MEDA-ETE
regional project

MEDA REGIONAL COOPERATION IN TVET AND THE LABOUR MARKET: FROM IMPLEMENTATION TO SUSTAINABILITY

MEDA-ETE Regional Project
Education and Training for Employment
(Component 1)

Third Annual Forum, Turin, 14–15 April 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Education and Training for Employment (MEDA-ETE) project is a unique regional initiative that works to set up a regional agenda on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and its links with labour markets in the Mediterranean region. The sets of themes and topics identified by country representatives during the preparation of the project, which are reflected in the project's four components[1], have proved to be in line with regional and national challenges.

The structure of the MEDA-ETE project's Component 1 (the Euromed Annual Forum) is such that it has developed into an important regional opportunity for exchanges and debate on issues and challenges facing education, training and employment in the Mediterranean region. The MEDA-ETE project's Annual Forum provides a perfect opportunity for examining past developments in depth and, more importantly, for discussing future actions. By bringing all the constituent networks together, the forum provides a framework for cooperation at the highest level and an opportunity for country representatives to discuss synergies and complementarities across project components at the national level.

Starting from the second Annual Forum, the project team, in discussions with partner country representatives and experts, decided to produce an annual publication that was to be considered a major input to the forum proceedings. The important function of the Annual Forum publication is to enable all the MEDA-ETE project actors to capitalise on the knowledge and expertise developed within the project and to share them with the outside world and among themselves. The idea of an annual publication was developed to support this process. It was based on the assumption that the accumulated knowledge and experiences needed to be made available and debated within and outside the project.

In general, MEDA-ETE project implementation was successful in 2007. It was not always easy, but it was certainly highly rewarding for the members of the project networks and the project team. The project has managed, using a participatory approach, to provide decision-makers and practitioners in the MEDA region with high quality publications (reports on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning, quality and quality assurance in TVET and methodological notes on the Observatory Function) that introduce new insights on these topics in the MEDA region. Practically all country and network members have contributed to the elaboration and finalisation of these publications.

We have also managed to introduce and develop some common methodologies in analysing TVET issues, or at least we have introduced a common language that refers to building blocks in analysing *apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning*, and *quality assurance*, taking into consideration major factors such as *context* and *institutional settings* and *the role of social partners* in TVET reforms. These key concepts and frameworks are now widely shared among all network members.

A similar outcome can be expected from our work on *entrepreneurship* and *e-learning*. The 2007 work plan marked a change from simply a reflection on countries' experiences to actual experience on the ground; pilot teacher and trainer training interventions have started in both entrepreneurship and e-learning. The project provided a mechanism not only for sharing expertise but also, for many, for becoming acquainted with some of the best practices within and outside the MEDA region. More profoundly, interventions on the ground are helping to

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[1] As an expression of the shared interest of MEDA partners, the ETE regional project encompasses four components: Component 1: Euromed Annual Forum on TVET for employment; Component 2: Euromed Network on TVET for employment; Component 3: Support for young unemployed people in the areas of self-employment and the creation of microenterprises; Component 4: Development of e-learning for training in Information and communication technologies (ICT) and TVET. For further information see: http://www.meda-ete.net

bridge policies with practices by looking at the sustainability of pilot experiments in a broader institutional context.

This publication will reflect on these experiments and draw lessons learned at this stage. It will show us to what extent a regional approach can set up solutions for common issues and can also bring change at the national level. It will also show us the boundaries of such a perspective.

Of course, the project is not yet where we would like it to be. The year 2008 will be an intensive one, full not only of implementation activities but also of evaluation and dissemination of the project's results at both the regional and national levels. It was agreed that the project should have a three-year operational phase as a time frame for achieving its objectives. This period is now coming to an end and it is time to think about what comes next. The purpose of this reflection is to identify and map out questions, ideas and potential strategies for the future. Clearly, the intention is also to make further progress towards understanding the rationale and implications of regional cooperation and more broadly towards a framework for a strategic partnership between Europe and Mediterranean partners in education, training and employment.

Overview

This publication includes five interrelated themes:
- the observatory function of TVET and the labour market;
- apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning;
- quality and quality assurance in TVET;
- entrepreneurship;
- e-learning for teachers and trainers.

The two threads that link these themes are TVET reform and sustainability of the project outputs. Each chapter is structured in three dimensions: the progress made by the project in 2007; the state of knowledge, experiences and lessons that can be drawn from project implementation; and the sustainability of the project's interventions and outputs.

The following is an overview of the contents of the five chapters.

Chapter 1. Compare to learn: monitoring labour markets and TVET systems in the MEDA region

This chapter reports on recent developments in setting up the Euromed Observatory Function. It highlights major gaps in terms of collection and analysis of data regarding TVET and the labour market and their use in decision-making. It also introduces elements of debate regarding the comparability of data across the Mediterranean region. The chapter also stresses that the present phase should be seen as a first stage of a much longer cycle, which will eventually build on sound mechanisms for producing comparable and useful data for policymaking in the region.

Chapter 2. We need them – they need us: work and learning partnerships for youth

This chapter presents the methodological approach used to set up and lead the activities of the network on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning. It focuses on the main insights and conclusions of the comparative analysis of work on enterprise-based programmes and schemes. The chapter presents three categories of programme, each of which faces different challenges. They comprise well-established programmes, long-established programmes, and relatively recent pilot programmes. The chapter concludes with major recommendations regarding opportunities and constraints for the development of work-based programmes in

the MEDA region stressing the added value and leverage for sustainability of regional cooperation in this field.

Chapter 3. Quality and quality assurance in TVET in the MEDA region: state of play and outlook

In many countries of the MEDA region and the European Union (EU), interest in improving the quality of TVET systems has increased progressively over recent years. The chapter gives a short description of project activities and the situation in the MEDA region regarding the issues of quality and quality assurance, and then explains the shortcomings of considering quality and quality assurance separately from TVET reforms. Based on insights developed in the framework of the MEDA-ETE network on quality and quality assurance, the chapter states that quality and quality assurance objectives and mechanisms need to be embedded in a general framework for reform and they need to be linked to clear political objectives and measurable achievements. The chapter concludes with a vision of future support to the MEDA network on quality and quality assurance.

Chapter 4. The entrepreneurial spirit within the MEDA-ETE project: between practice and policy

The chapter describes the process set up by the MEDA-ETE project to contribute to fostering the entrepreneurial spirit in society with effective actions, to boosting the quality of training on entrepreneurship by improving methods and tools, and to building national and regional networks of entrepreneurship. The chapter reports on progress made by the project. It then presents and discusses a number of best practices. It presents the adaptation and transfer process for the beneficiaries and some lessons learned. In addition to the analysis of project outputs, the chapter discusses other issues such as complementarities with the Euro-Med Charter project.

Chapter 5. Harnessing new technologies for quality teaching and learning in the MEDA region

In the wider context of education and training reforms, the chapter addresses teachers and trainers who receive training in e-learning as drivers of wider change. In addition to presenting the e-learning course, the chapter presents the socio-constructivist approach used and highlights the strong emphasis that it puts on collaborative learning at the national and regional levels. The chapter also looks at the challenges that have emerged during project implementation. The challenges are related mainly to the methodological choice of the blended approach, the overall learning environment, the course language, structural and technological frameworks and the balance between country and regional needs. The chapter concludes with the presentation of recommendations for future actions and for the sustainability of MEDA-ETE actions.

The **Conclusion** establishes a bridge between project implementation and the future of its outputs. The year 2008 will mark the end of the project implementation phase. The MEDA-ETE project's sustainability strategy will be developed around its two strategic objectives: to enhance regional cooperation and to foster national TVET reforms. It addresses the following questions: What are the lessons learned from the implementation of the MEDA-ETE project? What are the options for sustainability of the project outputs and themes (networks, regional and national debates, pilots of Components 3 and 4) beyond the project's life? What major developments in the Euromed partnership can support the sustainability of regional cooperation in TVET and the labour market?

CHAPTER 1. COMPARE TO LEARN: MONITORING LABOUR MARKETS AND TVET SYSTEMS IN THE MEDA REGION

Jens Johansen

1.1 Introduction

In the framework of the MEDA-ETE project, a regional Euromed Observatory has been set up to enhance the knowledge and understanding of labour market and education and training trends and issues in the MEDA region. All participating countries have been invited to nominate three representatives as members of the Euromed Observatory. For each country, one member will represent the national statistical office, one will represent the Ministry of Labour or Employment and one will represent the Ministry of Education or possibly the Ministry of VET. Linking these three representatives and their respective institutions is considered the best way to increase communication and knowledge sharing at the national level before proceeding to an exchange of knowledge and experiences at the regional level.

The Euromed Observatory Function is designed to provide national experts and institutions with an opportunity to review their methods, to confront their national approaches with those of other countries in the region and to explore, with assistance from international experts, the most effective ways of building comparable indicators at the regional level and to harmonise them with international standards. The aim is to provide decision-makers with relevant and reliable information on TVET and the labour market at both the national and regional levels.

This paper presents the progress made by the project in setting up the Euromed observatory function and to highlight major issues related to the links between the regional and national levels, the planning of TVET programmes and the quality and the comparability of data at the regional level. The paper will also discuss the sustainability of the network and its future beyond the MEDA-ETE project.

1.2 Links between the national and regional levels

In building the regional observatory function it is important to bear in mind the fact that a regional observatory cannot exist in solitude. Relations to national work must be created, but first work must be done at the national level to produce and analyse data and information. Without a national interest in monitoring the issues through reliable data it is impossible to develop a regional interest in using indicators on TVET and the labour market as the basis for decision-making.

The Euromed network has therefore focused: first, on developing national networks; second, on supporting capacity building; and third, on developing means to facilitate comparability. In the following paragraphs we will develop these three dimensions.

Setting up networks

From the outset it has been the intention that national networks should consist of one representative from each of three different institutions: the national statistical office (NSO), the Ministry of Labour or Employment, and the Ministry of Education or VET. In the countries where the ETF has initiated activities to support the development of an observatory function (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Turkey), the nominees for the MEDA-ETE Euromed network are mainly experts who are already engaged in ETF projects. In most countries, members from national statistical institutes are also involved in the MEDSTAT network. In a few countries, efforts must still be made to ensure that the NSOs participate actively in network activities. Their involvement is crucial in all countries for two reasons. First, the NSOs possess some of the most basic data regarding education and training for

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employment, particularly employment and unemployment rates from the labour force surveys. Second, it is necessary to ensure operational coordination at the country level with the MEDSTAT project, which operates through NSOs. The Euromed Observatory network would bring together the 10 national networks and effectively become a true 'network of networks'.

Capacity building activities

Capacity building efforts have been carried out in the form of study visits, workshops and technical assistance. The aim is always to develop knowledge sharing and the expertise of network members.

The first study visit took place in Portugal in January/February 2006 and a second took place in Estonia in November 2007. The objective of the study visit to Estonia was to learn from the country's recent experience with developing observatory mechanisms for education and labour market data. An observatory was set up in Estonia a decade ago with the help of the ETF, and it has become a particularly good example of cooperation with social partners in the collection of statistics. The study visit included discussion of:
- TVET system governance issues, particularly the cost-effectiveness of merging the administration of technical schools;
- involvement of the social partners to ensure a range of programmes that match local needs;
- development of relevant indicators to monitor the TVET system situation and developments and its importance for good governance.

Another form of capacity building is implemented through regional workshops. During these events, all network members have the opportunity and responsibility to provide valuable inputs on their national systems for the elaboration and finalisation of an agreed set of indicators to be used at the regional level. The method proposed has been to progressively phase in the project, bring in the knowledge and experiences of different countries and take stock of available knowledge and regional expertise.

Two international experts, who are also the authors of the four methodological notes produced to date, have been travelling to the participating countries and evaluating the data sources and the data provided by network members. In addition to producing the methodological notes, the international experts have also been involved in a capacity building effort, advising on the alternative use of available data sources to provide the data that all network members have agreed are important.

Working on comparability

The Euromed network has also developed ways to facilitate future comparisons and to develop a common base for a regional understanding of issues related to the labour market and education and training. One way is through the production of the methodological notes that provide network members with a common frame of reference for discussing the development of regional indicators. Four methodological notes have been published to date, in 2006 and 2007. The first two are about selecting indicators and defining better governance indicators. The third note focuses on available national data sources and definitions and how these data sources can be used to compile regional indicators. The fourth note discusses the development and the sustainability of the Euromed Observatory network and possible synergies with MEDSTAT and national observatory functions.

1.3 An overview of education and training programmes and available data

Education and training programme mapping

Another way to achieve a better regional understanding is by creating a better understanding of national education and training systems. Despite efforts by organisations such as UNESCO to develop maps of national education systems that can be used subsequently to compare education programmes across borders, many education and especially vocational training programmes were not categorised in a harmonised manner for all 10 partner countries.

