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FOREWORD

The European Union (EU) and its wider neighbourhood face many challenges within their borders and beyond. Conflicts, terrorism and radicalisation threaten us all. Poverty, corruption and poor governance are also sources of instability.

The basic *raison d'être* of European integration – peace, democracy, human rights, prosperity and security – has never been more relevant. What happens beyond our borders has a direct impact on us. We can't simply wall ourselves *in*. We need to reach *out*. If we don't actively export stability, we are bound to import instability and insecurity.

That is what drives our external relations policies towards enlargement partners and the countries of the European Neighbourhood. And this is where the work of the European Training Foundation (ETF) fits in. Human capital development, vocational education and training (VET) and skills are at the centre of our efforts to modernise and stabilise our partners. They are drivers of productivity, competitiveness and innovation and they also enable the creation and growth of viable businesses. By creating an attractive environment for investment and by offering job opportunities to the youth and unemployed, they promote social integration and social cohesion.

Through its support to the implementation of the EU's cooperation programmes, and through its direct assistance to partner country stakeholders in the form of policy analysis and advice, capacity building, exchange of good practice and networking, the ETF makes a substantial contribution to the social and economic development of enlargement partners and the European Neighbourhood countries.

In the following pages, you will see many practical examples of how the ETF, through its work, contributes in its own way to that vision.

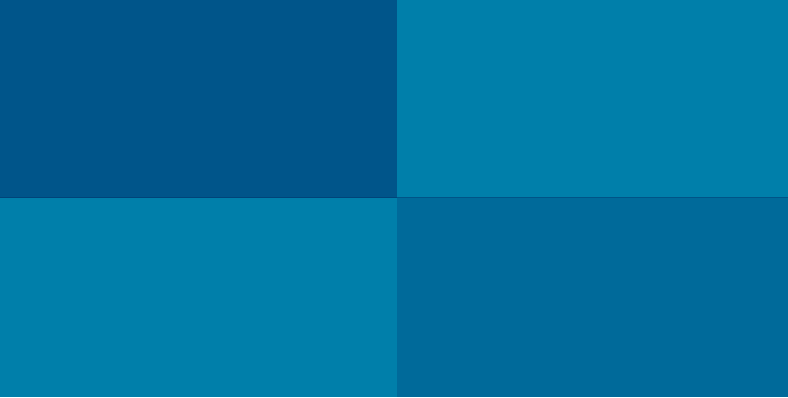
We are grateful for the role that the ETF is playing in providing advice and expertise to the EU Delegations, to the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and to all the other Commission services. Clearly, we expect this advisory role to continue and the ETF to play a key role in monitoring the progress of human capital reforms. We are keen to develop synergies and complementarities further, and strengthen our common efforts to ensure the success of reforms that will create new opportunities for the peoples of our partner countries, and underpin the stability and prosperity of the entire region.

Let me conclude by extending my warmest thanks and gratitude to the outgoing Director of the ETF, Madlen Serban, who has invested countless days, time and energy to make the ETF a relevant and recognised EU agency. I wish her success in her new challenges and extend my best wishes to the new incoming Director.

Johannes Hahn,
European Commissioner, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations



Commission européenne |
European Commission



THE ETF

The ETF is the EU agency tasked with supporting human capital development in the countries neighbouring the EU in the context of the EU's external relations policies¹. In doing this, the ETF draws on relevant EU internal policies and policy instruments.

Governments seek to protect their citizens and promote their well-being. Well-being is inextricably linked with fair access to meaningful work, appropriate education and training provision, and to the opportunities that enable the creation of new enterprises and the growth of existing ones. With that fair access, populations can make use of their skills, gain new skills, and pass skills on to others. Therefore, you can draw a straight line from the heart of government to the specific activities of the ETF. But in a world that grows ever more complex, the trajectory of that line can all too easily become hidden.

Across the globe, rapidly evolving labour markets function in dynamic tension with more or less regulated education and training systems. The demand for relevant and transparent skills and qualifications, the imperative to adopt innovations in automation and robotics, the pressure to provide welfare and social inclusion policies which maintain stable societies – these are some of the issues that confront EU Member States, as much as the countries in and around the EU's Neighbourhood and Enlargement areas.

