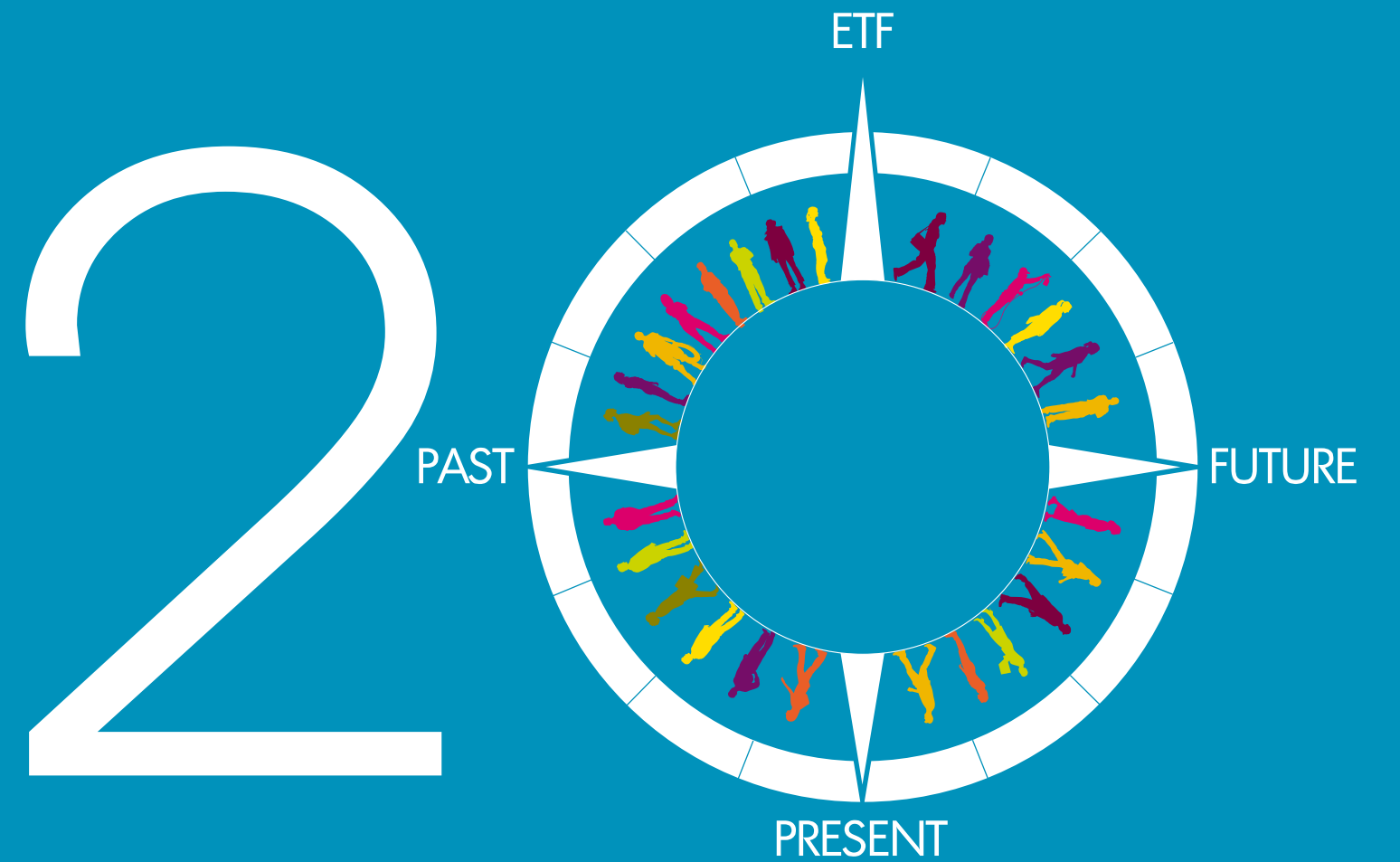




## LEARN MORE...

On the 20th anniversary of the  
European Training Foundation





**The time to build is upon us.**  
Nelson Mandela, May 1994

PREFACE

Odile Quintin

former Director General for Education and Culture, European Commission

I first worked with the ETF when, as Director General for Employment and Social Affairs, I prepared social and employment aspects of the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union. We decided to use the expertise of the ETF in producing reports on those countries, and in soliciting advice and support on the best way forward. I enjoyed a very positive experience working with the ETF and was impressed by the high quality of the expertise and material provided by its staff.

Then when I became Director General for Education and Culture in 2006 the ETF became a key partner, and I chaired its board. I was again very impressed by its work, particularly the management of the Tempus Programme for a time, and then its successful refocusing on policy analysis and support for candidate and neighbourhood countries. In this respect the impact of the ETF's activities is strong, in providing a forum for debate, identifying good practice, and illuminating the way forward for improvement and modernisation in education and training.

My message at this time of celebrating the ETF's twentieth anniversary would be this; continue in the same direction! Further develop your expertise, pursue positive cooperation with EU institutions and Member States, as well as with your sister organisation Cedefop.

The coming period is no doubt going to be very challenging. The issue of skills is becoming more and more central to economic and social development, and at the same time budget constraints mean we must all ensure value for money. Evaluation and a rigorous focus on priority actions will be top of the agenda.

I wish the ETF and its team great success on the next part of their journey.

Not too soon and not too late; the secret of education lies in choosing the right time to do things.

Natalia Ginzburg

Italian writer, politician and playwright

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## FOREWORD

### Xavier Prats Monné

Director General, Education and Culture, European Commission

#### Twenty years of great work...

The European Union looks beyond its borders not only when it comes to trade, development aid, or foreign policy, but also when it comes to education and human capital development. It aims to give individuals the opportunities to upgrade their skills, to support countries in their efforts to modernise their education and training systems, and to promote common values and mutual understanding – and over the last twenty years if these efforts are successful and visible it is also thanks to the exceptional work of the ETF.

For two decades now the ETF has been delivering quality work on vocational education and training as part of the European Union's partnership with its neighbouring countries: its twentieth anniversary is a very good time to reflect on how best to use the rich experience of its past, to further strengthen the work we are doing with partner countries.

From the moment I became professionally involved in employment, education and training, the ETF became a very important element of my work. Seeing its achievements over two decades and the passion with which it works is very reassuring: the ETF has grown into a mature agent with the drive and the ideas we need in the field.

So it has always been a stimulating experience for me to participate in ETF events, both when I was still wearing the hat of DG Employment and now. Because it is a key contributor to policy development and implementation in areas critical for Europe and its partners, such as combatting social exclusion and poverty through education and training. And because, by looking into the European Social Model, the ETF contributes to the noble task of proving that social protection is compatible with growth and competitiveness.

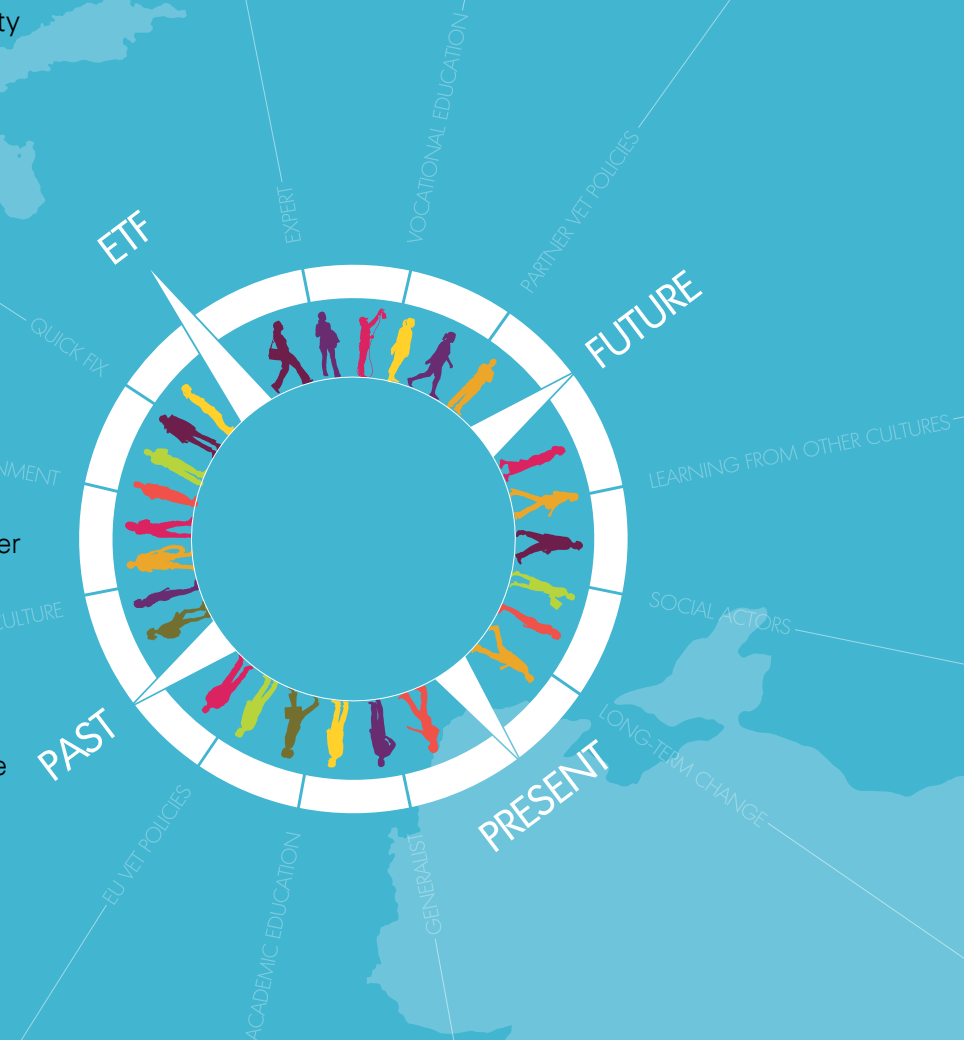
The ETF works with a wide variety of actors who come together from different neighbouring regions, bringing plenty of different perspectives. Their challenges are many, but we see the massive experience and great enthusiasm they bring, and their willingness to share and learn from each other. The ETF is right in the centre of all this, facilitating, supporting and offering expertise.

The EU, through the ETF, has become a recognised and valuable source of knowledge and good practice in evidence-based policy making; qualifications development; skills forecasting; and social dialogue in education and training. This knowledge and the policies based on them will only grow in importance, and we must ensure that we continue building our interventions and support measures on solid information. This is how we will become even better at addressing the challenges of, for example, skills gaps, systemic reform, and – on an even wider scale – the flows of migration and demographic change.

#### ...and even greater tasks ahead

Many partners of the region have undergone important political and social changes in the recent past. The ETF together with other EU bodies needs to continue to provide technical assistance and capacity building for stakeholders in education and training. We need to use our position to help enhance dialogue, partnership, trust and capacity in the systems and between them.

The pursuit of excellence and innovation in education and training systems is an imperative for all of us. Education and training systems will increasingly be called on to provide the skills that help solve complex problems; exploit the potential of technology; contribute to reducing poverty and inequality; promote mobility and social integration; and adapt to changes in the learning paradigm.





The EU and its partners in the neighbouring countries need to tackle these common challenges in partnership and cooperation. The ETF is particularly well-placed for this purpose. If I had a crystal ball to see 20 years into the future I would show you all the magnificent things the ETF will achieve. But I don't, so I can only try to predict. That said, I am convinced that DG EAC and ETF will make best use of the immense knowledge and skill gathered in the ETF, together with its unique position in relation to the EU neighbourhood, to help strengthen the skills and confidence of individuals, the quality of systems, and the scale of cooperation. In the end, we are here to help make people's lives better, and this should remain the fundamental focus of all our work.

Since its inception in 1994, the ETF has been recognised as playing a unique role in the 30 partner countries of the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions, each with their own specific cultural, political and economic realities.

As the ETF enters its third decade of supporting the EU education and training agenda in these countries, I would like to use this opportunity, on behalf of our service and my colleagues at DG EAC, to thank the ETF staff and Director for their excellent work, professionalism and tireless dedication to improving education and training systems, both within and beyond Europe: their contribution in the past to a shared vision of learning for innovation, growth and social cohesion has been remarkable, and we count on them for the future too.

