

SOCIAL PARTNERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN



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SOCIAL PARTNERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

WORK IN (SLOW) PROGRESS
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'To ensure sustainable and inclusive growth, effective social dialogue at all levels is key. We also need to have close cooperation among the social partners to anticipate and manage future difficulties.'

*José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission
High-Level Tripartite Meeting with the European Social Partners, Brussels, 4 June 2010*

PREFACE

The European Training Foundation (ETF), through the implementation of a large number of activities and projects in the southern Mediterranean region, has gained considerable experience working with stakeholders and has witnessed the diversity of social partners' involvement in the reform and management of vocational education and training (VET). The ETF commissioned this study to gain a better understanding of how the concept of social partnership has been implemented in the VET sector in the region. The study is, to some extent, a journey into *terra incognita* in view of the very limited amount of information available on the subject academically and the absence of transparent mechanisms for reporting on social partner activities at the national and regional level in general and in VET in particular.

The aim of this study, which is the first on the topic, was to provide a snapshot of social partnership in VET in eight southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia) and to provide detailed information on the organisation of social partners and their role in VET.

The methodology used was to take stock of existing practices in social partnership in the VET sector in the region. Background country reports were prepared by local experts, followed by a cross-country report in early 2010. Local experts were requested, within a very short timeframe, to undertake thorough discussions with key stakeholders and to compile legal, strategy and policy documents. Since the field is mostly unexplored and the concept of social partnership is not deeply rooted in the region, country reports have suffered from a lack of common understanding of the social partnership concept (sometimes confusing or conflating it with public-private partnerships and other forms of cooperation), a lack of empirical evidence and limited access to, or in most cases an absence of, raw data.

The author is grateful to all those who provided relevant comments and information in order to make the report the most accurate description possible of the reality of social partnership in the southern Mediterranean. Special thanks go to all the local and international experts who contributed to this pioneering work. Additional information came from ETF country managers and specialists, mainly through the information provided during the drafting of the Torino Process report and the Education and Business Study prepared by the ETF in 2010 but also through the internal peer review process. These individuals are warmly thanked for their contributions. Finally, sincere acknowledgements go to the social partners from partner countries involved in ETF projects who kindly agreed to answer questions about their involvement in VET decision making.

Gérard Mayen
ETF Expert

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While several initiatives have indicated that social partners in the southern Mediterranean region are expected to play an increasing role in VET, little is known of the processes currently in place to implement social partnership in these countries or the capacity of the social partners to deal with their new role. A review was therefore needed to examine the issues at stake, and in 2009 the ETF commissioned a study to analyse the situation.

This study aims to describe the existing mechanisms involving social partners and to explore policy options in the different national contexts concerned, specifically with a view to improving the participation of the social partners in the field of human capital development (HCD) from the perspective of lifelong learning.

In the southern Mediterranean region the economy is widely informal and/or dependent on micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To varying degrees depending on national contexts, the region's demographic profile is becoming an issue that makes the unemployment of youth (both male and female) a recurrent problem.

All the countries in the region have tripartite negotiation systems. The social partners representing employers differ by country, with the involvement of one or more federations. In some cases (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon), national federations of chambers of industry and commerce are recognised as the official representatives in the tripartite organisational model. In all of the countries, employees and workers are represented by one federation of trade unions (with the exception of Morocco, where two federations are active in the field).

Most of the countries in the region are in the process of reforming their education and training systems and moving towards a more demand-driven policy. In the reform documents of the countries surveyed, social partners are clearly identified as critical actors in the process of VET reform. Nevertheless, education and training systems remain very centralised while also undergoing radical restructuring. Moreover, the concept and definition of social partnership in VET is still unclear for both governments and the social partners themselves and is presently not seen as a mechanism for supporting decision making. Finally, social partner organisations are poorly structured to deal with their new roles in VET.

A combination of several factors still limits the effective participation in VET systems of social partners.

- Traditionally, policies are elaborated by government through a top-down centralised governance process. Such systems give little space in the decision-making process to other constituents of civil society. The legal framework often restricts social partners engaged in decision-making processes to a consultative role.
- At the same time, this attitude may be reinforced by a lack of active involvement in HCD on the part of industry associations, employers' bodies and trade unions.
- Additionally, many social partners' representative institutions are not prepared or keen to engage in a field about which they are not sufficiently knowledgeable and which they do not as yet consider to be of strategic importance. A limited number of these bodies have a clear policy regarding VET or more generally HCD. Only a few have internal structures that allow them to develop strategies, monitor policy development, provide support to members responsible for VET issues on councils and boards, and provide analysis and direct technical input for the implementation of policies at the national, regional and local level.
- The weak capacity of trade unions and their lack of involvement in HCD is a persistent feature. Trade unions are generally less well represented than employers; this may be linked to the fact that trade unions often do not consider training and HCD a high priority in countries where labour and employment discussions constitute the most important part of the social dialogue and where social benefits are often lacking.

The reality is that in the field of VET, only two countries – Morocco and Tunisia – have created formal and efficient tripartite structures that function in a manner analogous to those found in European Union (EU) Member States, and then only in a small number of priority sectors. It is interesting to note that both these countries, which to some extent replicate the model used in one of the EU Member States (France), have also elaborated structured models for continuing training. This can also be explained by the more forward-looking vision that characterises these countries (their interest in moving closer to Europe through special agreements).

Countries with a stronger Anglo-Saxon influence (Egypt, Jordan and to some extent the occupied Palestinian Territory and Syria) tend to give preference to employer participation and only rarely involve trade unions in the limited field of initial vocational training. Employer involvement takes the form of sectoral partnerships. The success of these experiences can be attributed to the capacity of employers to organise at the sectoral level, identify own their human resources needs, and develop active structures for working with government.

The study recommends:

- the development of institutional settings and a legislative basis for the involvement of all social partners in VET decision making, and the inclusion of VET as part of the formal bargaining process between governments and social partners;
- the reinforcement of a structured social dialogue between social partners, leading to the drafting of a common strategy platform for social partnership in VET;
- the reinforcement of social partners' capacities in VET governance and decision making. This may take the form of peer learning activities and may also involve government services;
- paying special attention to trade unions, which in this sector lag behind employers' organisations in both capacity and resources;
- a stronger commitment from donors as well as from international and European institutions dealing with social partnership to supporting the capacities of southern Mediterranean social partners to negotiate VET-related issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Successful social and employment policies require the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, namely the social partners. In this connection, the cooperation of social partners across the Euro-Mediterranean region should be further developed.' This conclusion comes from the final statement issued by the Euro-Mediterranean ministers of foreign affairs after a meeting held in Marseille in November 2008 in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean, the successor to the Barcelona Process for cooperation between the countries of the Mediterranean region.

In the same year, a conference of Euro-Mediterranean employment and labour ministers held in Marrakech (Morocco) confirmed the 'crucial importance of effective social dialogue for enhancing employment, employability and decent work in the Euro-Mediterranean countries'. This was corroborated in a framework for action adopted at that conference. The statement also urged the countries to step up bipartite dialogue between employers and trade unions in order to enhance their contribution to managing economic and social change and to reinforce the capacity of the social partners. In this context, the cooperation of social partners across the Euro-Mediterranean region should be further developed.

As a result of these recommendations, the first Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum was held on 11 March 2010 in Barcelona. Although this was the first opportunity for social partners from across the region to meet and discuss common challenges – particularly the training and employment of the growing cohort of young people – several other initiatives have existed for some time. These include Tresmed¹, an initiative launched in 2001 that provides support aimed at strengthening the role of economic and social agents in decision-making processes in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and the Euromed follow-up committee, a body set up by the European Economic and Social Committee to raise awareness of social partnership and to reinforce the capacities of the social partners.

Many countries in the region (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia) have initiated substantial reforms to modernise their education and training systems (and more broadly, their HCD systems) with a view to making them compatible with lifelong learning strategies. These reforms are made possible by the support of EU Member States, the European Commission and other donors. The aim is to forge closer links between the needs of labour markets and the delivery of high-quality education and training systems for lifelong learning. Demand-driven systems are being introduced to replace the centralised and supply-driven arrangements that have been shown to lack the flexibility needed to adapt to rapid change in the global economy. To achieve this overall goal, the role of a larger number of stakeholders is being studied. More particularly, social partners – that is, representatives of the business world and civil society – are being directly invited to identify skills needs and to contribute to the governance and financing of these new systems.

The time has come to analyse whether social partnership has contributed (and in which ways, if any) to bringing VET systems more into line with the needs of the economy through recent reforms and policy directions.

The ETF has been engaged in the southern Mediterranean region since the beginning of the 21st century and supports the work of the European Commission in the field of human capital development within the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and the Union for the Mediterranean. A key aspect of ETF's work is to promote cooperation and the exchange of experiences among countries in the region and between the north and the south.

The present study provided an opportunity to analyse the situation in the field and to explore policy options within the different national contexts, specifically in terms of how to improve the participation of social partners in the field of human capital development in the context of lifelong learning. It takes stock of ETF's 10-year involvement in the region and the recent information provided by the Education and Business country studies prepared under the Torino Process². The aim was to provide a comprehensive analysis of social partnership in VET in the southern Mediterranean region. Country reports were produced for eight countries³ in order to build a picture of the existing social partnership practices in VET at country level. After clarifying a number of key concepts, the study describes and analyses country by country the role of social partners in policy making and implementation in VET. The different stages of development of social partnership in the region are identified and discussed. A final chapter provides the main recommendations for European and partner country policy makers and social partners interested in supporting social partners from the southern Mediterranean and enabling them to play an enhanced role in VET governance.

We look forward to all comments and hope that they will provide valuable additional information.

¹ Tresmed is a project supported by the European Commission in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership to foster the role of economic and social agents in decision-making processes. It was implemented from 2005 to 2010 by the Spanish Economic and Social Council.

² The Torino Process is a participatory review of progress in VET policy carried out every two years by all ETF partner countries with the support of the ETF.

³ Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia.