ETF staff therefore made a first proposal in the early summer of 2007 concerning how to categorise all the known education and training programmes of all 10 countries, and this proposal was sent to the network members for verification and validation. The basis for the mapping is a categorisation of all known programmes according to the International Standard Classification of Education Systems (ISCED). The objective of the mapping process was to develop a precise picture of the education and training systems in each country to allow for accurate comparisons with a special emphasis on VET. The resulting maps of education and training systems, which can be compared across all the countries, constitute one of the more tangible results of the 2007 work programme.

It is important to note that vocational training programmes are often missing from national data sources, as there is little central coordination of the TVET sector. Moreover, the ISCED is designed to categorise longer education programmes, and most training programmes are not categorised according to this international standard. Nor does basic data about students exist in many cases. Qualification frameworks, when developed in all countries, can be used to compare programmes and resulting qualifications. Future work should put more emphasis on the links between the ISCED and qualification frameworks.

Available data

Through the Euromed Observatory Function, a first collection of education and training and labour market data was undertaken, and the data and their sources were analysed in 2007. This exercise revealed large gaps in terms of information, availability and quality of data in different countries. International standards such as the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities (NACE) and the ISCED are not always used fully at the national level, which creates difficulties when trying to translate the national classifications into categories that can be compared at the regional level. The absence of finance data, and especially data on private expenditure on education, poses a particularly large problem. The problem is heightened by the anecdotal evidence that private expenditure on education is of even greater importance in many, if not all, of the MEDA countries than it is in the EU Member States.

Drawing also on the experience of national observatories, there are indications that developing a full set of comparable indicators on TVET is highly ambitious. Because not all countries have yet developed national sets of indicators used in national decision-making processes, it is evidently even more difficult to develop indicators that are comparable across the MEDA region (particularly in the short term available to the Euromed Observatory network).

This indicates that the aims of the Euromed Observatory have been overly ambitious, considering the time frame of the MEDA-ETE project, which closes at the end of 2008. Moreover, the start of the MEDSTAT II project, which was intended to precede the MEDA-ETE project and provide capacity building to national statistical offices, was delayed, and it

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did not provide the expected basis for the work of the Euromed Observatory. When the MEDA-ETE project is terminated, many of the policy reforms and institutional development processes supported by the MEDSTAT II and undertaken for partner countries' statistical systems will have only just started or will be ongoing, and their impact may not be achieved until long after the termination of MEDA-ETE support. Statistical capacity building is a lengthy process, and neither the MEDSTAT II nor the MEDA-ETE project have sufficiently long time horizons or the resources to achieve fundamental changes at the national and regional levels.

1.4 Analysis of the indicators

An agreement was reached at an early date that the Euromed Observatory should develop a list of indicators on labour market and education and training issues to feed decision-making at the national and regional levels. To a large degree, the challenge has been how to harmonise existing national data in order to arrive at regional definitions for indicators.

A first, comprehensive list included indicators on access and equity, investment in education and training and the involvement of social partners, as well as a set of indicators to provide a contextual frame. The indicators on the involvement of the social partners have proven to be especially difficult to capture, and the list of indicators has repeatedly been revised by the network members according to an analysis of the available data at both national and regional levels.

Network members agreed at the workshop held in Estonia during the study visit in October 2007 to provide a national analysis of the data that will be submitted during the second data collection. The national analyses will result in main lessons that can be drawn from each national data set. It is intended to use the national lessons learned as the first basis for drawing regional trends. The national lessons and the resulting regional trends will become the basis of a collectively written methodological note, which will be the first truly comparative analysis of TVET and labour market data in the MEDA region. Following successful completion of this activity, a third data collection and accompanying national and regional analyses will be launched and produced in late 2008.

On the basis of the analysis of the data and the mappings made of the education and training systems of the countries, the project team agreed with network members on a revised list of indicators that most countries are able to deliver. A second data collection was launched in late 2007, based on lessons learned from the first data collection and with a deadline for data submission early in February 2008.

1.5 Strategic partnership with MEDSTAT II

A focus of the project team has been to develop a strategic partnership with MEDSTAT II in terms of data collection, coverage of indicators and technical assistance. The Euromed Observatory has suggested that several of the indicators for the regional observatory be collected by the MEDSTAT II project. In return, a number of the TVET indicators collected through the Euromed Observatory will be handed over to MEDSTAT II. A MEDSTAT II workshop was chaired by a MEDA-ETE project team member in October 2007, and work is ongoing to develop a more formal protocol for exchanging data and information between the two projects. In 2008 the ETF will host a MEDSTAT II task force meeting on social indicators as part of the strategic partnership. Project team members from the Euromed Observatory will participate actively in this meeting and develop closer ties between the two projects.

Coordination between the two projects is essential to ensure that data is collected in a harmonised manner that satisfies the needs of both projects without unduly burdening the participating countries. Creating a sustainable future for the MEDA-ETE project involves continuing discussions and coordination efforts with MEDSTAT II. At the time of writing, it is

not known exactly how the MEDSTAT II project will proceed after 2008, and this creates an additional factor of uncertainty for the MEDA-ETE project.

1.6 Status to date and some recommendations for the future

The main achievements of the Euromed Observatory can be summarised as follows:
- national education and training systems have been mapped according to international standards and have become more transparent and comparable;
- data gaps have been laid bare through an analysis of the existing data sources;
- a set of indicators has been jointly developed;
- a data collection is ongoing;
- network members and their institutions have gained an understanding of how regional perspectives can influence and inspire national discussions and policy developments.

As noted above, four methodological notes have been produced since early 2006 and are used as reference documents for the work of the Observatory Function at both the national and regional levels.

It is also important to mention that national networks have not been equally active in all countries. Efforts to reinforce the national networks must be explored in future initiatives.

Moreover, the regional analysis is to be based on national analyses. The regional dimension of the latter could subsequently be improved. It is therefore imperative that the national networks produce national analyses based on their own data, drawing on the experiences of all the network members.

Overall, the project has progressed well to date. Developing indicators is a time-consuming task and even more so when the indicators in question are to be internationally comparable, taking into account that few of the countries involved use similar indicators. Coordination within each country is not institutionalised but is often based on relations of a more personal nature. Because some network members occupy political posts, there have been changes in the composition of the network, despite the original request that network members be nominated for the duration of the project. Where national commitment falters, the project faces the risk of failure.

Risks of a more technical nature include difficulties in adopting classifications in time to provide data in a comparable manner, and in finding a suitable compromise for comparison of programmes. Subregional indicators may then have to be adopted, or an indicator using more than one definition may be presented.

The results that have been achieved, despite these risks, are in danger of having been achieved in vain, as the MEDA-ETE project winds down at the end of 2008. It seems necessary to continue to develop individual national projects building TVET and labour market indicators. Supporting national efforts in this way should be complemented by efforts to anchor the achievements reached at the regional level.

It is also logical to see the MEDA-ETE project, and particularly the Euromed Observatory, as the first phase of a much longer cycle that will eventually build on sound mechanisms for producing comparable and useful data for policymaking in the region. The current project has the aim of establishing a stable mechanism for data collection efforts, but this cannot stand alone. The regional network must be stabilised and better organised in order to become sustainable.

Notwithstanding the possibility of other regional projects in this domain, current achievements can be consolidated through the adoption of some form of formal commitment. For example, a formal commitment by the 10 participating countries to provide a basic set of

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indicators and a national analysis to the ETF on an annual basis would ensure that the regional dimension could continue to be developed and would serve as an inspiration for decision-making at the national level. The ETF could continue to play the role of focal point, while in the medium-term perspective one of the partner countries might host the Euromed Observatory Function.

CHAPTER 2. WE NEED THEM – THEY NEED US: WORK AND LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS FOR YOUTH

Richard Sweet[2] and Helmut Zelloth[3]

2.1 Introduction

In 2007, the MEDA-ETE project included a major component on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning with a twofold objective: to analyse the apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning policies and systems in the 10 MEDA countries involved in the project and identify cases of interesting and innovative practices; and to stimulate national reform agendas in the area of apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning through enhanced regional cooperation and networking.

This chapter introduces the methodology adopted to lead the implementation of this component and, more specifically, the policy learning process that was designed and made operational. The chapter will present the major conclusions of the comparative analysis and will contribute some recommendations for sustainability of the project's achievements, taking into account the challenges faced by the MEDA partners.

2.2 Methodology

The overall methodological framework of the project on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning in the Mediterranean region was based on three major and closely interlinked pillars: analysis, networking, and policy learning (see Figures 1 and 2).
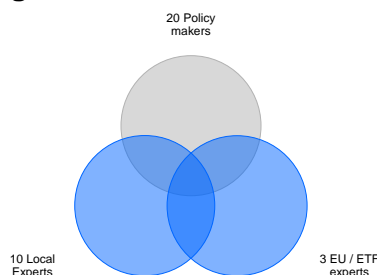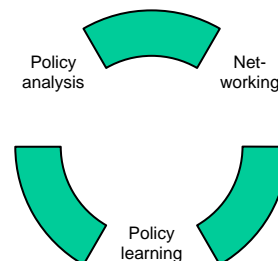
Figure 1. Network architecture

Figure 2. Critical interrelations

Source: Zelloth ETF

Analysis

The analytical pillar was based on a common analytical framework (concept paper, guidelines for country reports) that was applied in the production of a set of 10 country reports by national experts selected by the ETF. The research done by local experts has been complemented by evidence, documentation and lessons gathered during field visits to four of the ten participating countries: two visits to the Maghreb (Algeria and Morocco) and two visits to the Mashrek region (Jordan and Egypt). The analysis also drew upon material presented at two meetings held for national experts and policymakers from the region at the

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ETF in Turin (mid 2007), and two stakeholder workshops in Morocco and Algeria (October/November 2007).

The major output of this analytical pillar is a cross-country analysis and synthesis presented in a comparative report that examines programmes for youth that combine learning in classrooms with participation in work in 10 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and West Bank and Gaza.

Regional networking

The second major pillar has been a regional network of policymakers in apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning from the 10 Mediterranean countries that was set up in July 2007 to enhance regional cooperation on this topic. At the request of the ETF, Ministers of Education/VET and social partner organisations (employers and unions) have nominated two representatives per country (a total of 20 participants) to take part in the network. The policy network organised its activities through a blended approach. Two face to face meetings took place in 2007, while communication and discussion has been permanent, although uneven in its intensity, through a virtual community and discussion forum. The network has built upon a well-developed information base (country and comparative analysis) and also interacted with local and EU experts on the discussion and validation of these products to enhance the quality and dissemination of the analysis and reports in their countries.

The major outputs are the establishment of a regional platform that is operational for exchanges and debates on the topic of apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning, and the creation of stronger bridges between policymakers. Lessons on the effectiveness and impact of the network as well as on its temporary or sustainable nature will be drawn at the end of 2008.

Policy learning

The third pillar is the process of policy learning through linking the analysis with the policy network. A number of measures have been designed to strengthen the capacities of the actors involved, allowing them to be reflected on their own systems through the 'mirrors' of the experiences of other Mediterranean countries as well as the EU. A number of focused learning opportunities had been provided, such as a study visit to the Netherlands to learn about governance issues, social partners' involvement and the place of apprenticeship within the wider VET system, as well as flexible approaches towards apprenticeship. An innovative methodology will be applied in a visit to one of the countries in the region in June 2008, combining peer learning with a peer review in a 'peer learning review' (PLR). Particular emphasis has been placed on the transfer of lessons learned and the development of home-grown policies and practices as opposed to donor-driven or imported models.

The major outputs are lessons learned from the various policy learning activities, such as reports from the PLR and study visits, which are fed back in presentations and discussions in the countries, with a potential for impacting on national reform agendas.

2.3 Why and how to combine work and learning?

For some 30 years or more the combination of work and learning has been an attractive, even seductive, idea for policymakers. Influenced in part by evidence from apprenticeships in German-speaking countries, this has been based upon four sets of arguments. These are that it can improve pathways to adulthood, deliver economic and labour market benefits, improve pedagogy, and reduce costs and increase capacity within the vocational education and training system. While research evidence certainly exists in favour of this support for work-based learning programmes for youth, there is also evidence that other types of transition pathways can lead to good outcomes for youth. In the case of apprenticeship and

other work-based models, the evidence indicates that they need to be done well if they are to succeed.

A number of examples can be found in recent years in which the attempt to develop such systems has not been successful, but such examples can be balanced by cases in countries such as Ireland and Norway, in which some success is evident. Both the examples of failure and the instances of success suggest that a number of factors are important. These include:

- coherence within the several parts of a national vocational education and training system;
- coherent financing and regulation methods;
- attention to the reality of the ways in which enterprises operate and the ways in which work is organised;
- the involvement of employers and trade unions;
- the ways in which qualification systems relate to the labour market;
- close relationships between firms and schools at the local level.

