







Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations



"...education and training clearly have a role to play in developing our neighbourhood. Good education and training that respond to the needs of society and the economy contribute to employment, economic prosperity and social and political stability."

Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism

#### **ETF: A PARTNER FOR PROJECTS**

As a centre of expertise, the European Training Foundation (ETF) is well-equipped to carry out its mandate of developing knowledge and skills through education and training. ETF experts have in-depth knowledge and experience of key labour market matters, employment issues, vocational education, management training and lifelong learning. They can combine this with knowledge of the political, social and economic history and reality in the countries they work with.

Working within EU policies, the ETF cooperates with a wide range of partners to deliver services to European Union institutions - especially the European Commission - and EU Member States. In 2004, the ETF operated in 30 countries in four regions across three continents. Being a relatively small agency, the ETF draws extensively on expertise available in the EU Member States.

The ETF helps the European Commission to identify opportunities for supporting innovation in labour market related education and training and develops methods through which these can best be addressed. It supports policy development by providing the European Commission, EU Member States and stakeholders in the partner countries with analyses, geographic and thematic studies, stocktaking reports and progress reviews that are based on information and data collected and compiled in its partner countries.

Through pilot projects, often carried out with the support of individual or groups of EU Member States, the ETF also plays a significant role in preparing the ground, building momentum in the period between the identification of new EU actions and the start of their implementation, and coordinating planned parallel support activities.



Villa Gualino, Turin, Italy

With 10 years of experience in education and training in countries neighbouring the EU, the ETF would like to raise awareness and interest about the opportunities that it offers for partnership with individual Member States in this field.

EU external support to human resources development has increased sharply in recent years. The adoption of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) promises a further boost to this trend.

Within the EU, a determined focus on human capital has been the European Commission's answer to the mounting importance of knowledge in the global economy. Its European Employment Strategy, the Lisbon Process, and a persistent drive to develop a culture of lifelong learning are complementary parts of an all-out effort to steer Europe into the knowledge era.

With the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has now also committed itself to promoting these aims in the countries that surround it. Already today, theory is being put into practice through a strong emphasis on capacity building in the candidate countries, a reorientation away from large infrastructural projects in the Tacis Programme, focus on stability through social and economic development in the Western Balkans and support for job creation and private sector development in the Mediterranean region.

EU assistance to human resources development in these regions covers a myriad of initiatives to develop knowledge and skills through vocational education and training, and their number is increasing. The ETF is the EU agency that prepares the ground for these initiatives.

Through its work, the ETF has proved that EU Member States harbour a tremendous amount of expertise in labour market related education and training. Coordinating and appropriately channelling such expertise is one of its hallmarks. With ETF mediation, groups of EU Member States have mustered expert teams whose qualifications and versatility are among the best in the world.

As international support to human resources development increasingly moves towards comprehensive sector-wide approaches, the need for such coordination becomes ever more urgent. No single actor can or should attempt to take on broad support initiatives alone when working through partnerships, where every party involved contributes its own specific expertise, is a viable alternative

Recognising the added value of multilateral teamwork, the European Commission will aim for close interaction with bilateral operations of individual Member States in the new programmes that will put the theory of the new European Neighbourhood Policy into practice from 2007.

The ETF strives to encourage and support such interaction by reinforcing its campaign for closer coordination among national policies and bilateral or multilateral programmes.

This publication describes what kinds of services the ETF can offer and how and to what extent these can be utilised by individual Member States, groups of Member States and third parties.





#### **HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER**

EU Member States and international organisations can access both the organisational and thematic expertise of the ETF and are indeed encouraged to do so. Cooperation between Member States and the ETF can take different forms.

# Providing access to available expertise

The European Union provides the world's best education and training policy developers. No other region in the world can showcase such a variety of solutions to current generic challenges in education and training: how to keep adults in 'learning mode', how to finance continuing training, how to guarantee ongoing dialogue between employers and trainers.

This versatility is important. It is generally acknowledged that policies cannot be copied but this doesn't mean that every country tackling training reform must reinvent the wheel. Good practice can be translated, but doing this appropriately is a process of making choices. The more informed these choices are, the better the end result will be. Making informed choices requires exposure to a variety of solutions.

Throughout the past 10 years, the ETF has drawn extensively on this wealth of good practice in the EU Member States. It has mobilised and focused available expertise to the benefit of reform in its partner countries but it has also mediated between partner countries with a need for specific skills and expert organisations in EU Member States that could respond to this need.

Through ETF-managed programmes and projects, hundreds of people who have played central roles in the development of education and training in their countries have been able to learn from their colleagues in EU Member States.

The need to share this expertise is still pressing. EU Member States are therefore encouraged to continue working with the ETF to make their accumulated experience available to colleagues in our partner countries by hosting study visits, workshops and seminars.