2. KEY CONCEPTS

2.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

This study, which looks at the role of social partners' in VET for lifelong learning, deals with all forms of VET that provide initial and continuing training inside or outside the labour market (informal training). It covers all types of vocational and technical education, vocational training, and all educational programmes or training courses aimed at helping people to get a job in the private or public sector, whether or not participants receive a formal certificate. References to general education (secondary, upper secondary and higher education) are not included (except in specific cases where they are relevant, such as Tunisia) because there was no evidence that social partners are playing a direct role in decision making regarding to academic delivery.

2.2 SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN EUROPE

The European Commission promotes social dialogue through the Directorate-General for Employment and the social partners, namely, the representatives of the European trade unions and employers' organisations. The following definitions are shared by the European Commission⁴ and the social partners.

- European social dialogue refers to discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations representing the two sides of industry (employers and workers). It takes two main forms: a tripartite dialogue involving the public authorities, and a bipartite dialogue between the European employers and trade union organisations.
- The bipartite dialogue takes place at cross-industry level and within sectoral social dialogue committees.
- As a result of their representativeness, European social partners have the right to be consulted by the European Commission and may decide to negotiate binding agreements. The institutional basis for social dialogue can be found in the European Community Treaty.

According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)⁵, social dialogue is better developed in Europe than in any other region in the world, and the European social dialogue culture is seen as a cornerstone of its social and economic model. Most social partnership activities take place in the context of this model, including active labour market and economic policies (including education and training in a lifelong learning context), social protection and inclusion, labour regulation, industrial relations and flexicurity.

In general, education and training are seen as key factors in the process of making companies and nations more competitive and increasing the employability of the workforce. The Lisbon Strategy (2000) formulated a vision of the EU as a competitive knowledge-based economy, and social partners are recognised as important players at all levels (enterprise, sector, national and cross-national) in this endeavour. Since 2002, they have been recognised through a joint strategy entitled 'Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications' and have played an important role in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy by contributing to the formulation of guidelines on how to ensure growth, generate employment and enhance competitiveness.

Since then, education and training has been at the top of the agenda, first through the Education and Training 2010 work programme (launched in 2001) and then through Education and Training 2020, the current strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. In 2008, a Cedefop study on social dialogue and lifelong learning provided evidence of the importance of social partner dialogue in education and training, particularly in the context of industrial change (Galvin Arribas et al., 2008). The report shows how social partnership has contributed to the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in terms of both employment and lifelong learning policies. A range of policy decisions (including the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and the Helsinki Communiqué), working methods and processes (the open method of coordination launched by the European Council, the Copenhagen Process) have contributed to the elaboration of a framework of cooperation in which partnership plays a vital role.

At the European (cross-national) level, the social partners are:

- the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC);
- the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (BusinessEurope);
- the European Centre for Employers and Enterprises Providing Public Services;
- the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

⁴ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=329&langId=en>.

⁵ See www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/events/10593.aspx.

In 2007, these organisations produced a joint common study on the key challenges facing European labour markets. In their recommendations concerning education and training, the social partners indicated their commitment to promoting the notion of lifelong learning and ensuring that the continuous development of competencies and the acquisition of qualifications remain an interest shared by both enterprises and employees (ETUC et al., 2007).

At Member State level, social partnership in VET is organised in a wide variety of ways, which will not be discussed at length here. While differences exist between European countries, the involvement of social partners in VET is found in all of them at both policy and implementation levels and in both initial and continuing training. In an analysis of a survey prepared by Cedefop, Winterton (2006) states that: 'Social dialogue and other social partner involvement, such as in tripartite bodies, [is] extensive and apparent at all levels in VET policy and implementation in Europe: national, regional, sectoral and local [...]. Significantly, the social partners are involved irrespective of whether the prevailing socio-economic model involves legal regulation (as in the majority of countries), voluntary arrangements (as in the United Kingdom) or a hybrid of these, as in the formalised cooperation found in Finland and the Netherlands.'

A report prepared in 2009 by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and Cedefop looked at the contribution of collective bargaining to continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and the role of social partners (Eurofound-Cedefop, 2009). It concluded that the Copenhagen Process had encouraged most EU Member States to introduce or revise their national CVET systems and confirmed the increasing involvement of social partners in decision-making processes through mechanisms differing from country to country.

2.3 SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

According to the research undertaken for the European Trade Union Institute in 2003 by Isabelle Schömann in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries⁶, tripartism is not regulated in the same manner in all countries, and where tripartite bodies exist they do not constitute a proper framework for social dialogue (Schömann, 2003, p. 746). In addition, the author notes the general lack of mechanisms for evaluating the outcomes of partnership agreements.

Schömann also notes that while a number of countries have not yet ratified some of the fundamental and/or priority International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions (see Annex), freedom of association is ensured either by constitutional provisions or by legal texts. She highlights the functional dependence of trade unions in the region on government, a situation that hampers their decision-making capacity. With respect to employers, Schömann highlights the high degree of politicisation of employers' bodies and their considerable capacity to influence major political decisions. The authors of a report presented in 2007 by the Economic and Social Forum note that in the Middle East and North Africa 'states have restricted the general activities of workers' and employers' organisations, striving to control them through co-optation in some cases and coercion in others' (Esim et al., 2007, p. 6).

In other words, as further analysed in Chapter 3, the forms and frameworks of social dialogue in the European Neighbourhood South region may differ greatly from their European counterparts.

In this context, economic and social councils are the cornerstones for the elaboration and development of tripartism mechanisms. They already exist in five of the eight countries covered by this study (Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and the occupied Palestinian Territory), and two new ones are likely to be created soon (Egypt and Morocco). Given that these councils regularly analyse the economic and social environment and, more specifically, issues related to education, employment and labour markets, they may be best situated to develop a social dialogue strategy in VET. They are also exchanging at Euromed level through the Tresmed project financed by the EU and participating in the Euromed follow-up committee set up by the European Economic and Social Committee, a body that contributes to raising awareness of social partnership and reinforcing the capacities of social partners.

Unlike the situation in the EU described above, in the southern Mediterranean region there is no supranational body to which all countries must report, no forum providing a place to discuss these issues, develop a benchmarking system and work towards the possible alignment of strategies and policies.

In this context, the importance attributed to the reinforcement of social partnership by the Union for the Mediterranean is noteworthy. This was highlighted during the conference of labour ministers held in Marrakech⁷ in November 2008.

The first Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum, held on 11 March 2010 in Barcelona as a follow-up to the Marrakech conference, provided an opportunity for social partners to establish initial contact in order to address the most commonly identified challenge: the training and employment of youth.

⁶ Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory and Tunisia.

⁷ See http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/conf/employment_health_conclusions_1108_en.pdf.

3. SOCIAL PARTNERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN – A BRIEF OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a brief overview of the organisation, capacities and resources of social partners, mainly in relation to opportunities for participation in VET activities at policy and technical levels.

Social partners – defined as organisations representing employers or employees – are active in all the countries covered by this study. They are primarily organised to deal as well as possible with their members' immediate needs and expectations.

Depending on the country, employers are represented by one or more federations, and in some cases (Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) national federations of chambers of industry and/or commerce are recognised as the official representative in the tripartite organisational model. In all countries, employees and workers are represented by a single trade union federation (with the exception of Morocco, where two federations are active in the field).

A very limited number of social partners' representative institutions have a clear policy regarding VET or more generally HCD. Only a few have internal structures that allow them to elaborate strategies, monitor and engage in policy development, provide support to members responsible for VET issues on councils and boards, or provide analysis and direct technical input on the implementation of policies at the national, regional or local levels.

There is also a great deal of variation in the structures for cooperation between employers, employees and governments and for the participation of social partners in VET system management. This is perhaps unsurprising in light of the variation between countries in the extent of development of their VET systems.

3.1 REPRESENTATIVENESS, INTERNAL STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS FOR SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN VET

ALGERIA

Social partnership is a recent phenomenon in Algeria. The organisations tend to focus mainly on members' interests (support for exports and services, technical assistance etc.) and traditional collective bargaining issues (wages, social benefits, and job security).

The first trade union, the General Union of Algerian Workers, was established in 1956, and the first employers' organisation, the General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises, in 1988. The official role of social partners in VET was recognised in February 2008 with the enactment of a new law on training. The law foresees the setting-up of a higher council in which social partners will seat. This council will play a consultative role and will advise the government on the elaboration and regulation of the national policy in VET. However its membership – 57 members including 47 from public entities, ministries and national companies – and its mainly consultative role question its impact on the overall system. While represented in the council, social partners are not expected to play a crucial role in decision making. The council had not been enforced yet when drafting the report.

In total, 29 employers' organisations, represented by the General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises and the Algerian Confederation of Employers, participate in meetings or consultations with the ministries, mainly concerning issues relating to the economy, industrial relations and job security.

While 70 workers' unions are identified today, 52 trade unions have been approved by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. The General Union of Algerian Workers represents the recognised ones in tripartite meetings at the national level and in the context of VET.

Social partners participate in tripartite meetings with the government (signing an economic and social agreement) and in working committees of the People's National Assembly (the lower house of the Algerian parliament), the Senate, the

National Economic and Social Council (Conseil national économique et social) and the Advisory Council. The General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises represents employers on the boards of the National Social Insurance Fund (Caisse nationale d'assurances sociales des travailleurs salariés), the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (Caisse nationale d'assurance-chômage) and the National Pension Fund (Caisse nationale de retraite). In the absence of a legal framework for social partnership in VET, social partners have a very limited role in policy and decision making and thus have not built any structured internal mechanisms to deal with VET issues.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN ALGERIA

Employers' organisations

General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises (Confédération générale des entreprises algériennes)	The General Confederation was established in 1988 as the first employers' organisation in Algeria and represents 7 000 members from all sectors. It participates in the boards of all the national insurance and pension funds and is a member of the National Economic and Social Council.
Algerian Confederation of Employers (Confédération algérienne du patronat)	The Confederation of Employers represents 15 national federations, and the majority of its members are SMEs. It has offices in 42 provinces (<i>wilayas</i>) and is by far the most important employers' organisation, representing 76% of affiliated businesses. It is very active internationally (in the ILO, the Arab Labour Organisation and the Network of Maghreb Enterprises for the Environment) and is also a member of the National Social Insurance Fund and the National Pension Fund.
National Confederation of Algerian Employers (Confédération nationale du patronat algérien)	This organisation represents eight federations and about 6 000 SMEs.