2.4 Contextual specificities in the Mediterranean region

The scale and character of work-based learning programmes for young people in the Mediterranean region are influenced by a number of economic, demographic, labour market, educational and cultural factors. High rates of economic growth in recent years have been fuelled by structural reforms such as economic liberalisation, by the increasing opening up of economies to international trade, and by foreign investment. These trends are causing a shift in the region's employment base as manufacturing for export markets grows, changing the demand for skills and qualifications. But manufacturing-driven demand for vocational skills is unevenly distributed in the region. For example, the manufacturing sector accounts for about 60% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Algeria but only about 20% in Lebanon. To the extent that traditional apprenticeship occupations are concentrated in manufacturing, this will result in different patterns of demand among countries.

In all the countries of the Mediterranean region the population is a young one, and it is growing far more rapidly than in Europe. This puts considerable pressure upon governments to provide jobs, education and training for young people. High population growth and the flow into the labour market of large numbers of young people help to explain one of the paradoxes of recent economic growth in the region: it has not been able to generate sufficient jobs to meet the needs of all who seek work. Unemployment, particularly among young people, remains high. But the formal unemployment rate is an imperfect indicator of the shortage of regular, stable jobs in the region. All countries experience significant underemployment and have a large informal sector; this sector accounts for perhaps half or more of all employment in Egypt and Tunisia. The informal sector is unregulated, invisible, present in unregistered or unincorporated enterprises and unprotected by legal frameworks such as social security contributions. It is an inadequate foundation upon which to attach structured and regulated employment and training arrangements for youth, and it is a limitation on the expansion of such arrangements. Unemployment, which varies in incidence among countries, plays a significant role in constraining demand for skills, as it reduces employers' incentives to invest in skills and technology; instead, employers rely upon a plentiful supply of cheap labour. The existence of large numbers of small and medium and microenterprises is another factor that has implications for work-based learning programmes in the region. In Jordan, for example, enterprises that employ less than five people account for about 90% of all enterprises and more than one quarter of all employment.

In countries such as Morocco, Turkey and West Bank and Gaza, early school leaving is a significant problem; in Egypt and Morocco illiteracy is an issue. Both factors put pressure on

governments to meet the needs of those young people for whom it is hardest to find jobs. In nearly all countries in the region, vocational pathways are more limited than is typically the case in European countries, and professional and white-collar work are highly valued. They both place a limit upon the size of work-based programmes, and increase the chances that they will attract the students who are the lowest achievers and that as a result they will be seen as a low-status residual pathway.

2.5 Models of work-based learning in the Mediterranean region

In all countries in the region there is a long tradition of skill development through informal or traditional apprenticeships. Although there are no reliable data on their extent in any country, they still represent the main training route for some sectors and occupations such as crafts, the construction sector, retail trade, garment making and repair, and automobile maintenance. Typically, informal apprenticeships take place entirely within the workplace and do not involve any complementary classroom-based education or training.

In addition to these informal arrangements, the project has revealed nearly 30 formal work-based learning programmes or schemes. They can be classified in three groups.

- Well-established programmes have relatively large numbers of participants, represent a reasonably larger share of the upper secondary initial vocational education and training system, and have a sound institutional base. They include Algeria's apprenticeship programmes, Morocco's and Tunisia's alternance and apprenticeship programmes, Turkey's apprenticeships and internships, and Jordan's Applied Secondary Education programmes.

- Long-established programmes have become a normal part of the country's vocational education and training system, but have remained very small, particularly in relation to vocational education and training that is completely institution-based. They include Egypt's Productivity and Vocational Training Department (PVTD) and Ministry of Education programmes, and Israel's apprenticeships and enterprise-based training.

- Relatively recent small pilot programmes in many cases still depend upon support from donor agencies for their continued existence and viability. They include programmes in Lebanon and in West Bank and Gaza, Syria's pilot apprenticeships and perhaps also the Egyptian Mubarak-Kohl Initiative (MKI).

In almost all of the programmes that came to light in the study, entry is limited to those of the normal age for secondary education and takes place at the normal age for entry into secondary education. In accordance, in almost all cases the programmes require completion of basic, primary or compulsory education for entry. This is not a guarantee that they are equal in status to other secondary level programmes. In many cases, such as Jordan's Applied Secondary Education programmes, lower-achieving students are streamed into them, often unwillingly, on the basis of their performance in primary or compulsory education. In many cases the low status of vocational education and training and work-based learning persists, even though a clear route has been created from it to tertiary studies and even though it leads to a normal secondary certificate.

The problem of the low status of work-based forms of vocational education and training is compounded in some countries by segmented vocational education and training systems in which work-based programmes lead to lower-level qualifications than do other programmes, as in the following examples.

Figure 3. Integrated versus segmented models of work-based learning for youth
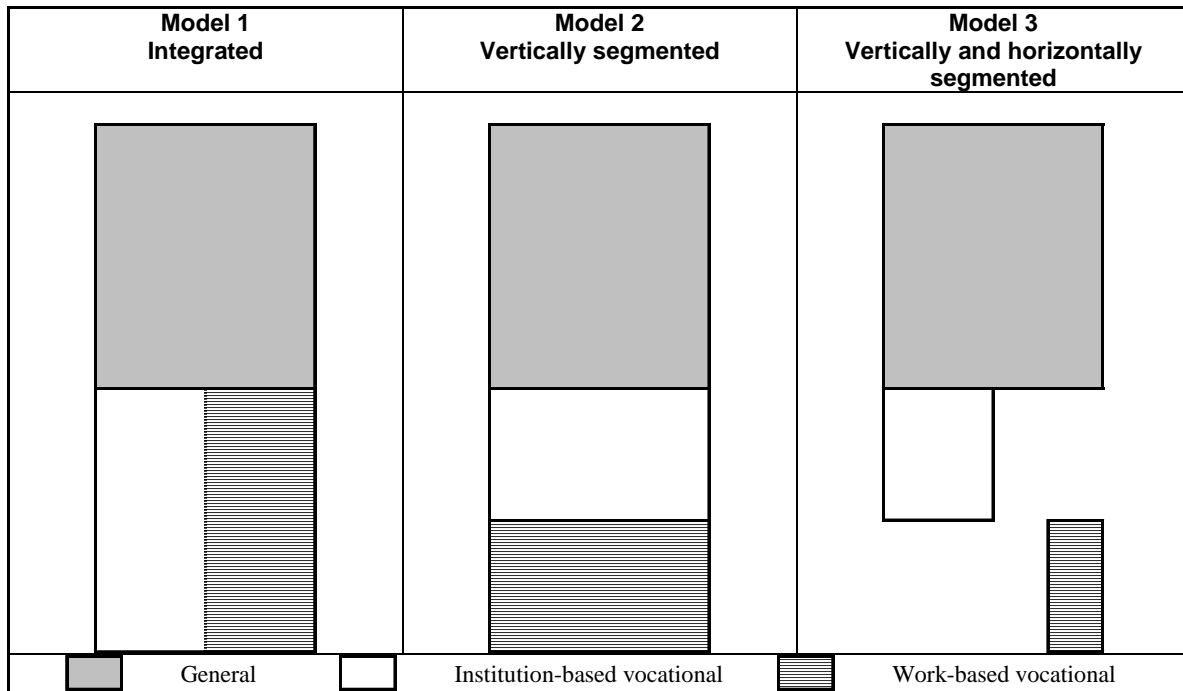
Source: R. Sweet, *Work-based learning programmes for young people in the Mediterranean region, a comparative analysis*, draft paper, ETF, Turin, 2008

- In Morocco there is a very clear hierarchy within the VET system. Apprenticeships are at the lowest levels of the national qualification system, alternance appears to be at a higher level, and residential vocational training is at the highest levels. The lower the level of the programme, the higher the level of contact with the workplace. Those vocational programmes which result in the highest-level qualifications provide young people with the least workplace contact.

- In Algeria the degree of segmentation appears to be less than that in Morocco, and apprenticeships are available at relatively high levels of the qualifications system. Nevertheless, they tend to be clustered at the lower levels, particularly as compared to residential programmes.

- In Israel apprenticeship programmes are segmented both vertically and horizontally in relation to secondary education. They are targeted at school dropouts and are provided by a separate ministry within separate institutions, and they lead to quite separate qualifications. Their segmentation from mainstream options for youth is further emphasised by the lack of any formal contracts of employment and training, with employment that is temporary and residual.

Wide variations were found in the ways in which programmes are structured. For example, there are variations in the typical duration (from one to four years), in the proportion of time spent in the workplace (from as little as 25% to as much as 80%) and in attendance patterns. In some cases neither the needs of young people nor the needs of industry seem to explain these differences.

Despite limitations in the information available, it seems that many programmes are focused quite heavily on the traditional manual trades and blue-collar work, and have made little impact on more modern areas of the economy, on the service sector, and on more highly skilled occupations. But there are some interesting exceptions. Egypt offers programmes in business and in the commercial and hotel and catering fields; programmes in telecommunications and nursing can be found in Syria; and in Algeria programmes have a

strong presence in white-collar work, the service sector, and the higher levels of the country's vocational qualifications system.

2.6   Assuring the quality of work-based learning

The study has revealed a number of initiatives to improve the quality of training both on the job and off the job. They include involvement of employer organisations in the selection of training firms (crafts chambers are involved in Morocco's apprenticeship programme, and in Turkey and Egypt educational institutions have this role); formal programmes to train the enterprise staff who in turn train young people at work (as in Turkey, Syria, West Bank and Gaza, Morocco and Algeria); and inspection systems (which can be found in Israel, West Bank and Gaza, Algeria and Tunisia). Examples of on-the-job training tools were found, such as competency lists to indicate the content of in-firm training or of log books to record the training undertaken (in countries including Turkey, Morocco, Jordan and Syria). But these initiatives seem to be of varying effectiveness and thoroughness.

While it appeared common during the field visits for many policymakers to criticise the quality of training within enterprises, this critical view appeared less common among the staff of educational institutions. It was often accompanied by a relative lack of interest of policymakers in ways of judging and improving quality within the educational institutions that provide complementary off-the-job training. Resource constraints were a common concern in relation to the quality of institutional training; teacher salaries were too low to attract adequate well-qualified staff and too little money was available for facilities, equipment and materials. In addition to problems and constraints, the study has found a number of initiatives for measuring and improving off-the-job quality. These include institutional standards and monitoring in Israel, pedagogical training for staff in West Bank and Gaza, and a proposal to establish a licensing and accreditation agency in Jordan.

In relation to quality in work-based learning programmes, there appeared to be a stronger concern in the region for inputs rather than for ways to assess the outcomes of training such as dropout and completion rates, employment rates, the type of employment achieved and the quality of the skills acquired during training. In some cases this can be attributed to weaknesses in the data and evaluation systems that are used to support programmes. There is a good case for improving skill benchmarking systems in the region, as well as for developing frameworks for judging the quality of work-based learning programmes that better reflect the institutional and resource realities of the region.

Steps that are suggested for improving quality include giving a stronger role to educational institutions in screening enterprises; developing simple tools such as log books and competency lists to guide training in the enterprise; and improving links between teachers and enterprises, using more independent assessments, standards for evaluating and accrediting educational institutions, and improved outcome measures.

2.7 Governing work-based learning systems

Work-based learning systems pose unique challenges within the overall governance of vocational education and training systems. A number of methods for governing these systems can be observed in the Mediterranean region.

- *Legislation and regulation*. Quite detailed legislation to support work-based learning programmes for young people exists in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey but is less well developed elsewhere. There seems to be a relationship between how well regulatory and legislative arrangements are developed and the scale of programmes.
- *Contracts of employment and training* that have a formal legal status appear to exist in only a few cases (for example, in Turkey and in Morocco's alternance

programmes). Contracts of a voluntary nature exist in other cases, such as programmes in Lebanon and Syria. Contracts do not exist at all in Israel and Jordan, and are not used by employers in some apprenticeship programmes in Morocco.

▪ *Financing systems* include not only public payments for institutional training, but also the ways in which employer and youth incentives are influenced by training wages, taxes and levies, and wage subsidies. Financial mechanisms such as training taxes to encourage employer participation in vocational training can be found in Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. However, except in the case of Algeria, they are often not well targeted to encourage work-based learning for young people, and they generally are not part of a coherent overall financing system for such programmes. In some cases (such as Lebanon, and often in Morocco) young people taking part in these programmes receive no payment. In others their payments are entirely a matter for individual negotiation. Formal and regulated wage arrangements exist in Israel, but they provide weak incentives for participation. The most coherent and rational wage arrangements, which offer appropriate incentives to both employers and youth, exist in Algeria and Tunisia.

▪ *Data and evidence* to support and steer work-based learning programmes in the region are generally poorly developed, and where they are available they often are not used as effectively as they might be. But some useful examples to the contrary were found in Morocco, Algeria and Jordan.

In considering ways of improving governance, the analysis suggests that it seems likely that significant benefits will flow from the development of more coherent financial, regulatory and legal systems, rather than from the continued development and extension of pilot programmes, particularly because many of these do not seem to be systematically evaluated, and no mechanisms seem to be in place for communicating their benefits. Recent attempts to strengthen governance through a stronger role for employers and trade unions can be observed in Jordan and Tunisia, and a strong place in governance for these organisations appears to have been a long-standing feature in Turkey. The creation, with government support, of a wider range of intermediary bodies (as in Egypt), could help both to improve governance and to strengthen the roles of employers and other actors in the operation and management of programmes.