## Introduction

The European Training Foundation (ETF) is a European Union-funded agency that supports the development of vocational education and training systems in 30 neighbouring countries, known as partner countries. These include places that border, or are close to, European Union member states, from the Balkans and the former Soviet republics of central Asia to the Middle East and North Africa. The ETF's mission is to help its partner countries develop the skills of their populations in order to promote political stability, economic development and human rights.

This work includes initiatives in education governance; skills assessment and planning; social inclusion; lifelong learning; migration impacts; national and regional education and training strategies; and the Torino Process, an analysis and evaluation scheme which provides a two-yearly review of overall progress toward the ETF's goals. The ETF has earned a reputation for excellence in applying its expertise to help improve the quality of vocational education and training systems in these neighbouring countries, including some which face challenging political and economic circumstances.

The ETF was established in 1994.

**I think in terms of what things can become, because one change brings about another.**

## Jean Monnet

French politician and diplomat, and founding father of the European Union



# LEARN

# MORE...

**Twenty is a curious age. Leaving our teenage years behind we start to spread our wings as our economic, social, intellectual and emotional paths begin to emerge. The nature of our opportunities along these paths is often determined by what happens to us in that crucial period leading up to our 20th birthday. From the age of 14 to the age of 19 we are confronted with big and often baffling choices about our education, our hopes, and our dreams. The distribution of opportunity can be affected by accidents of birth, in both time and place, and by rapid and, at times, convulsive change in our countries and communities. At 20, our lives gain momentum.**

Organisations, meanwhile, are made up of people bound to a common cause or principle. The extent to which they are bound varies and can be affected by different motivations. But 20 is a curious age for an organisation too. It is old enough to feel its purpose vindicated by its longevity, but young enough for the people who make up the organisation to still be thinking mostly about the future, carried by the momentum of founding ideals. But that phrase 'the people who make up the organisation' has a double meaning. People are constitutive of organisations, and organisations are 'made up'. They are, in effect, stories. The ETF is a story too, or rather a composite of stories, told by those who carry out its mission on the one hand, and on the other, those who take part in and benefit from its work.

We should say two things about our approach to this anniversary narrative. First, we will avoid the specialist terminology and acronyms that can often cause the reader's eye to falter and their attention to wander. In this we are following the example of political philosopher Luuk van Middelaar, who argues that "the way people write and talk about Europe is at least partly responsible for a lack of interest in the subject". Second, it would be natural to expect a history of the ETF at 20 to be a factual account that shows what the ETF has done and how it did it, with perhaps an introduction or conclusion to say why. But that would be repeating with much less detail and authority the plans, reports, accounts, newsletters, blogs, tweets and other communications that the ETF has diligently produced. It would be to miss the opportunity to tell the story, to capture the spirit and essence of an organisation that its Director, Madlen Serban, calls "a treasure".

Yet stories can be dangerous. They are likely to be partial and contingent, dealing as much with metaphor as with fact. However, stories "do not obliterate or deny the existence of facts but allow facts to be reinterpreted", as organisational studies expert Yiannis Gabriel points out. Stories aim "to communicate facts as experience, not facts as information". Here we will mix the communication of facts as experience with the communication of facts as information in a way that maintains the serious and instrumental purpose of the ETF, while allowing voices of experience to help uncover the meaning of what the ETF does. We ask for your agreement to this narrative contract in the hope that, whatever your prior knowledge or perception of the European Training Foundation, by engaging with this text you will discover more of its core, its actuality. There are ample opportunities to obtain the details of the facts-as-information history.

Some of the voices in this text are composites, drawn from interviews with ETF staff, former staff, partners, project participants and other stakeholders. Some are the voices of specific individuals. One is the imagined voice of Riccardo Gualino, the man who commissioned the construction of Villa Gualino, which has been home to the ETF throughout its 20 years. The thread that links all these disparate voices and stories may seem fragile or intangible. But we have captured it with just two words, which are often seen on web pages where a visitor is directed to something that lies beyond what is immediately visible. Those two words are **learn more...**

# GUALINO

## L'imprenditore

Riccardo Gualino was a financier, industrialist and entrepreneur, an intellectual who cultivated a group of artists in Turin, and an important figure in Italian social and economic life for some four decades. In the 1920s and 30s Gualino and his circle opposed Mussolini's fascist regime, and in 1931 he was arrested on the direct orders of Mussolini and sentenced to five years confinement on the island of Lipari. After eight months Mussolini ordered his release, having received a passionate appeal from Gualino's wife Cesarina Gurgo Salice.

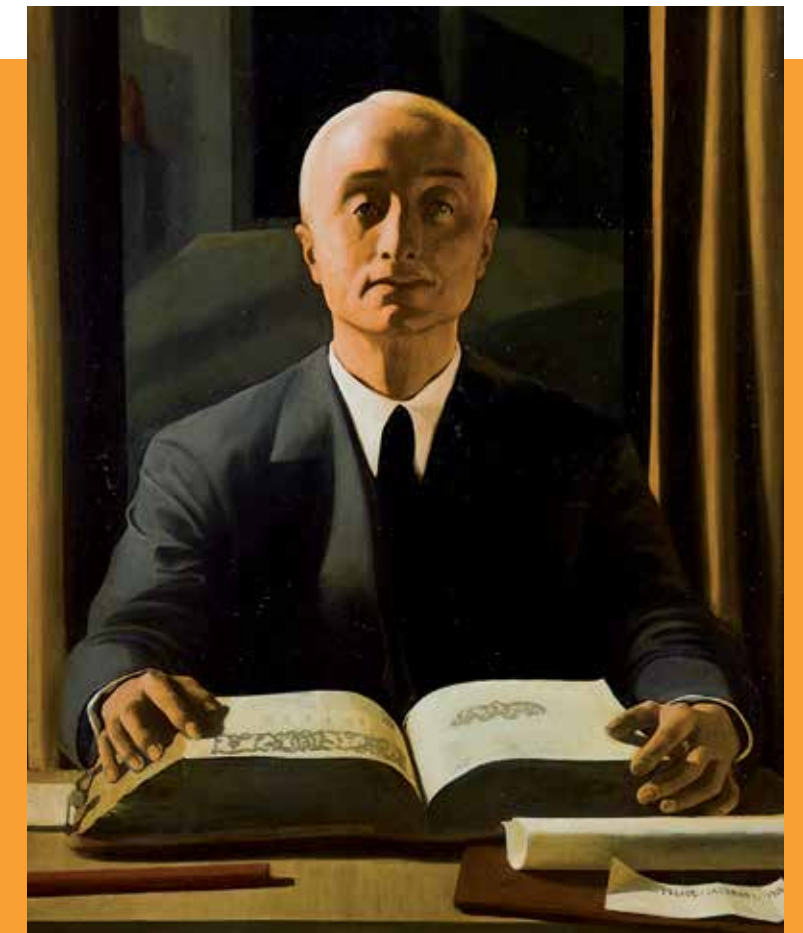
While Gualino's roots were local his outlook was always global. He made his name and fortune managing the transportation of timber between Italy and the United States with Società di Navigazione Italo Americana (SNIA), which he later transformed into a textiles-based operation. His business empire grew to include agricultural chemicals, banking, manufacturing, newspapers and chocolate production. He enjoyed a long-standing business relationship with Fiat founder Giovanni Agnelli, and served as a vice-president of Fiat from 1920 to 1927. However, Gualino was not a typical industrialist and promoted a model of development that was the opposite of the assembly line and fascism.

Gualino's lifelong passion was art. Cesarina, a talented painter, participated in his patronage of various art-forms including dance, literature, theatre, and painting. His film production company Lux, renowned for its role in the Italian neo-realist school, is perhaps his best-known legacy, along with his support for the eclectic Group of Six artists.

The critic and historian Lionello Venturi helped the Gualinos assemble a collection of ancient art, which they donated to the city of Turin. Felice Casorati, one of Gualino's Six, painted the iconic 1922 portrait in which he is seen seated in front of a large book. It is claimed that this image provided the architects of Villa Gualino with the inspiration for its distinctive design. Professor **Claudio Bermond** of the University of Turin is the author of a biography of Gualino.

Gualino sympathised with those who had a democratic vision of the social and political life of the country, and as a patron he left much liberty to the people he helped. I think Gualino would have a positive view of a European institution like the ETF living in his Villa. He certainly had a vision that went beyond Italy, but rather than a European vision in the strict sense he had an internationalist view of the economy.

Although not directly involved in pedagogical concerns, Gualino, were he here today, might perhaps be a critical friend, not afraid to challenge in the interests of continuous improvement. He might call our attention to the risks of group-think, or the over-concentration of leadership, or the neglect of administrative propriety. He would also see the similarities between his own values and those of an organisation that puts liberty at the heart of both its challenge to, and its support for, its beneficiaries in the partner countries.



Riccardo Gualino, portrait by Felice Casorati, 1922







## Regeneration

Six p.m., November 10, 1989. Barely twenty-four hours after the fall of the Berlin Wall an out-of-the-way bridge across the river Havel between Wannsee and Potsdam was re-opened to pedestrians from either side, for the first time since 1961. The bridge had become famous as the scene of high-profile prisoner exchanges between the Soviet Union and the Western allies during the Cold War. After the division of Germany at the end of the Second World War the former East German authorities, without a trace of irony, had changed its name from Glienicke Brücke – after the nearby hunting lodge – to Bridge of Unity. When the West German government paid for the bridge to be repaired in the 1970s, the East German authorities agreed to restore its original name.

**Bent Sørensen** remembers being on Glienicke Brücke in 1986, working for a Danish media organisation, to witness the historic final prisoner exchange when Soviet human rights activist Anatoly Sharansky and eight others were exchanged for Czech double-agents Karl and Hana Koecher.

We were standing, hundreds of journalists, on ladders, with photographers, to get the picture when the two delegations met in the middle of the bridge. And to me it underlined that this kind of suppression of people, of having barriers and walls, is not at all in line with the basic nature of human beings. Therefore to be able to work now in the ETF, bringing people together within and across borders, across the many issues that are out there, is a fantastic experience.

With its swift reopening following the fall of the Wall, Glienicke Brücke eventually became a true bridge of unity. Other ETF colleagues were involved at that time. **Evelyn Viertel** comes from East Germany and was there when the Wall came down.

I was right there on the spot. It was, I think, the most enthusiastic time of my life. We felt that we were writing history. Of course, when there is such a big societal change there is also a little bit of chaos. Everybody wanted to do something but it was not very well coordinated. And this was one reason why the Task Force in Brussels decided to set up the European Training Foundation.

Support for education and training was among the European Union's first responses to the reintegration of post-communist societies, as well as to wider conflict resolution and post-conflict regeneration. Good systems of education and training promote stability, reduce communal tensions, build tolerance and protect the vulnerable. Beyond that they form an essential platform for economic growth and prosperity by developing a population's capability in enterprise and employment.

### Bridge of Unity

The river Havel between Wannsee and Potsdam



**David O'Sullivan**, now Chief Operating Officer at the European Union's External Action Service, was directly involved in the establishment of the ETF. He is well-placed to tell its origin story, as a Hollywood producer might call it.

The ETF actually started out as a proposal, I think from Mitterrand to the European Council, in 1989, just after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Everyone was anxious to do something to help the countries of central and eastern Europe, and there were all kinds of ideas. One was that we open the Erasmus Programme to these countries, and the second was that we needed a management training foundation.

The Delors Cabinet came to us at the task force for education, training and youth, which was a sort of precursor to DG EAC as we now know it, and said, 'what are we going to do?' Our first thought was that opening up Erasmus to these countries wasn't going to help them very much, because while it would open the door to university mobility, what they also needed was investment, and training of professors, and equipment, and we couldn't do any of that with Erasmus which was purely a mobility programme. So we said, 'look, we need a tailor-made programme that can help these universities develop and modernise in the way that they would like, while at the same time building in the mobility element.' But the mobility element was not the only thing they needed, so we designed a broader programme of assistance, which became Tempus.

The second conclusion we reached was that they needed something more than management training, to include vocational training. We were very conscious that they needed to rebuild their vocational education and training, that was just as important. So that became the Training Foundation. We put forward the two pieces of legislation very quickly – we more or less wrote them over Christmas – and I think at one point it held the record for quick adoption in the Council, because we proposed it in January and it was basically adopted in May, which at the time was very fast.

The establishment of Tempus went ahead, but the ETF got entangled in a debate over where to host various new European Union agencies. This lost time was costly. It meant that the ETF wasn't there to provide the centre of expertise and coordination – the mission O'Sullivan and his colleagues had originally envisioned – precisely when it was most needed; when many of the countries were starting to think about remaking their education and training systems.