In many of these places, structural social and economic obstacles make the challenges more difficult. As we have seen so vividly and tragically, particularly in recent years, growing numbers of

people are compelled to migrate, either to escape immediate threat or to seek better life chances. Part of the solution is to help countries develop the human capital of their populations. By doing so, they can both support people's skills and career development at home and, in the event that they do migrate for work, help them make a transparent and measurable offer of value to destination country employers through, among other things, properly structured and trusted qualifications.

What we do

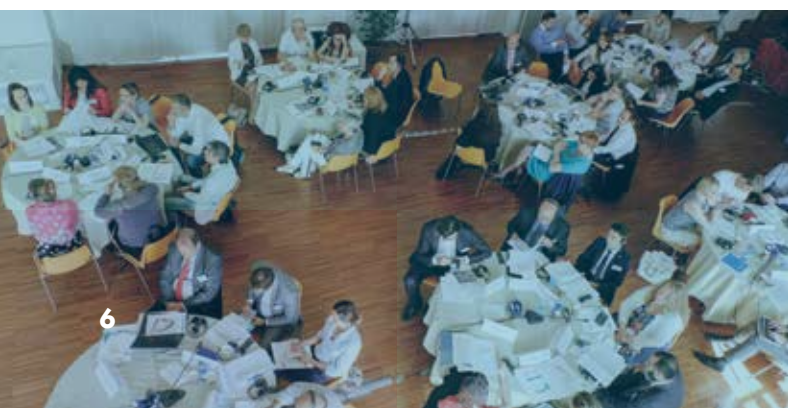
We support human capital development by being a critical friend in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programmes to promote social mobility and social inclusion, reform education and training systems, and better balance the capabilities of those systems with the demands of the labour market.

This means we support the efforts of our partner countries to cultivate effective, evidence-based policies that support civic participation and well-being, modernise VET provision, and match that provision with national and international labour market demand.

At the same time, we aid the delivery of EU assistance to our partner countries through expertise input to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EU interventions and support for policy dialogue.

We tailor our services to meet our partner countries' specific needs in their unique contexts, and this is a central tenet of our relations with them. It is also

¹ In this context, we take human capital to mean the broad value of every individual's particular combination of knowledge, experience, skills, and aspiration.





a requirement of EU policy, as articulated in the November 2015 EU Enlargement Strategy².

How we do it

The ETF is organised around seven strategic projects, which form the basis of our operational work. Our Single Programming Document 2017–20 provides a structure for our strategy and annual work programmes for the period. The strategic projects are designed to help our partner countries improve the capacity in their VET systems for policy making and good governance; enhance the attractiveness of VET; improve access to VET provision; and improve overall quality standards. The logic of the ETF's interventions in the field is illustrated in the diagram on p. 12.

The effectiveness and efficiency of our operations are ensured by two 'horizontal' strands of activity, covering corporate support functions on one strand, and strategic communications, partnership operations, and stakeholder cooperation on the other. In addition to operating at corporate level, communication activities – including events, publications, digital channels, and media relations – are embedded in the strategic projects. Developing and disseminating a compelling shared narrative about our work to all our partners and stakeholders is essential for our reputation, and for building the trust we need to deliver our work effectively.

Since the reorganisation of our work into the seven strategic projects in 2015, we have identified a number of indicators of efficiency in the way we work. Our Annual Activity Report 2016 shows that, according to our key performance indicators, internal

efficiency is improving. We have achieved high levels of efficiency in overall performance, especially in terms of our financial commitments and payments.

We remain confident that our improved internal efficiency will directly impact the outcomes of our work in our partner countries – after all, that is the point of the exercise.

Evaluating our work

In 2016, the work of 45 agencies and joint undertakings of the EU, including the ETF, was the subject of a wide-ranging evaluation focusing on their contribution to the political priorities of the European Commission³. The report highlights the value of the work done by agencies, stating that by “[b]uilding on their expertise in a wide range of areas, the agencies support the European institutions as they make decisions and implement policies”. It goes on to conclude that agencies are “instrumental in bringing to life the fundamental objectives” of the EU, and that their “missions and actions are fully in line with the Union’s 2017 budget focus on growth, jobs and addressing migration and its root causes”.

Regarding the ETF in particular, the Deloitte evaluation points out that our work “supports knowledge, business and innovation. It enhances trade, prosperity and stability in the Union and its neighbourhood. It also supports skills as a tool for economic growth and social development in partner countries”.

² European Commission, *EU Enlargement Strategy*, COM(2015) 611 final, Brussels, 10 November 2015.

³ Deloitte, *How do EU agencies and other bodies contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to the Juncker Commission Agenda?*, November 2016.