2.8 Looking to the future

Challenges

The challenges that face work-based learning for young people in the Mediterranean region differ among the three categories of programmes mentioned above. These challenges include: balancing growth and quality improvement; reconciling social and economic needs; strengthening links to the labour market; and improving governance systems, including the regulatory environment and financing systems. Achieving a balance between growth and quality is a key challenge, given the size and growth of the youth population in the region and the levels of youth unemployment. The extent to which expansion in programme places can deliver real benefits for young people needs to be questioned if non-completion rates are high and priorities for places are within economic sectors that are in decline and that are unattractive to young people. International experiences suggest that there is no ideal size for work-based learning systems, and that good social and economic outcomes for youth can also be achieved by other means. If good outcomes are to be achieved through such programmes, they need to be implemented well, with an emphasis on quality.

Constraints and opportunities

In addressing the challenges that face work-based learning programmes it is important to be realistic about both opportunities and constraints. Constraints include the size of national initial vocational education and training systems; increasing this size might require higher-quality work-based learning programmes that are targeted at more highly skilled areas of the economy that lead to attractive work. Labour market constraints exist in the form of wage fixation systems, but programmes in which the young person is a student rather than an employee might provide an opportunity to circumvent such constraints. Another labour market constraint is the reality of competition from cheap labour as a result of unemployment, migration or both.

The development of better systems of financing, regulation and governance, with the involvement of key stakeholders, will be important in both future expansion and future quality improvement. An additional factor is the development of a clearer and more coherent relationship between work-based learning programmes and other elements of the initial vocational education and training system, and among various types of work-based learning programmes.

The project has demonstrated that there are many excellent examples within the region from which participating countries can learn. There are a number of directions that mutual policy learning within the region might take. They include:
- developing more programmes at higher levels of qualifications and in white-collar and highly skilled jobs, following the example of Algeria;
- developing frameworks for assessing quality that better reflect regional realities;
- learning from good examples of regulatory and financing systems within the region;
- exploring the basis for differences among countries in the structure of programmes within similar occupation or industry sectors;
- strengthening the role of intermediary bodies.

Sustainability

Enhancing learning opportunities among the countries within the Mediterranean region – but also within the countries, among the major stakeholders (state and employers) – through regional analysis and the instrument of a regional network of policymakers, has proved to be useful and to provide added value. Participating countries have realised that there is a stock of expertise and approaches available in apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning in countries in their region that has remained untapped for mutual learning purposes. It is highly probable that the momentum gained in the discussions on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning will have an impact on development at the national level in some countries (such as Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan), if the regional network of policymakers is maintained. Such a regional network could be the catalyst and key for further development of policies and practices in the area of apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning, which are embedded into the regional context and adapted to local conditions. During the project it also became clear that a blended approach is promising, because relying only on electronic tools such as virtual communities and discussion forums would not be enough. Given the rather fragile status of the network after less than one year of existence, it would also require a minimum of continued EU or donor support in order to achieve self-sustainability and the capacity to foster continuous regional dialogue.

CHAPTER 3. QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TVET IN THE MEDA REGION: STATE OF PLAY AND OUTLOOK

Jean-Raymond Masson

3.1 Introduction

Quality and quality assurance was introduced into the MEDA-ETE project in 2007. The general aim was to draw up an inventory of the quality and quality assurance initiatives in TVET in the EU and in the countries of the MEDA region, and to promote exchanges of information and experience between the decision-makers and experts of the countries concerned. More precisely, the aim of the work was to analyse how quality assurance initiatives could promote the quality of TVET systems and support best practices already established in the EU and in the MEDA region to lay the foundations for specific actions at the national and regional levels.

This aims of this chapter are to draw some initial conclusions from the work done on this component since it was launched, to contribute to the discussion at the MEDA-ETE Annual Forum 2008, and to prepare the next steps. The conclusions are based primarily on the Thematic Report[4] prepared on this issue, and on all activities, workshops, study visits and missions to a number of MEDA countries, including the national reports and other documents produced in this framework.

3.2 State of play

The thematic report shows a host of contrasting situations. It reveals a general concern, in the countries of the MEDA region and the EU Member States, for promoting quality TVET. In the MEDA countries, this refers above all to linking training much more closely to the needs of the labour market and to making the social partners, starting with employers, much more closely involved in the management of TVET. This is considered to be a lever for achieving better governance of the TVET system, as well as the development of qualifications and education programmes and their implementation within an overall coherent framework. Simultaneously, a raft of current and planned initiatives covers quality management mechanisms, accreditation processes and systems of self-assessment within TVET institutions.

With the exception of Tunisia, where a well-funded and well-coordinated comprehensive approach was set up in the early 2000s through the MANFORME[5] programme, there is only a scattering of initiatives in the region. They have little or poor coordination, they were most often begun as part of bilateral cooperation projects or were set up by international donors, they were sometimes abandoned after a few years, and above all they have suffered from a lack of serious monitoring or assessment. Another setback for these programmes is that they have been implemented in a compartmentalised way, in segments of the TVET system. Analysis shows that, with the exception of a few countries, these programmes represent only a small, sometimes tiny, part of the education and training system. In many countries such as Algeria and Morocco certification and accreditation systems for training providers cover only private training bodies, because public bodies are considered to qualify automatically.

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[4] Seyfried E., *Thematic report: conclusions on quality assurance in vocational education and training*, Berlin, 2008.
[5] Mise à niveau de la formation professionelle et de l'emploi (Upgrading of Vocational Training and Employment)

Finally, national policy is supposed to be coordinated through policy bodies that may often exist only on paper. This is the case of initiatives such as the National Vocational Training Councils, which in most countries meet only sporadically.

As the thematic report shows, the main difference in TVET between the EU[6] and the MEDA countries lies in the importance attached in the EU to TVET in school success, the weight of TVET within education and training systems, the performance of the systems measured against failure rates and the number of unqualified school leavers, the quality of teachers and how well the systems match the needs of the labour market. The report shows clearly that implementing quality assurance procedures does not automatically have an impact on the quality of the system: "Although quality and quality assurance are issues of strategic importance for modernising TVET systems, they will not achieve this by themselves. They need to be implemented within the more general setting of the reform of the systems and to be subject to clear and measurable policy objectives that can be put into practice."

In this context, the country visits to Morocco, Algeria and Egypt and the study visit to Italy have shown that the MEDA representatives are responding to the EU's messages with a greater interest in quality assurance than in quality, and a keener interest in the specific processes and measures implemented than in a general conceptual approach. The conclusions drawn from the study visit to Italy aroused a great deal of interest, and many questions were raised on issues such as the autonomy enjoyed by schools and training centres and the accreditation of training programmes. But issues concerning decentralisation or the overall architecture of the education and training system, and especially the bridges between TVET pathways and general education, seem to arouse less interest.

One important reason for this is surely the scattered nature of TVET systems in MEDA region mentioned above. Since TVET is the responsibility of ministries and administrations that are different from those in charge of education and higher education, which have completely separate methods of management and policymaking, it is unlikely that those responsible would take an interest in issues over which they have no control. We should probably also limit the scope of our ambitions to talking only about VET, because the technical component in secondary education is often the responsibility of the Minister for Education or is shared among several ministries. This means that the analysis of Component 2.3 of the MEDA-ETE project is not based, in any of the countries, on an overview of TVET, and even less on the general context of the education system. This situation and these 'structural' divisions can only be damaging to any approach that is part of a lifelong learning strategic approach as promoted by the EU and implemented by most of the Member States. This makes it much more difficult to identify overall indicators of the education and training system and to measure progress against international and European benchmarks. Worse still, this makes it impossible to give any thought to links to be built between the various components of the system, especially between VET and higher education, and it hinders any attempt to identify priority choices for earmarking public funds for comprehensive strategies for fostering growth and employment. One particularly damaging consequence of this is probably the low level of importance attached to adult training among the initiatives put forward in national reports.

The approaches revolving around national qualification frameworks (as in Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt), national initiatives aiming at the implementation of mechanisms to monitor and assess the VET system (as in Morocco), and national accreditation agencies (such as those planned in Jordan and Egypt) are all initiatives that could help build this systemic vision required for strategic development. We might mention here the plethora of experiments and projects implemented in Morocco over the past 10 years, from which perhaps it is time to draw the lessons learned, with all the partners involved. Moreover, the clear intention of most countries to work within a regional context and their willingness to

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[6] This involves mainly the 'old' Member States.

continue cooperating with the EU in these areas should make it possible to continue along this path.

In summary, there are two complementary approaches in the MEDA region:

- to improve systems of governance by involving the social partners to help define how VET policies are to be implemented, moving from a supply-driven to a demand-driven approach, undertaking (or continuing with) decentralisation and boosting the autonomy of VET institutions, overhauling qualification and certification systems, and promoting better follow-up once policies are implemented, even though efforts to date have focused mainly on higher education;
- to work at the training institutions level, implementing accreditation processes, quality assurance and indicators – the reference framework adopted in Tunisia could be a relevant benchmark – and quality management measures such as ISO or Total Quality Management, as in Turkey.

3.3 What lessons can we learn from the MEDA-ETE initiative?

Against this background, we need to identify the lessons to be learned from the approach taken by the MEDA-ETE project on quality and quality assurance in TVET in 2007, on the basis of European experience developed within the Copenhagen process. At this stage we can make a number of observations.

- Participants are broadly satisfied with the activities undertaken to date, and they have expressed their wish to continue contributing to the network, to examine other experiences from EU countries and to work on more targeted subjects that go further than the initial general exchanges and the study visit to Italy.
- Participants are clearly interested in questions relating to the autonomy of VET institutions, partnerships with employers, accreditation mechanisms, the existence of institutions supporting quality policies (such as Istituto per la Formazione dei Lavoratori[7] 'ISFOL' in Italy), and more generally they are interested in links with the other aspects of VET reform, such as implementation of the competences-based approach and national qualifications frameworks.
- A few MEDA countries are much less interested in the quality and quality assurance component of the MEDA-ETE project; neither the opening seminar in Turin nor the study visit to Italy were particularly well attended, and the ETF noted that the rate of participation was lower than for similar initiatives in other regions. However, participants played an active role and took part in lively debates, and the representatives of the social partners played a key role. Another indicator of limited interest was the small number of national reports received and the limited requests that ETF received for national interventions. The Thematic Report was essentially based on the reports submitted by four countries (Morocco, Algeria, Jordan and Turkey); the missions to Morocco, Algeria and Egypt; the presentations made at the launch workshop in July; and the observations and feedback made by participants during the study visit to Italy.
- At the seminars and meetings organised as part of the project, there was a considerable discrepancy between the limited interest in the results of the European approaches, the European framework and the indicators and tools developed, on the one hand, and the marked interest in specific presentations such as the national quality reference framework produced in Tunisia, on the other hand.

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[7] The Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers

A number of explanations for this discrepancy and for the limits of the exercise have already been given here, and they relate above all to the fact that VET is partitioned off within the overall education system. But we would like to propose some additional hypotheses.

- The variety of initiatives already undertaken on quality assurance, although fragmented and poorly coordinated, constitutes a rich base of experience, probably richer than that in newer EU Member States.
- As occurred during the visits to the various countries, the intentions of decision-makers are often stated clearly, even if they have not learned all the lessons from the initiatives undertaken. But they are based on ideas that are a few years old and are often supported by European and international sponsors. There is a clear political commitment to promoting the quality of VET (as in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan and Turkey); comprehensive approaches have been launched in some countries (such as Tunisia); and there are many initiatives underway everywhere. Their aim is now to go further and promote a genuine quality policy for VET.
- It is clear that, contrary to their impact in the countries of the Western Balkans that aim to join the EU at some stage in the future, European approaches in general and the Copenhagen process in particular do not have the same appeal. The proposed procedures and tools must prove themselves on their own merits.
- Under those circumstances, the VET Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) does not really appear to be the appropriate setting for taking these experiences any further than what has already been achieved in the MEDA countries8. Nevertheless, it could be applied in the form of self-assessment procedures at VET institution level and to output-based measurements such as qualifications obtained and their relevance for the labour market. Its general principles are already well known and are sometimes implemented, although they are called by different names. This framework should be fed with indicators such as benchmarks, external assessment mechanisms and accreditation. It should be combined with efforts to provide greater transparency for VET users and/or clients. Beyond that, the approach should create links with the other elements of VET reform, and especially with the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, and it should consider the way in which VET links up to other components of education and training systems.

3.4 Conclusions and outlook

In conclusion, above and beyond the advances already noted and the planned actions for 2008 in Morocco, Algeria and Jordan, we might ask ourselves whether the project will pull in the other countries of the region and if so, under what conditions. The question concerns both the MEDA countries, in terms of their objectives, and the ETF, from the point of view of its support and technical assistance.