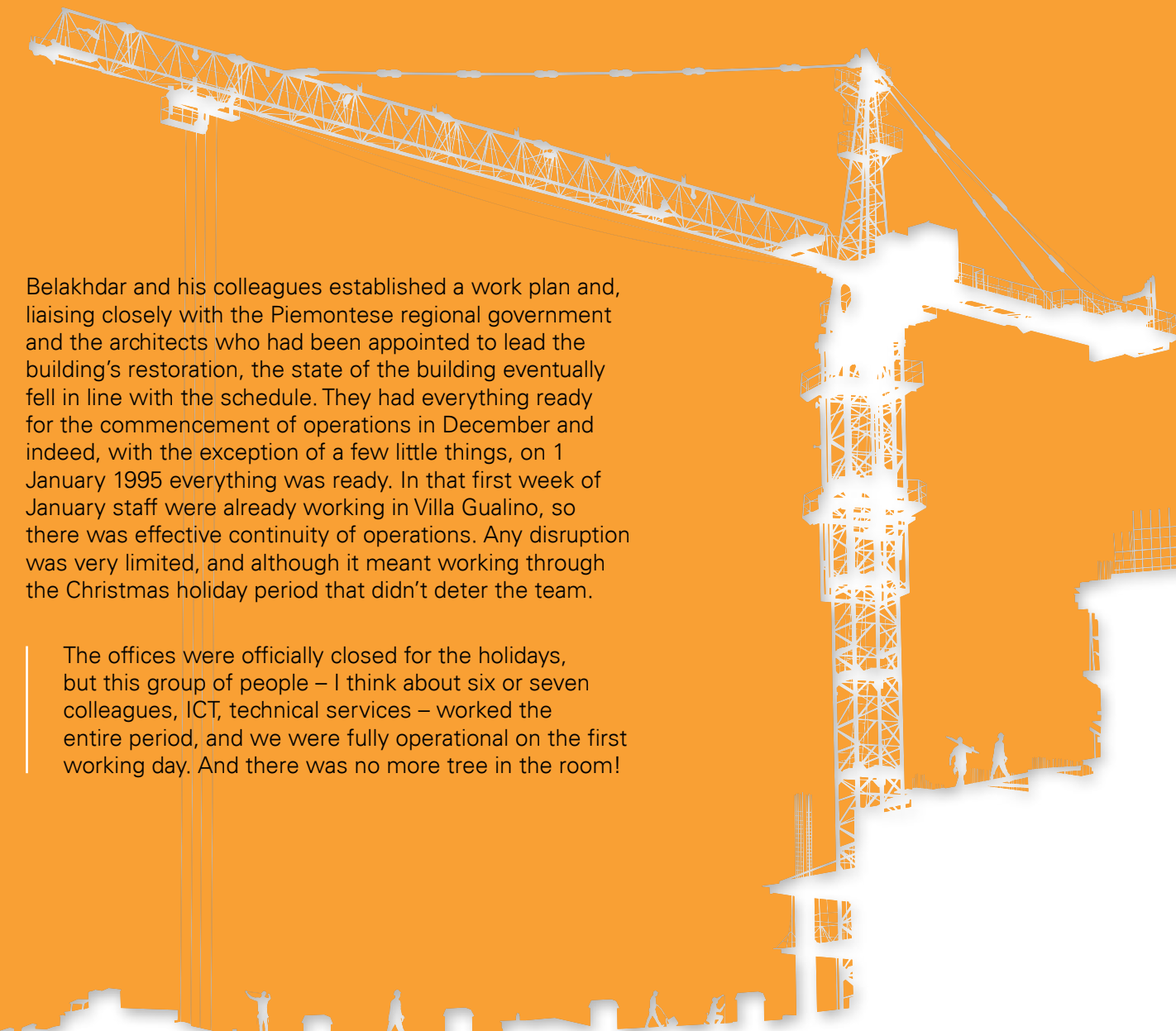
Meanwhile, in 1993 Turin's then Mayor, **Valentino Castellani**, began to consider the possibility of hosting the proposed European Training Foundation in the city. With the offer from the Piemonte Region to make Villa Gualino available as a location, the national government lent its support to the Turin bid.

What I remember is that I was coming back to Torino from Brussels, because I was in the Committee of Regions in Brussels, and I was at the airport and I was reached by a telephone call from the office of the prime minister, and one of the secretaries told me that Torino was selected. For me that was the end of the story in the sense that the role of the city was now just hosting not preparing, but it was the beginning of the story for ETF.

Regeneration work at the Villa Gualino marked the beginning of the story for the ETF's new home. **Yassin Belakhdar** remembers very clearly his first visit to the Villa in May 1994, on a pre-mission to view the building from his Brussels-based role with Tempus.

In one of the offices there was a huge tree. A real tree. There was basically no ceiling and the tree was growing through the wall – and that's where the heart of ETF was supposed to be, where the servers were supposed to be located. My first impression was, 'what's going to happen here?' We went back to Brussels, wrote our mission report and highlighted all the different points we saw. It was a kind of a shock to see the condition of the building.

**Villa Gualino, home to the ETF since 1994**



Belakhdar and his colleagues established a work plan and, liaising closely with the Piemontese regional government and the architects who had been appointed to lead the building's restoration, the state of the building eventually fell in line with the schedule. They had everything ready for the commencement of operations in December and indeed, with the exception of a few little things, on 1 January 1995 everything was ready. In that first week of January staff were already working in Villa Gualino, so there was effective continuity of operations. Any disruption was very limited, and although it meant working through the Christmas holiday period that didn't deter the team.

The offices were officially closed for the holidays, but this group of people – I think about six or seven colleagues, ICT, technical services – worked the entire period, and we were fully operational on the first working day. And there was no more tree in the room!



The regeneration of Villa Gualino became symbolic of a trajectory the whole city had travelled. After a century of industrial history, Turin had acquired a strong identity as an engine of Italian economic development, especially in automotive manufacturing, but during the 1980s and 90s the city experienced major de-industrialisation. Ten million square meters of industrial activity closed and unemployment was roughly double the national average. The city's population fell from 1.25 million to 900,000. It felt like an irreversible decline.

But Turin was already home to two important universities and host city to agencies such as the International Labour Organization's International Training Centre and the United Nations System Staff College. This helped to establish an international reputation as a centre of education and training. While Torino remains a major hub of the automotive industry it now boasts an increasingly diversified profile and is the second biggest source of Italian exports, says **Piero Fassino**, Mayor of Turin.

Torino is now one of the most dynamic cities in Italy. Training is very important to this scenario. Torino is a great centre of training activities; the two universities, the ILO-ITC, the UN campus, the ETF, the many centres of research. You will also find here the training high school of the Italian Army. There are many activities in training, and this is an important profile for the city, one which we want to encourage, to solicit, to support.

Torino is also a capital of culture, with the greatest investment in culture in all of Italy, totalling some 100 million euros each year. This investment in culture has transformed Torino into an international tourist destination. When I was young, it was impossible to imagine tourists in Torino, because nobody visited a factory town. Today the city is filled each day, each week, with tourists. And it is a little-known fact that Torino has the best music school in Italy!



Turin at night

Bertu

# LEARNING TO HELP

**It was an act of great foresight to appoint as the ETF's first Director a man whose background was steeped in linking institutions and systems of learning with the needs of people within and across national boundaries. A geographer by training, Peter de Rooij was previously involved in university development projects in the Dutch Ministry of Education, as well as in building cooperation with central and eastern European countries after the events of 1989. He was under no illusions about the scale of the task he was taking on. As he told the ETF *Live and Learn* publication at the end of his tenure, "I started my job on 1 July 1994, six months before we moved into the Villa Gualino. It was a hot summer and we had a daunting task ahead of us..."**

**Peter de Rooij's** vision was of an expertise centre that could help bring the best out of the emerging education and training systems in transition countries. His typically modest comments only hint at the sheer dedication and energy required to get the ETF up and running. In the 2004 *Live and Learn* interview he recalled a September 1994 Governing Board Meeting.

All the important people that were involved in the start-up phase of the ETF were there when the Deputy Director, Ulrich Hillenkamp, and I presented the Work Programme we had written, burning the midnight oil, to cover the first year of the ETF. It was peppered with all the issues we still talk about today: expertise centres; demand-driven approaches; networking key people; partnerships; 'east-east cooperation' – the way we referred to it before the Med region came into view; National Observatories – well, they were there as 'observatory function', but still, it was all there in autumn 1994.



**Peter de Rooij,**  
ETF Director 1994-2004

The demands made of his new organisation in its early years by the consequences of rapid European Union enlargement and post-Santer Commission governance arrangements stretched his original vision somewhat. However, he was vindicated to a great extent when, by the end of the 1990s, "we anticipated a surge in demand for expertise in education and training in what became known as 'the wider Europe' and finally, with a fantastic detour, we returned to the original aims of that very first Work Programme that Ulrich and I had put in front of the Governing Board in September 1994."

With German reunification already completed the initial focus was on reconstruction in the economies of Poland and Hungary. This soon extended to other countries already preparing for accession to the European Union, and then further south and east to countries with, at that time, no such ambition, but with similar social and economic challenges. With projects bearing distinctive European Union nomenclature such as Poland Hungary Aid for Reconstruction and Economic Development (Phare) and Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (Takis) providing the framework and the funding, the task was to reform out-of-date systems so that these countries' populations would have access to the learning and skills that would set them up for employment, for business, for life.



# INITIATIVES

In November 1994 a second Deputy Director was appointed to strengthen the team. **Livio Pescia**, an expert in enterprise-based training, brought his significant industry experience to the task of sharpening the new agency's focus on helping partner countries deal with the so-called transition economy. Pescia remembers some of the challenges around the ETF's relationship with the European Commission which flowed from a shifting agenda of tasks, competences, and organisation. He highlights the differing roles and characteristics of small private enterprises, larger state-owned companies and big multi-national enterprises in the newly-complex economic panorama.

The transition economy provoked a strong demand for business culture and for managerial and business training. In the initial period of Phare and Tacis activities, with the support of the ETF, many noteworthy initiatives were created in management training. Business schools of high quality were created and developed. An important element within Tacis was a programme of internships in western enterprises for managers and engineers from partner countries. We heard during one Tacis conference in Moscow that Czar Peter the Great had participated in an internship programme in the Dutch shipyards!



His counterpart **Ulrich Hillenkamp** describes the education and training systems in the former Soviet territories and in part of the Mediterranean region as being very much schools-based. The needs of the economy, of enterprises and firms, as well as of the public sector, were not being sufficiently well met.

This had partly dramatic consequences for the quality and efficiency of the production process, the products themselves and, in fact, the economy as a whole. That is why the ETF was established as the European expertise centre for human resources development in partner countries, for social and economic development.

Hillenkamp is clear, though, that arriving with an attitude of 'what works in the West will work for you' would be a disaster. He explained to his staff that they would first have to listen, to understand the situation, which has its roots in the past, before giving advice. He asked them to be modest, and to speak to as many people in the respective countries as possible.





Europe Day  
Founded 5th May 1949



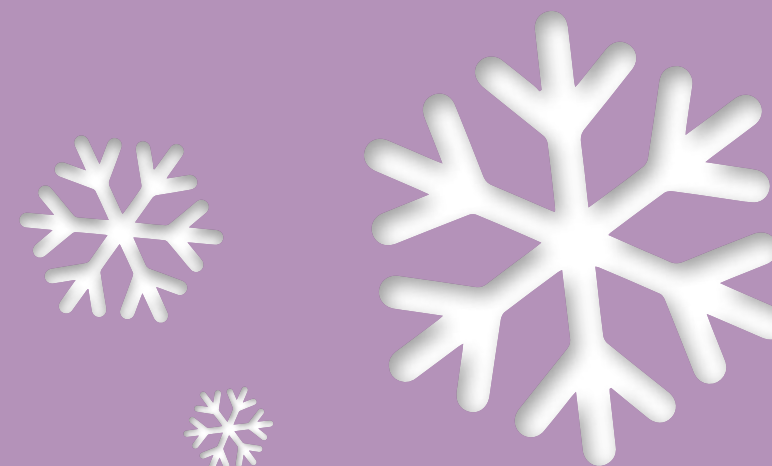
As desk officer for the ETF in Brussels in its early days, **Lawrence Meredith** experienced this at first hand when he accompanied ETF colleagues on a mission to Kyrgyzstan. He describes having a very clear memory of going in March 1999 to what felt like a “brave new world,” with the aim of explaining vocational education and training reforms.

