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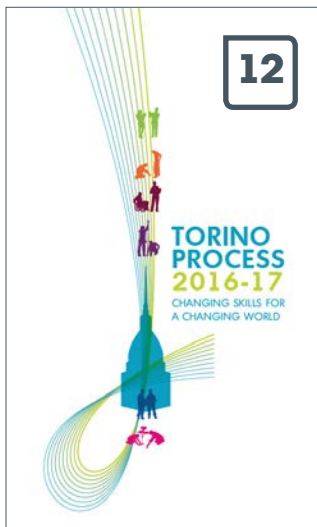
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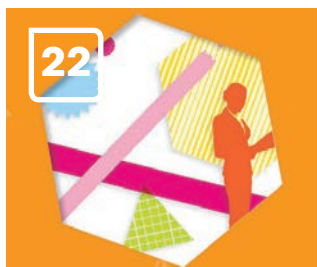
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EDITORIAL

THE RIGHT SKILLS FOR THE RIGHT JOB AT THE RIGHT TIME

'We are at a critical juncture for the European Union. This is a time of many global, economic, environmental and societal challenges. European citizens therefore expect the EU to make a concrete difference in helping address the biggest of these challenges,' the joint declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2017 reads.

A new boost to jobs, growth and investment tops the list of legislative priority areas set out in the declaration, the first of its kind, agreed to by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the EU.

The Heads of State or Government of the EU were to discuss these priorities further when meeting in the Italian capital in March to mark the 60th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome, which laid the foundations for the EU. A White Paper outlining the future of Europe was presented by EU President Jean-Claude Juncker in time for the meeting.

This work builds upon the new Skills Agenda for Europe, which sets out concrete actions to boost human capital, employability and competitiveness. It calls on EU countries and stakeholders to improve the quality and relevance of skills formation, make skills, including digital skills, more visible and comparable, and improve skills intelligence for better career choices. This holistic approach to skills acquisition in a lifelong learning perspective can provide inspiration to ETF partner countries. In this regard, the ETF has an important role to play, as the European Commission's Michel Servoz, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, explains in **News&views**.

Promoting vocational education and training (VET) as a pathway to excellence by increasing its attractiveness, quality and governance, is part of the new Skills Agenda. To help do this, the European Commission organised the first European Vocational Skills week in December 2016. Close to 1,000 activities were held in the lead up to the event, mobilising more than 700,000 people in Europe and beyond its borders, including in the ETF partner countries. A further one million people were reached globally through the #DiscoverYourTalent social media campaign. Catch up with all the highlights in **News&views**.

The ETF was a key partner for Vocational Skills week, organising numerous events and activities with partner countries.

The highlight was the release of the Getting Organised for Better Qualifications toolkit, designed to assist in the planning, development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks. The toolkit is explored **In depth** in this issue.

ETF experts working in the area of skills, employment and employability (we speak to team leader Daiga Ermsone in the **Project update**) have been busy co-producing another series of 'how to' guides on the topic of skills anticipation and matching, which are set to become an e-learning tool. The ETF brought together policymakers and employment and labour market experts from 24 partner countries for a week-long learning programme going **In depth** into the content of the skills matching guides. As Egypt's Deputy Minister for Technical Education, Ahmed Elgeushey Hassanein, says: 'This learning programme was very useful because it provides the data, methodologies and tools to do the job and start the policy-making process. The ETF is helping to provide a bright future for labour market systems and VET institutions in the partner countries.'

Stakeholders from the partner countries will be gathering in Torino in June to discuss the future of VET, skills and labour market systems. Changing skills for a changing world is the theme of the 2017 Torino Process international conference. In its fourth round, the Torino Process enables partner countries to monitor the implementation of VET reforms and assess progress and impact on citizens. Regional-level policy forums have been taking place in preparation for the international conference. This issue's **Regional focus** explores how the theme of ownership has been a key feature throughout.

Speaking at the South Eastern Europe and Turkey regional-level policy forum, the EU's Ambassador to Serbia, Michael Davenport, our **Cover interview**, said private and public sectors must work together to mitigate skills shortages and ensure that education and training systems are as responsive and flexible as possible to the needs of business and the labour market.

'This is very much where the ETF comes in ... through the already well-established Torino Process, the ETF is helping countries ensure the analysis of relevant results and economic indicators. The effectiveness of policy responses taken is done in a way that is all encompassing and that brings together all the major actors – public and private sector – in a comprehensive approach to this cross cutting issue', he said.



INTERVIEW

MICHAEL DAVENPORT HEAD OF THE EU DELEGATION IN SERBIA

The EU Delegation in Serbia is the second biggest in the world. Why is the EU investing so much in the country and what are its main priorities?

The European Union has its origins in the strong conviction after the Second World War that the priority was to foster peace, prosperity, respect for human rights and the rule of law across the continent. The same spirit led to the creation of the Council of Europe during the same period. The European Union is as relevant today as it was then. Commissioner Hahn recently used the phrase for the Western Balkan countries 'Either exporting stability or importing instability', which shows the importance this region has for the EU. A stable and prosperous Serbia in which the rights of citizens are protected and the rule of law is guaranteed would be a huge asset to the European Union and all its Member States. That is why the EU is supporting Serbia on its path towards EU membership, which successive Serbian governments have set as the country's strategic priority. The EU is by far Serbia's largest donor, supporting Serbia's reforms across the board – in agriculture and environmental protection, energy and transport infrastructure, developing SME competitiveness, and working towards an independent judiciary and prosecution service. The EU is Serbia's top partner in trade, investment and financial support in all sectors. Serbia's clear EU perspective is reassuring for actual and potential foreign investors, not only those from EU Member States.

What are your expectations for the political and economic direction of Serbia in the next five years, and how important is human capital development for this?

There is every prospect that Serbia will continue to see its path to membership of the European Union as its top priority. This clear direction of travel is important in driving forward reforms, institutional as well as economic. Serbia has made huge advances over the last few years, notably in tackling its budget deficit, embarking on long-overdue enterprise restructuring and achieving a return to growth. These results reflect the determination of the Serbian government to make up for lost time as well as strong support from the EU, the international financial institutions and other governments. Sustaining this progress will require further progress being made with the restructuring and privatisation of state-owned enterprises, especially the largest utilities. Effective public administration reform, ensuring that the civil service at all levels is delivering a service to citizens and

business, is also a sine qua non. Furthermore, as we hear frequently from major European investors and the Foreign Investors Council in Serbia, it will be essential to make progress with reforms to ensure the independence of the judiciary and prosecution service as well as the proper and independent functioning of the courts themselves. Investors and citizens alike need to feel confident that their rights will be protected by Serbia's institutional framework, including independent regulatory bodies such as the Ombudsman or the Commissioner for Data Protection and Public Information.

The so-called 'Copenhagen Criteria' require the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. This is the overarching aim to which Serbia needs to aspire in economic terms, supported by a stable political situation. The tasks to achieve this are manifold and challenging, in particular in an environment of fiscal consolidation and limited public funds. The European Union is supporting and monitoring this process carefully and has indeed witnessed progress. We are seeing a continued commitment to implement measures improving the economic situation and sustaining growth prospects. Investing in human capital remains a key driver for these achievements to be made in this regard: this is true for any EU Member State, but even more so in a country like Serbia which faces particular challenges in this transition phase before joining the common EU labour market. From this perspective, the importance of enhancing education and improving its labour force competences in line with the market needs for economic development and recovery should not be underestimated.



You have spent a long time working in Serbia in different roles helping to develop and grow the Serbian economy. How does vocational education and training fit in the context of Serbia's development?

Relevant and effective vocational education and training policies are essential to boost the competitiveness of the Serbian economy. Higher rates of vocational enrolment in the country than in EU Member States increase the need for Serbia to ensure effective VET skill formation and therefore higher employability of its citizens. We will continue to support Serbia's efforts in refining its education and training system to ensure it is able to adapt to today's knowledge-based economy and its work force is prepared to cope with the competitive pressure of the European Single Market. Investing in VET reforms remains a key element in helping to reduce low employment and activity rates everywhere, though it is even more critical in times of economic crisis or recovery to prevent the mismatch between skills' demand and supply and its impact.

The economy in Serbia is going from strength to strength and the country has even been described as the emerging 'Balkan Tiger'. What is needed to build on this momentum?

Further steps need to be taken to improve the business environment, especially for small and medium enterprises, which are the backbone of any economy and the main source of potential further growth. A stronger focus on the education system is also key. The education and training system needs to become as responsive and flexible as possible to the needs of the labour market, as these efforts will ultimately contribute to addressing the considerable regional disparities faced by the country today and therefore reinforce competitiveness of the Serbian economy. Serbia has a comparative advantage in the region, notably when it comes to its potential in Research & Development and innovative SMEs. This should be further encouraged and invested in to reinforce the branding of the country and its work force. The important role of the Serbian diaspora should also not be underestimated as an untapped potential still to be harnessed for boosting human capital development, notably through improvements in higher education.

How can VET, innovation and smart specialisation help to solve sector skills shortages that are already affecting this economic recovery?