# **Sharing expertise**

Over the past 10 years, EU Member States have been instrumental in the ETF's objective of sharing expertise in training.

When the Phare VET reform programmes were launched in what today are the new Member States, staff of the national Programme Management Units met every six months in whichever Member State held the EU Presidency. Spread over a number of days, the participants typically went through an intensive programme of study visits and seminars. They met regional authorities, visited companies, spoke with social partners and studied regional training programmes throughout the European Union.

The experience they accumulated over the years gave them an insight into the diversity of the Member States that few even within the European Union

possess. The contacts they made prepared them better than anything else for accession. Today, many of them have started to pass on their knowledge to those who need it in other partner countries.

Impending accession also brought (and still brings today) an immense need for capacity building in the candidate countries. Access to the European Social Fund (ESF) could only be taken meaningful advantage of by people trained in using it. Through the ESF Special Preparatory Programme, the ETF helped develop this capacity in the candidate countries by convening regional workshops where people who worked with the ESF on a daily basis shared their experiences and, again, organised study visits throughout the European Union for hundreds of civil servants and social partners.



# 2. Implementing projects linked to ETF activities

Member States or groups of Member States can opt to develop project activities linked to ETF initiatives. ETF activities tend to be small pilot projects, many of which have great potential for implementation across a broader geographic or thematic area.

Cooperating in clusters of linked activities has the potential to considerably streamline multilateral efforts, not only because the ETF can mediate among different partners, but also because it can keep partners up to date on other donor activity in the field or region. At the very least, this can avoid duplication. More positively, however, it supports much needed synergy among bilateral and multilateral support activities.

Linked projects also offer groups of Member States a chance to contribute to initiatives of a scope they might otherwise find hard to realise. Small countries may have the expertise to deal with specific reform activities but not the broad base that is required to see a reform project through from start to end. A large country, in turn, may have this broad base but lack specific sector expertise.

This approach is particularly suitable in cases where EU Member States have national priorities and programmes that are in synergy with EU external relations priorities and ETF Work Programme activities. It is also appropriate in cases where EU Member States wish to maintain control over the



implementation of their individual projects, while at the same time linking them cost-effectively to the efforts of other donors and Member States to improve impact.

The ETF has demonstrated the capacity to link up multilateral teams with a collective expertise that could not have been mustered by any of the EU Member States alone. A flagship example of this is the North-West Russia Project in which eight Member States and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) took part.



# **Linking expertise**

The North-West Russia Project contributed to the reform of vocational education and training in four sectors crucial to the economy of north-west Russia: telecommunications, tourism, transport, and wood production and processing. The project was launched as part of a joint initiative of the Russian ministers for education and labour and the ETF. It took place over six years, in two phases, and was supported by Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands in its first phase. The second phase (1999-2001) was supported by Austria, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and the ILO.

The original idea was that the Member States involved would be responsible for sectors, while the ETF would take responsibility for the horizontal issues, but there were serious communication problems among the different project teams and in the first years progress was slow.

Towards the end of 1997 the project was evaluated externally. The main conclusion was that it should be continued because there was potential, but as things stood they were unsustainable. As a result, in the second phase of the project, the ETF took over the project management and coordination.

In the second phase, the ETF coordinated the project design, developed the framework and organised a two-week visit to the region with 20 people from the participating teams. From there on the project grew to become the flagship example it is today. It is now one of the initiatives whose results are in highest demand throughout Eastern Europe and even Central Asia.

# 3. Using ETF services for national initiatives

The ETF is a centre of expertise in training reform in transition countries. This expertise can be accessed by Member States and employed for the benefit of their own bilateral and multilateral activities.

ETF support services are suitable in cases where an EU Member State has programmes that complement both EU external relations priorities and the mandate of the ETF. They are also appropriate where EU Member States see the benefit of grouping their foreign aid programmes under a multilateral umbrella.

They may also be suitable where the EU Member State has identified a key objective, but is lacking the required expertise and field resources to design, implement, monitor or evaluate measures to reach their objective.

This approach has been used by countries such as France, Italy and Switzerland and by organisations such as the World Bank. The terms for cooperation agreements of this type are negotiated on a case-by-case basis according to the nature of the project, and the expected level of ETF involvement in the project.



# **Supporting expertise**

The most significant example of direct financing of regular ETF projects is the multi-annual contribution of the Italian Trust Fund to the ETF.

Each year, the Italian Government makes €500 000 available to support ETF activities. After consultation with the Italian authorities, the ETF indicates in its annual Work Programme which ETF projects will be reinforced thanks to Italian support, thereby ensuring the appropriate recognition of the donation made by the donors. Contributions are typically used to extend or expand projects in the ETF Work Programme. As such, they respect EU and ETF priorities by default.