It was less than 10 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and everybody was ‘discovering’ these countries, but the ETF, for me, was at the forefront of those changes. The main thing I remember was the 130 deeply engaged people working there, young and very committed, trying to drive the agenda and create space for themselves to work.

But while policies and practices could not necessarily be directly transplanted to places like Kyrgyzstan, within policy circles in partner countries there was plenty of interest in how European Union member states were reforming and developing their own education and training systems. This interest could be satisfied at least in part through the ETF’s strong ties with Cedefop, the agency responsible for vocational education and training reform within member states. **Ulrich Hillenkamp** recalls his very close working relationship with Cedefop staff at the time, particularly deputy director Stavros Stavrou and head of research Manfred Tessaring.

Of course, you couldn’t take all these developments from Cedefop and introduce them immediately in our partner countries, but it was also very helpful for the partner countries to inform them about what the EU was discussing, what their main problems were, and their success stories. So I think it was a good scenario that there were two institutions working closely together and exchanging experiences.

**Peter Greenwood** was among the first wave of employees to arrive at Villa Gualino to work on the Tempus programme. Within a couple of years he moved to the newly-created national observatories project. This was designed to enable the ETF to act as a brokerage organisation by sharing knowledge with partner countries about best practice from within the European Union, not least through the close links with Cedefop, and to capture knowledge about developments in partner countries.



We were setting up small functions and facilities in the countries to gather information about what was happening in vocational education and training, and we were creating opportunities for them to discuss this with each other within the country. So, for example, the ministry of education and the ministry of labour would be talking to other stakeholders about what was happening. And we were bringing these different facilities together across countries, and we called them national observatories. Then we were providing opportunities for them to work with the European Union member states so they could exchange information with them too.

His colleague **Anastasia Fetsi** recalls returning from a month’s trip to Japan to begin work, at first, on the same project.

I remember it was November and there was a lot of snow when I arrived. I started work in the unit responsible for establishing the national observatories, as they were called at the time, where I was focusing on developing key indicators for these observatories.

The collection and publication of this data proved to be very valuable for a number of reasons, for instance the strengthening of an evidence-based approach to strategic planning among national authorities who had, at times, shown significant blind spots in terms of what was already happening in their own economies and labour markets. The ETF’s success in developing this kind of monitoring led to more than twenty such observatories being established; and the partner countries’ success in applying the lessons learned has seen many of the national observatories continue to function beyond the life of the project through which they were established. Indeed, as partner countries from the list of accession candidates joined the European Union, handing these excellent capabilities to Cedefop was a source of great pride to Peter de Rooij.

**Cesar Birzea** is one of those whose involvement with the national observatory programme made him less of a stakeholder and more of a friend. His first contact with the ETF came when he attended a conference in 1995, before he became manager of the national observatory in Romania, and then a member of the ETF Editorial Board.

I was impressed from the beginning by their understanding and friendly attitude, and their impact at the national level was related particularly to our reporting capacity. At the end of the 1990s, the ETF was actively involved in the implementation of the Phare project on VET reform and the elaboration of important strategic documents on human resources development, employment and continuing vocational training.

Similarly, **Lea Orro** first encountered the ETF in 1995 when she was working at the Estonian Ministry of Education and Culture on a Phare-funded project to support vocational education and training reform. The ETF had been assigned to oversee the implementation of the project. After negotiations with the ministry, an independent foundation named VET Reform Estonia was established to implement the project.

It was the beginning of VET reforms in Estonia, and the school directors to this day remember these times as the beginning of changing our mind-set, taking into account the huge challenge we were facing to move from one socio-economic system to another.

Orro now heads the 200-strong Foundation Innove which continues the work started by VET Reform Estonia, including managing all European Social Fund projects earmarked for vocational education and training, employment and social inclusion. There were, of course, moments of uncertainty among the former Soviet countries too. When the ETF launched a regional project on continuing training some of the countries of eastern Europe were a little reluctant, recalls **Siria Taurelli**.

They were saying ‘well, we’ve been together 70 years and it didn’t work. Why do you want us to stay together again?’ And it was fun, but very serious at the same time, and through practice and through mutual learning everybody came to appreciate the fact that there is learning from Europe but also within eastern Europe that is equally relevant, and immediately applicable. So from this initial feeling of ‘why put us together again’ they reached the point of recognising, ‘yes, it’s a good idea to be together’.

During the first five years or so of the ETF’s life in Turin **David O’Sullivan’s** attention had been elsewhere, as he carried out duties in other areas. But he returned to the ETF’s world in 1999 as Director General for Education and Training at the European Commission, serving briefly on the ETF Governing Board.



By the time I picked up the story again in 1999, I was very impressed with the work that the ETF was doing. I think we could take some satisfaction that it was managing such a rapidly-evolving role, because 10 years later we were talking about the accession of all these countries to the EU. The agenda had changed dramatically.

His successor in the last five years, **Jan Truszczyński**, notes that while the agenda has changed so much, the size and shape of the ETF, as it were, has changed much less.

Looking back at the nineties I think one can say that in those years the organisation was already performing as one of the decentralised bodies of the European institutions and was dealing with quite a lot of things. It’s not just the number of countries in which the ETF at the time was active, going after all as far east as Mongolia in those years, it was also the budget that was not much different from the budget of today. And the number of staff, not much different from the number of colleagues who perform at the ETF today, around 120 in those years, around 130, plus or minus, nowadays. So the size of the operation today is not much different from what it was in the 90s.

As the final years of the 20th century drew to a close, Europe embarked on another major step in its reinvention with the introduction of the euro currency, described by former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder as “Europe’s key to the 21st century.” The shifting borders of the European Union itself were also driving change, leading to the Copenhagen Summit of 2002 which gave the green light to the accession plans of 10 soon-to-be member states.









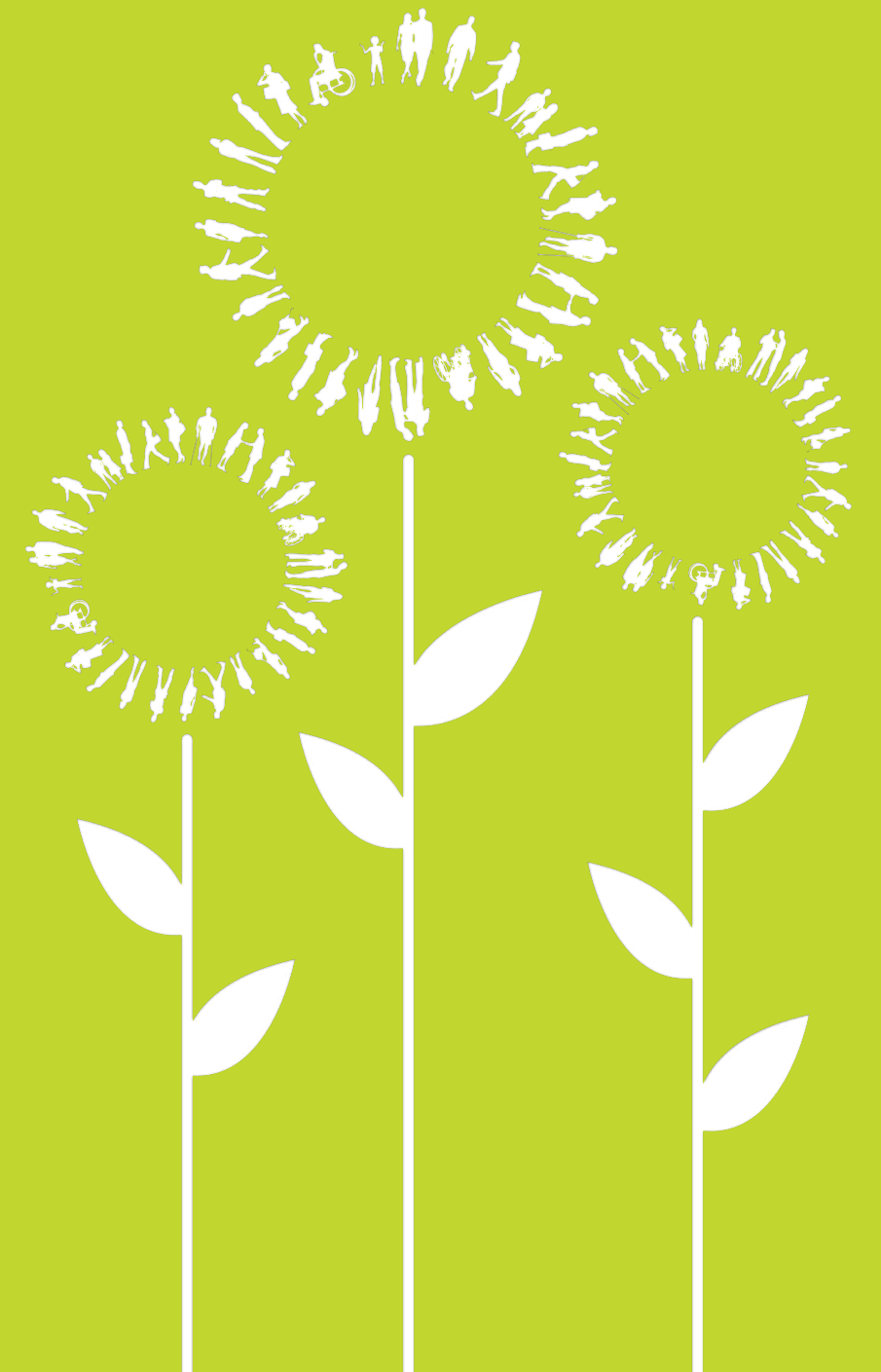
**The ETF has many long-serving employees, partly because its mission attracts people for whom a commitment to cooperation and development is at the heart of everything they do. The average length of service is close to 11 years, and many key people have been with the ETF from the beginning, among them Eva Jimeno Sicilia.**

# LEARNING TO GROW

I've been here in the ETF for 20 years. I think the profile of the institution, in terms of what we do, has changed a lot. We started as a project management institution; we would get projects from Brussels, and we would carry out the management of those projects. And we have completely switched, 180 degrees, to be what we call a 'centre of expertise'. We focus on advice, on giving expert input to governments on different topics linked to vocational education and training. So it's more about accompanying countries through a process of change, being a critical friend, being a facilitator of processes inside a country, which is more interesting. Much more interesting...

The word 'interesting' can sometimes have the sense of challenging as well as engaging, and Jimeno Sicilia recalls one experience that was a mixture of both, when she moved to the Mediterranean department in 2000 to be country manager for four countries; Palestine, Lebanon, Libya and Jordan. But her biggest challenge was being told to go to Syria, a country that was largely unknown to the ETF, to accompany a project team from the European Union.

That was a big challenge because I didn't know the country, I was very new to the region, the Commission had not asked us to go. But it turned out to be an amazing experience, really great from all points of view, professionally, personally. It was a great discovery for me.





# DISCOVERY

Others shared this type of challenge; of going to an unfamiliar place, of feeling new. They were also aware, despite being experts in their field, of not knowing much about the circumstances in which they were carrying their message of social improvement and wealth creation through improved education and training systems. **Claire Morel** worked for the ETF for nine years and during that time visited a number of locations in central Asia, including Mongolia.

We knew no-one, no-one knew us, and we were going there to explain the mission of the ETF. Our idea was, after one or two years, to set up national observatories. I remember some people thinking the observatory was for looking into the sky! I remember feeling completely lost, feeling very lonely. But once we had the observatories network that was extremely helpful in explaining what we were doing, and things became much easier.



Along with new countries to work with, the development of policy learning as a systemic intervention started to take hold in the early years of the new century, as did a focus on lifelong learning, the impact of migration, equality of opportunity in the labour market and the growth of informal sectors in partner country economies. Directing attention to these issues certainly played to the shift away from project management from about 2000 onwards, as the ETF began to build its profile as a centre of expertise. However, this was by no means an attempt to undo Ulrich Hillenkamp's emphasis on listening to and learning from the partner countries. Being seen as an expert is fine but, as **Vincent McBride** notes, it's not as if staff walked around with a sign on saying 'expert'.



That would not be great for people you interact with, because they then have to define themselves against your badge. So the concept we're increasingly using is 'professional to professional', which suggests we know what we're talking about, in terms of the EU, the content of reform and VET, and qualification frameworks, and quality and so on; and you – in the partner country – know all about your history, and your systems, and what you do, and you may have been a school director for 30 years or a civil servant for 25 years. So 'professional to professional' means blending the two sets of expertise together.