VET policies in Serbia need to be adjusted to ensure relevant and effective skills development opportunities can be offered as part of a lifelong learning process. Existing competences need to be better matched with the needs of the market in Serbia: market operators need to be systematically plugged into this process in order to address existing skill shortages and prevent others from emerging. This demand-driven and bottom-up approach is also key in the development of smart specialisation strategies: adapting relevant policies to local needs will help Serbia overcome the considerable regional disparities faced today and reinforce sustainability of investments. This means that these regional needs should be clearly identified, as was for example the case for Vojvodina through a recent ETF skills' survey confirming gaps in ICT skills at secondary

and post-secondary level of the VET system. Devising strategies tailored to these needs as well as existing opportunities and capabilities will help strengthen the attractiveness of the regions and ultimately also improve Serbia's overall competitiveness in a global, highly dynamic and changing economic context.

Incentives to boost research, development and innovation could for example be a valuable contribution to staunch the brain drain. The EU believes that supporting innovation is key to overcoming financial difficulties and creating jobs. As the largest donor in the region, the EU has invested more than EUR 25 million in supporting and developing research and development, innovation and technology transfer in Serbia, and this is just a fraction of more than EUR 200 million of support to Serbia in boosting competitiveness. Nevertheless, such donations, even when matched by credits, e.g. from the European Investment Bank, can never replace private sector-led growth. And that is why making real improvements to the overall business environment is so important.

What is the role of the EU Delegation in regional cooperation and reconciliation? To what extent do you think education and training has a part to play in this too?

The EU accession process for the Western Balkans fosters reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation. Indeed regional cooperation and reconciliation are key factors which will contribute to the success of the accession process for all countries in the region. These are therefore also key themes of assistance provided under the European Union's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The EU Delegation in Serbia works closely together with the Serbian government, local authorities and civil society organisations in these areas. Indeed several major funding streams (Cross-Border Cooperation and Multi-Beneficiary programmes) contribute to foster regional cooperation in key sectors – from trade to culture, social policies and security from natural disasters.

Many economic challenges (including high youth unemployment) are common to the Western Balkan region and would therefore benefit from increased cooperation at that level: hence the importance of the European Commission's Economic Reform Programmes across the region. The connectivity agenda, focusing on a regional approach to infrastructure investment, is also a high priority. Offering young people a long-term perspective to live and work in the region requires giving a higher priority to ensuring the quality of education and training as well as fostering the conditions for growth and the creation of new jobs. If economic growth can be nurtured and sustained then all countries in the region will have a demand for energetic and well-trained young people. Further developing vocational and educational training and rolling opportunities out more widely will also be essential for combating social exclusion and building more inclusive societies.



NOVI SAD: SERBIA'S HOTBED OF ICT

Milan Solaja, chief executive of Serbia's Vojvodina ICT Cluster, speaks rapid, fluent English that he began learning informally as a boy desperate to understand the lyrics of songs by the Beatles.

A tall, slender man who has to remember to duck to avoid hitting his head on the wooden beams that support the ceiling of the offices of the Novi Sad-based software and computing industry support and training body, he is a passionate advocate for the role that IT businesses can play in supporting Serbia's economic – and educational – development.

Putting IT and software at the heart of national development under the slogan Digital Serbia is Milan's vision and one that he is passionate about.

The Vojvodina Cluster – which brings together around 35 companies employing 4,000 people and stakeholders from 11 governmental and educational institutions – aims to give ICT companies a regional, national and global platform; support training initiatives both at its centre and through in-house and dual education programmes; and lobby the government for better policies to support digital industry development.

A not-for-profit business association, it raises around 10 to 12% of its annual budget through company subscriptions of EUR 100 per month and the rest from projects. In 2016, its budget was around EUR 250,000.

'We've always had strong support from ICT companies – ever since we were set up in 2010, based on an industry initiative. They had seen similar organisations overseas and wanted something like that here,' he says.

'We saw the need to involve all stakeholders – the industry, government and education – that can contribute to taking advantage of opportunities to develop the digital process. ICT has been the nuclear fuel for everything that we do, but the role of training and policymakers is also essential: a triple helix must be there to achieve the best results.'

Involving stakeholders, working with VET schools and other educational institutes is one of the keys to ensuring that enough software engineers are trained to sustain an industry that often loses



its best skilled employees to international firms. Milan mentions a German company that skills tested a Serbian team of IT specialists to design a piece of software it had already had its HQ staff work on. The Serbs did a better job at a better price. Fortunately, in this case, the foreign company did not poach them, but invested in establishing a local office and creating new employment opportunities.

'Often we have a lack of IT staff in the market and we have had to start pressure education institutions to deliver more.'

Building a creative, sustainable homegrown ICT industry is essential to the future of the sector: the basic model of IT, he says, boils down to outsourcing – where foreign companies sub-contract projects to local firms – or developing your own business models, software, games and other applications.

Outsourcing has a low ceiling – a company that has 10 engineers can charge a maximum of ten monthly engineer fees. Develop your own software and the sky's the limit.

'There were a couple of students here who dropped out of college to develop specialised project management software they could not find on the market,' Milan says.

'They put the resulting software on the Internet as open source with a licence priced at USD 300 – not much by western standards – with



There were a couple of students here who dropped out of college to develop specialised project management software they could not find on the market



support and upgrades included and sold 40,000 copies, making USD 12 million over two years. Now their company employees a dozen staff.

Another company that designs HOPA games (Hidden Object Puzzle Adventures) has 450 employees, only a third of whom are engineers – the rest are creative game developers, designers, graphic artists, photographers, visual effects specialists and others, underscoring the importance of the educational component of the ‘triple helix’. The European Training Foundation (ETF) is also playing a part in developing the education and training part of the Vojvodina ICT Cluster approach, through a needs analysis conducted in 2016.

‘Nobody knows exactly what profiles we need to develop for training and dual education programmes,’ Milan says. ‘Everybody thinks they know. The ETF helped us design a needs analysis and questionnaire that went out to 40 companies. Initial results confirm what we know – but it is useful now to have the facts to push an agenda for dual education in IT training.’

Apart from core engineering skills, the sector also needs to train people in business, marketing, communications and sales, the study found.

Milan says many lessons have been learned since the ICT Cluster was set up in 2010.

‘We’ve learned that it is better to give a general [skills] base for trainees, because later on they will specialise. We stopped offering entry level tests online as they are open to cheating.’

Through the Serbian Association of Business Clusters, the organization is also engaged in lobbying the government for better policies.

The Torino Process, the ETF’s flagship tool for providing evidence-based analysis of VET systems to support policy reform can help support this lobbying effort, Milan adds.

A priority in that area, he concludes, is to encourage a more efficient approach to EU structural funds available so support digital training and reform in Serbia: currently only around 15% of which is being drawn down as too few people actually apply for the support.

Text: Nick Holdsworth

Photos: Andrea Guermani



DISCOVER YOUR TALENT: EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK!



Close to 1,000 activities took place across Europe and beyond its borders in the lead up to European Vocational Skills Week, a campaign designed to showcase the benefits of better vocational education and training (VET).

More than 700,000 people were mobilised through the European Commission initiative, part of the new Skills Agenda for Europe. A further million people were reached globally through the #DiscoverYourTalent social media campaign.

The aim was to demonstrate the critical role of VET for skills, jobs, innovation and competitiveness, and improve the image of vocations. Vocational Skills Week culminated in a programme of workshops, conferences and events in Brussels from 5 to 9 December.

Around 14,000 participants, from the worlds of VET, business, education, government, civil society, unions, think tanks, youth organisations, public authorities and more took part, discussing topics including business partnerships, apprenticeships, mobility, youth employment, adult skills and quality assurance.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) were key partners throughout, hosting a raft of activities including the ETF's Getting Organised for Better Qualifications conference (featured **In depth**, p. 19).

European Business Forum on Vocational Training

The European Commission's Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki Katainen, opened the forum, promoting business and education partnerships as the 'new normal'.

'The forum puts the spotlight on how business and VET can work more closely together. The aim is to make partnerships between business and education the new normal!', Finland's former prime minister said to the 700+ strong crowd.

Mr Katainen joined a list of high-level speakers discussing innovative approaches to partnerships, funding, apprenticeship and skills. ETF Director Madlen Serban championed the 'win-win-win' approach for business, education and learners alike. 'VET is linked to the well-being of citizens. We don't do VET for learners, we do VET together with them, to build the future.'

Michel Servoz, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, agreed, saying the way to address skills mismatch was through 'discussion, coordination, cooperation between the three sides of the same triangle.'

Speaker Vera Chilari, VET specialist from ETF partner country Moldova, discussed the country's move towards the dual system of work-based learning (read about it in **Live&learn** Issue 37). 'It very quickly became clear that they would need business on board,' she said, explaining the process. 'Successful models are contagious, take care!,' she mused.

Adult Skills: Empowering People

Technology, demographic shifts and migration continue to transform the employment landscape. Most high-growth jobs require high skills, but even the best performing countries have at least 15% of low skilled adults. Many countries, including ETF partners, experience far higher rates.