At the end of 2016, the European Commission finalised its own External Evaluation of the ETF⁴. The evaluation, carried out by a consortium of independent consultancies, gives a positive view of what we are achieving across all our thematic areas. However, as with any external evaluation, it encourages us to try and do more, to get a better return. Inspired by the findings of the evaluation, we have worked on better articulating the logic of our intervention in partner countries, connecting objectives with outcomes, and with intermediate and long-term impacts, as well as in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. All of which has already helped us to clarify our purpose and build a better common understanding with stakeholders.

“ The story of the EU agencies is a European story closely intertwined with the evolution of European integration that leads to the Union we presently live in. The 45 agencies and joint undertakings have played a key role in helping to ensure the success of the European project. And they do so by helping the EU deliver results at times when they are most needed. ”

Herman Van Rompuy,
former President of the
European Council

The External Evaluation also focuses on the sustainability of the ETF's functions. Given what we are able to put into the field – in terms of funding, but mostly in terms of expertise – our budget is relatively modest. For example, looking at our work from an activity-based budget perspective, we are able to allocate an average of EUR 700,000-worth of organisational value to each partner country. This has to be considered in the context of the size and complexity of some of our partner countries. Nevertheless, we have a track record of close cooperation with multilateral and bilateral donors and other organisations working in related areas within our partner countries, helping them to focus their activities.

Our aim is always to ensure that our work is effectively embedded in what is happening in any given country. We strive continually for the best possible cooperation with EU and other country stakeholders, and the highest levels of understanding of what other international actors are doing. We are often in a good position to find ways of making links between those international actors and national administrations. That's how we increase the chances of the deployment of our modest resources leading to sustainable, positive outcomes for our partner countries.

To find out more about our mandate, visit
www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Mandate

⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF): Final report by the EFECTIV Consortium*, 2017. Last accessed 23 May 2017 at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2767/17936>





" The need for interconnected, holistic approaches is greater than ever. Seeing societies affected by instability and insularity, conflict and division, with all the inevitable consequences for their citizens, can be disheartening. But we will never give up. "

Madlen Serban,
Director, ETF





OUR PARTNER COUNTRIES

Our partner countries vary enormously across all the dimensions one might use to characterise nations, regions, territories, and populations. It would make no sense to describe them in one way, other than to say that each has a specific relationship with the EU, and a particular position within EU external relations policy.

Although we work on the same thematic issues in all our partner countries, we do so with considerable differences in emphasis from place to place, and always in the context of each country's situation. We don't go into a country with the intention of imposing a single view or method. There is no 'copy and paste' element to our approach.

“ The ETF affords policymakers in the partner countries vital external support in identifying the best options for the development of their own population's skills. This takes on greater importance in a world of growing cross-border dependencies. Every government needs to work in concert with their own people, with neighbouring countries, and with peers around the world. That's what the ETF can help them do. ”

Peter Greenwood,
Head of Corporate Performance
Department, ETF

Our role is to offer as much knowledge and experience as we can, in terms of creating better results for and from VET systems. Where we know of useful and relevant experience in one country, we will offer to share it with others. Increasingly, we facilitate peer learning opportunities in which, rather than directly offering our knowledge or experience, we provide a platform for stakeholders from our partner countries to do so. The benefit to other countries from this kind of peer learning is, if anything, even greater.

Engaging our partner countries in the process of policy analysis helps us to understand the status of, and prospects for, each country's VET system reforms. However, we have to be clear that we are planning for a complex and uncertain future. Complexity and uncertainty do not lend themselves to linear planning, which is why it is crucial that partner countries put adaptation and innovation at the core of everything they do.

There are many examples of good practice in innovation in our partner countries, as you will see in the 'Highlight' sections within this report, as well as in the whole range of ETF publications. However, many face long-term structural challenges in their VET systems, ranging from poor quality or irrelevant VET provision to high unemployment, particularly among young people; and from significant inequality with regard to women's employment, to social exclusion linked to minorities, disadvantaged groups, and under-developed rural areas and regions. Other challenges include problems with financing, mismatched supply and demand among skilled workers, limited opportunities for skills upgrading and entrepreneurship, and inflexible labour markets.





These challenges do not deter us, nor will they prevent our partner countries from moving forward, particularly as the ingenuity of local communities gains ground, and the potential of peer learning to help identify and implement local solutions is more widely realised.