The balance of new thematic approaches on the one hand and geographic growth on the other was now an important factor in the ETF's deployment of the expertise that was so central to de Rooij's original vision, although this wasn't formalised in terms of organisational structure for another decade. Two more major projects came to influence the ETF's work, named, as ever, in the inimical style of European Union short-hand. MEDA II established the new remit in the south Mediterranean region, MEDA being an acronym for the French term Mesures d'accompagnement, since the project provides financial and technical measures to accompany the reform of economic and social structures in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership; and Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation, or CARDS, which brought the Western Balkans into the spotlight.



**Marie Cormans** joined the ETF in 2003, having worked in the Commission on training local authorities in how to design and implement education and training. She took on a similar task with the ETF, but with a new geographical focus, in the partner countries of the south Mediterranean. The first thing that Cormans had to grapple with was the degree of centralisation in these countries. She immediately began to address issues of decentralisation, empowering local communities, including people who may want to challenge central government's decisions and priorities.

I was asked to design and launch a project to help young entrepreneurs in these countries to set up their businesses, from the point of view of skills. In 2004, so about one year later, I heard that the European Commission was launching a Euro-Mediterranean charter for enterprise. I thought this would be interesting for my project, so I invited somebody from DG Enterprise and Industry to come to Turin and present on the charter.

This was something of a departure for the ETF, which had been dealing with education ministries, labour ministries, and vocational training specialists in ministries and agencies, but the business world had not been present to the same extent. It perfectly suited Cormans, who saw the value in integrating approaches across sectors to make them fit together.

I like to network people, organisations, build bridges between the public and private sectors, and this is what the charter is all about. It's about working together, all stakeholders, public and private body stakeholders, ministries, agencies, and entrepreneurs, to mould a business-friendly environment and make sure that companies can strive and thrive.

2003 also saw the ETF host a major conference to review progress in the reform of vocational education and training systems in partner countries. Some 300 delegates from European Commission services, member states, partner countries and agencies, and the international research community gathered under the banner 'Learning Matters', at the former Fiat factory at the Lingotto. As **Nikolaus van der Pas**, then Director General for Education and Culture at the European Commission, said in opening the conference, "Learning matters for economic and social development. Learning matters for social cohesion. Learning matters for social and political stability." From this conference emerged the concept of policy learning, amidst the recognition that the outcomes of 'transition' in countries which had come to bear that term as a descriptor are not necessarily known from the outset. That's what makes the 'learning' part so vital. Through learning – as people, communities, regions and nations – the opportunities created by more open political and economic situations can be realised. And through learning, some of the dangers that inevitably lurk in the shadows of transformation can be faced and overcome.

Policy learning is more sophisticated as an approach than simply being the result of supporting one country or group of countries to learn from the policies of another. It goes much deeper into the structures of both source and



destination countries by creating a feedback mechanism within education and training systems at national and regional level. This kind of whole-system learning requires the involvement of a wider set of participants – or actors – than is likely to have been the case under previous, less open government structures. From here on, the ETF's role can be increasingly characterised as facilitating policy learning. **Maria Vittoria Garlappi** sees this as an important milestone, as well as a spur to future developments in the ETF's approach.

As an institution the ETF was born dealing mainly with technical assistance and the project approach. So it evolved on to policy making. I think we are good now at providing tools for policy analysis and also at supporting countries in policy making. The next challenge for us is to support countries in policy implementation, in helping them to see the impact of the strategies they have developed, and how they are put in place and how feasible they are in reality.



# 2003

**Peter Greenwood** identifies the 2003 'Learning Matters' conference as a turning point in ETF history which defined the direction of work that has brought the agency to where it is now.

We presented this concept of how we work with the countries, called policy learning, based on the idea that you're not going to countries and telling them 'your employment policy is wrong, you've got to do it this way'. Instead, you're enabling them to take decisions about their own young people, their own education policy. And we presented this concept at the start of the conference with a video we had made, and it felt like we were suddenly in a new century.

The video was greeted with tremendous applause at the conference and, after some introductory remarks, the education minister from Slovenia spoke about how the concept complemented his work. The overall impact was to create a strong sense of direction for the ETF and, says Greenwood, "that was, if you like, when the ETF 'grew up'; it was in that meeting, and in the preparation for that meeting, that we became the organisation we are now."

Arguably, the European Union 'grew up' at around that time too, when, on 1 May 2004, eight eastern European countries that had been encased behind the Iron Curtain since the end of the Second World War finally became members of the European Union as free and independent states. They were accompanied by the two Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta. This unprecedented enlargement was at least to some extent made possible by the support of the ETF to those countries' education and training systems. This was certainly **Lea Orro's** experience in Estonia.

We learned why and how to work with social partners, how to identify skills needs, how to develop a qualifications framework, how to develop modular curricula, what skills teachers would need in the new situation, how all this fits into the broader socio-economic development, including further training for adults, and more. In Estonia altogether we had six Phare projects that supported the development of



vocational education and training before we joined the EU. Even though the projects had quite a large technical assistance component and we had the privilege of using the best know-how from countries like Ireland, Finland and Holland, the ETF added the broader picture. As education is deeply embedded in every country's cultural and socio-economic situation, you can never copy education solutions from other countries; but rather you can learn and rationalise the different needs and opportunities, and that's where the expertise and support of ETF was crucial.

If, as the 2003 conference had articulated, learning matters to such vital dimensions as social cohesion and economic development, then it certainly matters to the ground-breaking political changes that followed. Change was happening within the ETF too. In July 2004 Muriel Dunbar took over as Director from Peter de Rooij. Under his guidance the ETF had grown from being an exciting idea, formed in response to the extraordinary human triumph over the physical and political barriers of the Cold War, to the grown-up agency of 'Learning Matters', poised to take on the challenges of the decade to come. Continuity was needed as well as change, as **Vincent McBride** points out.

In the period 2004 to 2009, with Muriel Dunbar, a further exploration of policy learning took place. I think Peter de Rooij gave birth to the ETF, in the sense that as Director he paved the way for a new definition of the ETF. Muriel did more of that exploration.

In her first interview with the ETF *Live and Learn* magazine Dunbar confessed that, although she had visited Villa Gualino before, she'd never been there during the daytime. But the dawn was about to break on her era as Director.





Launch of the Euro



# LEARNING TO CHANGE

**On arriving at Villa Gualino in 2004 Muriel Dunbar set about meeting all her new colleagues, learning about the ETF's key strengths and identifying those areas that were in need of support. She quickly realised that its unique mission, status and structure among agencies of the European Union made it a complicated thing to explain, even to seasoned actors in the EU's various institutions and circles.**

**The name itself is misleading, and Dunbar readily agrees with current Director Madlen Serban's assertion that the European Training Foundation does not work primarily in Europe, does not deliver training and is not a foundation. Dunbar set out to raise the profile of the ETF both within Brussels, with a variety of the directorates general that form the European Commission, and also with multi-lateral organisations like the World Bank, UNESCO and ILO. She set up an inter-agency group to develop methods and approaches that would support partner countries working with the international community as part of a programme for aid effectiveness.**

Within Brussels, Dunbar worked on projects with the Directorate General for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship and the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry. At the same time, the focus back at Villa Gualino was firmly on ensuring that project work was aligned to the priorities of the Directorate General for External Relations, the ETF's co-sponsor, while strengthening its core expertise in vocational education and training. At that time **Muriel Dunbar** felt that the sheer scale of her new team's expertise was not fully appreciated outside the organisation.

It is an incredible resource of TVET expertise. It's the largest resource of TVET expertise, globally – there isn't another institution like it. Other multi-lateral or bi-lateral agencies may have a few staff who specialise in TVET, but there isn't anywhere else where that is the core purpose. And the ETF has a lot of flexibility; it's given quite a large degree of freedom in how to spend the budget it receives and how to prioritise its work. So it has the room to shape itself and to grow.

Muriel Dunbar,  
ETF Director, 2004-2009



Dunbar sees the value for partner countries of accessing all that expertise originating in the dual impact it can have on social and economic goals. She sees social purpose and economic purpose in vocational education and training as inextricably intertwined.

Naturally there is a lot of emphasis in the ETF's work on the role of skills development for economic growth, but there is also a huge emphasis on skills development as a means of raising people out of poverty, of bringing greater equality to disadvantaged groups, including women.

**Outi Kärkkäinen** joined the ETF just before Muriel Dunbar and has led much of the work the agency has done to support greater equality for women. She advocates the mainstreaming of gender issues in the ETF, and in development work in general.

Gender should be mainstreamed in ETF activities at all the levels. In our work programme, in operations, gender should be mainstreamed from the beginning of our activities and we have tried to do that with guidelines for the planning phase... how we should assess first of all whether our activities involve females, and how our activities will impact females.

Kärkkäinen explains that in some of the ETF's partner countries in the Arab world, a focus on female employment is high on the national agenda. This is the case in Jordan, where objectives for increasing female participation have been built into the national employment strategy and in the related employment and education and training strategy.



Jordan has committed itself to benchmarks regarding female employment and activity rates in the current support that the EU is providing. Female employment objectives will be included in the new budgetary support to Jordan which we are involved in formulating with the EU.

Kärkkäinen is particularly proud of a project called 'Women and Work' which ran in Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt, and looked at female participation in education and access to private sector employment, in the information and communication technology and tourism sectors. The ETF conducted research with employers and young females, focusing on youth employment, which included a survey among employers and focus groups with the young women. Some were still in education, or working in the two sectors, or unemployed and wishing to work in one of those sectors.

First of all we looked at how many women were working in the enterprises and in the sectors. Of course it was a minority, and then we looked at why, from the point of view of the employers and the females, the women. And why am I proud of it? Because it involved the people, the employers and the young women, who were directly concerned by it. We got good research which was then well-disseminated, cited, and generated a lot of interest outside the ETF.

Although he joined after the end of Dunbar's term, **Alastair Macphail** offers another insightful perspective, having served as desk officer for the ETF within the Commission before joining the organisation, with a stint helping to set up the new Chemicals Agency in Helsinki

in between. His time as desk officer in Brussels was during a critical period for the ETF, with a new mandate under review that would align its work to a revamped set of European Union instruments for managing decentralised agencies.

I was in Brussels from 2003 to 2006, so I produced the first draft of the new mandate which was then picked up by my successor as desk officer. That period was mostly quite tense because DG Education and Culture was in the process of setting up an executive agency, and they had already taken the decision to transfer the Tempus programme, which was managed by the ETF at the time, to Brussels. There were a lot of technical negotiations and it was quite a protracted process. When Tempus was eventually transferred in 2008 it was quite a wrench for the organisation.

The impact of the new set of instruments was to broaden the ETF's mandate to cover the whole area of labour market-related human resources development in partner countries. The reformulated mandate was eventually approved by the European Parliament in 2008 and encapsulated in the phrase "human capital development in the context of lifelong learning".





# RESEARCH

When Peter de Rooij died in 2006, Ulrich Hillenkamp wrote a tribute which focused on the former Director's belief in the central importance of investing in education, whether that investment was made by the state or the individual. De Rooij saw education and training within a broader context, Hillenkamp wrote. It was not only a question of labour market responsiveness, but also promoting social cohesion. These were the fundamental convictions which guided de Rooij's work. **Vincent McBride** agrees, and sees the ETF as an organisation that is based on the social purpose of education.

The social purpose of education enables people to explore and realise their potential, and participate economically through their potential. It's not just about getting a job; it's about having a broader concept than that. Having worked with Peter de Rooij, Muriel Dunbar and Madlen Serban, I would say all of them, in different ways, have a commitment to education as having a social as well as an economic purpose.

What was always clear about the mission of the ETF from the very beginning was its remit to help countries around and about the borders of European Union member states, in Hillenkamp's words again, "strengthen their democracies and make education and training a political priority". The imperative for those countries was to shake off decades of economic stagnation and political restrictions and, as quickly as possible and with proper quality, reform their education and training systems to prepare graduates for the needs of a very different economic environment.

Like Peter de Rooij, **Arjen Vos** is an alumnus of the Dutch ministry of education. In the 1990s he was representing the ministry in discussions about setting up the Tempus project and he joined the ETF, initially as a consultant, in March 1995. In the early years he witnessed the ETF's ability to make vocational education and training a broader issue than purely one of ministerial remits and policies, particularly through the involvement of employers and trade unions in the policy dialogue. Almost 20 years on from joining he has also seen considerable change.