Employees' organisations

General Union of Algerian Workers (Union générale des travailleurs algériens)	The oldest trade union (established in 1956), with about 1.5 million members.
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EGYPT

Many different actors are involved in VET activities in Egypt, with more than 25 different ministries and authorities currently active in the field. The legal framework provides for institutional participation including tripartite representation in the field of VET. Examples of this are the Supreme Council for Human Resources Development, which is reflected in the new Labour Law of 2003, and the 27 local VET councils. In practice, however, these mechanisms are not fully operational. VET social partners are active in the VET executive committee of the Supreme Council.

While several employers' organisations are quite active in VET, mostly through the sectoral federations, the trade unions are mostly absent. One employers' organisation, the Investors' Association Union, has set up a National Centre for Human Resources Development (NCHRD) with the aim of influencing VET policy decision making through representation within the dual education system set up by the Mubarak-Kohl Initiative (MKI) and now adopted by the Egyptian system.

Several public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives are in place at sector level. (The trade unions are not involved in any of these initiatives.) These include:

- three training councils: the Industrial Training Council (Ministry of Trade and Industry) set up in 2006; the Building and Construction Training Council (Ministry of Construction); and the Tourism Training Council (Ministry of Tourism) created in 2010. All these bodies maintain close relations with the federations in their respective sectors, which are among the most actively involved in VET issues;
- the enterprise training partnerships (ETPs) originally set up by the EU technical and vocational education and training (TVET) reform programme in 12 sectors and also at local level (construction is one example). Employers are actively involved in these partnerships through the Chambers of Industry and Commerce.

Employer involvement is also important in the dual-system VET schools set up under the MKI, the first centres to create training units jointly with regional investors' associations and, to some extent, with the participation of local VET councils.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN EGYPT

Employers' organisations

Investors' Association Union and National Centre for Human Resources Development

The Investors' Association Union was established in 2004 and is made up of investors' associations from all over Egypt. The aim of the union is to represent investors in dealings with government authorities, to help resolve problems and to request government support or services when needed.

The Investors' Association Union established the NCHRD in 2006 in order to participate in the MKI (representing the private sector).

Federation of Egyptian Industries

This federation was established in 1922. Its mission is to enhance industrial economic growth, both domestic and export, through 17 decision-support committees which are constantly implementing programmes and providing services to facilitate and support Egyptian industry.

The federation has an Industrial Training and Vocational Committee, which deals with VET-related issues.

It also comprises 16 chambers and 8 ETPs. The Building and Construction Materials ETP, for example, was established by the Minister for Trade and Industry to ensure employer participation in shaping TVET reform in the sector.

Egyptian Federation for Construction and Building Contractors

Established in 1992, this federation covers the areas of construction, building, public works and land reclamation, as well as dredging, marine installation and other similar works. It defends and fosters the common interests of its members and represents them in discussions and negotiations with authorities. It participates in the regulation of employment conditions, the development of new methods, and other areas. It also tries to further the government's general plan for the development of competency-based HCD policies.

Egyptian Tourism Federation

This federation was set up in 1968. Its mission is to construct the right environment for the tourism industry, to improve tourism workers' skills enabling them to compete internationally, and to work with its five affiliated tourism chambers (two of which are related to ETPs) and the Ministry of Tourism in promoting the interests of the tourism industry. By law, the view of these chambers must be taken into consideration when any decision is made that affects the tourism industry.

Employees' organisations

Egyptian Trade Union Federation

There are around 23 official trade unions in Egypt, each representing a different industry or service, and they are all obliged to be affiliated to this federation. More than 25% of the Egyptian labour force belongs to trade unions.

JORDAN

In Jordan, the involvement of social partners in VET is very recent. The three main social partners – the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), the Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JOCC) and the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) – are at the very early stages of providing their organisations with embryonic resources and capacities. Their role is formally provided for in the country's legislation on employment and TVET, and they are represented on a large number of councils, boards and committees acting in the field of employment and TVET. These organisations are supported by the ETF in capacity building and developing a common strategy on their new role in the decision-making process. Cooperation between social partners has been established, and through this project experiences have been shared with EU social partners.

The Ministry of Labour is currently initiating a social dialogue project with the support of the ILO. A tripartite committee headed by the Minister of Labour is likely to be set up to provide a forum in which social partners will be expected to discuss and advise the Ministry of Labour on labour relations issues. The projected composition of this committee is six members from the Ministry of Labour, six members from employers' groups (three members each from the JCI and JOCC) and six members from the GFJTU.

In 2009, the JCI set up a department for vocational training, employment and human resources staffed by one expert dealing with all the activities of the JCI in the VET sector. It reports to the director-general of the JCI. Its main tasks are to prepare background information for JCI representatives on boards and committees, discuss policy documents issued by the government, and contribute to technical committees and to the elaboration of the JCI's strategy in the field of TVET and employment.

In 2010, the JOCC established a TVET human resources development section staffed by one expert. The role of this section is expected to be similar to that of the department set up by the JCI, and it reports directly to the governing board of the JOCC.

The GFJTU board is also committed to establishing a human resources development section. To date one expert from the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), one of the most prominent VET provider in Jordan, has been seconded to the GFJTU to deal with VET and to work closely with one elected member who represents the GFJTU on various boards and committees. The tasks of the future section are expected to mirror those of the JCI and JOCC departments, but no effective internal resources have yet been assigned to those tasks mainly due to limited financial capacity. Lack of funds may in the long term hamper the capacity of the GFJTU to fully play its role in VET decision making.

In addition, there are 29 other employers' associations and 11 professional and technical associations set up to take care of their members' interests that do not belong to any federation. They may be represented on a few boards or committees, but this is generally on a private basis (Durrah et al., 2006).

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN JORDAN

Employers' organisations

Jordan Chamber of Industry	The JCI represents three chambers of industry in Jordan, cooperates with the government on all policies, laws, regulations, strategies and programmes that might affect national industry, and has an advisory role. It is represented in national and international fora.
Jordan Chamber of Commerce	The JOCC represents 15 chambers of commerce in Jordan. It works with national and international authorities and has an advisory role with respect to the government and Parliament.

Employees' organisations

General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions	The GFJTU represents 17 trade unions covering all trades in Jordan. It participates regularly, mostly in an advisory role (like the JCI and JOCC), in the social dialogue on VET and is represented on many boards and committees that deal with VET.
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LEBANON

In Lebanon, social partnership does not yet play a significant role in VET policy making, but some business associations are represented on VET-related national boards and committees.

The Association of Lebanese Industrialists and the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture are members of several national councils and committees, including the Vocational Training Centre for Adults, the High Council for Professional and Technical Education and the Lebanese Association for Technical Education. Working jointly with the Ministry of Education and Training, they contribute to a number of training projects.

Apart their formal participation in these high-level committees, none of these institutions have created specific mechanisms or structures to deal with policy issues related to VET.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN LEBANON

Employers' organisations

Association of Lebanese Industrialists	Founded in 1943, the Association of Lebanese Industrialists is an economic organisation made up of industrialists from all over Lebanon. It advocates a policy of balanced industrial development for all Lebanese regions and is invited to participate in government meetings on sector-specific issues. Among its specialised committees, it has a VET committee that deals with policy formulation matters in this area.
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Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture	The four Chambers of Commerce Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon (Beirut and Mount Lebanon, North, South, and Bekaa Valley) are independent legal entities working for the public benefit promoting the development of business enterprises. Today, the membership of these chambers represents most Lebanese business. The majority of the members are classified as SMEs. They serve Lebanon's economy and private enterprises through a diverse range of services and activities, including the provision of business information and training ⁸ .
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Employees' organisations

General Confederation of Lebanese workers	This loosely organised national trade union federation founded in 1958 has some 200 000 members. It has so far focused on members' basic rights (wages and conditions) and is not as involved in VET.
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⁸ The Institut de formation par alternance franco-libanais at the Beirut and Mount Lebanon Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture was set up in 1995 with the cooperation of the French Chambers of Commerce to meet the training needs of Lebanese business by developing and delivering highly qualified and professional training programmes.

MOROCCO

In Morocco, social partners are deeply and influentially involved in VET. The new labour legislation has activated the role of both employers' and employees' groups in decision making, and VET is included as an issue for collective bargaining. Social partners are directly engaged in the management and financing of the CVET system.

The main employers' federation, the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM), is structured into 18 committees, one of which deals with vocational training. Two elected members represent the CGEM in all the boards and committees where strategies are discussed. The VET committee representatives are supported by a specialised expert. The main operational arms of the CGEM in the implementation of sectoral strategies are the federations and the professional training advisory bodies called *groupements interprofessionnels d'aide au conseil* (GIAC). The CGEM is also represented on the 10 regional VET committees.

The main trade union, the Moroccan Labour Union (UMT), uses its human resources (staff seconded from companies) to directly intervene in activities related to VET. An internal committee prepares all strategic documents regarding VET. Three elected members of the UMT are on the governing board of the Office for Vocational Training and Labour Promotion (OFPPT), and in each of the 10 regions that have a VET committee, UMT representation is provided by two members.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN MOROCCO

Employees' organisations

General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (Confédération générale des entreprises du Maroc)	Established in 1947, the CGEM represents companies of all sizes and sectors although 95% of its members are SMEs. It works actively on the international scene to promote the Moroccan economy and to attract foreign investments and is presently in charge of the implementation of the country's new system of continuing training. Many sectoral professional associations are operating under CGEM leadership, but with strong financial and operational autonomy. One of the most active in VET is the Moroccan Association of Textile and Clothing Industries, which developed the concept of contractual training in 1990. This agreement with the government stipulates that the association must approve all initiatives that involve creating or terminating a training discipline or section. The concept is currently being implemented in a number of other sectors, including tourism, information and communication technology, construction, and the automotive and aeronautics industries.
Federation of Moroccan Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Services (Fédération des chambres marocaines de commerce, d'industrie et de services)	This federation represents the country's Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Services and their affiliated companies. It plays an active role in all debates concerning the economy and the future of its members and is a member of the board of the OFPPT.