" One important factor is how the Torino Process links with, or complements, but does not overlap with other monitoring processes that the Commission is working on in the partner countries. This is particularly relevant for candidate countries in the SEET region. They have a monitoring process linked to the economic semester, they have their own monitoring processes, and they have to reconcile the Torino Process with those other monitoring systems. "

Eva Jimeno Sicilia,
Head of Systems Policy and
Country Analysis Unit, ETF

We currently work with 29 partner countries. Most of them are involved with the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policies.



South Eastern Europe and Turkey (SEET)

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo⁵, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey.



Eastern Partnership (EaP)

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.



Russia



Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED)

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine⁶, Syria, Tunisia.



Central Asia

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

⁵ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁶ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

ETF INTERVENTION LOGIC

GENERAL OBJECTIVE 2017–20

To contribute to human capital development, i.e. the lifelong learning development of individuals' skills and competences, in the context of EU external relations through improved VET systems and better labour market integration and re-integration

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES 2017–20

To support partner countries to improve both initial and continuing VET in terms of:

GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS
AND POLICY MAKING

VET PROVISION AND
QUALITY ASSURANCE

QUALIFICATIONS AND
QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING
AND ENTERPRISE SKILLS

EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS
AND EMPLOYABILITY

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES 2017–20

To support partner countries through:

POLICY ANALYSIS
AND ADVICE

CAPACITY
BUILDING

EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS
AND EMPLOYABILITY

EU ASSISTANCE
IN THE CONTEXT OF EU
EXTERNAL POLICIES

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION
AND NETWORKING

ETF STRATEGIC PROJECTS

SUPPORT TO EU ASSISTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF EU EXTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY ANALYSIS AND
SYSTEM-WIDE PROGRESS
MONITORING

VET
GOVERNANCE

VET PROVISION
AND QUALITY

QUALIFICATIONS AND
QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
AND EMPLOYABILITY –
INCLUDING SKILLS AND
MIGRATION

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING
AND ENTERPRISE
SKILLS





WORKING TOGETHER, LEARNING FOR LIFE

Our strapline, 'Working together, Learning for life', is a mere five words, yet it opens up a vast arena of policy and action. As the Deloitte report on the contribution of the EU agencies suggests, one of the distinguishing features of our work is our role as a trusted partner. We are often described as being an organisation that is not suspected of having a private agenda. Stakeholders at every level have shown a willingness to talk to us, almost unconditionally. This derives from a widely held view that, whatever the issue or the intended outcome, our goal is to see VET systems in partner countries improved for the benefit of the people of those countries. We're not trying to promote a particular ideology or model, we analyse the situation in each country and ask how we can help. And we're there for the long term, offering expert and strategic advice to support the economic growth and social development of our partner countries. After all, it is in the EU's interests to have stable and prosperous neighbours.

" We seek to renew the attention given to VET in partner countries, and help demonstrate the contribution it can make to sustainable economic development through lifelong learning. Our role is to help the countries develop policies that will ensure VET is effectively designed, governed, and monitored. "

ETF: Highlights and Insights 2016,
European Training Foundation

" Developing human capital in ETF's partner countries constitutes a significant wing of the Union's efforts at projecting its internal policies beyond its borders, which benefits both neighbours and EU citizens. "

How do EU agencies and other bodies contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to the Juncker Commission Agenda?,
Deloitte

Skills have become part of sectoral, regional, and national development, and VET is no longer discussed in isolation. This can be seen, for instance, in the rising interest in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial competences within the realm of skills. The objective of VET is to ensure that societies and economies have the right skills and competences available to them. A skill is the ability to perform a task needed to do a specific job, whereas competences enable people to be effective at any job. While competences favourable to entrepreneurship, like other key competences, are not sector-specific, there is a strong case for combining them with vocational training, to give VET learners the greatest chance of gaining relevant, adaptable capabilities, including being able to start their own business if they wish.

Policymakers in our partner countries know they can help unleash the human capital of their people – in entrepreneurship, in employment, in life – by improving their VET systems.





They have shown a real desire to move forward, from policy formulation to making real change, in creating opportunities for their people to access training, and to gain and use better skills. Structural challenges persist, and new needs also arise, which means we have to find new ways to support them. For example, it is often assumed that only policymakers are the beneficiaries of our actions. But we operate increasingly at practitioner level too, for example in supporting the spread of work-based learning, helping with the implementation of quality assurance methods, and setting up innovative projects on teacher training.