'People with weak skills can't participate fully in society and the economy, and countries with weak skills will be held back,' said Deborah Roseveare of the OECD's Education and Skills Directorate. Turning this around was the challenge she addressed to participants. Speaker Nesli Urhan Tatlıoğlu, of the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security, discussed efforts to promote a lifelong learning strategy. She thanked the ETF for its on-going partnership, and the opportunity to present.





‘So many people have been coming up to me to find out more. This has been a great opportunity to network and share best practices.’

Upskilling Pathways

Access and outreach are key to getting low-skilled adults back into education. This is at the heart of the European Commission’s new initiative to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Detlef Eckert, Director for Skills at the European Commission, presented the newly adopted EU recommendation on Upskilling Pathways for Adults.

The non-binding common approach, agreed among the EU Member States, involves a three-stage approach targeting low-skilled adults: a skills assessment, followed by a tailored offer of education and training, and validation and recognition of the competences acquired. Countries will start by setting priorities and identifying beneficiaries, then activate arrangements reaching out to learners and guiding and supporting them on their pathway, while ensuring cooperation, partnership and coordination between the different actors: local and regional authorities, employers, employment services, learning providers and NGOs.

‘Motivating adults to learn is key,’ said Mr Eckert. ‘It’s one thing if people are unemployed and enrolled in active labour market schemes, but you need to reach out to people and motivate them to get them on board.’

EQAVET Forum on Quality Assurance

A parallel session was held on the topic of quality assurance. It was an opportunity for key experts and practitioners to discuss how to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms, the role of teachers and trainers, quality assurance in apprenticeship and tracking VET graduates.



Award Winners!

The closing ceremony was a chance to highlight outstanding and innovative examples in VET. The ORT vocational school network from ETF partner country Israel, the 2016 laureate of the ETF’s Good Practice in Training for Entrepreneurship, was among the award recipients. You can read more about the ETF’s Good Practice in Training Awards in Live&Learn Issue 36, and watch the films on the ETF YouTube Channel here: goo.gl/lq1Tmx



Wrapping up the event, Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, branded Vocational Skills Week a huge success. ‘We have laid groundwork this year to put #EUVocationalSkills in positive spotlight. I’m keen to repeat this experience so watch this space!’

European Vocational Skills Week 2017 will take place from 20 to 24 November.

Text: Susanna Dunkerley/ETF

Photos: European Commission



THE RIGHT SKILLS FOR THE RIGHT JOB

'In this fast-changing world, we need to invest in our greatest asset: people. People need a broad set of skills to fulfil their potential both as active citizens and at work. Skills are also vital for prosperity, jobs, growth and sustainable well-being,' says the European Commission's Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki Katainen.

The new Skills Agenda for Europe is all about investing in skills, qualifications and human capital development to drive employability, innovation, jobs and growth.

Launched in June 2016, and set to be updated in 2017, the 10-point action plan aims at developing basic and higher skills, making it easier to use and understand qualifications and providing better and timely information on skills needs and anticipation.

- A **Skills Guarantee** to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification.
- A review of **the European Qualifications Framework** for a better understanding of qualifications and to make better use of all available skills in the European labour market.
- The **Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition** bringing together Member States and education, employment and industry stakeholders to develop a large digital talent pool and ensure that individuals and the labour force in Europe are equipped with adequate digital skills.
- The **Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills** to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages in specific economic sectors.
- A **Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals** to support early identification and profiling of skills and qualifications of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants.
- A revision of the **Europass Framework**, offering people better and easier-to-use tools to present their skills and get useful real-time information on skills needs and trends which can help with career and learning choices.
- **Making Vocational Education and Training (VET) a first choice** by enhancing opportunities for VET learners to undertake a work based learning experience and promoting greater visibility of good labour market outcomes of VET.

- A review of the **Recommendation on Key Competences** to help more people acquire the core set of skills necessary to work and live in the 21st century with a special focus on promoting entrepreneurial and innovation-oriented mind-sets and skills.
- An initiative on **Graduate Tracking** to improve information on how graduates progress in the labour market.
- A proposal to further analyse and exchange best practices on effective ways to address **Brain Drain**.

Text: Susanna Dunkerley/ETF

Photos: European Commission

In this fast-changing world, we need to invest in our greatest asset: people. People need a broad set of skills to fulfil their potential both as active citizens and at work. Skills are also vital for prosperity, jobs, growth and sustainable well-being

Jyrki Katainen European Commission's Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness.





THE ETF AND THE NEW SKILLS AGENDA

Vocational education and training (VET), apprenticeships, qualification systems and skills recognition all feature in 10-point action plan.

The aim is to help EU and non-EU citizens, third country nationals, get the right training, skills and support to find quality jobs.

The European Qualifications Framework review, for example, will make it easier to compare qualifications across countries. Apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities will increase through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

The Skills Toolkit will ensure migrants' skills are identified and assessed quickly and help an estimated 100,000 refugees access online language courses over the next three years.

The focus of the new Skills Agenda for Europe reflects the work that the European Training Foundation (ETF) undertakes with its 29 partner countries.

Michel Servoz, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion explains:

What is the ETF's role in helping to deliver the new Skills Agenda?

The ETF is very important because the 29 partner countries and Europe are one big labour market. Some people in the ETF partner countries will become migrants to Europe; we have a keen interest to make sure that the new Skills Agenda is also used by the partner countries.

Why is it important to speed up the identification of migrants' skills and qualifications?

One of the big issues for Europe is the rapid integration of migrants into labour markets. One of the key issues is to identify their skills and help them to use these immediately. This is why the European Commission has put such an emphasis here.



Part of the package is to create a compendium of labour market integration best practice from across Europe, how will this help?

It is important because it shows that the migration crisis is not a crisis; it is a situation that presents opportunities for migrants and for Europe. We have skills shortages in some sectors, so it's important to use all the opportunities we have to respond.

What is the role of VET to help to deliver the initiative?

Vocational education and training is one of the solutions to the employment crisis. It is well known that learners who go through VET are more employable than some students studying law and economics are. We are placing a greater focus on VET because here is a problem with its attractiveness. Children and parents consider it as a B-grade option. This is something that we want to correct. VET is really a good way to find good employment and improve career opportunities for young and older learners alike!

Text: Susanna Dunkerley/ETF

Photo: Cristian Afker



A GROWING SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

In the lead up to the Torino Process international conference in June, ETF partner countries have been taking part in a series of regional-level policy forums on vocational education and training (VET) and skills for economic development. Ownership has been a key feature running throughout, as Nick Holdsworth reports.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP REGION

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine



When the Georgian Minister of Education Aleksandre Jejeleva told the regional forum in Tbilisi that education is a national priority, heads nodded around the room.

Education – and the role of skills and professional training – are critical to the success of the government’s economic and social reform programme, he said, noting the government’s strategic plan for educational and economic reform, infrastructure development and good governance.

‘I believe the VET system can make a very important contribution to all the pillars of this plan.’

Participants said the Georgian recognition of skills training for employment reflected the situation in their own countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

This is reflected in the degree of progress in using the Torino Process tools, demonstrated by participants.

‘In all the Eastern Partnership countries we have self-assessment, the only region with all countries fully engaged in this. As a result we have a much more solid evidence base. We have moved from a lack of evidence to plenty of evidence,’ says Manuela Prina, the ETF’s Torino Process team leader.

‘Reports are more solid,’ she adds. ‘The countries now need to work more on using the evidence produced for decision making.’



Ukraine’s unique approach to draft 25 regional reports – coinciding with a shift to devolved financial and management responsibility for VET to those regions – exemplifies just how demand driven the analytical exercise of the Torino Process is.

Demand and ownership is further demonstrated in the growing role social partners are playing in the countries – where their part in contributing to the evidence database is of key importance. Moldova’s impressive network of stakeholders in the Torino Process, which includes the ministries of education, labour finance, agriculture, economy and territorial development and agencies such as the national statistics bureau, chamber of commerce and industries and others, is a strong example.

Progress is also evidenced through work on creating a national qualifications framework in Belarus; the Torino Process for benchmarking progress in Azerbaijan, where major reform of the VET system is just beginning; and the introduction of obligatory 12-year schooling in Armenia.



CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan



There was enthusiasm and engagement at the regional forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, that can be summed up in one word: ownership.

As the Torino Process approaches the conclusion of its fourth round since being launched in 2010, it is clear that VET specialists, experts and officials are integrating evidence-based reform into their daily routine.

For the first time, Central Asia participants are producing their own country reports. The shift in attitudes by ministry officials, VET school chiefs and institutional experts means that responsibility for and ownership of the process is palpable.

Subhon Ashurov, an independent expert assisting the working group at Tajikistan's Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, says this round marks the beginning of the 'ownership' period.

Appointed by the prime minister, the working group is bringing together the efforts of five sector groups concentrating on Torino Process priority areas: overview and vision; labour market demand; the social sector; internal efficiency; and governance and policy. 'Taking ownership improves the potential of the work of the ministry, supports analysis and leads to concrete recommendations,' says Mr Ashurov.

It is a point that has clearly entered the thinking of the most senior VET managers in the region. In his opening remarks to the forum, Taalaibek Cholponkulov, head of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Science's Agency for Initial and Secondary VET, said: 'We are ready to share our experience; this year we have taken responsibility to make a report and demonstrate our achievements.'