Employees' organisations

Moroccan Labour Union (Union marocaine du travail)	The UMT was established in 1970 and is associated with the Party of Progress and Socialism.
General Union of Moroccan Workers (Union générale des travailleurs du Maroc)	This union was established in 1960 and is associated with the Istiqlal (Independence) Party.

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Several employers' organisations are represented in the occupied Palestinian Territory, but there is only one main player on the trade union side. All of these social partners are represented on the Higher Council for VET and at the local level in Local Employment and Training Councils.

The current political conflict in the country makes the VET situation difficult. The social partners are not very well organised for dealing with VET from a lifelong learning perspective, which means that most initiatives are taken by the ministries and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

Social partners are represented by elected members in several bodies, including the Higher Council for TVET (with members from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour) and the Local Employment and Training councils. So far none of the social partners has invested in a formal organisation to deal with VET issues.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Employers' organisations

Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry	This federation represents its members' interests and will occasionally be consulted by the ministries and training centres about new training programmes and other related issues. It also collaborates with international donors on training programmes for its members.
Palestinian Information Technology Association	This association was founded in 1999 by a group of Palestinian entrepreneurs to defend the interests of the information and communication technology sector. It is legally registered with the Ministry of National Economy as a non-profit trade organisation and currently represents more than 80 major companies in various sub-sectors.
Palestinian Construction Union	This is a professional, economic and social entity that deals with the practice of the construction contracting profession in the occupied Palestinian Territory and abroad.
Palestinian Federation of Industry	This is the national institution representing the Palestinian industrial sector through its five federated associations.
Union of Agricultural Work Committees	This agricultural union was established by a group of volunteers and agronomists as a non-profit organisation in 1986 to defend the interests of Palestinian farmers.

Employees' organisations

Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions	This federation represents several trade unions in a number of sectors and is represented on the board of the Higher Council for TVET.
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SYRIA

While there is no obligatory cooperation between the worlds of education and work in Syria, the participation of social partners in the field of VET has increased in recent years. Employers are represented by the Federations of Chambers of Industry and Commerce and by the General Federation of Artisans. On the other side, the General Federation of Trade Unions represents all workers. However, the internal organisation of the trade union is not designed to deal with VET policy issues.

The Chambers of Industry have set up an apprenticeship scheme in Syria and have allocated resources and developed internal capacities to follow up on its implementation. Elected members represent the Chambers in a number of boards and committees. A Human Resources Development Centre has been established in Damascus to collect data and information and support those members. Special offices dealing with the apprenticeship scheme have been established in the Aleppo and Homs Chambers of Industry, and there is a plan to set up VET centres in these locations similar to the facility in Damascus.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN SYRIA

Employers' organisations

Federation of Chambers of Industry	This federation represents the local Chambers of Industry in their dealings with the authorities and takes care of the interests of its members. It is represented at local, Arab and international conferences, economic and social discussions, etc. There is a Human Resources Development Centre in the Damascus Chamber of Industry and similar centres are planned for Aleppo and Homs.
Federation of Chambers of Commerce	This federation represents the local Chambers of Commerce in their dealings with the authorities and takes care of the interests of member companies. It participates in local, Arab and international conferences. VET centres have been established in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, but their work is not yet regulated as part of an agreement with the ministries involved in VET policy making.
General Federation of Artisans	Represents employers of hairdressers, confectioners and other kinds of crafts workers, and issues licenses to practice after examination.

Employees' organisations

General Federation of Trade Unions	Represents all trade unions in Syria, covering workers from all over the country.
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TUNISIA

The main social partners in Tunisia are the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (Utica) on the employers' side and the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) on the employees' side. These groups are represented at all levels in various councils and committees, ranging from the Economic and Social Council to regional vocational training committees, and they have over time developed the capacity and assigned resources needed to monitor and engage in activities in the field of VET. The Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP) and the Tunisian Hotels Federation are active in their specific sectors as employers' representatives. In the mid-1990s the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training signed conventions with the major federations as part of the effort to involve employers' organisations in the VET system. A similar convention was signed in early 2000 with the employees' organisation (UGTT).

In Utica, an elected member of the executive board is specially assigned to follow up on all activities relating to education and vocational training and to represent Utica on all committees and boards headed by the government. A specific department in charge of VET and HCD activities composed of various regional representatives is active in the headquarters of Utica; it mainly deals with coordination between the ministries and the regional and sectoral structures of Utica, and participates in technical committees organised by the Ministry of VET. There is no direct reporting link between this department and the official representation, however, so information flow is limited. Another department works closely with private companies that deal with consulting and training. Utica is planning to reorganise in order to better serve the needs of its enterprises as concerns VET.

In the UGTT headquarters, two departments report to the executive board in this field; VET issues are the responsibility of the department of studies, staffed by one expert, while the department of trade union training mainly concentrates on internal trade union activities linked to VET. This situation creates some confusion because the UGTT's representation on the various councils and committees may be from either of these departments. The executive board has put forward a proposal to create special units at the sectoral level to deal with VET activities. At the regional level, staff in charge of studies generally deal with VET issues.

The Tunisian Hotels Federation has set up a commission for TVET activities. Regional federations are responsible for monitoring any training programmes and actions related to their sector of activity. They are also in charge of supervising and/or establishing new TVET centres and participating in regional structures for TVET. At the central level, one expert is in charge of coordinating all activities relating to VET.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONS IN TUNISIA

Employers' organisations

Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (Union tunisienne de l'industrie, du commerce et de l'artisanat)	Utica is the main body representing employers and private operators in industry, trade and handicraft, and is their voice in dealings with the government. Established in 1946, it is represented nationally and locally and through sectoral federations. It participates regularly in meetings, consultations and negotiations with ministries.
Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries (Union tunisienne de l'agriculture et de la pêche)	This organisation was established in 1950 to represent SMEs in the agriculture and fisheries sector. It participates in meetings and is consulted in the context of councils and committees relating to agriculture and fisheries, but its influence appears to be rather limited.
Tunisian Hotels Federation (Fédération tunisienne de l'hôtellerie)	This federation was founded in 1960 to represent the interests of the hotel and tourism industry. It represents the sector in VET discussions under an agreement with the Ministry of VET and runs a number of VET schools.

Employees' organisations

Tunisian General Labour Union (Union générale tunisienne du travail)	The UGTT was established in 1946 and is the union for all organized workers and professionals in Tunisia in both the public and private sectors. The union is involved in several committees and councils and participates in meetings, consultations and negotiations with ministries.
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3.2 ENVIRONMENT FOR SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN VET

3.2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

All the countries in the region have enacted laws or regulations to formalise the functioning of social partnership (mostly labour laws and specific by-laws). These define the minimum standards for the responsibility and participation of social partners in employment and labour policies. However, the legal framework for VET does not always formally include social partnership as a mechanism for governance.

No case was found where legislation on education or higher education stipulates or calls for any role for social partners. In several countries where the participation of social partners is clearly covered in the legislation, the role remains advisory. In Morocco, VET is an issue subject to collective bargaining and there is strong and direct social partner involvement in the management of part of the national vocational training system (mostly continuing training). As mentioned in a recent ILO report, 'one of the strong points for social dialogue in Morocco is undoubtedly the new attitudes of stakeholders as concerns the concept of social dialogue' (Ibourk, 2010, p. 46). Tunisia is in the process of having VET included in the formal tripartite discussion.

While quite detailed legislation supporting work-based learning programmes exists in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, formal structures for cooperation and the involvement of social partners in this field are relatively weak elsewhere (Sweet, 2009).

Algeria

In Algeria, Act 91-30 defines the modalities for exercising the rights of employers' organisations and trade unions (Article 1). It states that these social partners have the right to negotiate collective agreements and to be represented on councils and/or may be consulted (Article 39). VET is not mentioned specifically. National associations are recognised if they have a presence in at least 25 of the 48 *wilayas*, and the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for their accreditation. Article 57 of Law 90-11 of 21 April 1990 states the obligations of employers in terms of training. This refers to continuing training and apprenticeship. The recent Orientation Act (08-07) provides the VET system with a new social partnership council (Article 24). The mission, organisation and composition of this council are established by a decree (No 09-170/2 May 2009), but the council has not yet convened.

Egypt

In Egypt, the Labour Law regulates the role of social partners. The Supreme Council for Human Resources Development is a tripartite body formally in charge of elaborating a national human resources development strategy, including VET, but it is not currently fully operational. (Since 2008, only its executive committee has been holding regular meetings; employers and trade unions are represented, though not very strongly.) The main decisions on VET (such as the Strategy for VET Reform approved by the Prime Minister in 2009) are developed outside these fora and are mostly led by the public sector. A common feature of all the programmes implemented in the field of VET is that generally trade unions are neither active nor invited to contribute. Although the legislation on tripartite dialogue is not properly implemented, there are several examples of PPP in Egypt, such as the Training Councils for Building and Construction, Industry, and Tourism).

Similarly, in the TVET reform project supported by the European Commission, dialogue between government and employers takes place through the ETPs in 12 economic sectors and through the Local Enterprise Education and Training Partnerships in a number of governorates: 'Two thirds of each sector or local committee is comprised of the private sector while the third part is comprised of training authorities, like the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Productivity and Vocational Training Department'. Working with the building and construction ETPs, the Egyptian Federation for Construction and Building Contractors runs employment and training programmes in all 26 of the country's governorates. These programmes directly employ young people who are then contracted out to individual employers. They use the training centres of the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction to compensate for the seasonal nature of the work available and to compensate for limitations in the range of skills that can be learned on some work sites. Other organisations running similar programmes include Traintex (for the textile industry).