" It is clear that institutions in our partner countries have learned to value working together, reconciling their different interests, not being afraid to celebrate each other's successes and recognise shortcomings. And it should be like that. "

Madlen Serban,
Director, ETF

Our continuing focus on governance, and particularly the governance of funding and financing as the benefits of decentralisation become apparent in many countries, emphasises the importance of partnership, both between the ETF and our partner countries, and within each country. Institutions are learning to work together with other institutions and with citizens, as well as with policymakers. The isolation that can result from a defensive attitude

towards one's own job title or status is giving way to the togetherness of multi-level governance, in which we move forward with a shared vision, from the single learner to the entire apparatus of government, and from the college workshop or training suite to the factories, offices, and chambers of every type and size of employer.

" The pressure of the wider environment is not conducive to giving anything time. Demands are always for instant results and proof of impact. The whole question of policy analysis and how you turn that into action is becoming more about practicalities and the implementation of ideas, rather than the discussion of ideas. "

Anastasia Fetsi,
Head of Operations Department, ETF

Our knowledge and our expertise have always been relevant to our partner countries. In the challenging global environment we all face today, they are without doubt more relevant than ever. But that knowledge and expertise do not seek to provide a set of answers that can be applied to dispose of particular problems. Their purpose is to ask better questions, the spur of all learning, and by doing so shine a light on possible paths. As a famous African adage puts it, if you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together. In the skills arena we go together, working together, learning for life.





THE SEVEN STRATEGIC PROJECTS

STRATEGIC PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

Support to EU Assistance in the Context of EU External Policies



Building and strengthening relations between the EU and its neighbouring countries — especially those which are candidate or potential candidate countries — is vital for regional stability, national economic prospects, and the aspirations of millions of people. The ETF's work contributes to improving the relevance and effectiveness of EU technical and financial assistance, highlights the pivotal role of human capital development in neighbourhood relations, and promotes the EU approach to policy dialogue. In 2016 our support helped to shape the delivery of hundreds of millions of euros in EU support funding.

VET Governance



Good governance is essential for translating policy into action, avoiding duplication of efforts, and building confidence among all stakeholders. It demands clear roles, vigorous institutions, and transparent decision making. In VET, responsibility for system reforms is too often concentrated in a single central ministry, leading to blockages and inefficiencies and, potentially, poor decision making. The ETF's work helps partner countries align with international advances in multi-level governance, bringing decision making into clearer focus at local, national and regional levels, and across sectors, institutions, and other stakeholders.

Policy Analysis and System-wide Progress Monitoring (Torino Process)



Through the Torino Process, the participatory analytical review methodology developed to help partner countries assess progress in VET reform, the ETF has provided policymakers and other actors with a fit-for-purpose, flexible and facts-based means of monitoring policy development in VET and identifying policy options to advance the reform agenda. This contributes to better decision making in policy matters and greater transparency throughout the system.

VET Provision and Quality



Although the ETF's work is focused on coherent and sustainable VET and employment policies, it is not involved in the delivery of VET itself. However, it supports partner countries in important areas of policy implementation. These include continuing professional development for VET teachers and trainers, the relevance, attractiveness and accessibility of VET, and the implementation of quality assurance. The emergence of a focus on work-based learning, particularly in the Eastern Partnership and the candidate countries, has seen an increase in the range of partnerships the ETF and partner countries manage in this area, including for instance the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.





Qualifications and Qualification Systems



People need qualifications that are based on rigorous elements, so they can make their skills visible to others, particularly employers, learning providers, and governments. As a consequence of that visibility, they have better prospects in terms of the transferability of their skills within local, national, and international labour markets. The ETF works bilaterally and face to face with our counterparts in the partner countries, providing policy and technical advice on qualifications and qualification systems and contributing to their reform efforts with toolkits, guides, studies and thematic analysis.

Entrepreneurial Learning and Enterprise Skills



Competitiveness is just as important to the development of capable individuals as it is to the growth of businesses, sectors, and economies. But competition works best when infused with cooperation and the ability to identify talent and build teams. The teaching of entrepreneurship skills such as confidence, problem-solving, risk management, and creative thinking is increasingly central to VET, and supporting women and SMEs in particular can make a major contribution to wider enterprise, employment and social cohesion outcomes. The ETF helps its partner countries boost entrepreneurship by disseminating good practice and supporting the skills dimension of the Small Business Act for Europe.