As far as the MEDA countries are concerned, this analysis has shown that approaches to quality and quality assurance will be effective only if they are part of a broader framework of reforms based on clear political commitments and clearly identified monitoring indicators. The question that arises is whether this general framework already exists and, if not, what conditions and resources would be required to create it and what the countries intend to do within this reform framework. As noted above, two complementary approaches emerge from the intentions that are set out. One concerns governance and national reform frameworks, the other relates to the degree of autonomy of VET institutions and related accountability and self-assessment mechanisms. Consequently, it would be advisable to merge these two

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[8]We should add that this analysis is not specific to the MEDA countries and that the debate on the CQAF is currently taking place within the Network on Quality Assurance in VET, especially on ways to make the instrument richer and more specific.

approaches, if not at the national level, at least when dealing with it at regional level, within a comprehensive approach associating all the countries concerned. At the same time, it would also involve combining the reasoning on the quality of VET ingredients (curricula, teachers and trainers, and technical equipment) with an in-depth consideration of the appropriate indicators concerning results and outcomes (such as certification, dropouts and access to the labour market).

As for the ETF, it still needs to set up a framework for cooperation beyond MEDA-ETE so that it can work in a useful way and contribute to fulfilling these aims. This analysis has shown that the country-based approach is a fruitful one, but also that the regional framework has made it possible to establish the premises for genuine peer-based learning. Finally, contact with European experiences has already made it possible to make some headway, although these exchanges are still far from reaching their full potential. This is why the ETF plans to continue the project in 2008 and suggests discussing the conditions for its further extension beyond that date with the various partners. Also, exchanges could now be established with the structures set up at the European level within the context of the European Network on Quality Assurance in VET, taking into account the dynamics of the process and also the limits of the framework.

CHAPTER 4. THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT WITHIN THE MEDA-ETE PROJECT: BETWEEN PRACTICE AND POLICY

Abdelaziz Jaouani

4.1 Background

The Euro-Mediterranean region is set to become a large free trade area by 2012, providing economic prosperity and offering entrepreneurs vast prospects for development. This process of economic integration is irreversible, and it is part of the overall context of rapidly increasing exchanges and global competition.

In this context, the concerns shared by all the Mediterranean region partners can be expressed in the following terms:

- acting as global players and seizing the opportunities offered by the opening up of the Euro-Mediterranean economic area;
- remaining competitive and creating enough jobs for new entrants to the labour market;
- deciding upon strategies for creating added value and developing economic complementarities;
- fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and attracting new and durable foreign investment.

Today it is widely accepted that there is a positive correlation between entrepreneurship and economic development, both in the developed and the developing world. In the MEDA countries, in which youth unemployment and female unemployment are often high, entrepreneurship can play an important role in social cohesion and can provide increased opportunities for job-seekers and vulnerable sectors of society.

To analyse the national policies that are in place for promoting entrepreneurship, we need to answer the following questions: Who is promoting initiatives to develop education for entrepreneurship in society, especially among young people, and fostering the creation of microenterprises or self-employment? Who are the target groups, and where is this approach applied? What types of best practices are used by specialised service providers in the EU and MEDA countries?

Component 3 of the MEDA-ETE regional project seeks to provide some answers to these questions and uses education and training as key instruments for developing the entrepreneurial spirit in the future Euro-Mediterranean free trade area.

This chapter presents the approach adopted, the progress made and the lessons learned at this stage of the project. It concludes with a discussion on the Euromed Charter initiative and the perspectives for sustainable movement from practice to policy.

4.2 MEDA-ETE project Component 3: Support for young unemployed people in the area of self-employment and microenterprises creation

The MEDA-ETE regional project, created under the Barcelona process, proposes to help MEDA partners design and implement TVET policies to promote employment through a regional approach. It is designed as a platform for discussion and thought and as a framework for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in education and training.

Component 3 of the project focuses on combating unemployment, especially among young people, in contexts in which it is increasingly difficult to create sufficient paid work to respond to the needs of the active population entering the labour market (job-seekers) or of those who have become unemployed. To a greater or lesser extent, this situation is common to many countries that are either developed or in transition. It is particularly important in the countries of the MEDA region, where the number of young unemployed people – especially university and VET graduates – is becoming unacceptable to public opinion and political authorities because it slows down economic and social development. Not only are paid work opportunities few and far between, but when job-seekers do have an opportunity to become employed, they often find that the employer has additional demands for skills and competences which they don't have, which increases their frustration.

In this context Component 3 seeks to strengthen the capacities as service providers of the MEDA partners specialised in information, training and advice for creating microenterprises and self-employment, and their capacities to address the issue of long-term youth unemployment.

The activities covered revolve around the following elements:

- identifying specialised service providers in the EU and MEDA countries to facilitate the exchanges of experiences between organisations in both regions;
- identifying, selecting and analysing best practices, methods and tools used in the EU and MEDA countries and the lessons learned from bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation programmes among EU Member States and the MEDA partners;
- matching supply and demand between EU/MEDA service providers to transfer and implement best practices, using pilot projects supported by Component 3 to train trainers and aspiring entrepreneurs;
- conducting assessments to learn from this experience and providing recommendations to specialised national agencies to develop a flexible methodological approach that can be adapted to the situation on the ground in these countries;
- providing recommendations to policymakers for improving training policies aimed at reducing unemployment among young people.

4.3 Progress and results of the MEDA-ETE project

An inventory was drawn up in the 10 MEDA countries and in 15 EU Member States in 2006. This was a triangular, iterative programme to identify:

- EU-MEDA cooperation projects and programmes in entrepreneurship;
- service providers active in these projects;
- best practices used by service providers within the projects and/or programmes identified.

Figure 4. Triangular inventory process.
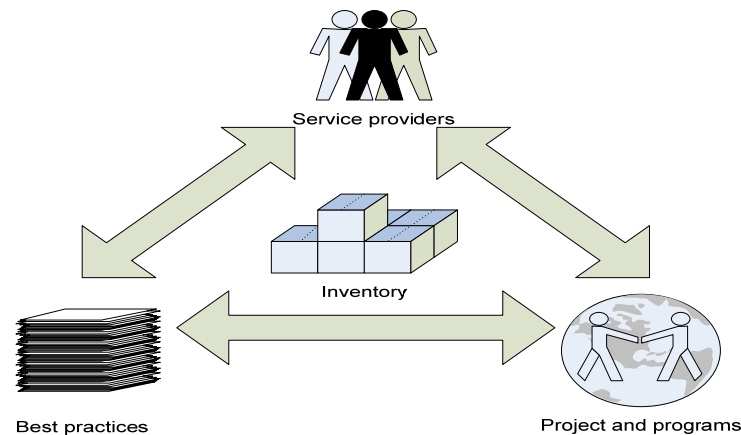
Source: MEDA-ETE component 3 progress report March 2007.

An inventory of the EU and MEDA service providers was published in directory form on www.meda-ete.net. The study found more than 220 providers who are actively promoting entrepreneurship, and it is made available to various groups, including:

- young people excluded from the school system;
- unemployed graduates;
- vulnerable sectors of the population;
- women;
- ethnic minorities.

In addition, more than 40 best practices in education and training for entrepreneurship were identified and described in detail, and are also published on the project website.

In February 2007, a selection was made among the service providers identified, based on objective criteria established by an independent technical committee. For each MEDA country, one core service provider (CSP) was appointed to be the interlocutor and direct partner within the project. The CSPs, who are direct beneficiaries of best practices, committed themselves to promoting the new tool in their countries and to enabling the other service providers to benefit from it.

At a technical seminar in April 2007, the best practices identified and the selected CSPs were brought together. After a fruitful matching process, the selected CSPs chose one practice according to their specific needs, to improve the training they provided for setting up microenterprises and enabling self-employment.

From October to December 2007, the project, CSPs and providers of best practices participated in tripartite meetings to foster dialogue and agree on an action plan to decide how to adapt and transfer the practices chosen. Memoranda were signed, establishing the activities to be performed, the responsibilities of each party and the deadlines for completion of the various stages. The matching process led to the setting-up of the partnerships listed in Table 1.

Since early 2008, the transfer process has involved adapting and translating the best practices to be transferred and holding training seminars for trainers from the CSPs and partner organisations. These trainers will lead pilots organised by the respective CSPs for

young aspiring entrepreneurs. This stage covers the period from February to July 2008. The aim of the project team is to involve as many national partners from the CSPs as possible in the transfer process, to maximise the project's impact.

The transfer process will be completed by the end of 2008 with an assessment and adjustments to training based on the experiences gleaned during the different stages of the process mentioned above. The assessment will also help measure to what extent the practices transferred have been accepted by and integrated into the recipient institutions. Recommendations will then be made to the CSPs to develop a flexible methodological approach that can be adapted to the situation on the ground in partner countries, and to those responsible for improving training policies aimed at reducing unemployment among young people.

4.4   Lessons learned at this stage of the project

We can already identify some lessons learned from the approach taken in the MEDA-ETE project.

- The inventory drawn up by the project identifies, selects and analyses best practices, methods and tools used in the EU and MEDA countries and was confirmed by the results of the assessments currently under way as part of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise project. The inventory shows that young people are ill-prepared to design and start up their own businesses. This situation is essentially because national education and training strategies do not encompass entrepreneurship as a key building block. It also emerges that while this problem is similar in all the countries concerned, the strategies and practices used to tackle the situation vary. National agencies have been set up to resolve the problem of unemployment and help young people and other target groups set up microenterprises and become self-employed. Finally, the regional nature of this project, with its exchange of know-how and best practices, is welcomed by the beneficiaries, who want to see this partnership continue after the project expires.
- The countries of the MEDA region (and several EU Member States), do not systematically include entrepreneurship as a key competence in their curricula. But under pressure from the rampant unemployment that particularly affects young people, they are now starting to realise that developing an entrepreneurial spirit, teaching young people to take risks, to set up their own businesses or to take up a family business cannot be left to chance, and they are seeing the need to develop these ideas across all educational and training modes and levels.
- 'Operational training' (training that leads immediately to the creation of microenterprises or self-employment) is fairly well-rooted in the MEDA countries. Ministries of Employment provide such schemes as a way of combating unemployment among young people and higher education graduates. This approach is emerging as an alternative in situations in which the public sector provides limited and selective recruitments and where the private sector is still too small to be a genuine alternative.
- Building an entrepreneurial society represents a current need for the Euro-Mediterranean societies and an investment in the future. It requires an in-depth reform of teaching practices to include new ways of thinking, and active teaching methods to make the education system compatible with current and future needs. Teaching programmes and methods in education systems do not place enough emphasis on a sense of initiative, risk-taking and problem-solving, and seem to foster conformity rather than free critical thought.
- The regional dimension, particularly through the exchange of best practices among countries (Europe or MEDA) is a factor for success and can be an asset for national agencies for improving the services they provide for training in setting up microenterprises and self-employment if adapted to the local contexts. Indeed, the CSPs showed a great deal of interest in the best practices presented at the technical seminar,

and the transfer process is currently running smoothly and is being received very well both by the managers and trainers involved (to date, in Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt).

• Several service providers selected within the MEDA-ETE project have expressed needs in domains that are either upstream or downstream of their traditional activities (see Table 1). Here we can see, for example, that the Egyptian (El MOBADARA), Israeli (MATI), Jordanian (JOHUD), Lebanese (INJAS) and Turkish (KOSGEB) partners chose to work upstream, increasing awareness of entrepreneurship among young people who may be able to benefit from their traditional support services for company start-ups. Morocco (ANAPEC) preferred to concentrate its efforts downstream of the start-up process and chose follow-up post-start-up, currently considered a weak link in this process. Finally, the Syrian (PCEED) and Palestinian (PYU) partners opted for a more comprehensive approach, designing and setting up a whole set of services for potential entrepreneurs, including defining the entrepreneur's profile, the candidate selection process, the basic elements of a business plan, diagnoses and communication .

4.5 The Euromed Charter for Enterprise: an opportunity to move from best practices to national strategy?

At the fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Industry Ministers of the Euro-Mediterranean region[9], held in Caserta on 4 October 2004, the Ministers of the Mediterranean countries and the EU representatives signed the Caserta Declaration and adopted the Euro-Med Charter for Enterprise[10]. Since then, it has embodied a firm commitment to economic reforms based on the development of the private sector in the region. The Charter is the reference text for action in company policy in each country of the region.

The Euro-Med Charter covers 10 action lines for improving companies' economic environment. Two dimensions are directly linked to education and TVET. These are Dimension 2, on education and training for entrepreneurship, and Dimension 3, on improved skills. In these two dimensions, the Charter indicates that entrepreneurship learning should be aimed at young people and adults in a cross-cutting manner, across the formal and non-formal educational system, in a lifelong learning perspective (encompassing primary and secondary school, higher education and adult VET).