Prior to the TVET programme, the MKI was the first project that involved the private sector in the establishment of dual-system schools adapted to the Egyptian context and needs. The MKI project is now fully implemented, and the dual education system is an integral part of the Egyptian VET system. Mobile training programmes are run jointly by the Ministry of Tourism and the Egyptian Tourism Federation in a variety of locations.

The NCHRD is legally under the umbrella of the Investors' Association Union but it also involves government entities. This body coordinates 22 MKI regional units, and its partners are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, and the Egyptian Federation for Construction and Building Contractors. Finally, the Industrial Modernisation Centre works at the local level and focuses on training needs analysis.

Jordan

In Jordan, specific laws and by-laws regulate the role of organisations representing employers and employees, and the Labour Act and the E-TVET Council Act (2009) clarify the role of social partners as regards their participation in diverse boards and governing bodies active in the field of VET, such as the boards of directors of the Security Social, the VTC, the Employment and TVET Council, the National Training and Employment Project and the Employment and TVET Fund. The recent establishment of an Economic and Social Council has provided a forum for discussion on labour and VET by social partners and civil society representatives. Despite this high degree of involvement, however, a lack of capacity and organisation among social partners (internally and with regard to one another) minimises the impact and coherence of their interventions. None of them has established a clear strategy for intervention and participation in the governance bodies in which they are invited to participate.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, the Labour Law includes several articles related to some form of HCD. Articles 18 and 19 stipulate that 'the employer has a responsibility to gradually and completely train the employee in the profession or the craft in which they are employed. As a result the employee should be given a certificate at the end of the training period'. This law has never been applied, and very few of the social partners have called for the implementation of the related by-laws. Most of the parties involved – employers' organisations, workers' groups and government ministries – do not yet recognise the role and importance of social partnership in helping individuals to pursue initial and continuing training. To date no laws or regulations have been enacted concerning the tripartite dialogue or other arrangements, and there is no evidence of bipartite formal or informal organisation. Social partnership in HCD for lifelong learning is a new concept in Lebanon.

Morocco

In Morocco, the existence and intervention of all social partners is based on legislation. The new Moroccan Employment Act (2004) regulates the social dialogue and provides for collective bargaining. Several priority sectors have been identified (offshoring, textiles and leather, automotive, electronics, aeronautics) in the framework of a strategy, which is supported by the King, that aims to create 220 000 jobs before 2015. It is foreseen that TVET social partners will play an important role in the implementation of this strategy. Since 1996, public authorities, working with social partners, have been engaged in thorough reforms, encouraging companies to provide continuing training. As an example, the board of directors of the OFPPT, the institution in charge of implementing CVET programmes, has a tripartite membership (14 members from the government, seven from the CGEM and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Services, six from the UMT, and one from the General Union of Moroccan Workers. Social partners are also represented at the regional level in 10 regional committees for continuing training. A reform process is under way to create a new institution managed by the CGEM in order to improve the functioning and management of actions in continuing training implemented by the OFPPT. With respect to initial training, trade unions are not engaged in any of the activities implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

Occupied Palestinian Territory

In the occupied Palestinian Territory, the tripartite dialogue should take place within the structure of the Higher Council for TVET. However, in reality this council almost never meets and the two ministries (the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education and Higher Education) in charge of coordinating and implementing curriculum development carry out development work in an administrative manner without the effective involvement of social partners. In fact, the social partners in the occupied Palestinian Territory play a very limited role in VET at the governance level. This limitation may be due to a series of factors, including their lack of experience, resources and commitment to VET. The new strategy for TVET presently being finalised with the support of the German international development cooperation agency (GTZ) contemplates the creation of a new TVET agency in which social partners are likely to participate. In six governorates there is an initiative to set up Local Employment and Training Councils that would play a key role in responding to labour market needs. Social partners (employers and employees) will be formally represented and fully engaged in the management of these councils.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, the presence and membership of social partners are regulated by laws or administrative decisions. The TVET Act passed in 1993 provided a framework for social negotiations in the field. Social partners are invited to participate in

the various structures directly or indirectly related to HCD. In Tunisia, these include the Economic and Social Council, the Higher Council of Human Resources, the National Committee of Professional Training, and the Regional Professional Training Committees, among others. The reforms of the vocational education system implemented in recent years have involved a major change in system steering. Employer and union representatives have been given a stronger role at the national level in advisory and management bodies, and in the management of vocational education colleges. Conventions have recently been signed with major employer and industry bodies to strengthen their involvement and to more clearly define their responsibilities in areas such as identification of training needs, mobilisation of local employers, and management of training centres. Recently, the UGTT and Utica have succeeded in including VET as a regular and permanent topic for discussion in future negotiations.

Syria

In Syria, the activities of social partners are regulated by laws and by-laws. The recently enacted Labour Law of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (April 2010) provides for the establishment of mechanisms for cooperation between education and training institutions and employers to facilitate the creation and supervision of apprenticeship schemes and vocational training centres and the certification of training. The social partners have been asked to participate in preparatory steps and discussions during the five-year development and planning period for these mechanisms. Such participation would obviously require an effective institutional framework and commitment on the part of both decision makers (government) and social partners.

The Council for Higher Education, the Supreme Council for Intermediate Institutes of the Ministry of Higher Education, the Apprenticeship Committee and the VET Council are composed of representatives from public and private sector institutions. These bodies are tasked with suggesting policy and measures to strengthen the links between education and the world of work. The results to date include a VET strategy endorsed by the government and a proposal for a system-wide rollout of an apprenticeship scheme. Strategies and agreements exist mainly on paper, and the country lacks an executive policy for cooperation.

The Federation of Chambers of Commerce participates in committees in the field of education and vocational training and is engaged, together with the Syrian Enterprise and Business Centre, in providing training, mainly business oriented. The Federation of Chambers of Industry has been given the right by law (Decree 52 of September 2009) 'to cooperate with the related bodies in designing the education plans and curricula in the colleges, institutes and high schools that teach industrial professions'. Since 1996, the Federation and its local chambers have participated in committees on VET development led by the Ministry of Education and have been very active in the implementation and management of the apprenticeship scheme. The chambers are presently considering setting up human resources development centres at the local level. Trade unions in Syria are not active at all in the field of VET.

Summary

In summary, it is clear that the legal framework for a partnership between government and social partners is already in place in most of the countries of the region but that it is not being used in the ways provided for in the different laws and regulations. This may be due to the centralist tradition of government decision making and programme management in the region and the still inadequate experience and very weak capacity of the social partners to commit to and sustain engagement in VET policy and decision-making processes, a new field they may sometimes see as secondary. Nevertheless, several examples indicate that employers have started to become more concerned about the need for a qualified workforce and are looking to initiate pilot joint projects with public institutions with a view to making the VET system more responsive to labour market needs. Such concern is rarely supported by employee representatives, however, except for the notable cases of Morocco and Tunisia, where trade unions have tended to move from a rather opposition-based style to a more cooperative approach, mostly under pressure from the liberalisation of the economy in the context of globalisation.

3.2.2 PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORKS AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

Decentralisation of governance and implementation is not systemised in the VET sector in the region. Several countries have started decentralisation initiatives in which social partners are involved on a tripartite basis.

In **Algeria**, the VET law (Orientation Act 08-07) provides for regional conferences in which social partners will be invited to contribute, but no formal system with a decision-making role for social partners has been set up to develop and manage VET at the local level.

In **Egypt**, the process of local decentralisation at the level of the governorates and districts is being piloted in the field of education (including VET). This process offers an opportunity to bring the governance and implementation of VET closer to society and the social partners. Cooperation mechanisms still need to be put into operation, and the creation of local training councils, provided for in the Labour Law, may be one of the first initiatives.

In **Lebanon**, a pilot project supported by the EU in the agro-food sector is seeking to involve social partners in the management of a vocational training school. So far, however, the role of social partners in this decentralised project has not been effective owing to reticence on the part of the authorities.

In **Morocco**, tripartite regional committees for continuing training have been established in 10 regions. Strategic decisions concerning requests for and monitoring of training plans are implemented by these committees. All official social partners are directly involved in the decision-making process.

In the **occupied Palestinian Territory**, local employment and TVET councils have been set up on a pilot basis in several governorates, with the support of the GTZ. Social partners (employers' groups and trade unions) are formally represented on these councils, which are expected to play a key role in coping with labour market needs.

In **Tunisia**, the legislation specifies that VET centres are to be managed by an administrative council chaired by an employers' representative. This is not, however, generally put into practice, and employers' organisations are unprepared for their new role. In the absence of a clear differentiation of responsibility between the chairperson of the council and the administrative manager of the centre, and owing to the limited flexibility of administrative school's rules, the decentralisation process is not functioning efficiently despite a general willingness to develop a quality assurance system based on international standards.

There are very few other examples in the region of structured tripartite social partnership at the local level supporting VET development. In some cases, in the absence of any formal representation of social partners, NGOs function as local government counterparts and contribute widely to the support and implementation of projects in partnership with local institutions.

There are some examples of government–employer mechanisms at the local and regional level that have resulted in cooperation between employers and public education and training systems.

In **Egypt**, the EU TVET Reform Programme is involving employers' organisations chiefly through their participation in the ETPs⁹. There are 12 national sectoral ETPs and an ever increasing number of local ETPs. The focus is primarily on bridging the gap between schools, training providers and the private sector. The first ETPs focused strongly on training needs analysis and improving the quality and availability of training. Based on needs analysis findings, courses were developed to meet the needs of industry, and short courses were implemented to address immediate needs. The programme now also encompasses VET schools, which have become part of the ETPs and whose curricula, training of teachers and trainers, and physical upgrading of premises and equipment are being carried out in cooperation with the Industrial Training Council. The main challenge for the immediate future is the sustainability of these ETPs after the programme has been implemented. At present, discussions are being held with public and private representatives, and different models may be followed in different cases. The ETPs have certainly provided a laboratory where different models of public–private cooperation in VET have been rehearsed, although once again trade unions are not involved.