Obviously, the organisation has changed. In particular, like with every new organisation, the early phase is always one of improvisation, finding the right instruments, finding the right messages to deliver, finding the right way of organising the work. And now I think we have an organisation which is pretty much structured with procedures and is fulfilling the European administrative criteria.



It didn't always seem like that, and in the early days Vos feels it was more a case of asking 'what will Brussels think' because the ETF was perceived as a slightly strange organisation; although the Directorate General of Education and Culture held the chair of the ETF Governing Board the funding came from External Relations. Vos says that the ETF has evolved quite a lot since then, from being fairly unknown in Brussels to being well-recognised as an agency. However, getting across a clear idea of the ETF's work continues to be a challenge, as **Cristiana Burzio** acknowledges.

It's not very easy to explain to people outside ETF what we are doing. I would say ETF works to help the governments of non-EU member states make policies in the field of human resources development.

But the ETF's impact is abundantly clear to the partner countries because, as Muriel Dunbar points out, the people whose lives are most directly touched by the ETF's work are the people who work in policy development, in the civil services and in the education and training systems of the partner countries. They can tell a story about what difference it made to have the ETF work alongside them. Like Cesar Birzea in Romania and Lea Orro in Estonia, **Olga Oleynikova's** experience in Russia is indicative.

From my first contact with ETF in 1996 under the national observatories project my perception was highly positive. The ETF colleagues knew so much about VET developments in Europe and were eager to share their knowledge and experience.

The key word for Oleynikova is openness. Cooperation with the ETF began with training sessions in Turin and workshops in Russia, the latter being hugely important in triggering the modernisation of vocational education and training processes in the country. Later this cooperation took the form of other projects, as well as participation in the ETF's Editorial Board and work in the Commonwealth of Independent States, for example to assist with national qualifications frameworks and the development of occupational standards. Oleynikova values the ongoing relationship.



The impact of our cooperation with the ETF can be summed up as very positive. The new learning acquired has helped to streamline the VET modernisation processes, to develop policy-makers' and practitioners' competences. Probably the most powerful long-term impact was the start of the social dialogue after the 1998 ETF conference on VET in Russia. This development in enterprise cooperation has sown seeds that took time to surface, but the results have been shaping all ensuing VET developments and modernisation initiatives in Russia.

**Henrik Faudel** describes the approach the ETF typically takes to working with partner countries as providing a multiplier effect through the combination of its own direct work, with facilitating the best use of inputs from other sources. Stakeholders in the partner countries start out broadly agreeing the areas where they want support, and then the ETF team develops the programme. One reason for the failure of some larger-scale development support programmes is that they do not sufficiently relate to the reality of the recipient country from the outset.

That's one of our trademarks if you like, that we can help the Commission get things right from the beginning. At the same time it's one of the reasons that we were created, it's a task that was already foreseen in our original mandate.

For stakeholders in partner countries there are advantages to working with an institution that is committed to building a relationship with the country and understanding the situation there, rather than a commercial consultant who might arrive on a one-off project, deliver their response, and then go. Otherwise an intervention risks becoming something that works in parallel with the country's own reform activities. Ensuring the ETF's work is properly integrated with in-country reforms can be difficult, unless the partner countries are clear about where they want to get to and how they can best achieve their goals with bilateral or multilateral donor support. For Faudel, the ETF's selling point is that it is a critical friend; it has broad experience in transition and emerging-market countries and understands their strategies and initiatives, their reform failures as well as their successes, and is able to guide them without doing the work for them.



**Muriel Dunbar's** tenure marked the completion of the ETF's transition from "technical assistance body" to "centre of expertise in human capital development". In that time the recognition of its value grew enormously, despite the continuing challenge of articulating its proposition more easily to those beyond its immediate circles. But in those circles the impact of its work is long-felt and greatly appreciated. During the last six months of Dunbar's time as Director, the ETF ran a major international conference on national qualifications frameworks at the European Parliament. For Dunbar, it brought together a lot of the ETF's strengths.

First of all, we were able to access the Parliament building which made it very interesting for people to come. We were able to access prestigious speakers from among the Parliamentarians and use our global network to bring in people from all over the world who were working on, or planning to work on, qualifications frameworks, meta-frameworks, and regional frameworks. The ETF obviously has a lot of experience of running major conferences, so we brought all that together in what really was a milestone in global thinking about qualifications frameworks. And even now, while I'm travelling for my work, people mention that conference to me and the fact that they were there. So five years later it still resonates with people and they still think of it as a milestone in NQF development.



IMPACT



Launch of the World Wide Web  
6th August 1991





But things don't always go quite to plan at a major conference. That same event at the European Parliament required meeting rooms to be set up and a conference stand put in place, all appropriately branded. **Mara Arnò** was part of the team charged with carrying out these essential duties.

Unfortunately, the conference was to start right after lunch and there was someone else using the room in the morning. So we would have less than half an hour on the day of the event, which was definitely not enough time. But we were a determined team, and we wanted to set up that room properly, so we decided that if we couldn't do it during the day we would do it at night. We waited patiently for the last officials to leave the building, and then a little longer to make sure that the cleaners had done their job. From our hotel rooms we could see the lights going off in the offices, one after the other, until the building was a dark wall of glass. At 11.30 I got a text to say that the way was clear, and we set off. So there we were, sneaking into the European Parliament with banners and posters as if we were trying to steal the Topkapi diamond, silently gliding through the empty corridors like 007 dei poveri as you would put it in Italian.

I do not remember how long we were there. I remember we had some fun testing the microphones and trying to hide the ETF banners behind the curtains so that we could take them out the next day, like a sleight of hand. I remember the sense of belonging to a team, the feeling of sharing and trust that comes from working together, not for someone but with someone. Did that night raid at the Parliament impact on the reform of vocational education and training systems in ETF partner countries? I do not know. I know that we did our best, and that each single contribution is important, each has an impact – inside, from those who support; and outside, from those who go to the countries and speak with ministers.





**Current ETF Director Madlen Serban is keenly aware of the vital role played by effective communication in maintaining hard-won recognition of the ETF's mandate. It rests on the importance, as she puts it, "of making sure that the ETF is well known, well profiled and well presented", something that has continued to grow stronger since she became Director in 2009.**

# LEARNING TO LEAD

Serban began her career as an engineer in the automotive sector in her native Romania, an area that was looking to develop a more qualified workforce. She needed appropriately qualified people with her who were capable of translating new ideas into reality. At the time she was also teaching in the local university, contributing to those very qualification opportunities, and she went on to teach at a nearby high school. These were her main entry points into the world of vocational education and training.

When I started out in my career it was in a type of society that has changed a lot. The process is still going on, because democracy cannot be built in a night, even though, as individuals, we perhaps want everything to happen during our lifetime. But different societies have their own pace of change and their own capacity to absorb change. In the early 90s my country moved from a centralised, planned economy to a market economy. I was part of these two different worlds, and they are by their nature very different – the world before in Romania, with a highly-centralised regime and planned economy, and then the process of change that started in the early 90s. For a long time I was contributing to the journey, through my roles in vocational education and training.



Madlen Serban, ETF Director, 2009 – present

# PRIORITY



Today she remains both a producer and a consumer of vocational education and training. Indeed, we are all consumers, because whenever you use a chair, or turn on a light, or put gas in your car, or book a table at a restaurant, or get your computer repaired, or your hair cut, or engage in any number of other essential daily activities, you are consuming the skills of vocational education and training graduates from all sectors and qualification levels. As a producer, Serban is now primarily concerned with producing policies, helping governments to become better at developing policies, and contributing to the policy-making process in partnership with many different organisations, both in European Union member states and within the partner countries. The emphasis on helping shows the clear line of continuity with the founding ethos as articulated by Peter de Rooij, Ulrich Hillenkamp and others, as Serban points out.



The first and the most important priority is to understand the mode of development in the respective countries, the profile of the human resources available. The aim is to identify education and training and employment policies that can address specific issues, such as youth unemployment, as well as create general economic growth.

Regardless of the political cycle, with its comings and goings of ministers, advisers and civil servants, countries are learning to be more consistent in the way they approach policy. It's risky to copy and paste what works in other countries. Serban highlights the ongoing discussion of apprenticeships as part of the mix of education and training opportunities, and suggests they work best where there are the enterprises to support them. But in a scenario where job-creation is almost exclusively in the public sector, policy-makers and practitioners need to consider what kind of apprenticeships will be applicable.

To address this, as with other development issues, policy-makers must look for dialogue and be willing to have a two-speed action plan. They will inevitably look for quick fixes, since governments have a limited duration, but they are also learning to look at long-term results because that is more sustainable. These can be challenging times for governments of all kinds, with levels of public trust consistently low across developed, transition and developing countries. The question for education and training policy is whether it can go beyond a purely political mandate, whether there can be any kind of de-politicised debate.

That's why the ETF started working on foresight as a methodology for managing policies. Again, this is not something that will come about overnight. It's not easy, because the ETF is not the only player in a country, there are many other institutions. So my second main priority is to have good coordination with the other big players, namely the generic donors, in each country.

The ETF is always seeking opportunities to coordinate with in-country donors and thus avoid overlaps, particularly as the Torino Process generates important insights that can help integrate with, and support, donor activities. The ETF's thematic and geographic leads organise donor meetings to share findings, in the context of the clear differences between the respective organisations' roles.



In 2012 **Michael Graham** accompanied Lida Kita, country manager for Kosovo, on a visit to Pristina. He considers the work in Kosovo as the most satisfying part of his time with ETF to date, because he gets to work closely with a small team of local experts and officials providing technical and policy advice. It may be small-scale, but this is the most effective way.



We went to Pristina during one of the most severe winters in the Balkans in years. We met our local partners as planned, walking snow-bound streets to ministries and agencies, talking over our projects with our local contacts – who were always friendly and interesting company – and then in the evenings we met them for dinner in snug local restaurants. As the weather deteriorated and flights in and out of the country were cancelled, we got calls and emails from our unit head and ETF missions officer asking after our well-being and if we needed help to get out. In my hotel room one afternoon, receiving one of these cheering messages on my laptop, I looked through my hotel window at the snow-covered mosque across the square and thought ‘you lucky man...’ We caught our flight home as planned; at Pristina airport, which was still the size of a private aero club in those days, I asked for a seat on the starboard side of the aircraft, as this gives the best view of Torino coming home.

Graham believes that organisations such as the ETF, which are all about relationship-building, knowledge-generation, diplomacy and development, are organic. Providing small-scale, tailored advice is a strength, and can be the best way to help the partner countries improve their vocational education and training systems, thus contributing to growth and stability. This is, he believes, very much in the interests of the public in European Union member states. This mirroring of interests between the publics of member states and those of the ETF’s partner countries is well represented in the Torino Process, which is today firmly established as a leading part of the agency’s repertoire, as **Elena Carrero Pérez** explains.

The Torino Process is an analysis of vocational education and training reform which we do across almost all of our 30 partner countries. It mirrors a similar process that exists in the European Union where, every two years, member states review how their vocational education and training systems are performing against a series of indicators. In 2010, ETF had the idea to do this in countries that are not members of the European Union.

The analysis starts in the countries themselves and is based on the participation of many groups of stakeholders, including government, the private sector, civil society, and other interest groups. It’s also very much an evidence-based approach, making use of statistics and qualitative data on best practices; data that can indicate how a country is progressing in implementing reforms. The final output is a report from each country which is compared to other countries from the same region. The ETF produces four

regional reports and then a final cross-country synthesis report that is presented at an event in the year following implementation. The creation of the Torino Process was driven by the need to light the way for partner countries in terms of policy analysis. “If you haven’t got a torch, it’s dark. You don’t know where you’re going,” as **Peter Greenwood** puts it.

It is very similar in some ways to what we were doing in the late 1990s with the National Observatories, so that’s coming back, in a way. But we’re at the start of a journey; it’s going to be at least a ten-year activity.



INSIGHT



Human population passes 7 billion  
October 2011



During those ten years, how might the European Union change? It's hard to tell, with some countries still knocking on the door of accession following the latest new joiner, Croatia, in 2013. And others, it seems, are considering slipping out of the door marked 'exit'. Prior to accession Croatia was a partner country, and the ETF set up a focus group there to discuss the evaluation of evidence-based policy cycles. The group included people from education, employment, statisticians, NGOs and so on, and it has continued its activities now for four years under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. **Simona Rinaldi** considers the outcome to be a great success.