Confirmation of the value and benefits to the Italian authorities came most recently in September 2004 when the Italian Government made available an exceptional additional contribution of €300 000 through the Italian Trust Fund to co-fund labour market surveys in the Western Balkans. These had been keenly requested by the European Commission's Directorates General for External Relations and Employment, the Italian authorities, and the ETF, and were welcomed by the partner countries.

Other organisations have also contributed to ETF activities in a similar way, such as the Swiss Development Agency and the World Bank.



# 4. Making direct financial contributions

EU Member States can also support the sharing of EU expertise in education and training by offering direct financial support to ETF Work Programme activities

This approach is particularly suitable in cases where an EU Member State has priorities and programmes that are in line with EU external relations priorities and ETF Work Programme activities, and wishes to employ the full spectrum of EU expertise to increase investment in human resources development in one specific country or region.

It is very effective in cases where EU Member States wish to integrate their foreign aid programmes, even on a small scale, in an EU framework. This would maximise the impact of initiatives that tackle pan-European or even global issues, such as poverty alleviation and international migration, through education and training development.

It may also be suitable in cases where an EU Member State has identified a key priority, but is lacking (part of) the required specialist know-how or capacity in the field to reach their objective.



Finally, direct funding is an option for EU Member States that have been involved in linked pilot projects (see above) and want to ensure broader implementation or dissemination without making the organisational commitments this would require. In this case a country could opt to finance continuation or dissemination under ETF management instead.

This direct funding mechanism can increase the return on investment from aid as pooling resources reduces the incidence of fixed overhead costs. As such it is a sound option for EU Member States that are looking for cost-effective implementation mechanisms within a European dimension.

### WHERE WE WORK



# Candidate countries

For 10 years the ETF helped the new Member States in Central and Eastern Europe prepare their education and training systems for accession. In the years ahead, the ETF will sustain its involvement in human resources development in Romania and Bulgaria and step up activity in Croatia and Turkey. ETF activities in these countries are implemented in the frameworks of the EC Phare, CARDS and MEDA Programmes.

#### Key areas for cooperation with these countries

■ Labour market restructuring and training for unemployed people, reform of vocational education and training systems, adult learning, national qualification frameworks, teacher and trainer training and preparation for accession, including the European Social Fund.



# **Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

In the current Tacis Regulation education and training are regarded as key tools to support institutional and administrative reform in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Training is also considered of great significance to the reform and restructuring of the private sector. Active labour market policies for job creation and initiatives supporting local development help to address the social consequences of transition.

#### Key areas for cooperation with this region

Social partnership, local and regional training strategies, financing, quality assurance, teacher and trainer training, qualification frameworks, governance and decentralisation, active labour market policies for poverty alleviation, and training for enterprise development.





# **Mediterranean region**

European Union support to North Africa and the Middle East is rooted in the philosophy that social and economic development offer the best perspective for stability in the region and reduced migration pressure.

The ETF's overall aim is to achieve a more targeted use of the various Euro-Med policy instruments to help Mediterranean partners develop socially balanced and cost-effective training systems geared to the labour market.

#### Key areas for cooperation with this region

■ Labour market analysis and training policy development, teacher and trainer training, regional cooperation, ICTs and training, addressing the needs of the informal labour market, financing education and training.

### **Western Balkans**

High unemployment and an inappropriately skilled labour force continue to be major obstacles for stability in South Eastern Europe. The ETF supports governments, training institutes and socio-economic partners in the region to develop vocational training systems that are innovative and responsive to the labour market and to social needs.

#### Key areas for cooperation with this region

■ Labour market restructuring and training for unemployed people, reform of vocational education and training systems, decentralisation in education, adult learning, national qualification frameworks, teacher and trainer training and local training strategies and skills development for SMEs.

### **FACTS AND FIGURES**

Council regulations	The European Training Foundation was established by Council Regulation No. 1360/90 of 7 May 1990. The consolidated version of the Council Regulation CONSLEG: 1990R1360 – 01/10/2003 integrates the original founding regulation with all subsequent
Director	Muriel Dunbar
Staffing 2005	104
Stanning 2003	104
Budget 2005	€18.5 million
Location	Turin, Italy
Mission	The ETF assists partner countries in developing quality education and training systems and in putting them into practice.



Muriel Dunbar, Director, European Training Foundation

# MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ETF

Further details about the ETF and the activities that it carries out can be found on the ETF website: www.etf.eu.int

# **EU MEMBER STATE REPRESENTATIVES**

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	Ministry of the Flemish Community	
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	Ministry of Education and Culture	Ministry of Education and Culture
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	Ministry of Education	University of Kuopio
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	Ministry of Employment, Labour and	Ministry of National Education,
	Social Cohesion	Higher Education and Research
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	Federal Ministry of Education and Research	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany
Greece	nomination pending	
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