Those achievements include a groundbreaking new Kyrgyz tracer survey on how well VET schools prepare students for the labour market.

In neighbouring Kazakhstan, the database – managed by the Ministry of Education's National Analytical Centre – is digitalising information on 18,000+ educational institutions from pre-school to secondary VET. The new digital system has saved 560 working days by reducing labour intensive old paper-based practices, says Dinara Alimkhanova, the centre's VET development manager.

'The government, ministries, international agencies – such as the UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Economic Forum – all use this data,' she notes.

Addressing the issue of young people not in work or study, and challenges of migrant workers, were shared themes, and improving financing, equipment and teacher training.

The importance of the regional forum was highlighted by participants who agreed that recommendations in the national reports would be put forward for political approval.



SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE AND TURKEY

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

Wide-ranging reforms in VET and the labour markets appear to offer a promising picture for a region that includes five EU candidate countries. Growth of between 0.8% in Serbia and 6% in Turkey in 2015 comfortably brackets the EU 28 figure of 2.2% the same period. The seven ETF partner countries in the region show steady, sometimes improved rankings on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index.

But it masks a complex and challenging picture where youth unemployment remains alarmingly high – 33% in Albania, up to 62% in Bosnia and Herzegovina compared to the EU average of around 20%. The proportion of working-aged people in the informal economy is as high as 30%, VET is characterised by low achievement and high drop-out rates, and social exclusion and gender equality is prevalent.

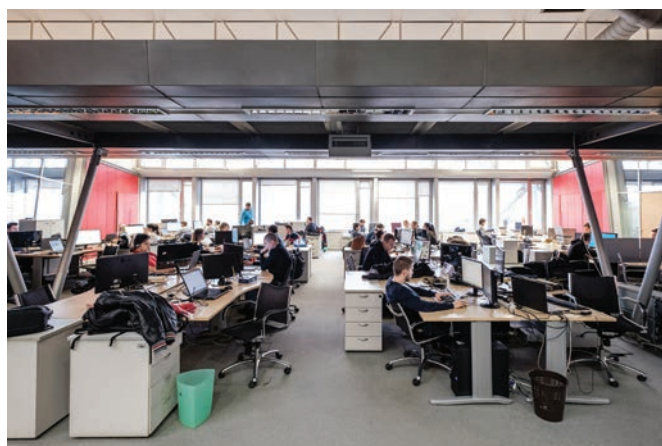
'Growth is mainly linked to development of sectors with high productivity and low or unstable job creation,' the ETF's Manuela Prina says. 'Employment rates are not following the positive growth, in particular for young people not in employment education or training (NEETs).'

It is clear that VET policy experts, officials, schools, businesses and social partners need to do more to act on the evidence-based findings from the Torino Process country reports and continue calls for urgent policy reform.

The support and political goodwill from the EU is there. The EU has invested EUR 25 million in Serbia over the last 15 years to support the modernisation of VET curricula. The IPA (the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) is investing EUR 8 million annually for VET support in the region, with a focus on the Riga Conclusions – a set of five mid-term objectives for VET reform for the EU candidate countries.

Countries have a clear idea of what needs to be done. New flagship policies include the adoption in 2014 in Albania of a National Skills and Employment Strategy 2020. Bosnia and Herzegovina has introduced a 2014–2020 Action Plan for the Development and Improvement of Qualifications Frameworks, an education development strategy 2016–2021 in its constituent semi-autonomous Republika Srpska, and is developing six new occupational standards and learning outcomes in secondary VET.

The Comprehensive Education Strategy 2016–2020 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will modernise technical VET, a national qualifications framework (NQF) is under development, as well as a concept for adult education that addresses the needs of those with non formal and informal learning experience.



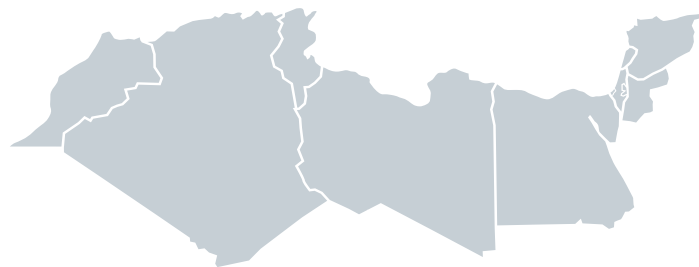
Montenegro is making big strides in its work-based learning policy – with a focus on broadening apprenticeships and creating opportunities in small and micro businesses, in tourism, agriculture and construction – and has also fully referenced its national qualifications against those of the EU.

In Serbia though there has been 'no major conceptual or strategic changes in VET' in two years. Torino Process Coordinator, Rade Erceg, says. Developing a NQF law – expected to be approved later this year – is the focus, as is the shift towards dual education.

Turkey foresees progress in dual education after parliamentary approval in December 2016 of changes to work-based learning laws. Turkey lacks a VET monitoring system, so the Torino Process is really helping, says Özlem Kalkan, a VET expert with Turkey's Ministry of National Education.

In her closing remarks Madlen Serban, ETF Director, referring to Roman philosopher Seneca, added: 'If one does not know to which port he is sailing, no wind is favourable: what counts the most is to know which port you want to go to in vocational education and skills.'

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence (hereinafter 'Kosovo').*



SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestine** and Tunisia

Youth unemployment, low levels of female participation in the labour market and high unemployment among university graduates – three key economic and education structural challenges facing countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region.

The fourth round of the Torino Process is helping specialists identify the challenges, opportunities and needs for skills training.

‘Some countries are growing beyond 3% but others are not even at 1% – recovering, but very slowly’, Martiño Rubal Maseda, ETF statistician told the regional-level policy forum in Rabat, Morocco.

Women’s participation in the labour market is as low as 14 or 15% in some countries, such as Jordan. Youth unemployment rates, average 30%, across the region and many young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Higher education graduates whose academic qualifications are ill matched to labour market demands represent another ‘wasted resource’.

Education, labour and social affairs ministers, officials, businesses and other VET stakeholders across the region recognise the challenge and a multitude of programmes, policies and initiatives are being implemented to address it.

In Egypt, three key reforms have been identified: to shift the VET curriculum to a competence-based approach that meet the ‘real demands of the workplace’; to upgrade the national network of 1,200 technical schools; and to introduce new profiles that better reflect labour market needs.

Israel’s future VET priorities include the development of more regional centres and greater coordination between schools so that schools can learn from each other and even benefit from finding economies of scale.

In Jordan, to tackle female unemployment, satellite training schemes have been set up in rural areas aimed at women, mostly those working in clothing manufacture.

The establishment of a national labour market information system is a priority for Lebanon so that VET is more closely aligned with the labour market.

In Morocco, a new VET observatory, the Regional Professional Occupation and Sector Skills Observatory, is working with SMEs to support better evidence-based decision making through providing a framework for collecting and analysing relevant industry, labour market and training data.

In Palestine, a new scheme to introduce and train a new cadre of monitoring and evaluation experts, drawing on qualified graduates from within the territory is an important instruments for tackling youth unemployment, social inclusion and women’s participation.

Tunisia is moving ahead to devolve political and administrative responsibility to the country’s regions. Involved in the Torino Process since it was launched in 2010, Tunisia is one of only three countries in the region that is experimenting with local implementation of VET reforms.

To enthusiastic applause, Mhmed Kouidmi, a self-styled ‘social entrepreneur’ and managing director of Algerian company Business Wise, intervened in a plenary discussion to emphasise: ‘We cannot build sustainable solutions for the future by people from the past working in the present. We need to look to the future now.’

Text: Nick Holdsworth

Photos: Andrea Guermani, Andrea Bogarello, Martine Smit/ETF

** This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the EU Member States on this issue.



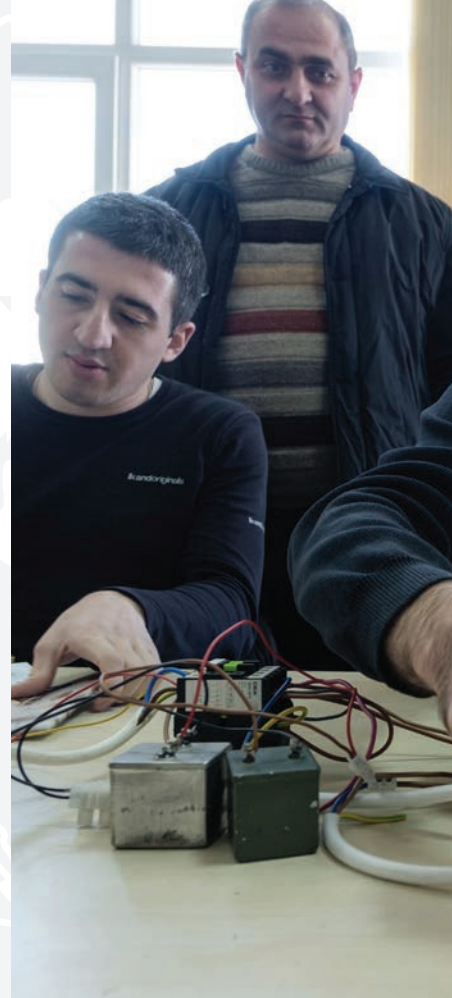
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS **PROVIDE ESSENTIAL TRAINING** IN AN ECONOMY FACING SKILLS SHORTAGES

The popularity of vocational education and training (VET) compared with academic routes to further and higher education in Georgia remains stubbornly low: more than three quarters of school leavers who go on to further study opt for university rather than skills training.