In **Jordan**, PPP initiatives involving key enterprises and sectors and the VTC have been successfully set up through memoranda of understanding. In some cases the management of the centre has been given to a private company.

In **Syria**, the establishment of an apprenticeship scheme by the Ministry of Education at regional level, starting in the Damascus region and then expanding to Homs, Aleppo and Hama, has been fully supported by local Chambers of Industry and the Federation of Chambers of Industry. These groups have been closely engaged in designing the project, developing curricula, and participating in local apprenticeship committees and governing bodies in two sectors – ready-made garments and mechanical manufacturing. Some chambers have set up offices specifically to monitor the development of the scheme. A new experiment in the leather and shoes sector driven by the Aleppo Chamber of Industry and the Ministry of Industry aims to provide dedicated training in vocational training centres. Trade unions are not involved.

3.2.3 PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORKS AT SECTORAL LEVEL

Identification of priority sectors requiring special attention in HCD is a key issue that poses problems in centralised systems. Not all the countries of the region have labour market information systems, and where such systems do exist they face problems in terms of the quality and accuracy of the data collected.

In some countries, efforts have been made, with the cooperation of social partners, to identify priorities and to start building partnerships capable of responding more effectively to the needs of evolving markets. In most countries, with

⁹ Sectoral ETPs are PPPs made up of a technical and administrative secretariat and a decision-making board of directors. The latter is made up of elected representatives of stakeholders, with approximately two-thirds from private sector enterprises and one-third from TVET service providers. In general, sectoral ETPs are closely linked to the structure of their respective sectoral chambers and federations.

the notable exception of Morocco and to some extent Tunisia, trade unions are not active in the creation and implementation of such mechanisms.

In **Egypt**, a large number of sectoral VET mechanisms are in place, as described above. In addition to the ETPs, the NCHRD, an institution established by the Investors' Association Union and one of the employers' social partner organisations, is active in 22 dual-system schools started by the, now completed, MKI project. The NCHRD acts as an interface between companies and schools and contributes to a large number of activities, ranging from identifying training needs to training trainers and managers. Another example is the Egyptian Federation for Construction and Building Contractors, which, together with initiatives like the MKI, is providing employment services to trainees and helping them find jobs with member companies. As usual in Egypt, these activities do not involve trade unions.

In **Jordan**, the Employment and TVET Council commissioned a study in 2009 to identify the key sectors with development potential. The ten sectors identified are now being assessed by the social partners and the Quality Assurance and Certification Agency to identify the areas requiring more in-depth review. This initiative is in the early stages and is expected to result in an agreement on the mechanisms needed to build a sectoral approach. The Siyaha project, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development, is a very successful programme based on PPP in the tourism sector. On the basis of an in-depth analysis of the sector together with the Ministry of Tourism and the VTC, the project has developed a dual training scheme that has involved the hotel sector since the early stages. The VTC has recently launched other pilot PPP initiatives in several sectors, including pharmaceutical, automotive and printing, through memoranda of understanding between sectoral federations and/or companies. While interesting, these initiatives do not form part of any strategic framework, however, and the concept still needs to be further developed and discussed with the social partners. The trade unions have no formal role in this process.

In **Morocco**, a strategic plan for HCD has been drawn up for a number of priority sectors, such as the hospitality industry, textiles, mechanics, automotive, offshoring and farming. An action plan based on a strict analysis of the data available, undertaken jointly with the social partners, has been elaborated by the ministry in charge of labour and vocational training. Social partners are full members of the governing board of the OFPTT, the corporation responsible for continuing training in Morocco. A tripartite management committee acts as the decision-making body on behalf of the board and validates all strategic decisions, budgets and action plans. Social partners are also members, with equal representation, of a central committee for special training contracts which elaborates and validates training plans and sector action plans and allocates GIAC funding. Nine sectoral GIAC (state-financed and managed by the federations) focus on identifying employers' needs as regards continuing training and providing technical and financial support to selected companies. In addition, many federations co-manage vocational training centres with the OFPPT. Some of them have set up specialised training institutes (for example, in the textiles sector). This highly structured system is fully active and based on a very positive experience of partnership between employers and the government.

In **Tunisia**, social partners are involved at sectoral level in advisory bodies and through consultations organised by the ministries in charge of education and training. Their role in the choice of training plans is advisory and they are not involved in decision making. Nevertheless, in the field of higher education the role of employers, through Utica, has been reinforced by the implementation of a new university scheme involving co-managed Bachelor of Arts and Master's degrees. These schemes, which are linked to the implementation of the Bologna Process, require the revision of curricula and, more importantly, a period of training in the companies involved. The principle of co-design and co-management of these curricula is the only example of a structured PPP initiative identified so far in higher education in the region.

In **Lebanon**, the agro-tourism school in the Labeka region (an EU project) is a unique example of an attempt to involve social partners in the design and management of a training centre. The functioning of this programme still needs to be evaluated before it can be considered to be a model.

In **Syria**, apart from the apprenticeship scheme mentioned above, which is based on a partnership between the government and the Chamber of Industry, little is known about VET projects at sectoral level contributing to the involvement of social partners from either the employer or employee sides.

3.2.4 INVOLVEMENT OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN TECHNICAL VET-RELATED ISSUES

This study has looked at whether and to what extent social partners are involved in the technical activities that contribute to the development of demand-driven VET systems. These include the definition of occupational standards, training needs analysis, review and updating of qualifications and training standards, work-based learning (for example, apprenticeship and dual systems), financing, quality assurance and accreditation, continuing training and lifelong learning, guidance and counselling, teacher training and qualification, and curriculum development.

The following paragraphs present a selection of initiatives in those areas, but no example was found of a systematised arrangement where the social partners were engaged through tripartite mechanisms in all activities.

Training needs analysis

While some countries have established training needs analysis mechanisms involving a selected number of social partners, no example of a systematised training needs analysis programme was identified.

In Morocco, nine sectoral GIAC are working with companies to analyse their continuing training needs and develop special training programmes to meet the demand identified.

In Syria, the apprenticeship system has benefited from an analysis prepared by the Chambers of Industry, which looks at the needs of the professions in the sectors of ready-made garments, mechanical manufacturing and mould manufacturing.

In Egypt, the Industrial Modernisation Centre, an independent institution co-funded by the Egyptian government, the EU and the private sector, analyses training needs together with company human resources departments. Training needs analysis is one of the regular activities of the local and sectoral ETPs set up under the TVET Reform Programme. Trade unions are not involved in this process in either case.

Quality assurance and accreditation: definition, review and updating of standards

In countries where the competency-based approach has been chosen as a model for implementing VET reform (Morocco and Tunisia), the quality assurance and accreditation processes in place include the definition and review of occupational standards. These processes receive technical support from employers' federations and involve the participation of trade unions. This mechanism is centrally managed and regularly updated, and is considered to be a fundamental component of qualifications design.

Egypt has an emerging system for quality assurance in education and training based on the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education, but so far no social partners are engaged in the process. It is likely that the development of a national qualifications framework under the national authority may influence their future involvement. The Industrial Training Council, which works with 330 training centres, contributes to the quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms (in collaboration with the Scottish Qualifications Authority) in the application of the National Skills Standards Project. The standards developed through this project are now also being tested by the Building and Construction Training Council and have been used by companies like Arab Contractors. Once again, trade unions are not involved in this process.

In Tunisia, social partners are represented on the tripartite board of the National Centre for Teacher Training and Training Engineering, which is in charge of the revision and update of qualifications and training standards.

In the sectors that have apprenticeship schemes in Syria, occupational standards are developed with the support of the relevant employers' organisations and without the involvement of trade unions.

In a regional project supported by the GTZ, Jordan has led the development of an Arab occupational standards classification framework in which professionals have been invited to participate. This has been done on an ad-hoc basis and no permanent mechanism is in place to review the framework with the formal support of official social partners.

Work-based learning (apprenticeship and dual system)

Since initial VET and apprenticeship programmes are supposed to lead directly to jobs, social partners should be involved in this vital area. They represent the sectors and are therefore in a position to say what trainees (students or adult learners) should know, understand and be able to do after they complete a VET course or module.

While Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia have quite detailed legislation to support work-based learning programmes, elsewhere formal structures for cooperation and the involvement of social partners in this field are relatively limited (and, where they do exist, often weak). Structured models set up in Egypt and Syria in a limited number of sectors have been identified. The role of employers at all levels of the process (from identification of needs to the implementation and management of programmes), in cooperation with governmental institutions, is established. In Egypt, once again, the best examples are to be found in the EU TVET Reform Programme ETPs (which have developed a dual training model that is currently being piloted) and the dual education system set up by the MKI. In the Productivity and Vocational Training Department (part of the Ministry of Industry), training is provided through an apprenticeship system in which students receive theoretical and practical training at schools and then apply what they have learned in factories. Employers therefore have a role in practice, but there is no formalised national policy in place. No example of trade union involvement of was identified.

Financing of VET

Social partners in the region rarely directly manage or contribute to the financing of VET. There are, however, rare cases (in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, for example) in which special funds are generated through the collection of contributions and/or taxes from companies to finance VET projects. In general, the management of such funds is centralised through government institutions. The efficiency and transparency of these systems need to be improved. As an example, in Jordan an Employment and TVET fund is in place and employers are participating on its board, but a recent decision has been taken by the authorities to no longer request contributions from companies. This reduces the capacity of social partners and companies to influence the use of such a fund and to support the development of a structured model of continuing training. In Syria, the private sector contributes to apprenticeship financing through an apprenticeship fund, but the lack of transparency regarding the use of the fund does not motivate companies to continue their financial support. One exception is the decision of the Moroccan government to entrust the employers' association (CGEM) with the management of the in-service fund.

Continuing training and lifelong learning

In Morocco, the sophisticated mechanisms in place for continuing training are used to reinforce the capacity of companies and sectors to compete at the international level. The role of social partners in the tripartite board of the OFPPT and the managerial capacity of the sectoral GIAC is unique in the region. It is fair to say that training policies and the implementation of activities are mostly managed through a tripartite social partnership approach that is very close to that of some EU Member States.