Employment, Skills and Employability (including Skills and Migration)



Aligning the skills supply from the VET system to demand in the labour market helps learners and workers keep up with the ever-increasing pace of change in the requirements of employers. Better alignment of supply and demand is also an important contributor to reducing unemployment and low-quality employment, and addressing the challenges of large-scale migration. The ETF works with its partner countries to build their capacity to identify present and future skills needs, improve transitions to work and enhance the recognition and portability of migrants' skills.





SUPPORT TO EU ASSISTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF EU EXTERNAL POLICIES

Building and strengthening relations between the EU and its neighbouring countries – especially those which are candidate or potential candidate countries – is vital for regional stability, national economic prospects, and the aspirations of millions of people. The ETF's work contributes to improving the relevance and effectiveness of EU technical and financial assistance, highlights the pivotal role of human capital development in neighbourhood relations, and promotes the EU approach to policy dialogue. In 2016 our support helped to shape the delivery of hundreds of millions of euros in EU support funding.

The past year has seen a strengthening of our contribution in this area. In addition to our support to the EU Delegations in the partner countries, we helped to set up new initiatives that use VET expertise to enhance the value of EU development aid. One such initiative is a VET Toolbox, created by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) to deliver services similar to those we offer our partner countries, to other countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. We worked closely with DG DEVCO on the design of the Toolbox, drawing on the whole range of ETF expert knowledge.

2016 saw many successes in our regular support to the EU Delegations. One highlight has been our involvement in Algeria, working with the Delegation there on the evaluation of a new service and the

formulation of new regulations. We provided support to the design of the EU assistance programme in Morocco, and were heavily involved in the evaluation of Swedish technical assistance in Georgia. That led to the EU Delegation in Georgia requesting our support in the design of EUR 50 million in new EU assistance for human capital development projects, for the period 2018 to 2021. In Albania, we worked with DG NEAR on the first EU budget support for VET in an enlargement country.

We were consulted by the European Commission on both the enlargement policy review and the neighbourhood policy review. This was in addition to the regular structured dialogue meetings we have in Brussels. But perhaps the real added value that the ETF offers is attested to by the informal settings where we are consulted on day-to-day work. These may be smaller requests – some not even recorded in our reporting system – but they are vital, everyday interactions where we're asked for facts and opinions that influence the outcomes of EU assistance across our partner countries.

One less well-known aspect of this strategic project is its involvement in providing support, in the form of training and coaching, to other ETF staff. Last year, for instance, the team organised training on budget support, as it is a growing issue in partner countries. There was a clear need for ETF country desk managers to be better equipped to handle EU requests in their areas. The team planned and



delivered the training, provided summaries via informal catch-up sessions, and set up a digital library of tools and methodologies available to staff at any time. There are also plans to team up with the strategic project on governance to provide future training on funding and financing structures.

" We have been working with the ETF and with the Serbian institutions in the last years very intensively. We are supporting Serbia with substantial financial assistance when it comes to the process of European integration and the accession process. The ETF has been a close partner in this, and we have been relying on the expertise of the ETF colleagues in several spheres – when it comes to education, especially VET, but also social inclusion – and we were very happy about the cooperation and the flexibility the ETF can offer."

Steffen Hudolin,
Head of Operations II,
EU Delegation, Serbia



Highlight

Improving all the time

The volume of assistance varies from place to place, and we often have to take unplanned requests into consideration. Nevertheless, we have managed to improve our responsiveness by establishing agreed methods to plan more of these requests into our work programme. For example, we helped DG NEAR to improve coordination with EU Delegations over the timing of requests for ETF support. We regularly survey stakeholders in the EU institutions to assess their satisfaction with the support we provide, and in 2016 100% of survey respondents said that our support was 'good' or 'very good'.





POLICY ANALYSIS AND SYSTEM-WIDE PROGRESS MONITORING (TORINO PROCESS)

Through the Torino Process, the participatory analytical review methodology developed specifically to help partner countries assess progress in VET reform, the ETF has provided policymakers and other actors with a fit-for-purpose, flexible and facts-based means of monitoring policy development in VET and identifying policy options for advancing the reform agenda. This contributes to better decision making in policy matters and greater transparency throughout the system.

One of the ETF's main objectives is to support our partner countries' development of policy analysis and evidence-based policy making. We do this through the four principles of the Torino Process – becoming more participatory; taking ownership of the process; carrying out self-assessment; and developing a comprehensive vision for VET.