It's something Education Minister, Aleksandre Jejelava, and many within the country's VET system, are concerned about. 'We need to increase annual VET school enrolments from 10,000 to 50,000–60,000, including all programmes, modular and short term,' Mr Jejelava told the Torino Process regional forum, in Tbilisi.

The November 2016 conference brought together stakeholders from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to discuss progress in the fourth round of the European Training Foundation's (ETF's) flagship VET system analysis tool.

Mr Jejelava said skills shortages were holding back economic development in Georgia. 'We need to develop VET so that it attracts more people. The labour market is struggling to find skilled workers in a number of areas – some of them quite surprising.'



'We have plenty of international relations graduates but an acute shortage of veterinary surgeons, construction engineers, welders and computer designers. In some villages you simply cannot find a vet. We have to bring them in from Turkey and other countries.'

In an country where paid employment has stubbornly remained fixed at 15% of the population for years, despite annual GDP growth rates of between 5 and 7%, skills shortages translate into steeply rising wages for those few with something to offer.

That's an unsustainable model, according to labour market expert Eric Livny, president of the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University. 'I would love to see a situation eventually that allows more opportunities for unregulated learning, learning through platforms using the technology available today,' he says, noting that in more mature economies, like Germany, 57% of that country's population of 80 million work and earn wages.

These concerns may not have yet sunk into the consciousness of most young Georgians and their families where, in common with other former Soviet countries, academic diplomas continue to be regarded as the gold standard of tertiary education, but a quiet revolution is underway at the grassroots of VET schools in Georgia, where a new government programme on dual education, combined workplace and college training, has recently been introduced.

Ioseb Udzilauri, 23, is a student on the veterinary course at the LEPL Community College 'Aisi' in Kachreti, around 80 km east of Tbilisi. He is one of a group of students combining training in the college's Animal Husbandry Farm (a modern barn equipped with animal stalls and equipment built with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), with practical work experience.

Ioseb, who comes from a farming family in Akhmeta, some 90 km north-west of the college, says that he was attracted by the prospects



of finding well-paid work. 'It is a job that gives me a chance to live and work in my home region, develop my own business and support a family,' he says, as he examines a dark brown calf before it is given a vitamin injection.

'I've not yet graduated and already I am earning between 1,000 and 1,400 lari (EUR 370–520) a month from helping local farmers at the weekends; if you know your profession well and are a good specialist, you will earn good money.'

Shorena Kipshidze, a 33 year-old freelance Georgian language tutor, is another student who sees financial opportunities in skills training. Married with a nine year-old son and husband who is a school sports instructor, she plans to build a beekeeping business to increase her earning potential. Dressed in a protective smock and wide-brimmed hat with a net veil, she is standing among a group of hives in the college grounds on a sunny and very warm autumn day.

'I'm very interested in beekeeping and helping my family by producing honey and other products, such as royal jelly (a honey bee

secretion that is believed to have health-giving properties),' she says. Shorena, who earns 300 lari (EUR 112) a month working as a private tutor in the college's rural region, already keeps 11 hives of bees but plans to increase this tenfold. By taking the hives to different flower meadows or mountain pastures she hopes to produce up to 5 tonnes of honey a year – worth 75,000 lari (EUR 28,000), a sum that will transform her family's fortunes.

'I shall give up teaching and with my husband's help concentrate on honey,' she says as she waves a bee away from her face.

It is stories like these that are beginning to become known throughout the wider community, Aisi College Director, Natela Papunashvili, points out.

'The prestige of professional education is now increasing: many higher education graduates are coming back to college to get specific skills training.'

The college is piloting dual education in many of its specialities – which range from agricultural engineering, woodcutting, tractor technicians, pharmaceutical assistants to winemaking and viticulture (Kachreti is in a region famed for its wines such as Saperavi, Kindzmarauli and Rkatsiteli).

'I think that dual education is cheaper for the government than conventional forms of training – and by comparing it with traditional instruction shall be able to see if it is better,' she says, adding that it certainly benefits industries that need workers with specific skills. Employment statistics from the college suggest that on the job training – and demand for certain specialities – does help student prospects: 100% of cookery trainees from the college find work directly after graduation and 90% of veterinary students. For winemakers the figure is 60–70%, although many set up their own small businesses rather than going into paid employment.

Text: Nick Holdsworth

Photos: Andrea Guermani

We need to develop VET so that it attracts more people. The labour market is struggling to find skilled workers in a number of areas – some of them quite surprising





THE WHOLE WORLD IS HERE!



ETF QUALIFICATIONS TOOLKIT
• **Getting organised** •

The 'Getting Organised for Better Qualifications' conference brought delegates from all over the world to Brussels for the launch of a new European Training Foundation (ETF) toolkit for policymakers.



Opening the event, ETF Director Madlen Serban surveyed the 150 delegates from over 50 different countries and declared: 'The whole world is here!' Highlighting the near-universal interest in qualifications, qualifications frameworks, and qualification systems, Ms Serban stressed the ETF's strategic work in the area is to showcase the merit of good qualifications and to make them better. This doesn't happen by itself, she pointed out; 'work has to be done.'

The case for reforming and improving qualification systems has become unanswerable, as technological, societal, and labour market factors have shifted towards new global paradigms. Writing in the Times Education Supplement a few days before the conference began, Alison Wolf – author of a major review of vocational education and training in England and Wales – stated: 'It is a core duty of a government to develop and maintain a national qualification system – and not just on the academic side.'¹

This reveals a growing emphasis on two features of qualification systems: their governance, both in policy and operational terms; and their holism, as more and more countries develop qualification systems that include formal, informal and non-formal aspects, and adopt and implement national qualifications frameworks which

include both academic and vocational qualifications. It is towards the former area that the new ETF toolkit, entitled 'Getting Organised for Better Qualifications' is mostly aimed.

Michel Servoz, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, and chair of the ETF Governing Board, welcomed delegates by noting that skills are 'a global currency' adding, 'if you have a qualification from an organisation that is up to international standards, your currency is convertible. If not, you have difficulties.' He also pointed to the fundamental similarities in the issues being faced by ETF partner countries and EU Member States. The recently launched new Skills Agenda is based on the European Commission having identified skills and qualifications as the most important response to the ongoing crisis of economic growth and stability. Mr Servoz shared the worrying statistic that some 70 million EU citizens currently lack basic literacy, numeracy, or digital skills; a number equivalent to the entire population of France. Moreover, as the digital transformation of economic activity continues, with constant media coverage of advances in artificial intelligence, robotics, data manipulation, and so on, it is likely that many existing jobs will disappear while previously unknown occupations are created. Add to this the increasing numbers of people who need to be integrated into national labour markets because they are migrating to seek work, or fleeing war, persecution, and climate disasters, and the urgency of the task is starkly revealed.

That urgency must not lead to paralysis. That's why the new ETF toolkit opens with an introduction headed: 'Don't agonise, organise!' This is the plain truth the ETF will share as widely as possible through the toolkit's dissemination and collaborative development. Mr Servoz concluded his remarks with a plea for that collaboration to extend to the actual delivery of qualification system reform: 'Social partners need to be in the driving seat with government,' he urged, 'to ensure good decisions are made.'

Anastasia Fetsi, ETF Head of Operations, then introduced the main conference structure, which took the form of four workshops, each focusing on one of the four 'pillars' of a qualification system. The pillars – legislation, stakeholders, institutions, and quality assurance – provide the core of the ETF toolkit. Each workshop was moderated by ETF and other international experts, reported on by volunteer bloggers, supported by input from experts and policymakers from ETF partner countries and other countries, and linked by rapporteurs who fed back to the conference via a plenary panel session on the second day.

¹ Times Education Supplement, 18 November 2016, p. 33.

While this structure may sound complex, it is a copy in microcosm of the complexities of the national qualification systems landscape which delegates were there to address. Help was at hand, however, in simplifying some of the major challenges, in the form of five short animated videos specially created by the ETF to give straightforward descriptions of a qualification system, and then each of the four pillars in turn. The videos are presented in simple, rather than simplistic, language, following Einstein's famous dictum that: 'Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.' Watch the videos on the ETF YouTube channel here: goo.gl/Qy52bh

After the workshop, rapporteurs' feedback and subsequent conversation with the floor, day two was devoted to insightful input from the stage. Ana Carla Pereira, Head of the Skills and Qualifications team at DG Employment, described the process and importance of the referencing system used to align national qualifications with the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). While there is still much work to do on, for instance, comparability of qualification systems, quality assurance and credit systems, and – perhaps most significantly – transparency throughout and between systems, the ongoing review of the EQF promises to address these and other issues, such as the development of common principles for quality assurance and comparability with third countries.