In Tunisia, companies employing over 100 employees are required to establish a yearly continuing training plan that benefits from public funding. This plan must be approved by a special commission, of which social partners are members. Social partners are also members of the board of the National Centre for Continuing Training and Vocational Promotion (Centre national de formation continue et de promotion professionnelle), a body that manages the financing and implementation of CVET programmes, helps companies to develop HCD plans, and disseminates information to companies and individuals.

No other similar examples were identified in the region, where in general continuing training and lifelong learning policies are either non-existent or centralised.

Curriculum development, teacher training and qualifications, guidance and counselling

Under the MKI in Egypt, the NCHRD has contributed to teachers' and trainers' qualifications for those operating within the initiative, and for factory workers wishing to become trainers. It has also developed curricula for 31 occupations, which are reviewed regularly every three to five years. The best example of curriculum development is to be found once again in the framework of the ETPs developed by the EU TVET Reform Programme: curricula are being developed on the basis of training needs analysis, teachers and trainers are being retrained, and a system for guidance and counselling has been piloted. The main area of uncertainty is the sustainability of these actions in the ETPs once the project funding has been withdrawn.

In Syria, curriculum committees set up by the Ministry of Education review curricula and introduce new specialisations. The General Federation of Artisans and the Chambers of Industry and Commerce are invited to contribute. Agreements have been signed with VET providers to carry out initiatives (still on a small scale) involving curriculum development and mutual exchange of training staff and teacher training initiatives. Recently, the Chambers of Industry have set up sector committees to proactively propose new curricula to the Ministry of Education.

Apart from initiatives at fairs and events promoting employment among young people, no other examples were found of any contribution on the part of social partners to guidance and counselling activities.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 TRADITIONS INFLUENCE THE BEHAVIOUR OF STAKEHOLDERS

In the countries of the southern Mediterranean region, as in the EU¹⁰, significant efforts are being made to boost economic development, with a particular focus on dealing with the negative effects of the economic crisis and adapting to the changes imposed by globalisation. The development of education and training is considered to be perhaps the most important ingredient of economic development. During the last 10 years, most of the countries in the region have reformed their education and training systems, often with very high expectations of the effects this would have on the employability of the educated population. So far, however, the results have been quite limited (ETF, 2009, p. 33).

At the same time, developing demand-driven education and training systems is a real challenge in a region with a tradition of centralisation and public employment and economies characterised by a large informal sector and driven by SMEs. In addition to the demographic challenge – in 14 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean current fertility rates will ensure positive population growth until 2020 (ETF, 2009, p. 6) – these countries are currently faced with significant absorption of newcomers into the labour market. The authors of a recent policy note from the ILO's Regional Office for the Arab States highlight the need for the countries of the region to focus on HCD, quality of employment and other social measures and to establish mechanisms for promoting employment (Behrendt et al., 2009).

Another critical issue is the lack of a structured system for skills development. In the absence of a structured CVET system or a regulated apprenticeship system that engages all parties in a legislative framework, there is no tradition of giving a strong and organised role to social partners in the governance and implementation of education and training.

The case of Morocco and Tunisia reflects the truth of the above statement. Throughout this study it has been mentioned that Morocco and Tunisia show evidence of a more advanced approach to the implementation of social partnership in VET than their neighbours. Thorough analysis of the role assigned to social partners in those countries indicates that their involvement in CVET constitutes the cement for cooperation and partnership. Formal structures have been developed that allow all the social partners to discuss continuing training policies with each other and the government, and mechanisms have been set up that allow them to play a direct role in governing and to some extent managing part of the training system. At the same time, social partners have developed internal policies that give direction to their contribution to national HCD strategies.

Moreover, partnership is more active in countries where business sectors are well structured and demand is clearly expressed in terms of human resources needs, although there is a need to reinforce the role of trade unions to fully comply with the basic rules of tripartism. In countries in the Mashrek region where CVET may not formally exist (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian Territory and Syria), social partners (particularly trade unions) find less opportunity to engage in policy discussions regarding VET.

At policy level

Shared decision making does not form part of the traditions of the countries in this region, and this is reflected in the VET sector. There are, however, marked differences between countries. Those with a stronger Anglo-Saxon influence (Egypt, Jordan and to some extent the occupied Palestinian Territory and Syria) tend to focus on involving employers rather than the trade unions. In these countries, it appears that policies are elaborated by the government without any serious attempt to engage in organised, structured and strategic partnership with social partners. Governments tend to take a very top-down and centralised approach to the governance of such systems, meaning that other bodies have little real role in decision making. This attitude may be reinforced by a lack of any effort on the part of industry associations, employers' bodies and trade unions to engage in HCD. Additionally, a large number of social partner representative institutions are not prepared or keen to engage in a field they do not know enough about and one they do not consider to be strategically important. A combination of these elements continues to limit the development of effective education and training systems in the region.

At least two countries with a stronger French influence (Morocco and Tunisia) have a more balanced form of social partnership and a clearer institutional framework, although this varies from country to country. This attitude may also be reinforced by the geographical and political interest these countries have in forging closer ties to Europe and complying with European principles (a process concluded by the signing of an advanced status agreement)¹¹. In these two countries, trade unions and employers' associations are involved in VET policy design and negotiations, although not so much in decision making.

¹⁰ See http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm.

¹¹ Morocco obtained this status on 13 October 2008. The discussion process is still ongoing as concerns Tunisia.

At programme and project levels

Approaches again differ depending on the local context. Confronted with a quality delivery problem, a social demand for more academic education that does not reflect the needs of the labour market, and high unemployment among educated young people, governments are tempted to involve social partners (mainly employers) without giving them a balanced role in decision making at local and sector levels and without transparent mechanisms in place. In other cases, social partners proactively approach the government or local training providers to develop programmes that better respond to the needs of the labour market. Some successful PPP initiatives, in which employers participate in a number of activities – identifying training needs, fully or partially managing schools and implementing new programmes – are found in most of these countries, but in the absence of clear mechanisms of implementation, these initiatives are not being scaled up. Furthermore, the absence of trade union involvement calls into question the capacity of countries in the region to build a sincere and active system of social partnership. Once again, it is only in Morocco and Tunisia that the social partners are engaged in a structured way with government authorities and participate in large-scale VET programmes in terms of both decision making and implementation.

4.2 DIFFERENT STAGES OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

None of the countries in the region have a national strategy for lifelong learning that fully includes the social partners as committed actors.

Direct involvement of all social partners (tripartism) in the decision making and management of the national vocational training system is found in only a few countries (Morocco, Tunisia and to some extent Jordan).

Involvement of social partners in the development of VET (and more generally, VET policy) ranges from nil to (in one case) very effective.

Three different social partnership development profiles can be identified in the region. These situations are neither logically nor chronologically sequenced, and they are not mutually exclusive.

Structured tripartite partnership

In this model, social partners are actively involved in policy design and are accorded a specific role in the implementation of policies on an equal footing with the government. This type of partnership is based on historical links between partners, recognition of the competences of each partner and sharing of responsibilities as regards implementation. The government is prepared to relinquish some of its traditional competences to social partners on the basis of established rules. A structured mechanism has been elaborated in which bargaining and negotiation are key elements for success. Social partner organisations are structured to keep pace with changes and in a position to initiate bilateral social dialogue and develop clear strategies. Morocco and Tunisia are the only countries in the region that have established this kind of model for initial and continuing training in a number of key sectors. This model still needs to be consolidated as it is neither extended to all sectors nor present at all levels of the VET system.

Government–private sector partnership

This is not strictly speaking a form of social partnership because of the lack of any engagement on the part of trade unions. It is, nonetheless, an arrangement by which government and the private sector are engaged in active partnership through the implementation of projects (rather than at the policy level) in selected sectors. Such arrangements often emerge when there is no clear strategy covering all economic sectors or all levels of the VET system. Cooperation between employers and government is based on memoranda of understanding, with employers' institutions playing a role in activities ranging from training needs analysis and guidance and counselling to the management of schools, curriculum development and definition of qualifications. In this model the government still retains a preeminent and central role in decision making and the management of the system, and there is no long-term history of involvement on the part of social partners in policy making. This kind of approach is found in Egypt, Jordan and Syria at differing levels of commitment. If trade unions and government can find a discussion platform where VET can be included as a subject for collective bargaining, this model could evolve and become a real tripartite system.

Donor-supported pilot partnership

Donors have been involved in several initiatives in the region aimed at getting social partners and governments together to engage in a structured discussion concerning VET and the role of each party. This has happened in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian Territory and to some extent in Jordan and Syria. The hope is that these pilot programmes will provide governments and social partners with positive examples that can be used as a basis for further development.

4.3 DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONAL SET-UPS IN SOCIAL PARTNER BODIES

The priority for employers' organisations is to focus on the qualification structure and the mechanisms that contribute to the development of the human resources companies need. In several countries (Egypt, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia), some sectoral bodies have started to restructure their organisations to respond more effectively to these needs and to engage in the decision-making process. This is achieved through a range of mechanisms that tend to edge out official tripartite partnership in favour of more direct solutions, such as local or sectoral partnerships with training providers.

Trade unions in the region have very different ways of looking at VET issues. Some (in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia for example) have been able to actively engage in bargaining and to include VET at the top of their priority lists. A larger group have not yet begun to look at VET as a strategic issue. In a few countries, Jordan, for example, unions are at the very early stages of mobilisation and are to some extent still clarifying their views on involvement in VET. The critical situation of labour market access for young people, growing unemployment, and the industrial changes necessitated by international competition may lead these organisations to rethink how they may play a more strategic role in VET decision making.

This study identified several organisational patterns of social partner engagement in VET in the region. The three main models identified range from symbolic (not to say non-existent) to limited and finally to extended. They provide a general description of the strategies used by social partners in their efforts to play an active role in VET policy and decision making in the region, but they may apply to either employer or employee representative institutions and, in any case, can never fully reflect the real situation of the institutions examined in this study.