Based on the principle that effective support for an enterprise policy is a national responsibility, each Mediterranean partner will apply the principles of the Euro-Med Charter in accordance with the progress achieved and with its own priorities. The results of implementation will be assessed on a regular basis. The efficiency of the process will depend on the capacity to involve all stakeholders, both public and private.

In the MEDA region, the Charter has stimulated discussions between the private and public sectors on how to promote the private sector, and it has been effective in setting up permanent networks of stakeholders and in stimulating coordination between ministries. A regional network of national coordinators was set up to facilitate the process on a national level, and to exchange experiences across the region.

The Charter, which embodies a strong political commitment to economic reforms by the countries of the region, could thus act as a bridge and ensure the continuity of Component 3 of the MEDA-ETE project, making it possible to structure systematic exchanges of experiences, best practices and skills within the Euro-Mediterranean area. The purpose of setting up regional cooperation platforms is to pool and share information between partners.

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[9] EU, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, West Bank and Gaza, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey

[10] The Charter was adopted by the EU in 2000 and by the Western Balkan countries in 2003.

With this objective in mind, the ETF has begun to communicate with its partners and has already facilitated cooperation actions between certain service providers of the MEDA partners and the stakeholders in the framework of the Euro-Med Charter for Enterprise project in the country (JOHUD in Jordan, MOBADARA in Egypt and ANAPEC in Morocco). This dovetailing of the two projects will continue and will constitute an important element of discussion during the 2008 Annual Forum.

In addition, bearing in mind the enormous difficulties in finding information and consolidating data encountered in the MEDA countries, Sub-component 2.1 of the MEDA-ETE project, the Euro-Med Observatory Function, is also an important link in this chain of reforms aiming essentially at building a network of permanent experts in training, employment and statistics (see Chapter 1). The network has already developed a group of common indicators that will be updated on a regular basis. The indicators cover both macroeconomic and budgetary aspects of the countries and various statistics relevant to school attendance, employment, gender, and similar issues. The aim is to create a common online database with key indicators and statistics for education, training and the labour market, which would make it possible to set up an information system for the MEDA region. Now that the MEDA-ETE and Euromed Charter projects have made progress in implementing their activities, more in-depth exchanges between those two projects concerning indicators, data and mutual experiences will take place.

4.6 Conclusion

The experience acquired through the activities conducted both within this project and through the implementation of the Euromed Charter for Enterprise project shows that although there are similar problems in employment, especially among young people and women, and while results (creating wealth through enterprise) often converge, the approaches used to achieve this goal are different and attempt to adapt to local contexts and resources.

In any case, for all the countries concerned, the main stakeholders need to be involved in a dialogue to agree on a national lifelong learning strategy for fostering an entrepreneurial spirit. This strategy should cover all levels and modes of education and training. The approach underlying the strategy should be considered in the long term, covering at least one generation.

At the regional level, there should be a systematic structuring of exchanges of experiences, best practices and skills in the Euro-Mediterranean area through open networks. The Euromed Charter could play an essential role in this connection. Governments would then be able to assess their support policies for companies and improve them in light of the experience of the other partners.

The MEDA-ETE project, through Component 3, also offers an opportunity, already seized upon by certain countries, to lend more visibility and political credibility to their actions, especially using the indicators in the Charter concerning start-ups and best practices.

In conclusion, at this stage of its implementation the MEDA-ETE project has certainly contributed to raising awareness of the importance of regional cooperation by providing solutions to the problems posed, and it has served as a platform for exchanging experiences and know-how and for debating the challenges facing education and training and employment systems in the region. Meanwhile, as this is the last year of the project, it must ensure proper dissemination of results already achieved or still to be attained, ensure that the beneficiaries take on board the best practices transferred, start to identify the potential institutions that could guarantee the continuity of the work undertaken, and thereby guarantee that the results obtained and the links between the members of the networks will be sustained after the project has come to a close.

Table 1. Partnerships established within the project

Country	CSP	Statute	BPs chosen	Target groups
Algeria	ANSEJ	National agency	COMECAR (Portugal)	Project holders/ young entrepreneurs
Egypt	El Mobadra	NGO	GLEAM (United Kingdom)	Young graduates/ project holders
Israel	MATI Jerusalem	NGO	Open for Business (Sweden)	Students/ demobilised soldiers
Jordan	JOHUD	NGO	Open for Business (Sweden)	Young people/ project holders
Lebanon	INJAZ	NGO	GLEAM (United Kingdom)	Secondary school and higher education students
Morocco	ANAPEC	National Agency	COMECAR (Portugal)	Project holders/ young entrepreneurs
Syria	PCEED	National Agency	Moukawalati (Morocco)	Potential entrepreneurs
Turkey	KOSGEB	National Agency	Open for Business (Sweden)	Higher education students
West Bank & Gaza Strip	PYU	NGO	JOBS (Bulgaria)	Project holders

CHAPTER 5. HARNESSING NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE MEDA REGION

Ulrike Damyanovic and Sabina Nari

5.1 Introduction

In its last year of implementation, Component 4 of the MEDA-ETE project on e-learning for teachers and trainers in the MEDA region provides indications that this initiative, which has the aim of developing partner countries' capacities in building e-learning courses, can be considered one of the few examples in the region of an initiative tailor-made for the needs of a specific group (teachers and trainers) that at the same time aims at reaching the maximum level of sustainability and continuity of capacities and skills acquired.

This chapter presents the project's methodological approach and achievements at this stage of implementation. It focuses on lessons learned and challenges faced by the project in terms of both participation and quality of learning processes. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for 2008 actions plan and for the sustainability of the project outputs at both the national and regional levels.

5.2 Project achievements in 2007

In 2007 the main achievements were the development and delivery of the online course for teachers and trainers. The course is the result of a preparatory phase involving teacher training institutions in each country with the aim of developing and strengthening their capacities and skills in this field. In particular, the institutions have cooperated in completing the training needs analysis, which served as a basis for the course design and for development of the course curriculum, which touches, in a comprehensive way, the whole learning process. Teacher training institutions have also contributed to the design of the curriculum for e-learning.

The curriculum outline was presented officially at the MEDA-ETE Annual Forum in 2007 and was approved by country representatives of the teacher training institutions, the project's main beneficiaries. To ensure the relevance of training to participants' needs, and to promote national and regional exchanges, each module is fine-tuned before being delivered to participants. The course adopts a blended approach, combining learning on an online platform with face to face meetings, both country-based and regional.

Course delivery started during 2007 and was launched with kick-off meetings in each of the participating countries. As a result of external factors, Lebanon is not participating to the course. The number of students presently enrolled in the course is about 150.

In the following sections we will present the project approach and an initial assessment of the implementation of the e-learning course for teachers and trainers.

Project approach

In the wider context of education and training reforms, the project considers teachers and trainers as drivers of a deep change. Although the idea in itself is not new, the key strong points of the project consist in having developed a distinctive course with the support of high-level experts, focusing on enhancing methodological and pedagogical capacities to enable trainers and teachers not only to use new technologies in their everyday working environment but also to develop practical experience to make teaching and learning more flexible and more responsive to the trainees' needs.

In addition. the course, which takes participants through the different stages of how to design, develop and deliver an online course, adopts a socio-constructivist approach, with a strong emphasis on collaborative learning. In this way, at the end of the course, individual participants will have produced their own project, drawing from personal experience, and it will be adaptable to their specific working context. They will also have experienced the difficulties and challenges implied in putting together an e-learning course from different perspectives, ranging from pedagogical to structural and technological issues.

The curriculum learning path encompasses all features linked to the creation and implementation of an e-learning course, from introductory modules on e-learning to core modules on tutoring, pedagogy and technology, to be complemented with a full range of correlated aspects such as managerial, financial and logistical issues. Some key modules are the object of particular focus in terms of effort required and topic treated. These are linked to methodological and pedagogical aspects as well as to the tutoring function. They represent fundamental elements in shaping the role of the trainer and teacher in an e-learning context. From a pedagogical point of view, the project adopted a socio-constructivist approach that, interlinked with the use of new technologies, allows quality learning and efficient tutoring support for learners. Learning becomes a comprehensive process that includes knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and the capacity to re-apply and replicate it.

In concrete terms, and in order to guide the learner towards achievement of the learning objectives, each module provides the theory, along with a variety of practical examples in which the theory is applied. The learner's achievements are finally assessed both on the factual knowledge acquired (through multiple choice tests) and on the learning outcomes through the combination of evaluation of the contribution to collaborative work and the production of a summary outcome (i.e. sample of training needs analysis, course storyboard, etc.). Through this approach, learners receive regular feedback on their results, to allow for re-engineering and fine-tuning. The learning process is supported by tutoring actions that support learners while creating trust and confidence in the new learning methods. In addition to providing direct support through the platform, teacher training institutions in the country are committed to providing support to and motivating trainees during course implementation.

First assessment of challenges and corrective measures

In the context of the challenges that have been brought forward during project implementation, specific grey areas can be identified. Key issues that emerged are related in particular to the methodological choice of the blended approach, the overall learning environment, the course language, the structural and technological frameworks and the balance between country and regional needs.

These areas will be illustrated In the following paragraphs, specifying difficulties encountered and the type of solutions or corrective measures that have been put in place to overcome them.

Methodological choice

It has been decided to adopt a blended learning approach[11] for course delivery, combining multiple approaches to learning with particular reference to technology-based materials and face to face sessions[12]. "Blended Learning is learning that is facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning, and

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[11] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/blended learning.
[12] See European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), *E-learning for teachers and trainers*. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.

founded on transparent communication amongst all parties involved within a course"[13]. The idea at the project's start was to focus on online training (through the online platform) interspersed with face to face meetings with the trainees in the countries and regional events. During course delivery, however, it became clear that trainees demanded more face to face meetings and stronger online tutorial support. In particular, it became evident that during the course start-ups[14] in the beneficiary countries, participants showed commitment and enthusiasm, with peaks of online presence for a few days afterwards. But participation dropped consistently and continuously between August and September and this had an impact on course delivery, causing delays in the opening and closure of modules; the course is still suffering from this delay.

As is often pointed out by teacher training institutions, and as is often the case in e-learning, it is difficult to sustain the motivation of trainees, avoid dropouts and promote 'drop-ins'. With the aim of overcoming this difficulty, it was decided to organise country-specific virtual meetings to gain a better understanding of the major difficulties from trainees, to provide them with ad hoc support and to motivate them for the phases to come. In addition, face to face meetings in the countries took place from November 2007 to January 2008. Along with these ad hoc activities, online tutoring support has been reviewed and a revised plan for tutoring actions has been put into place to strengthen regular support to trainees. Teacher training institutions in the countries have collaborated by providing continuous support through monitoring of trainees' progress and organisation of specific training sessions.

The number of active participants varies from module to module. Taking into consideration various levels of 'active' participation in the course, we can estimate that on average 90 trainees have been participating regularly in the course (see Figure 5 for statistics on participation). This number represents about 60% of the total enrolment of 150. This percentage, which is based on results that change continuously, can be considered quite high, compared to international experiences.

The socio-constructivist approach and collaborative learning

The socio-constructivist approach[15] to learning is less familiar to MEDA teachers and trainers who are more familiar with traditional didactical methods. Further complications are linked to the use of online tools and the introduction of new didactical, pedagogical and technological concepts that are still being pioneered in most of the countries. Experience shows that teachers have difficulties in accepting and understanding new learning and teaching processes and contexts. In fact, they are still acting in environments where traditional ways of teaching and learning are still widely preferred. As a collaborative tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning, e-learning is a rather new concept for the institutions and trainees, which would prefer to put more emphasis on face to face discussions and less on learning through the online platform, which in itself represents a new learning environment. This issue has already been addressed in 2007 and will continue to be addressed in 2008, by motivating trainees to exploit as much as possible the potential for using the platform as a collaborative tool. Groups established in different countries may be tasked with achieving certain outcomes or may be engaged in a process-oriented task, the objective of which is to work effectively in a group or team inside national communities and/or in the regional community.

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[13] Heinze A. and Procter C., *Reflection on the Use of Blended Learning Education in a Changing Environment*, Conference Proceedings, University of Salford, EDU, 2004.
[14] Course start up-meetings between May and June 2007.
[15] See Gaimster J. and Gray D., "From transmitted knowledge to constructed knowledge – e-learning as independent inquiry", European Conference on Educational Research, Lisbon, 11-14 September 2002.

Learning resources and case studies

With regard to learning resources provided and their relevance for vocational education and training, it has proven difficult to provide relevant best practices in the field of vocational training. In part this has been accommodated by asking participants to provide examples from their own experience, and through the collection of national good practices. But in order to support the trainees in re-applying the knowledge acquired in their school environment, further cases from the TVET sector need to be made available. The project team has made an effort to address this issue. The idea is to provide the network with a repository of practice and learning materials to be consulted and shared among countries in the region. This is a work in progress that should be completed at project end.