A panel on 'Making Qualifications Frameworks Work Globally' included updates from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and heard calls for conceptual work to be done on the possibility of a global qualifications framework.

Concluding remarks were made by Karol Jakubík a specialist in VET from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Slovakia; and Jordi Curell, Head of the Labour Mobility team at DG Employment. Jakubík declared vocational education and training (VET) to be a priority for the Slovak Presidency of the EU, adding: 'We are fully aware of the importance of the new skills agenda, and the need to put something on the table.' He was, therefore, pleased to announce a recommendation for Upskilling Pathways for Adults (formerly known as the Skills Guarantee – see more on p. 8 of this issue of Live&Learn). Curell praised delegates for their 'intense' work at the conference, and echoed Jakubík's view that the new Skills Agenda goes beyond labour market issues, important as they are. Both speakers praised the ETF toolkit, describing it as a valuable and impressive publication, which had generated significant interest among EU Member States as well as partner countries.

Finally, ETF Director Madlen Serban closed the conference with a plea for delegates to keep the momentum going, particularly because 'we don't want empty frameworks, or for that matter empty qualifications. When we implement qualifications frameworks, we have to ensure transparency, trust, and accountability, wherever we are, at whatever level, from individuals to entire systems.' Moreover, adopting qualifications frameworks is not enough. 'If we are to go beyond the frameworks, and truly get organised, we have to create resilient systems.' That resilience comes, at least in part, from persistence and collaboration. 'There is so much change needed,' Ms Serban said, 'that nobody can do it overnight, or do it alone.' In other words, this is a marathon, not a sprint.



Workshop wrap-up

A note on terminology: We distinguish between qualification systems and qualifications frameworks, using singular and plural. This is because, at systemic level, 'qualification' is a single, abstract concept; whereas, a framework is populated with a number of discrete 'qualifications'. In other words, qualification is the strategic policy area, while qualifications are tactical means of delivering the policy (as well as being the means by which individuals achieve their objectives).

Workshop One: Legislation

Delegates in the first workshop discussed the idea that, in most countries, legalisation is a necessary if not sufficient condition for a functioning national qualifications framework. As one delegate rather acerbically put it: 'In my country, you can't move a pebble without a law.' The discussion suggested that most countries have legislation in place or in preparation, although in some there are conflicts between legislation on employment and on education, or between laws on VET and higher education. Overall, the biggest challenge remains actually implementing new laws effectively. A pithy closing comment came from Osman Seçkin Akbiyik, head of the Qualifications Framework team in Turkey's Vocational Qualifications Authority: 'Legislation should define the basic principles, but don't waste too much time on it. Focus on developing good qualifications.'

Workshop Two: Stakeholders

This session's wide-ranging conversation was brought neatly into focus by Ahmad Shammout of the Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan. The process of getting stakeholders systematically committed to the development and implementation of a national qualifications framework is often inhibited by change at policy level, leading to a lack of consistent vision. 'All agree stakeholders should be in,' said Shammout, 'the question is how to involve them and maintain dialogue in changing circumstances.' The way this question is addressed depends, said Silviu Gincu, head of the VET Department in Moldova's Ministry of Education, on who takes the lead role in qualifications reform. Inevitably, these issues overlap with the subjects of the other workshops. ETF expert Siria Taurelli suggested that legislation alone was not enough, and the formalisation of roles and responsibilities is key. But nor is consultation sufficient; the aim must be to empower stakeholders. 'We have to become activists,' claimed Yelena Zigangirova, senior analyst at the Information Analytical Center, Kazakhstan. To engage private sector stakeholders in particular, she advised looking for employers 'with a sparkle in their eyes' – in other words, those who can be motivated with a sense of ownership and by personal example.

Workshop Three: Institutions

In most countries, the vision and the plan for institutional arrangements are more or less in place, though some are more advanced than others, while there are overlaps and gaps even in the most developed systems. The challenge is twofold: first, to convince political leaders of the importance of qualifications and thus the need for resources; and second, to get institutional arrangements to work. On the former, Aileen Ponton, chief executive of the Scottish

Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) partnership, stressed the importance of communicating the value of a national qualifications framework to all stakeholders. On the latter, she said the Scottish experience showed that getting the institutions to work is a long process: 'People congratulate themselves on putting the necessary arrangements in place, but the challenge is to get them to work.' ETF qualifications specialist, Arjen Deij, also highlighted the issue of institutions' effectiveness, observing that 'institutions may be in place and functioning, but not delivering.' Joseph Samuels, chief executive of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), pointed out that his country's legislation on qualifications includes a built-in conflict resolution mechanism, adding that the international community can help with capacity building, transferring and adapting models, and communicating with stakeholders.

Workshop Four: Quality Assurance

Competence, confidence, certification and trust were all central themes in this session. Grant Klinkum, Deputy chief executive of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) described quality assurance issues in the three iterations of his country's national qualifications framework, operational since 1992. He focused on measures designed to build trust in qualifications, such as the recent review, which led to a major reduction in the number available. 'While many jurisdictions are increasing, we've gone from around 6,000 qualifications to just over 1,200,' he said. This was achieved by providers working with employers to conduct joint reviews of suites of qualifications in their sectors. He highlighted the vital role of clear, accessible public communication on this, to ensure that employers' renewed confidence in qualifications translated into increased public trust. Amina El-Alam, from the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training in Morocco, described the competence-based approach her country has adopted. This approach 'links to sectoral drivers,' she said, providing 'a common language for the training world and the labour market, and keeps the learner at the centre of the system.' And while quality assurance holds a central place in the government's national strategy for vocational education and training, El-Alam described the preparations for the implementation of a national qualifications framework, saying 'we want it to be a quality tool for reform of the system overall.'

Assessing the self-assessment tool

All the workshops provided feedback on the self-assessment tools which follow five of the ETF toolkit's six chapters. Participants made valuable suggestions on, among other things, improving the red-amber-green rating system, the potential for the self-assessment tool to cover systems and sub-systems, and splitting the questions into separate sections for policy and implementation respectively. Other delegates noted immediate uses for the self-assessment tool that include bringing a group of countries in a region together to make a shared response, and using the self-assessment tool with private sector stakeholders to stimulate dialogue. The feedback forms part of the deliberations that will lead to a final version of the toolkit in 2017.

Text: Ezri Carlebach

Photos: Juha Roininen



ANTICIPATING SKILLS NEEDS: **A 'HOW TO' GUIDE FOR ETF PARTNER COUNTRIES**

Matching skills supply with labour market demands and forecasting skills needs is critical for the economic growth of any country. The European Training Foundation (ETF) has co-produced a series of 'how to' skills anticipation and matching guides, based on best practice approaches, tools and methods, together with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).

The **six guides** cover the use of labour market information – how to exploit and transform data sources into indicators for evidence-based policy making, skills forecasting methodologies, skills surveys and tracer studies, and the role of sectorial bodies and employment service providers.

You can access the guides here: goo.gl/Yye1Yt

Thinking outside the box

The ETF brought together policymakers and employment and labour market experts from 24 partner countries bordering the European Union to learn more about the skills matching guides. The week-long learning programme in October 2016, included site visits and simulations. Participants explored tracer studies, graduate and employer surveys, methods for collecting, interpreting and applying data to policy development, the role of labour market observatories, employment services and forecasting skill supply and demand.



The learning programme was an 'out-of-the-box' approach for the ETF – one welcomed by participants.

Egypt's Deputy Minister for Technical Education, Ahmed Elgeushey Hassanein, says the programme will help shape the future of technical and vocational education and training.

'This learning programme was very useful because it provides the data, methodologies and tools to do the job and start the policy-making process. The ETF is helping to provide a bright future for labour market systems and VET institutions in the partner countries.' Employment service specialists Etleva Gjelog, from Albania and Mourad Bentahar from Morocco, were happy to take home new forecasting methodologies, which act as early warning mechanisms that can help to alleviate potential labour market imbalances.

'I got valuable, practical and new information on forecasting as a stand-alone methodology and I would now like to see this applied in Albania,' Etleva said.

'Across our region, we have a low capacity to provide a view of labour market supply and demand. We need to work together to coordinate and produce data, from several sources, which will be very useful for policymaking,' Mourad, who presented Morocco's labour market observatory to participants, said.

Labour market information systems

Many ETF partner countries lack developed labour market information systems, increasing the likelihood of skills mismatch where workers have fewer, or more, skills than jobs require.

Georgia's new Labour Market Information System is a 'one-stop-shop' web portal with up-to-date information on labour market conditions, jobs, career guidance and training, etc.

Public service agencies and private sector contribute data on population, economic trends, employment and wages.

Labour market analyst George Gamkrelidze says the portal is designed for the user. 'For young people and jobseekers to gain new skills and improve their employability,' he said, sharing the good practice example with participants.

'By improving the information flow we can also support policymakers to get the valuable information in developing employment support programmes and making analysis.'

A winning recipe: Transitioning to the world of work

From the field to the fork – a gastronome is a professional with skills across all aspects of food. Participants got a taste of just what it takes to become a gastronome during the study visit to the University of Gastronomic Sciences, in Pollenzo.