The main criteria used to define these models were the organisation's strategic vision and action with respect to VET policy formulation, its internal mechanisms for dealing with policy debate and decision making, the level of technical support provided to support the decision-making process, and the organisation's capacity to work with other social partners through bipartite dialogue.

Symbolic model

The symbolic model can be defined as an arrangement whereby social partners are formally represented on boards and committees that deal with VET at the request of government but outside of the context of a precise and regulated legislative framework. Inside the social partner institutions, elected members dealing with VET issues have no specific mandate (and are very often not nominated for their interest in or knowledge of the VET sector), and the organisation has no reporting or technical support structure. Social partners have no explicit strategy to guide them during discussions, and the decision-making process remains fully in the hands of the government. Coordination and bipartite dialogue among social partners is almost non-existent.

Limited model

The limited model can be defined as an arrangement whereby social partner institutions have not explicitly formulated a vision supported by their executive boards regarding their institutional role in VET. A strategic document to support the vision and position of the organisation is absent or at an early stage of elaboration. Official representatives (elected members) report to the board, but there is no accountability and there are no in-depth monitoring tools in place. Technical support exists within the organisation, but very limited resources are allocated. Formal links between elected members on boards and committees and technical support staff are not always established. Pilot projects are initiated in which social partners are given a limited role. The legal framework does not constrain social partnership, but neither does it fully clarify it. The contribution of social partners is still a matter of debate, and no clear bipartite dialogue mechanisms have been established between the social partners themselves.

Extended model

The extended model has been identified in a very limited number of social partner organisations in the region. It is supported by a favourable political and legal environment that recognises the formal role of social partners in VET issues and the importance of tripartite cooperation. It is characterised by a clear vision and strategy in the institutions involved, whose elected members are real experts in the field. Adequate and staffed support structures are in place to support the work of elected members, and mechanisms have been activated to ensure an active role in policy making and programme implementation. Social partners are jointly active at sectoral, regional and local levels and well coordinated with government entities. Social partners manage financial systems to which they contribute totally or in part. They may even be assigned responsibilities in the direct management (total or partial) of initial and continuing training programmes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In a nutshell, social partnership in the field of VET can lead to a win-win-win situation whereby the public system can be adapted to labour market needs, employers can get staff with the skills they require, and employees and students can learn for and from a changing environment.

Policy makers are looking for solutions whereby poverty is alleviated through solid social cohesion. One way to achieve this is to make VET systems more demand-driven and responsive to the needs of local labour markets and the globalisation of the economy. In this context, the involvement of civil society and the creation of structures and mechanisms to support such involvement are matters of direct concern.

Employers are looking for more competitive approaches in order to sell high-quality services and products. This can be achieved through the provision of a qualified workforce and the elaboration of quality systems in VET.

Employees, students and families are looking for options that provide them with opportunities for advancement, and the provision of quality VET may help them to fulfil these expectations. The trade unions and NGOs that represent them in the policy dialogue need to reconsider the value of playing an active role in this field.

Finally, it is worth noting that this study – the first on the subject – faced a number of limitations due to the existence of different interpretations of the concepts ‘social dialogue’ and ‘social partnership’ in the countries studied. At the end of this first exercise it is clear that more research will be needed to properly assess the position in view of the diversity of the situations observed in countries that are at different stages of development and have differing visions of the modernisation of their economies and their human resources capacities. As often occurs in comparative analyses, country descriptions are still rather superficial. More structured work will be needed to take into consideration the national contexts in which social partnership occurs, including the political, historical, cultural and social environment in which the social partners are acting.

In order to address these issues and participate in the efforts to reinforce the role of social partners in the field of VET, the ETF intends to launch a regional project that will run from 2011 to 2013. This project will be undertaken in close cooperation with the social partners in the region and will aim to enhance their capacity to play an active role in making VET a key tool for social and economic development.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendation of this study.

- The involvement of social partners in VET requires **a legal environment that includes VET as one of the formal themes for discussion in negotiations** between government and social partners. Governments are invited to promote the role of social partners in VET reform. Institutional settings and a legislative framework should be developed to bring social partners into the decision-making process and give them the chance to directly influence and implement part of the VET system. The establishment of a structured CVET system is the best way of ensuring the participation of all parties in the decision-making process.
- **Social partners are encouraged to set up strategic platforms to reinforce structured social dialogue among themselves** in order to debate the strategies needed to develop VET. The formal consultation process between social partners should be strengthened at national and regional levels. Projects bringing together employer and employee organisations (bipartite dialogue) to further the common interests of both sides should be encouraged. Subjects that could be covered include the role of social partners in governance, qualification development, continuing training in the context of lifelong learning, financing, quality assurance, assessment and certification, guidance and counselling, training needs analysis, information provision, and training of trainers. A common strategy could be elaborated in order to strengthen the social partners' influence in the decision-making process during tripartite discussions with the government. At the regional Mediterranean level, social partners are encouraged to set up fora where they can discuss social partnership in VET and exchange successful experiences, preferably using existing mechanisms.
- **Social partners are invited to seek assistance in order to reinforce their internal capacities to deal with VET and HCD issues** at both the decision-making and technical levels. Social partners tend to have structures, functions and processes in place for collective bargaining (regarding wages and other working conditions). However, when they become involved in regular and systematic social partnerships in VET they need to adapt their internal organisation to reflect the new challenges this work entails. Several options are possible depending on the stage of development and involvement of the social partner in question, but a minimum technical structure is needed at the central, federal, regional and local level to make it possible to supervise business dealing with TVET activities. The governance and decision-making capacities of social partners need to be improved, as well as their technical and operational knowledge of the vocational training sector. A peer learning methodology could be used for this, also involving government services. Pilot projects and good practices should be identified and shared. Two kinds of competences are needed to help social partners play an active role in VET: policy and decision-making skills (through formal representation of elected members) and technical skills (with staff dedicated to supporting the decision makers). As regards selection of board members, priority should be given to those who are convinced of the value of HCD. These individuals should be knowledgeable about policies and strategies in the field and to some extent should be the owners of the social partners' strategies. Technical staff are expected to provide permanent support to the decision makers by supplying them with updated information, preparing briefing notes and reports, organising relationships with other partners, drafting papers, organising interventions by technical teams in discussions and workshops, and so on. They should be the interface with federations and members as concerns information on programmes and mechanisms supporting HCD through VET initiatives.
- All parties (including government, donors and international organisations) should pay particular attention to the **need to reinforce the strategic and resource capacity of trade unions in the field of VET**. Trade unions in the region lag behind employers' organisations in both capacity and resources in VET. Special capacity-building programmes should be developed to improve one or more of the following capacities: strategic vision and development, structural and functional organisation, and negotiation skills. Trade unions should be supported in their efforts to elaborate strategies for VET and put in place adequate resources (representativeness, organisation, staff, and equipment) to engage in this field.
- **Donors and international and European organisations dealing with social partnership are invited to systematically consider supporting the capacity development of Mediterranean social partners** in programmes aimed at supporting the VET reform process. At present, donor assistance in this field is scant. There are a number of PPP projects, but not much is being done to help social partners take the driving seat in HCD reform. Donor programmes should support social partnership in accordance with the policies in place. Support programmes for VET should systematically include one objective that contributes to greater involvement of social partners at both the governance and technical levels. Regional projects focusing on social partnership are likely to provide an interesting forum for the exchange of experiences between peers. Projects should be policy-driven, not donor-driven.
- **EU and Member State social partners are encouraged to share their experiences** concerning their role and involvement in VET and to contribute to the capacity building of their counterparts in the southern Mediterranean. Although there are a few bilateral examples of employers' organisations working together (mostly in the Maghreb region), there is no coordinated support from sister organisations in the EU. The experience gained by the European social partners has not been utilised to a sufficient extent in the European Neighbourhood South region. Even though

the conditions are very different in this region, EU and Member State social partners should initiate knowledge-sharing programmes (for example, twinning, peer learning and development projects) with their southern counterparts in order to help reinforce the latter's capacities and expand their VET resources. The role of international institutions, such as the ILO and International Trade Union Conference, is also very valuable in reinforcing the negotiation capacities of social partners in the field of HCD and VET.

ANNEX LIST OF ILO CONVENTIONS

Selected ILO conventions of interest for this study are listed below (categorised according to ILO definitions as 'fundamental', 'priority' and 'other'), with information regarding the subject of each convention and the state of ratification in each country.

SELECTED ILO CONVENTIONS									
No	Subject	State of ratification							
		Algeria	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	OPT	Syria	Tunisia
Fundamental conventions									
87	Freedom of association and protection of the right to organise conventions	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
98	Right to organise and collective bargaining	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Priority conventions									
122	Employment policy	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
144	Tripartite consultation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Other conventions									
88	Employment service	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
135	Workers' representatives	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
140	Paid educational leave	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
142	Human resources development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes

OPT: the occupied Palestinian Territory

None of the countries have ratified all of these conventions, and four out of eight have not ratified one of the most fundamental conventions, namely No 87, which concerns freedom of association and protection of the right to organise conventions.

ACRONYMS

Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CGEM	General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (Confédération générale des entreprises du Maroc)
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETPs	Enterprise training partnerships
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
GFJTU	General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions
GIAC	Groupement interprofessionnel d'aide au conseil (advisory training body)
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit)
HCD	Human capital development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCI	Jordan Chamber of Industry
JOCC	Jordan Chamber of Commerce
MKI	Mubarak-Kohl Initiative
NCHRD	National Centre for Human Resources Development
OFPPT	Office for Vocational Training and Labour Promotion (Office de la formation professionnelle et de la promotion du travail)
PPP	Public-private partnership
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union (Union générale tunisienne du travail)
UMT	Moroccan Labour Union (Union marocaine du travail)
Utica	Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (Union tunisienne de l'industrie, du commerce et de l'artisanat)
VET	Vocational education and training
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation

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