The project platform

The learning platform on which participants work is an open-source one (Moodle), which has been widely used in recent years at the international level. The Moodle platform has been customised by Giunti Labs and is continuously adapted to changing needs as they emerge through feedback from tutors, experts, trainees and country representatives.

While experience shows that the selected platform is flexible, easy to use and adaptable to different contents, its potential as a collaborative learning environment and pedagogical tool needs to be better exploited for the benefit of the trainees. In the project, the platform has been primarily used until now for digital distribution of content and as a digital library of resources and references rather than as a dynamic space for collaboration. After a first assessment of participants' use of and familiarity with the platform, it is suggested that the trainees, who also experience occasional problems in navigating the platform and finding their way through the different fora, will need support, and further awareness raising would be necessary to help them make the best use of the platform as an environment for collaborative learning.

In addition, the project pedagogical team plans to increase guidance of the trainees through the learning process, with particular attention to the learning resources and the overall pedagogical pathway proposed. Opportunities for collaborative learning will be increased so that participants can share and learn from one another. Through a focus on the learner and on the learner's needs and pedagogical requirements, there would be an increase in awareness of the overall learning process, leading to a final quality learning outcome.

The assessment tool that is applied is a mixture of multiple choice tests and an assessment of learning outcomes. While this allows regular monitoring of participants' results, analysis suggests that there is a need to further accommodate a formative assessment approach in order to improve the regulation of the learning process and in general to improve the quality of learning outcomes.

Language barriers

Another challenge is the language barrier. As agreed during the project design phase, the course is delivered in French, mainly for the Maghreb region, and in English for all other participating countries. This choice, linked to the need to find a language that is common to the majority of the project members and countries involved, has given rise to some challenges in two different directions: availability of resources for French-speaking participants and improved language skills for English-speaking participants.

For the Maghreb region, availability for the participants of relevant learning resources and references in French represents a problem. Because e-learning has its roots in the Anglo-Saxon world, it is often difficult to find appropriate resources and terminology in French.

Effort has been put into addressing this challenge, in particular through the help and suggestions of trainees and by taking advantage of French-speaking experts working in the project.

In the case of English, although a knowledge of English was one of the selection criteria set for the target group of trainees, in reality in some countries the level of English of the trainees was not sufficient to allow them to follow the course appropriately and understand the learning content. Some countries have tried to catch up by organising language courses in parallel. The contractor (Giunti Labs and its experts) and the ETF are looking into the issue, trying to start with the localisation of the course as soon as possible in order to ensure better accessibility. The Arabic translation of the course outline is already available to Arab-speaking countries.

E-readiness of countries

While the training needs analysis investigated individual needs, it looked to a lesser extent into the e-readiness of the countries' education and training systems, particularly into existing structural conditions allowing the development of e-learning. In most countries, the integration of new technologies in education and training is supported by strategic frameworks (integrated into laws, policies, special plans, e-strategies, etc.). Recent findings[16] show that implementation is moving slowly and concerns mainly general secondary and higher education. Examples can take different forms. In some cases, they take the form of public-private partnership between education and training authorities and private companies, as in the education initiatives in Jordan and Egypt (http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives). In other cases, advantage is taken of international certifications such as that offered by the International Computer Driving License (ICDL), delivered in various countries to provide information technology (IT) literacy skills at various levels.

Regarding technology and infrastructure, many challenges have been faced or are being faced at the country level, including lack of, or obsolete, infrastructure; high telecommunications costs; poor quality of telecommunications; a low rate of access to Internet; poor digital literacy; and the digital divide. All these aspects, which are present at different levels in all the countries throughout the MEDA region, have had an impact on course delivery. In particular, the majority of trainees do not possess a PC at home and this means that they have to rely on resources at their disposal in their institutions or in Internet cafes. This has introduced additional difficulties and creates real technological barriers.

Although the project itself does not wish to put the focus on technology but on methodology, and despite the growing interest and demands for e-learning in the countries, the existing technological and infrastructural barriers still represent a major challenge. This makes the further integration of e-learning a second priority in the overall process of education and training reforms.

 Regional and national dimensions

The project has been designed as a regional project, fostering the exchange of experiences and mutual trust while taking individual country needs on board. In this context, the national teams have been central to the project. The teams are composed of a project coordinator, a pedagogue and/or an IT specialist. In addition to providing country-specific support and liaising with the ETF, they represent the community of practice that shares knowledge and experience at the regional level and provides comments and feedback for key project documents and outputs. However, this type of regional exchange takes place mainly during

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[16] Coulon A. and Chakroun B., *e-Learning for Teacher and Trainer Training in the Mediterranean region*, ETF, Turin, 2008.

the bi-annual regional seminars and, to a much lesser extent through the project platform. There are some examples of initiatives for bilateral cooperation in sharing examples of good practice, such as cooperation between Israel and Turkey.

While regular cooperation at the regional level needs to be improved, cooperation and exchange inside the country is working quite well. This is in particular the result of the coordination and support of the country project teams during course deployment. Support provided to the trainees takes different forms, mainly through organising regular face to face meetings in the countries, promoting collaborative work within the trainees' community and encouraging group work for the preparation of the outcomes of modules.

5.3 Conclusions and recommendations for implementation in 2008

In the light of this assessment, the following short-term recommendation should help sustain participants' motivation and allow a substantial number of trainees to complete the course successfully. As indicated above, low motivation, high dropout rates and discontinuous participation represent common challenges in any online course. Ways and modalities to avoid dropouts are continuously under discussion, and they are changing. There is no unique solution. But experiences show that a sound tutoring approach is pivotal in guiding trainees and building trust and confidence in new ways of learning.

The Giunti team and the ETF have already recommended that the continued close monitoring of the participants be strengthened, both on the part of the tutors and on the part of the teacher training institutions, to allow for tailor-made support through follow-up on specific challenges. Particular focus will need to be put on regular monthly face to face meetings in the countries, possibly with the support and commitment of the teacher training institutions and local tutors, to allow for exchanges among trainees and to stimulate group work.

In the context of these developments, the work plan for 2008 puts particular emphasis on close monitoring and support measures, including face to face meetings, in addition to two training events organised for all trainees at the regional level. Module by module, awareness for better deployment of the portal as a learning environment rather than as a simple static tool should be increased. While guiding the trainees along the learning path to the final learning outcome, it will be important to increase awareness of the pedagogical approach applied and to ensure a shared understanding. On the part of Giunti Labs and the ETF, particular emphasis will be placed on providing further examples from the TVET field to facilitate learning applied to realities closer to the trainees' working environments. To complete the picture, training modules should also concentrate on the importance of the ecosystem approach[17] for e-learning, including legal and/or policy frameworks, financial resources, and awareness raising at the institutional level to allow trainees to have full support both from the institution as well as in the home context.

For future sustainability at the institutional level, e-learning should be promoted and supported in order to be integrated progressively into the teacher training system. Sustainability at the institutional level is a challenge that was already highlighted in the publication of the Annual Forum in 2007 and in discussions with country representatives. It will be further discussed and addressed in future meetings with the country teams. With regard to regional cooperation, the regional events in 2008 should focus specifically on sharing experiences and lessons learned, with the aim of learning from each other while focusing on collaborative work and examples of good practice.

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[17] www.elig.org: an approach to e-learning including a variety of stakeholders (parents, universities, companies, etc.), while addressing e-learning from legal approaches to course assessment.

As far as cooperation at national level is concerned, the issue of sustainability will need further discussion in 2008, with clear plans for implementation after project end. This will also need specific exchanges with major stakeholders in each country to prepare for integration into the education and training system. It is encouraging that some countries have already undertaken first steps in this direction.

Figure 5. Active participation, in numbers and percentages
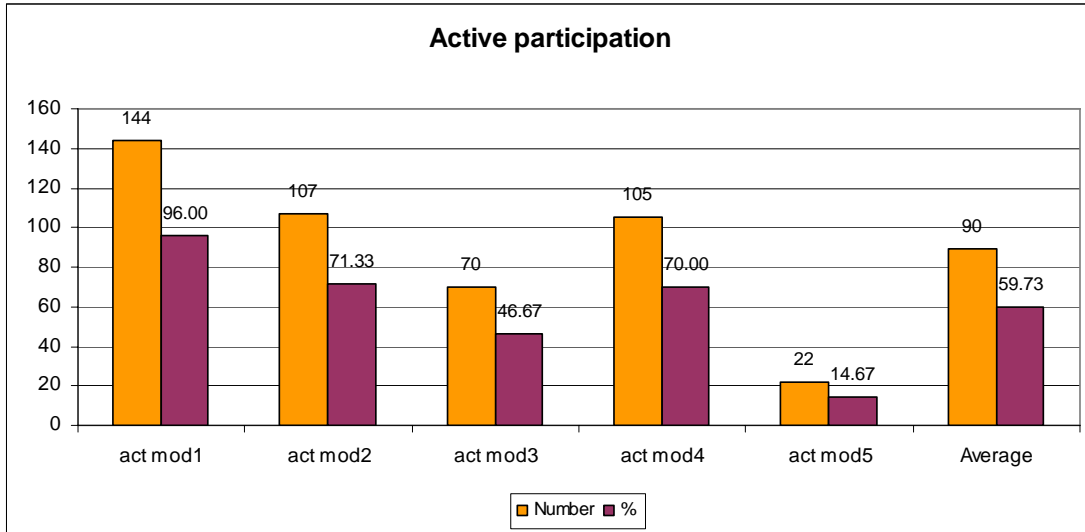
Source: MEDA-ETE component 4 activity report February 2008.

CONCLUSIONS. PERSPECTIVES FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN TVET

Borhène Chakroun

Building on the progress of the MEDA-ETE project and on the contents of this publication, we can already argue that recent developments in the project have contributed to the emergence of some important insights that can guide us in debating the sustainability of the project achievements and the future of regional cooperation in the fields of TVET and the labour market. We would like to start this conclusion with an overview of the experience gained and major lessons learned from the implementation of the MEDA-ETE project. We will also elaborate on insights gathered from researches and studies on TVET reforms in the MEDA countries. And we will introduce recent developments in the Euromed partnership and link them with the perspectives for the MEDA-ETE project's sustainability.

Experience gained

Overall, the major achievement of the MEDA-ETE project is raising awareness of the importance and relevance of regional cooperation in the field of TVET and its links with the labour market. Since the very beginning of the project, the main assumption behind regional cooperation has been the need for the commitment of partner countries and their active provision of inputs in the various phases of project design and implementation. This participatory approach was considered to be the most important factor in fostering ownership and contributing to the sustainability of the results achieved at the end of the project.

For all regional networks, national authorities of the MEDA partners have been requested to and have nominated experts and institutions that will be beneficiaries of, as well as contributors to, project components. The country teams are the core of the project and represent a community of practice that is sharing knowledge and experiences. Actions at the national level such as the national meetings during the Annual Forum in 2007 and national events and activities have helped embed the project at the national level and have facilitated national collaboration.

In all MEDA-ETE networks, partner countries' representatives and experts had the opportunity and the responsibility for providing valuable inputs on their national systems for the elaboration and finalisation of project outputs through the project events (workshops and study visits) and also, although to a lesser extent, through the virtual communities. They had also the responsibility of providing feedback to their colleagues and putting into practice the knowledge acquired.

In Chapter 2 Zelloth and Sweet strongly underscore the methodological approach adopted to involve all country and network members in a genuine policy learning process. The authors stress the importance of network dynamics. They argue that well-conceived working processes may induce policy learning. The method proposed has been to progressively phase in the project, which would make it a truly collective and structured learning experience.

Although it is difficult to identify a particular decision or policy re-direction that can be attributed only to the regional project, there is some good news from Egypt and Jordan regarding the development of national strategies for career guidance based on the MEDA-ETE initiative. Other good news is related to the continuation of National Qualification Framework (NQF) actions in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan and also to the continuation at the national level of the quality assurance actions in Morocco, Algeria and Jordan.

New insights in TVET and the labour market

Building on the progress of the MEDA-ETE project, we can underline the fact that developments have contributed to some important insights on TVET and labour market issues in the MEDA region that can guide us in the future. The insights gained – following several regional and national events, reviews, stocktaking and comparative analyses – have helped strengthen the existing knowledge base of policies and practices in the MEDA region, making it possible to enrich future policy options and develop a sharper understanding of the challenges at the national and regional level.

Through a participatory approach the project has managed to provide decision-makers and practitioners in the MEDA region with high-quality publications (reports and methodological notes on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning, quality and quality assurance in TVET and the Observatory Function), which introduce very new insights on these topics in the MEDA region. Some of the findings and major issues are developed in this publication.

The project researches showed that the transition for youth from school to work is a major challenge for all MEDA countries. In Chapter 2 the authors explain that apprenticeship schemes and entrepreneurship initiatives are bringing partial solutions but are not sufficient in terms of scale and quality. Other challenges are more systemic and will require reforms that are more system-wide and system-deep. In Chapter 3 Masson highlights major issues regarding balancing growth and quality improvement, reconciling social and economic needs, strengthening links to the labour market, building partnerships with enterprises, and improving governance systems, including the regulatory environment and financing systems.