The Centre of Culture around Food was founded by the Slow Food movement in 1989 in protest against the opening of a McDonald's on the steps of the iconic Spanish Steps in Rome.



It has grown to involve millions of people in more than 160 countries, promoting local food culture and access to good, clean and fair food.

The private university offers a number of degree programmes including food entrepreneurship and innovation and Italian wine culture. Working closely with 200+ companies, it recently established its own career office – a good practice example of matching skills with labour market needs.

Around 85% of the 2014 graduates found a job within 12 months, according to the university's own tracer study, that it conducted in the form of interviews. Vice President Silvio Barbero says this success is down to the 'holistic approach'.

'We are training people beyond a specialisation – we offer training, education and cultural platform for people who want to work in the food sector.'

Incubating jobs and growth

The University of Gastronomic Sciences was one of three site visits incorporated into the week-long learning programme. Participants also visited I3P -Innovative Enterprise Incubator – a publicly-owned hub for start-ups, located at the Politecnico Torino, which boasts 30,000+ students, 1,000 researchers, 1,000 non-academic researchers and the General Motors R&D facility.

The university-mix-technology-park is the home of 'open innovation' and a good practice example of how start-ups foster economic and job growth.

In 2015, the incubator began work with 44 new start-ups, a further 20 began the intensive three-year incubator programme. Collectively they attracted EUR 320 million in seed investments and EUR 820 million in early stage investments.

Director Marco Cantamessa explained how the incubator used data to put a EUR 6,000 value on job creation.

‘Start-ups are key to the economy – to grow you need business. But it’s about people first and foremost, if you don’t have entrepreneurs you don’t have entrepreneurship.’

He closed by welcoming future collaboration with the group: ‘We are not just sharing culture and knowledge, but future business partnerships!’

Employment service providers

The third site visit was to see first-hand how the public employment services are offered in the Piedmont region.

Participants met with Claudio Spadon, head of Agenzia Piemonte Lavoro (APL), the agency tasked with the coordination of the regional public employment offices.

APL coordinates 30 employment offices across the region, which offer a range of services to help match job seekers with jobs that match their skills profile.

Mr Spadon says the best piece of advice to address skills mismatch is partnerships. ‘Private and public employment service agencies working together with other institutions, employers, schools, universities, VET providers, towards the same goal.’

The learning programme was part of the Employment, Skills and Mobility strategic project – one of seven thematic areas driving the ETF’s work in human capital development.

Participants represented Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Serbia, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

Text: Susanna Dunkerley/ETF

Photos: Gary Bonge/ETF



SKILLS MATCHING GUIDES

Vol. 1 Using labour market information

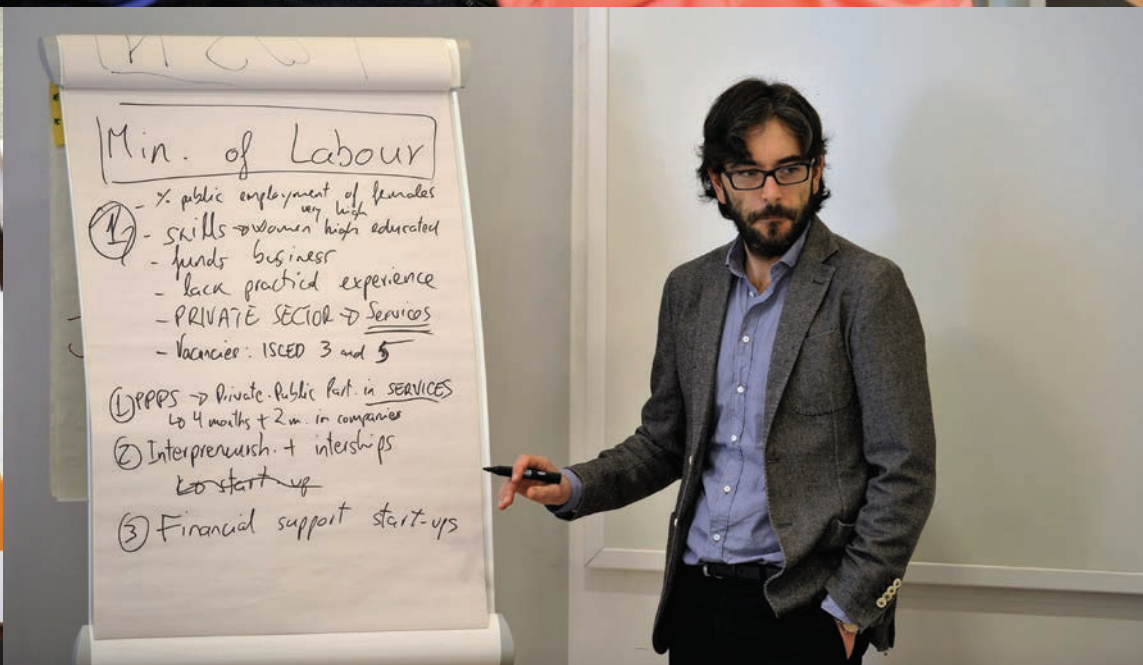
Vol. 2 Developing skills foresights, scenarios and forecasts

Vol. 3 Working at sectoral level

Vol. 4 The role of employment service providers

Vol. 5 Developing and running an establishment skills survey

Vol. 6 Carrying out tracer studies





TRANSITIONING INTO THE WORLD OF WORK



Young people aspire to find jobs that match their skills, provide decent wages, good working conditions and career paths. But high youth unemployment rates and sluggish economies continue to make the transition into the world of work tough. This is particularly the case for ETF partner countries in South Eastern Europe.

Addressing youth unemployment is a priority for the EU and ETF partner countries alike. The challenge requires well-targeted partnerships between governments, business, NGOs, employment service providers and career counsellors.

Employment experts, career guidance counsellors, policymakers, business leaders and young people from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Italy shared updates and ideas on the topic.

They gathered for a two-day workshop in Rome in October 2016, as part of the ETF's continued efforts to support partner countries to make education and training more responsive to labour market needs. Participants learned about Italy's approach to dealing with the unemployment crisis that saw close to one million jobs lost.

'We rolled up our sleeves and reacted,' said Bruno Busacca, from the Italian Ministry of Labour, referring to a package of active policy reform, including measures targeted at youth.

'It's learning by doing and raising general awareness among trade unions and employers. We cannot sit and wait, if we want to grow, we need new reforms and top-level vocational training.'

By bringing the right group of stakeholders around the table, the ETF is 'helping to build a more inclusive Europe,' he added.

Participants were introduced to Elisa, Luca and Désirée, three young Italians who shared their experiences transitioning into work.

The trio benefited from public support programmes such as the EU's Youth Guarantee Scheme and worked closely with career guidance counsellors, such as Cristina Bruno who also shared her experience working with students at the innovative Piazza dei Mestieri in Torino.

Government representatives from Albania, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey shared updates and approaches.

Alida Mici, **Albania**, said increases in youth employment were, in part, thanks to a growing number of 'reorganised' public employment offices.



Mersa Tinjak, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, said entrepreneurship is a focus, with new e-learning tools for business plans and marketing tips.

Izedin Bytyqi, **Kosovo**, said increasing the visibility of employment services was a priority, highlighting new on-line labour offices. The challenge of involving more public and private sector partners, however, remained.

Violeta Stojanovikj, **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, said young people were 'the target'. 'And we can see the transition of young people to the labour market is shortening – this is our aim!'

Edina Desic, **Montenegro**, said the government was working with social partners on a national strategy for young people, with a focus on skills matching.

Dragica Ivanovic, **Serbia**, said many young people work in informal jobs, particularly young men in the building sector. More intensive action was needed to address this, with a focus on work-based learning.

Ozbudun Fahri, **Turkey**, presented an online portal which aims to bring students together with business, noting that 1.4 million students were active.

The second day of the workshop was dedicated to the critical contribution of social partners, NGOs and the private sector working together.

Participants saw these partnerships in action first-hand during a site visit to Porta Futuro – an innovative employment service 'hub' in Rome. Ministry and regional authorities working together with employment experts and local business. The team working at the employment service hub, match skills profiles with those of jobseekers and runs workshops and trainings to enhance the employability of hundreds of people every month. Open from 9 am to 6 pm, and some weekends, demand for this one-stop-shop approach is so high the 'hub' doesn't even close doors for lunch!

Text and photos: Susanna Dunkerley/ETF





Q&A DAIGA ERMSONE

Globalisation, technological progress, digitalisation and demographic developments are changing the nature of work, job profiles and the skills required. Ensuring vocational education (VET) corresponds to the needs of labour markets drives the work of the ETF's Employment, Skills and Employability team. Live&Learn speaks to Daiga Ermsone, the strategic project leader, to find out more.

What are your team's main areas of work?

We are working in three main areas: skills intelligence, transition to work and skills and migration.

What is skills intelligence?

To help ensure that VET corresponds to labour market needs, there is an increasing need to base long-term education and training choices on evidence. This includes how the labour market, and specifically demand for certain qualifications, evolves, i.e. trends on existing and emerging skills. We support our partner countries in increasing their capacity to generate, analyse and use information on labour market needs, skills demand prospects, and to track labour market outcomes of young graduates. Our focus is on practical development and implementation of skills intelligence following a holistic approach that includes a variety of different methods, both quantitative and qualitative.