As a spin-off effect, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, which was part of the focus group, requested that the ETF support the development of a survey of employers. This represented an important step forward in strengthening the cooperation between the two ministries and different stakeholders in the country. This ETF-inspired process is now part of a system used to verify the labour market need for certain qualifications based on occupational standards.



**Shawn Mendes**, ETF country manager for Serbia – now perhaps the closest in line to follow Croatia into membership – sees the most important factor as being what he calls “giving people a chance”.

What I mean by that is helping countries which are generally in difficult situations to use their meagre resources in such a manner that their economy can grow, so that they generate jobs. Or, if you look at it from the level of an individual, to help these countries to develop, say, vocational education and training, so that individuals who enter it give themselves a chance to come out with labour market-relevant skills, maybe get a job, maybe get a home, whatever it is they dream of.

**Arjen Deij** adds an emphasis on the role of entrepreneurial skills in helping individuals to create their own opportunities, to give themselves a chance. With the financial crisis in Europe and throughout the world, and continuing social unrest in neighbouring countries, there is more attention than ever to the role that vocational education and training can play in restoring equanimity and tackling social and economic problems, but not just in the traditional sense of 'VET'.

There are new forms of VET, with more learning taking place in the work place, more learning for adults, more learning on-line and more learning to help people take care of themselves, become self-employed. We need to come up with approaches that can really help to prepare young people for self-employment.

For Mendes, the expertise which the ETF has in such abundance only makes sense if it is used to improve life for individuals in the partner countries. While it may begin with ideas at a systemic level, that can't be the whole story.

It's actually more important that we achieve some change. That we make a difference. So it's better to have a good idea that people can act on than it is to have a great idea that nobody can ever bring to market.

Another important string was added to the ETF's bow somewhat serendipitously at **Luc van den Brande's** 2010 Jean Monnet lecture at the University of Padua, during which he discussed the concept of multi-level governance. He recalls what happened next.

One of the speakers at the connected seminar was, by coincidence, Madlen Serban. We discussed for hours and hours afterwards how to coalesce human capital, skills, democratic change, decentralisation, multi-level governance and multi-actorship. It was an amazing experience and was the basis for the later cooperation between the Assembly of Regions and Local Authorities of the Euro-Mediterranean and the Committee of the Regions Eastern Partnership.

Multi-level governance has two dimensions. On the vertical dimension the central, sub-national and local levels each have their role, with individuals and providers primarily at the local level. On any single level the multiple actors create alliances and partnerships and they interact with each other at different stages of the policy making process, forming the horizontal dimension of the matrix. As **Madlen Serban** says, it's not just a case of putting together a paper to give the impression that the job was done:

...and then you have the family photo; look how many have been in the consultation! No, no. This is what it means to be client-oriented in our policies, working for results. Results for whom? Of course, the results must enhance the institutions; the ETF is not capable of changing a country alone, but together with other EU support we can serve as a catalyst, as a platform for dialogue.

As one of the most recent arrivals in Villa Gualino, **Anna Kahlson** shares the view that being a catalyst for change is an important part of the ETF's remit. Her role includes coordinating a project with the European University Institute in Florence's Migration Policy Centre. The objective is to assess the labour market impact of support measures for migrants, from an employment and skills perspective. This is a relatively new area and requires a willingness to question traditions and accepted wisdoms, something Kahlson thinks is vital.

Challenge old ways of doing things, challenge yourself, do something new, because stagnation is dangerous both on an organisational and a personal level.



Given the complex policy environment, ongoing financial pressures, and the degree of social upheaval within the partner countries, it seems there is little choice other than to face challenges and accept ever more change. Nevertheless, Madlen Serban looks ahead to the ETF completing its first quarter of a century with great confidence. She sets out an ambition for the ETF in the coming five years to be confirmed in its efforts to support human capital development in partner countries, and in making sure that there can be a real public debate, a policy dialogue, in each country.

We want to go beyond the cosmetics of public policy making that some of the countries still have in place because they are afraid that a true dialogue might weaken the government. And we are always making the case with, I hope, greater evidence, that the state will actually be stronger if it is willing to have reliable partners. And I hope as well that we, together with colleagues in other EU agencies and international organisations, can contribute to some solutions to this dilemma of our days, the gap between growth and unemployment.





From his desk as Director General for Enlargement at the European Commission, **Gerhard Schumann-Hitzler** has a pivotal role for the ETF in Brussels, and in Turin as a member of the ETF governing board.

When I took over this role four years ago I was immediately warned that one of my duties would be to be a member of the governing board of the ETF! So I had a steep learning curve at the beginning, but I felt that it was a very good opportunity. I was very impressed by the professionalism of the ETF, and their keen interest in giving real support to the enlargement countries, preparing them for membership.



Picking up Serban's theme of building bridges between the state and others in the policy making process, he highlights the shift in approach from the early days of the ETF, when relationships with partner countries were more on a one-to-one basis, towards the regional and network-based methodologies of today. Moreover, while it is obviously vital to work closely with governments, the focus has also widened to take in other groups and participants, even to the level of individual citizens. Trade unions and other civil society actors are, if anything, more important now than they were 20 years ago, he says. As evidence of the ETF's success in bringing together such wide-ranging interests, Schumann-Hitzler recalls the contribution of Madlen Serban to the Salzburg Global Seminar in 2013, which "demonstrated the ability of ETF to widen the horizon and to involve everybody and to promote ideas, and to be a kind of facilitator and driver of a larger evolution."

2013

As the celebrations of the ETF's anniversary inevitably fade, important lessons will remain for all concerned. Europe must continue to trust human capital and recognise the value of investing in people, not only in its own territory but also in its neighbourhood, and, says Serban, "it cannot do that without ETF, I'm absolutely convinced of that."

I'm saying that not as someone who would like to have a new mandate, but as someone who will leave the ETF very soon. My plea for everyone who is now involved in European policy making, and will continue to be after the elections at European level, is to take full advantage of this treasure, because that is really what I think the ETF is.

**So what comes next? There are so many possibilities, as well as problems to solve. What if there was a conversation with us – current and former ETF employees, sponsors and partners – and Riccardo Gualino? What might he say?**

# LEARNING BEYOND 20



In a room somewhere in his Villa, we find Gualino sitting before a large book. It is evening, still warm and peaceful among the Mediterranean pine trees outside. Gualino is making notes. We file into the room quietly. Somewhat self-consciously he clears his throat and begins reading.

What difference does it make whether you are learning to think, or learning to do? Thoughts and actions weave together. There is no point thinking up the greatest design for a house if there are no builders with the skills to build it. It was Peer Gynt who said, "If one goes about thinking, one is apt to stumble." But then, what would 20, 100, or 1000 builders produce, without a design to guide them? There are too many barriers in this world. They manifest themselves in fine and well-meaning systems as much as innational borders, language barriers, political and ideological divisions. None of them matters when any of us honestly examines our true needs – food, shelter, intimacy, social relations, self-actualisation.

The world that you call development cooperation is part of the response. It is about crossing barriers, overcoming obstacles, speaking other languages and finding ways to put political and ideological divisions to one side for a common purpose; to make the world a place where all can live together, a place we know will still be there for our children, grand-children, and great-grand-children. What else would they expect of us? You see, this is not about the past. We cannot see the future, but we can be the future.



# INNOVATION

Europe is like Peer Gynt's onion, consisting of many layers, some more easily peeled away than others. There is the layer of member states, the layer of institutions such as the Parliament and the Commission, and the layer of citizens – the core of this great European project. Emanating from the layer of institutions, closely guided by the layer of member states, the European Training Foundation finds itself in an unusual position, in that at its core is another, different layer; the citizens of countries who are the neighbours of Europe.

Yet you can only do so much, as **Jan Truszczyński** warns us.



You cannot invent VET policy out of the blue. You cannot paint the European Union better than it is. You can only be as influential and as authoritative as the European Union itself is perceived to be in the partner countries. But what you can do, and what you have to do, is to raise your own game quality-wise to an even higher degree. There's probably not that much to be done in this regard because when I look at the products or when I hear ETF experts speaking in meetings you can see at once that these are people who know their job inside out. And yet we all know that no matter how hard you try there is always more that you can do, that you should do. This is what I would wish for the ETF, to raise the quality of its game in each of those 30 countries – to different degrees, because there are priorities and priorities – but still, to raise it up one step.

**Livio Pescia** continues this line of thinking about the future for the ETF, which he describes as being “a new type of organisation, atypical and multiform.”

For these reasons there is a need for courage and creativity. The ETF cannot depend only on one Directorate General at the European Commission, but must depend on Education and Culture, Enterprise and Industry, International Cooperation – within DG Research and Innovation – and External Action. These will be in constant connection among one another and able to design jointly at least part of the ETF's activities.

**Mircea Copot** heads up the internal staff committee, which organises the kind of in-house activities that modern employers encourage. He is among the longest-serving ETF employees. He remembers the excitement and creativity of the early days, tempered though it may have been with uncertainty, and while nobody is suggesting turning the clock back he thinks it would be good to revive the “spontaneous spirit that was here at the beginning”. But he is keenly aware that, like all public sector organisations these days, the ETF faces pressures over efficiency and value.



In the next five years this will mean becoming more streamlined, and we must prove that having an agency is worth more than externalising the functions we carry out. We need to show that, with the people we have, with the resources we have, we can deliver more than a company would be able to deliver commercially.

Our friend Cesar Birzea of the Romanian national observatory, now Director of the Romanian Institute of Education Sciences, urges the ETF to “keep focusing on policy learning, while trying to balance its huge geographical coverage with more in-depth analysis of VET issues”. **David O'Sullivan** agrees, pointing out that, while the ETF has consolidated a mandate which is quite different to the original version, the most important message remains the same; the indispensable link between the education system, skills, and employment. That link is the key to competitive success in the 21st century.

That's what it's all about. And whether that's in Tunisia or in Portugal, it doesn't matter; it's the same issue.



This prompts a memory for **Elena Carrero Pérez** from 2003, when the European Commission asked the ETF to explore vocational education and training initiatives in Yemen, which is not one of its partner countries.

We were asked to support stakeholders there to develop a strategy, together with the World Bank. I became the manager responsible for Yemen for a couple of years. This included travelling on missions where we were perhaps three women in a workshop with 50 people; two ladies in black burkas, and me. I discovered that we were still able to help in such a different and 'exotic' environment; that our knowledge of VET, of how to handle complex issues, of how to support dialogue, consensus, analysis, was useful also for that country. This is the strength of the ETF.

Is it too fanciful to suggest that the strength of the ETF is also drawn to some extent from its home in Villa Gualino? **Luc van den Brande**, referring to his experiences on the board of Belgium's public broadcasting company, adds a comment about that organisation's search for a new building.

It's not about the bricks and mortar, it's a question of how to create the environment to be, if possible, more creative, interrelated, to be open and so on. The point is, of course, that when you go for the physical structure there has to be an opportunity for the next 10, 20, 30 years, so how do you deal with the ongoing changes? So I think it's important that it's more than just the physical environment, it's about the model and the flexible environment necessary for people to be creative.





EU awarded Nobel Peace Prize, 2012





We concur. We pay due respect to our Villa and to the inspiration behind it, namely Riccardo Gualino's goal to support, to encourage and to share art; which is, after all, about exploring what it means to be human. This is one route to self-awareness, an essential form of learning. As human beings we seek to learn; it is in our nature. As societies we must organise learning, which inevitably leads to complexity. There remain many questions that must be addressed concerning the funding, distribution, quality and accessibility of education and training, and the ability of national and regional systems in the partner

countries to interlock with employment markets, entrepreneurial activities, social justice imperatives, and general human well-being. These questions will persist however we are constituted, and from wherever we are based. Our responses to these questions include methods and approaches that require experience and expertise to implement. That expertise is itself the result of a deep and continuous engagement with learning on the part of the ETF's staff. It is as well that we highlight the skill and resilience that characterises this dedicated group of people, and commend them to those responsible for its funding and

governance. This engagement must be nurtured and developed in the context of the rigorous processes and structures that support the application of expertise for the benefit of partner countries.

The aim is no less than to set those twin imperatives in a sustainable balance. And that involves finding ever more creative ways to inspire others with the mission of this unique agency, the European Training Foundation; indeed, to inspire us all to learn more...