An uneven impact

As noted in the introduction, we can already argue that MEDA-ETE project implementation has been successful, and that it has not always been easy but certainly has been highly rewarding not only for the project network members and the beneficiary institutions but also for the project team itself.

But success should not hide the problems faced and the issues raised during implementation of the project. The first lesson to be learned from the project implementation is that the commitments and subsequently the impact of this set of themes in the partner countries have been uneven. In addition, the number of countries involved makes it difficult to monitor the progress of each and to support all countries equally. Also, not all countries are ready to deal with all project issues, mainly because there are more urgent matters on their political agenda. In some cases, countries have formally affirmed their various interests in the project's actions and approaches. In other cases, countries have kept their contribution to the project at the level of participation in regional events without creating any link with national developments.

The MEDA-ETE project team has therefore adopted a selective approach that focuses on:
- involving all countries in regional events;
- assessing the readiness of each country to embark on more substantial activities at the national level;
- implementing more focused actions in the more committed countries (such as participation in national working group meetings, field visits by experts and meetings with policymakers and social partners);
- Reporting back to regional network and share new knowledge and experiences.

It has been demonstrated that anchoring MEDA-ETE activities in national agendas is an appropriate and effective mechanism for blending and connecting development at the national and regional levels. Our major conclusion is that for advancement of the regional dimension it must build on and tap into national processes. And the lessons learned through

regional activities must be fed back into the national dimension in order to develop national policy recommendations. National policy priorities – in terms of topics and timing – will determine what the national and the regional dimensions should focus on and what their respective contributions will be.

Rationale of regional cooperation: Mediterranean countries can learn from one another

It is assumed that knowledge flowing between European countries and those of the Mediterranean region tends to be greater than the flow of policy learning between the countries of the region itself. The MEDA-ETE project was designed to help ensure that this trend is reversed, and that participating countries are able to learn from one another. Comparative and thematic reports produced by the project this year (on apprenticeship and enterprise-based learning in MEDA countries and quality and quality assurance) have brought important lessons, best practices and benchmarks that have been discussed within regional networks. In all events and project activities, an important question was always put on the table: What can the Mediterranean countries learn from one another, both now and in the future, about TVET reforms and links to labour markets. There are some concrete examples of regional cooperation:

- In component 2.1, the Jordanian work on key TVET and labour market indicators has been used as basis for the Euromed Observatory Function work on regional indicators for TVET and the labour market;
- In component 2.3, the Moroccan and Algerian authorities are willing to work closely with Tunisia in the field of quality and quality assurance;
- In component 3, Morocco's Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences. (ANAPEC) is considered to be best practitioner and, after adaptation, is transferring part of its system for entrepreneurship schemes to Syria's Public Corporation for Employment and Enterprise Development. (PCEED) ;
- In component 4, the whole network of institutions is involved in knowledge sharing actions, particularly in sharing training materials for e-learning.

Regional cooperation: thematic perspectives

As far as the thematic thread is concerned, the MEDA-ETE project has raised awareness of the importance and relevance of regional cooperation in TVET and the labour market. The region is in need of new initiatives that can go further in terms of fact-based benchmarking exercises and more formal peer reviews and knowledge sharing regarding common emerging issues. This can bring higher impact at the national level and effectively address issues that should be considered at the regional level. Good examples of issues to be considered at the regional level are: quality and quality assurance in TVET and its links with qualification framework, e-learning and information societies, entrepreneurship, and TVET and labour market indicators and regional benchmarking.

Quality and quality assurance in TVET

In Chapter 3, Masson notes that in 2007 the project introduced new themes related to quality and quality assurance in the TVET system. The network members came from the private sector (social partners) and public authorities (ministries and national agencies). This has been a major change in terms of the organisation of network activities (with a stronger focus on the role of social partners) and the focus of the debate (including governance issues and funding).

Quality and quality assurance topics are central for the development of the MEDA region. In almost all countries the issues of certification and accreditation and subsequently the governance of TVET systems are considered strategic issues. Quality assurance is also an

important building block in establishing national qualification frameworks. Several countries (such as Jordan, Egypt and Syria) are creating new independent bodies that will be in charge of accreditation and quality assurance in education at the system level. These bodies are an asset for supporting quality development in TVET and for bringing coherence within education systems and their links with the labour market.

This gives the issue of quality and quality assurance and the national qualification framework an important place on the agenda for regional cooperation. In this case, the importance of public-private partnerships and the role of social partners should be stressed and concretely addressed in terms of active involvement, capacity building and visibility.

E-learning: from pilots to systemic dimension

MEDA-ETE Components 3 (on entrepreneurship) and 4 (on e-learning) include pilot actions at the national level that are aimed at introducing new initiatives and practices in the MEDA region. Pilot projects need to be monitored very closely in order to assess how they can be made sustainable in the beneficiary institution and, more optimistically, how they can be implemented on a larger scale (at the system level).

As Damyanovic and Nari put it in Chapter 5 regarding the e-learning component, the technical assistance and training components have been designed to ensure their long-term viability. The project supports a train-the-trainer cascading scheme that may lead to a sustainable effect on the beneficiary institutions. But taking into account the results of the requirement analysis developed in the framework of the project and the first lessons of the e-learning course implementation, more initiatives are required both at the operational level (training trainers, developing e-learning resources) and at the system level (coherent policies linked with overall quality of TVET, etc.). In the short to medium term, these initiatives will most probably be funded in part by external donors.

Any future regional support in this field should target a dual objective. The first involves working within the educational systems but in relation to other sectors (such as telecommunications and industry) to improve the coordination and coherence of national policies regarding ICT and the knowledge society (including e-government and ICT strategy). The aim is to help optimise investment and better define the goals in coherence with the information society's initiatives at the national and regional levels. The second aspect of the objective involves targeting specific institutions in charge of leading the development of e-learning in TVET (training of teachers and trainers institutions, national institutions in charge of ICT-based resources development, etc.). In these cases, the work done by MEDA-ETE and the experiences gained could be the basis for new developments. In this context, several countries (Jordan, Algeria and Tunisia) have already expressed their needs for further support to bring pilot actions to the system level.

Entrepreneurship: from practice to policy

For Component 3 on entrepreneurship, in Chapter 4 Jaouani argues that the first phase (stocktaking and best practice selection) shows the great interest of partner countries in the topic but also the diversity of their needs (from education in entrepreneurship skills to more sophisticated schemes for the unemployed). The author also stresses the political interest on the topic, particularly for youth. He highlights the scattered nature of entrepreneurship initiatives (various ministries, NGOs, the private sector) and access problems (banks, loans, etc.). Although the project is just starting the transfer phase, and at this stage anticipating the results of this phase might be difficult, what we have learned is that partner countries lack not only comprehensive and integrated policies on entrepreneurship but also specific tools and schemes for specific sectors (education, TVET, higher education, active measures for employment) and specific target groups (including the unemployed, women and students).

The MEDA-ETE project team together with the Euromed Charter for Enterprise project already support the involvement of beneficiary institutions in several countries (such as Jordan and Lebanon) in dialogue and planning and reporting to the European Commission on the Charter indicators. This has already helped these institutions in linking operational interventions to national policies and strategies.

Again, any future support should target a twofold objective. The first involves working in the framework of the Euromed Charter for Enterprise to improve the coordination and coherence of national policies with socio-economic development. The second involves targeting specific institutions in charge of leading the development of entrepreneurship (training of teachers and trainers institutions, national institutions in charge of curricula and education resources development, etc.). In these cases, the work done by MEDA-ETE during the transfer phase and the experiences and knowledge gained (service providers' repertories, best practices repertories, etc.) could be used to inform new initiatives.

Observatory Function: need for a mid-term perspective

Regarding the Euromed Observatory Function, as Johansen puts it in Chapter 1, the first data collection exercise reveals the large gaps existing in terms of sources of information, availability and quality of data in different countries. Johansen points to the fact that the aim of having reliable and comparable indicators is overly ambitious for the time frame of the MEDA-ETE project, which ends in 2008. The major conclusion that can be drawn for the future is that it seems necessary to consider MEDA-ETE actions as the first phase of a much longer cycle that will eventually build on sound mechanisms for producing comparable and useful data for policymaking in the region. As Johansen notes, a formal commitment by the 10 participating countries to provide a basic set of indicators and national analysis to the ETF on an annual basis would ensure that the regional dimension could continue to be developed and serve as an inspiration for decision-making at the national level. The ETF could thus continue playing the role of focal point and, in the mid-term perspective, one of the partner countries might host the Euromed Observatory Function.

In the communiqué of the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference[18], the partners highlighted the fact that reliable statistics are an important factor in decision-making. The Ministers agree that it will be necessary to explore available mechanisms to allow continued support for the development of the statistical capacity of the countries. This provides political support for further regional cooperation.

Based on this political background, in the next section we will present recent developments in the Euromed partnership and link them with project sustainability issues.

Euromed partnership: an ongoing process

The MEDA-ETE project was initiated on the basis of a recommendation of the Euromed Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting in Valencia in 2002. At that time, policymakers from EU and MEDA countries stressed the importance of regional cooperation in developing TVET systems linked with labour markets, with the aim of increasing the employability of young people.

In recent years, new political initiatives have taken place in the framework of the Euromed partnership. Some of them are closely linked to the issues of education and training for employment. The first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research emphasised the urgent need to support a labour market-based reform of

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18 Lisbon, 5-6 November 2007.

education, including TVET, as well as convergence of frameworks of qualifications.[19] Although this initiative concerns higher education, it also provided an important agenda for TVET.

The Euromed Foreign Affairs Ministers[20] considered employment creation and the modernisation of labour markets to be among the most pressing challenges for the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries in a globalised world and changing economic environment. Ministers welcomed progress on the implementation of the commitment to support market-based reform of technical and vocational education and learning, the involvement of commerce and industry, and rationalisation of qualifications. In this regard, following the recommendation of the Tampere Conference, a workshop took place on 12 and 13 December 2007 and will pave the way for a Euromed Ministerial Conference on Employment, to be held in the second semester of 2008 that will bring together government representatives, social partners and international organisations. The conference, which will cover various aspects related to human development, should produce concrete initiatives and proposals to promote employment creation, modernisation of labour markets, and decent work.

Despite these interesting developments, the issue of TVET and links with the labour market has received little policy attention at the Euromed level. No high level meetings between EU and MEDA TVET and labour market ministers have taken place. A more formal institutional framework of political structured dialogue and common actions is still lacking.

A policy framework is necessary for several reasons. First, it results in more visibility of the Euromed partnership in the TVET sector both in Europe and in the MEDA countries. Second, it results in deeper commitment of partners, taking into account the monitoring mechanisms put in place within such a policy framework. Third, it can trigger a more integrated approach in the European Commission and EU Member States' support to TVET and labour market reforms in the MEDA countries.

Both the Euromed Higher Education conference and the forthcoming Euromed Employment conference are good opportunities to share the results of the MEDA-ETE project and to advocate the importance of regional cooperation in the field of TVET and the labour market.

The road ahead

The MEDA-ETE project has triggered real demand from partner countries for more ambitious Euromed partnerships in TVET and its links with labour markets. The demands are threefold: for support to national reforms, enhancement of regional cooperation and development of more sustainable partnerships with the EU.

More specifically, this publication calls for building a Euromed political partnership in the TVET labour market sector. This means that Euromed partnership should be organised around systematic and structured dialogue. It should place the issue of TVET and the labour market firmly on the Euromed agenda as a part of socio-economic development processes.

Partner country representatives in several networks (Component 4 on e-learning, and Component 2.1 on the Observatory Function) have already started a discussion of the sustainability of their work. Deeper and wider discussion (with all networks and the project advisory committee) will take place during the Annual Forum in 2008. All project stakeholders (the EC, partner countries, the ETF and others) need to reflect on follow-up to this important initiative.

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19 Cairo Declaration, 18 June 2007.

20 Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference, Lisbon, 5-6 November 2007.

Other actions that are being or will be undertaken include:

- mobilisation of partner countries to advocate regional cooperation in TVET and the labour market and to trigger further support to MEDA-ETE networks and initiatives;
- introduction of EC instruments relevant for sustainability and future actions, such as the Technical Assistance Exchange Unit (TAIEX)[21], Twinning and other relevant instruments;
- mobilisation of donors, EU Member States and other partner institutions that could continue to support regional cooperation;
- wider dissemination of the project results and outputs at the national, regional and international levels. This includes specific regional events for each component and a closing conference of the project in spring 2009. It will also include the organisation of a national dissemination event for teacher and trainer training and the pilot experiments in both Component 3 (on entrepreneurship) and Component 4 (on e-learning).

This work is a major input to the Annual Forum 2008. The event offers the appropriate opportunity for discussing its conclusions and considering other issues that partner countries' representatives deem relevant for the sustainability of regional cooperation in TVET and the labour market.

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[21] http://taiex.ec.europa.eu/

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