How does this link to the new Skills Agenda for Europe?

The ETF's work in the field of employment and employability is guided by the Europe 2020 strategy and, in particular, the new Skills Agenda for Europe which emphasises VET as a pathway to excellence by increasing its attractiveness, revising quality standards and streamlining governance for cooperation in VET. It calls on EU countries and stakeholders to improve the quality and relevance of skills formation, make skills, including digital skills, more visible and comparable and improve skills intelligence for better career choices. This holistic approach to skills acquisition in a lifelong learning perspective can provide inspiration to partner countries.

Addressing changing skills needs is high on the European and global policy agenda. How does the ETF share knowledge with active partners in the field?

To provide methodological support to develop skills intelligence, the European Training Foundation, the International Labour Organisation and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training recently joined forces. We combined expertise and geographical coverage to develop a compendium of methodological guides on anticipation and matching of skills supply and demand. They are available online and we have made an effort to translate some of

them in partner countries' languages. Our aim is to widely disseminate this work and to encourage our partner countries to implement these tools in practice.

What is ETF's focus in the area of transition to work?

Most ETF partner countries are facing great challenges in ensuring smooth transitions to work for young people. Equally, long-term unemployment, economic restructuring and social vulnerabilities greatly affect the adult populations, as an increasingly evolving labour market requires workers to engage in a continuing skills acquisition process. This requires countries to develop human capital-based activation measures. It also requires provision of improved information about the direction of skills needs in the future for young people, employees, employers, employment services and other public institutions.



Addressing youth unemployment is a priority in Europe and in the partner countries. How is the ETF's work helping to improve prospects for young people?

Youth employment and employability is an issue common to all ETF partner countries. Not only is a high share of youth disproportionately unemployed, a large number of young people remain inactive and disengaged from learning opportunities (not in employment, education or training – NEETs). We mainly work on helping countries to develop or consolidate existing action plans for providing youth with a real and timely chance to gain employment and develop skills to enable a smoother transition to the labour market and prevent social exclusion. We also provide inputs to the European Union institutions in fostering regional dialogue on youth employment and employability. In particular, we are supporting the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment to establish the Panel on Youth Employment and Employability within the Eastern Partnership region, and encouraging exchanges on education, training and youth policies between southern and eastern Mediterranean countries.

Managing migration is at the top of the EU agenda. What type of work is the ETF doing in this area?

As the only EU agency working specifically in the context of external relations policies, the ETF has a long-term perspective and works on the root causes of migration and supports the development of human capital in the partner countries, as part of their socio-economic development, and gives priority to the skills dimension of circular, legal migration. In particular, the ETF focuses on supporting policy measures for and mutual learning on the transparency and portability of skills and qualifications of partner countries' citizens, both as potential and actual migrants and as returnees.

Photo: Gary Bonge/ETF



BUSINESS TIME, PRESIDENTIAL STYLE

Arman Toskanbaev's ambitious goal required precision timing. The serial entrepreneur was determined to gift the president of Kazakhstan one of his company's luxury watches, in person. On 1 December 2016, a year after launching the luxury watch brand Otan Watches, the timing was just right. President Nursultan Nazarbayev was preparing to address a youth forum, as Arman recalls.

'The President was preparing to give a speech, there was a pause, and I saw a window of opportunity. I turned the microphone on and presented myself and the story of the watch, then I asked the President if I could present it to him in person.'

When he put the watch on, he raised his hand and declared: 'We are not wearing foreign Swiss-made watches anymore, we are wearing Kazakh-made watches!'

The story went viral. Arman's face, and the intricate gold watch face, bearing the national coat of arms, was all over the evening news. Business soared. Otan Watches have become Kazakhstan's official gift for high-flying officials, even Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev wears one.

See the events unfold on YouTube here: goo.gl/Le19vx

Building entrepreneurial communities

Arman believes his meeting with the President was more than coincidence – because at the time, he was 25 years old and Kazakhstan was celebrating 25 years of independence from the Soviet Union. Some may cite superstition, but those who know Arman will call it determination.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) met Arman through the Entrepreneurial Communities initiative in 2015. Since then, he has started four diverse businesses, producing luxury watches, fruit and vegetables, livestock feed and IT solutions.

He is also the director of the Youth Business Association, working with more than 1,000 young entrepreneurs across the country.



In addition, he recently started a career guidance and orientation programme for students, called New Generation.

The Youth Business Association is a key partner in the Entrepreneurial Community in Karaganda. The association works together with the Chamber of Entrepreneurs and 26 local vocational education and training (VET) providers to strengthen links between education and business and stimulate private sector regional economic growth. Read more about the Youth Business Association and other thriving local partnerships explored in 10 ETF partner countries in Local Skills Matter: A journey through entrepreneurial communities publication. Available here in English, French and Russian: goo.gl/JgN4ho

Growing global

The Entrepreneurial Communities initiative helped Arman to grow his business network beyond the regional and national level.

'I realised the world is much, much, bigger than my own country. I am communicating with people without knowing English, and I have grown relationships and my business. There are no barriers to this type of learning in the world today!'

Arman recently travelled to Israel to meet with Ravit Dom from the Israeli entrepreneurial community. She is the General Manager of



the Amal Network which runs the entrepreneurship centre at the multi-disciplinary high school in Hadera, a small coastal city around 45 km from Tel Aviv.

Arman was joined by representatives of the Kazakh Ministry of Education so they could see how students (aged 15–18) learn the entire business cycle, from idea generation to production, marketing and sales. Entrepreneurial learning is high on the national agenda in Kazakhstan, with plans to embed it in the school curricula from 2017.

Unlocking entrepreneurship: The key to success is...

Arman is passionate about helping young people learn, succeed and fail. A year before Arman met the President, he declared bankruptcy when a consulting company that he was a partner in went bust.

‘I learned that not everyone thinks like I do. I used to see life through pink glasses and thought everyone was as driven and motivated as I am. But money changes people.’

He turned the loss into a win, investing his time in his new ventures. For Arman, failure is an important lesson, one that he shares with young entrepreneurs. Another important lesson is that good partnerships, not financing, is the real key to start-up success.

‘I teach these young people that a business partnership is like a marriage. The most important thing is to be open. Not everyone is like this with their wives or husbands,’ he muses.

‘Business is like a child born from a good partnership, one in which you are open and honest about finances, transparent and everyone knows exactly where they stand.’

Success is also about investing in human capital, says Arman who simply wouldn’t be where he is today without his team of talented employees.

Back to the future

Proudly, Arman explains, that while the machinery of the watches is still Swiss-made, production is progressively moving to Kazakhstan. He and his talented team are helping to create local jobs.

While Arman says it’s ‘not exactly the goal’ to see Otan Watches on the wrists of all world leaders, his dream is to customise designs with the emblems of different countries and locally-sourced materials.

Watch this space!

Text: Susanna Dunkerley/ETF

Photos: provided by Arman Toskanbaev



NEW PUBLICATIONS

Skills anticipation and matching guides

A six-volume series produced by the European Training Foundation (ETF) together with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). The guides cover the use of labour market

information – how to exploit and transform data sources into indicators for evidence-based policy making, skills forecasting methodologies, skills surveys and tracer studies, and the role of sectoral bodies and employment service providers.



VOL 1
**USING LABOUR
MARKET INFORMATION**
goo.gl/4aG9Rj



VOL 2
**DEVELOPING SKILLS
FORESIGHTS, SCENARIOS
AND FORECASTS**
goo.gl/4Wiq4B



VOL 3
**WORKING AT
SECTORAL LEVEL**
goo.gl/JNDdH1



VOL 4
**THE ROLE
OF EMPLOYMENT
SERVICE PROVIDERS**
goo.gl/1oxMU5



VOL 5
**DEVELOPING AND
RUNNING AN
ESTABLISHMENT SKILLS
SURVEY**
goo.gl/QpMYG0



VOL 6
**CARRYING OUT
TRACER STUDIES**
goo.gl/5DQvGU



GETTING ORGANISED FOR BETTER QUALIFICATIONS: A TOOLKIT

Understanding and comparing qualifications is made easier through national qualifications frameworks. The ETF designed a 5-Step Toolkit to assist with planning, implementing and developing NQFs. Available in English, French and Russian!

goo.gl/3DkZed

Note: The status of this publication is draft. A finalised version will be available soon.



SKILLS NEEDS IDENTIFICATION AND SKILLS MATCHING IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

This working paper presents ETF research conducted in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to better understand how skills needs are being anticipated and assessed.

goo.gl/YNC9vM

TUNE IN ON THE TUBE

Did you know there are more than 200 mini movies on the ETF YouTube channel? We have coordinated a special playlist for this issue of Live&Learn. **ETF Qualifications Toolkit: goo.gl/dQpu0y** in English, French, Romanian, Russian and Serbian!

Step 1. Getting Organised



Step 2. Legislation



Step 3. Stakeholders



Step 4. Institutions



Step 5. Quality Assurance



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