Whether an organisation is celebrating its 100th anniversary or its 20th, it should throw a party and make it a good one. But don't just celebrate. Imbue your commemoration with the understanding that looking back can be more than mere nostalgia for the past. It can inform a whole body of work for the future.

**Judith Rodin**

President, Rockefeller Foundation, USA



# CASE STUDIES



## UKRAINE

### ACTORS TAKE THE STAGE

**Xavier Matheu de Cortada**

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the ETF scoped a regionalisation project for Ukraine's vocational education and training system involving a range of actors, not just the national and regional governments but also social partners including private sector employers and NGOs. The project was implemented by the Commission and the ETF was asked to return and review it. Economic growth in the meantime had largely been in traditional sectors such as heavy industries. At first, employers found unemployed skilled workers who used to work in these industries; but after three or four years, more qualified workers were needed. ETF staff visited a number of vocational education and training schools and what they saw was very different to the previous situation. The schools had been painted, the buildings were nicer and they had new equipment. When the school leadership was asked if the government had funded this, they explained that the money actually came from employers who had approached them because they needed skilled workers.

The employers also began to contribute to the vocational education and training curriculum and to support the development of a national qualifications framework. Working with government and trade unions, they wanted to define the content of qualifications based on the knowledge and skills their businesses needed. And rather than government inviting the employers to participate, it was the other way round. At the Torino Process conference in 2013, Viktoria Karbysheva, then Deputy Director of Ukraine's Ministry of Education, announced a new law establishing a national qualifications framework and the approval of vocational education and training system regionalisation. It remains to be seen, of course, what the fate of these political decisions will be in the aftermath of the current situation.



Viktoria Karbysheva speaks at the Torino Process.

## EGYPT

### COMMITTED TO CHANGE

**Ghada Amin and Elena Carrera Pérez**

The ETF's first mission to Egypt in November 2000 led to a growing role as an influential partner in the reform of the vocational education and training sector there. The ETF's main strength in Egypt lies in a package of support that includes vocational education and training expertise, networking and facilitation. The ETF is also able to share a corporate memory of vocational education and training reform and labour market policies within EU member states as well as in other partner countries. It is for these strengths that ETF's work in Egypt is most valued.

Egypt is an interesting case, exemplifying the importance of putting the authority of the ETF's expertise through the filter of local experience, not least because of the rapidly-changing political situation. Having started working there in the pre-revolution era, and then also during the revolution, the ETF has continued a close relationship with stakeholders during the transition between the two revolutions to maintain the commitment to progressive reform in vocational education and training. The impact of the ETF's activities is demonstrable in the enhanced capacity of the main stakeholders involved in its various projects and activities, and in the improved levels of understanding, expertise and willingness to cooperate.



Egyptian experts discuss training reform at an ETF conference in Brussels.



# LITHUANIA

## SEVEN INTO ONE

**Henrik Faudel**

In 2000 the government of Lithuania asked the ETF to help them explore a rationalisation of their vocational school network. The government felt that, politically, there were two things that would have people demonstrating in the streets. One was closing hospitals and the other was closing schools. Naturally, they were keen not to commission a study that might recommend, for instance, closing seventeen out of fifty schools. Instead they wanted to look at how the schools network could be better organised within the country’s ten administrative regions.



Finland agreed to co-fund a pilot project in Marijampole, a region with seven vocational schools. They were small schools, all trying to teach more or less the same professions, albeit under different names, they had historically been under different ministerial authority and were spread out over the region. The ETF and Finnish experts sat down with their Lithuanian counterparts to look at how they could organise the work and create common pools of curriculum developers, internal teacher trainers, learning materials, libraries, joint facilities and so on. They also looked at how they might rationalise course provision across the schools. It grew and developed effectively without the sense that someone had come in and just told them what to do. It was an example of joined-up thinking about how to make the best use of the different institutions, rather than leave them fighting against each other for students – and survival.

Former ETF Director  
Muriel Dunbar visits a  
vocational school in Lithuania.

# TUNISIA

## OPEN THE DOOR AND LET THEM IN

**Marie Dorleans**

Soon after the 2011 revolution in Tunisia the ETF agreed to help pilot new ways of working within a single governorate involving business, administrative bodies and vocational education and training centres. The government selected a governorate in the country’s far south, on the border with Libya, which had received a lot of refugees. Setting up the project in the shadow of the refugee camps was quite a challenge. The eight-hour drive from the government’s administrative centre in Tunis was another, as participating staff often arrived hot and tired and some avoided making the trip altogether.



We set up a careers fair with 40 companies, 19 public institutions and non-governmental organisations and 15 local training centres which attracted some 2,000 young people, creating an entirely new channel for sharing careers information. During this period in Tunisia any high-profile event, however positive, would also attract protests, and this was no exception. A group of politically-engaged young people turned up outside the event, but any potential conflict was avoided when the organisers went out and talked to the protestors, eventually inviting them in to see for themselves what was going on. It helped that the organisers were a young local woman with a strong personality working for a non-governmental organisation, and a calm and patient young man – they were exactly the right people to listen to the protestors’ concerns and engage them in constructive dialogue.

Launch of the regional  
project in Tunisia.

# POLICY LEADERS’ FORUM, MARSEILLES

## ONE FROM THE HEART

**Peter Greenwood and Eva Jimeno Sicilia**

The 2011 Policy Leaders’ Forum in Marseilles brought together different ministers from the Mediterranean region, ministers of labour and ministers of education from several Arab countries. It started off with a social programme, bilateral conversations and lunches to get things warmed up. Then came the official photograph, overlooking the port. It was a beautiful day, the ministers and deputy ministers gathered together, and a group of parliamentarians from Libya just started singing! Others quickly joined in and it started the Forum with an amazing spirit, a strongly positive sense. And this spirit kept going throughout the meeting, which was a really positive, open discussion.



In a typical ministerial-level meeting, super-busy people like ministers often only come for their appointed slot, read what their head of cabinet has given them, and everybody else is thinking ‘when’s coffee coming?’ But in Marseilles there were no prepared speeches. European Union Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said “I’m going to put my speech aside, and speak from my heart”. The delegates were all talking, asking each other questions – it was a genuine dialogue and a fantastic atmosphere. This shows something about what the ETF is able to do, by creating such a close and trusting relationship with the countries, and this is what inspired the Commissioner. This trusting relationship between the ETF and partner countries is very important, and is perhaps quite different to any other relationship they may have with donors, because it’s a relationship that is not based on money.

Participants at the Policy Leaders’ Forum, Marseilles.

# ALBANIA

## YOUNG, GIFTED AND... ALBANIAN

**Evelyn Viertel**

Albania has come a long way in recent years, from a near-medieval situation under communism and a civil conflict in 1997 which destroyed much of what had been built up after the end of the communist regime. A lot of international donor investments were destroyed, so they had to start from scratch after 2000. The previous government was reformed communists who were closely linked to the managers of certain companies in a potentially corrupt way. Recent scandals that have come to light suggested that public money was indeed misused, including donor funding.



A change of government in June 2013 saw a new, young and dynamic group of people take over. Their message was that the country had to roll up its sleeves and build a new society. The ETF saw an opportunity for them to rationalise a largely under-utilised vocational school network, and launched a study which highlighted where there was loss or waste of money. The study recommended closing or merging roughly half the schools on a regional basis to free up much-needed funding for reforms, and these results are now being taken up by the new government. They are also considering, as suggested in the report, an overhaul of the whole legislative framework for vocational education and training, along with a third initiative on qualifications and curriculum. The ETF’s support has been very much welcomed both by the new government and donors in the country. This has the potential to support major social transformation, giving great cause for hope.

ETF Director Madlen Serban meets Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama at an ETF conference in Tirana, October 2014.



# YOUNG MEDITERRANEAN LEADERS

## RESPECT!

**Jo Anstey**

A regional conference in Jordan in 2012 gave rise to a distinctive new project for the ETF. Amongst a general recognition that vocational education and training systems, schools and curricula were not fit-for-purpose in some Arab countries, the delegates endorsed the creation of a network – via a competitive process – of young leaders from a range of professional settings in eight Arab Mediterranean countries. The key word being used was ‘respect’ – respect for young people in their own right and for the insights they can bring to education and training reforms.



The six men and nine women selected in the first such competition are from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia, and hail from varied career paths including teachers, civil servants, charity managers, human rights activists and youth workers. The members of this new network, which has been developed in partnership with the European Group for Public Administration, will be involved in the ETF's work in the region and will have the chance to take part in policy debates. The work ahead of these young leaders is important, but they have the appetite and the courage to do it. Badiâ Safi-Eddine from Morocco is working hard to end discrimination against disabled people, which involves tackling deep-seated attitudes. Her involvement with the Young Mediterranean Leaders network has given her the chance to raise her concerns with policymakers, and she has written opinion pieces for the Moroccan national press. But it's not all about hard work, as Tunisian civil servant Walid Said says, "I love cinema and football, and dream of learning Italian and Spanish".

Young Mediterranean leaders.

# RUSSIA

## EVERYBODY'S SOCIAL

**Arjen Vos**

We set up a workshop in Russia to look at how to involve social partners in vocational education and training, and the presentations all led with concepts that are widespread in European Union member states about social partnership and how that should work. After two days the discussion turned to the question of who the social partners were in the Russian context, and the local delegates said 'well, basically everyone is a social partner', because the word 'social' there means anywhere where people are together – families, the employers, although they were not very prominent in the workshop, trade unions, NGOs. It seemed as if the whole world was a social partner!

Moving away from that concept to having real engagement with social partners has been a long process, but now in particular the employers in Russia have become important players in moving the vocational education and training agenda forward. They found that it was in their interests to have well-qualified staff, and that they needed to have well-certified staff in order to compete in international markets. This helped local stakeholders come to the understanding that there must be limits on the concept of social partnership, and that it can be most productive to focus on employer and employee representatives.



National Qualifications Framework meeting.

# WHO'S WHO



**Ghada Amin**  
Vocational education  
and training specialist,  
Egypt



**Claudio Bermond**  
Professor,  
University of Turin



**Valentino Castellani**  
Former Mayor of Turin



**Henrik Faudel**  
Head of Geographical  
Department,  
ETF



**Anna Kahlson**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Olga Oleynikova**  
President of IVETA.  
Director of Centre for  
VET Studies, Moscow



**Simona Rinaldi**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Jo Anstey**  
Communication  
Coordinator,  
ETF



**Cezar Birzea**  
Professor, National  
School of Political  
and Administrative  
Studies, Romania



**Mircea Copot**  
Budget Officer,  
ETF



**Anastasia Fetsi**  
Head of Thematic  
Expertise Development,  
ETF



**Outi Kärkkäinen**  
Country Manager,  
ETF



**Lea Orro**  
Chairperson,  
Innove Estonia



**Gerhard  
Schumann-Hitzler**  
DG Enlargement,  
European Commission



**Madlen Serban**  
Director since 2009



**Muriel Dunbar**  
Director 2004 - 2009



**Peter de Rooij**  
Director 1994 - 2004



**Marie Cormans**  
DG Enterprise,  
European Commission



**Xavier Matheu  
de Cortada**  
Head of the Planning,  
Monitoring and  
Evaluation Unit



**Maria Vittoria Garlappi**  
Country Manager,  
ETF



**Michael Graham**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Alastair Macphail**  
Head of  
Administration,  
ETF



**Vincent McBride**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**David O'Sullivan**  
Chief Operating  
Officer,  
European External  
Action Service



**Nikolaus Van der Pas**  
Former Chair of the  
ETF Governing Board



**Bent Sørensen**  
Head of Communication  
Department,  
ETF



**Siria Taurelli**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Arjen Deij**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Peter Greenwood**  
Head of Evidence-based  
Policy Making  
Department, ETF



**Shawn Mendes**  
Country Manager,  
ETF



**Elena Carrero Pérez**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Jan Truszczyński**  
Former Chair of the  
ETF Governing Board



**Mara Arnò**  
Thematic Expertise  
Department,  
ETF



**Luc van den Brande**  
Former President  
of the Committee  
of the Regions



**Marie Dorleans**  
Senior Expert,  
ETF



**Ulrich Hillenkamp**  
Former Deputy Director,  
ETF



**Lawrence Meredith**  
DG Enlargement,  
European  
Commission



**Livio Pescia**  
Former Deputy  
Director,  
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**History is accelerating. We must accelerate as well.**  
Jacques Delors, October 1989