As more countries become mature in terms of monitoring systems and consultation with internal stakeholders, the focus of the Torino Process is moving from enhancing that internal process, to becoming a wider intelligence-gathering operation. This intelligence is valuable both for the partner countries and for the European Commission, and has been accompanied by a growth in the number of partner countries embracing self-assessment within the Torino Process framework.

The growth of sub-national reporting has been a major trend over the last two years. It began with a pilot project in Ukraine, supporting five regions with training and coaching. The results were

excellent, and fast – the reports were ready within three months. This is now being extended to all the regions of Ukraine, including on a city basis in Kyiv. We were able to build on our experience in Russia, supporting Moscow's participation in the Torino Process at city level. Following this, the city of St Petersburg invited us to help them develop a strategy for the city based on the Torino Process methodology. In Tunisia, there is a growing focus on regional autonomy in policy analysis, and there the Torino Process was instrumental in preparing the ground for EU support at regional level. We are working with Kazakhstan, where there is an intention to develop sub-national reporting in five regions ahead of rolling it out to the whole country. And Morocco is also preparing the groundwork for this approach.

“ There's an internal tension to the Torino Process itself between the quality of the analysis and the learning process that the countries have to go through. ”

Manuela Prina,
Strategic Project Leader, Policy Analysis
and System-wide Progress Monitoring, ETF





Across the board, participation in policy dialogue is increasing. This is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of meetings which are just for regional representatives. Moreover, the contributions they make at national meetings are becoming more visible and more valued. The closer you get to the beneficiaries and the more you engage them in the policy-making process, the more effective public policies will be. The message, therefore, is that the sources of information are all around you – just get out and meet them! It not only helps with gathering data, but it also helps stakeholders to realise that they are part of a VET and skills ecosystem, which can be based on a town or city, a region, or a whole country. The overall ambition is to connect this ‘bottom-up’ approach to gathering evidence with policy making at the highest level.

However, we are not advocating the same approach for every country or every region. The diversity of VET and skills ecosystems is one of the great strengths of our growing engagement in peer learning among partner countries. The fact that things are different in different localities provides insight, and bringing partner country representatives together to share their stories will always be a vital part of what we do.

The Torino Process Conference in June 2017 will shine a spotlight on this learning, and on the stories from across the partner countries that testify to the contribution the Torino Process is making. We want to share the message that the Torino Process is not about numbers, it’s about people. Behind the data

and the analysis stand the stories of individuals who are dedicated to bringing about positive change in their country. We want to acknowledge the work that has been done, and increase the opportunities for others to benefit from it.

“ We realised that our understanding of the VET sector was rather minimal, and here we had an initiative coming from the ETF, the Torino Process, doing an analysis of the sector, looking into what’s going on and providing us with very good information and very good insight. This is a very good basis to start thinking about how we could build up in the future, or could expand, our support for the SME sector, for the business sector, using the analytical work which the ETF has been doing. ”

Berend de Groot,
Head of Cooperation,
EU Delegation, Ukraine

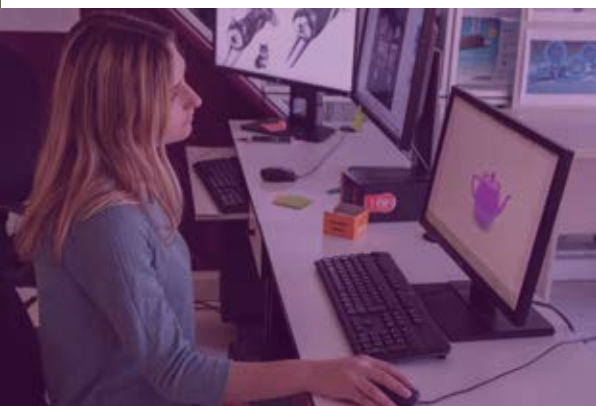




Highlight

Making communities stronger

The Torino Process continues to make strides as a methodology, as well as in its impact on the VET systems and stakeholders in partner countries. At a regional meeting in Belgrade, Torino Process coordinator Vesna Puratic, Senior Expert for VET, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina, spoke movingly about how their participation in a shared endeavour had helped to bring the different communities of her country closer together. "I thank the ETF for giving us this opportunity", she said, "because it has made us stronger. This is our report"





" There have been many big steps forward with the Torino Process. I'm proud that we collected so many stories from the countries, because while the reports are fine, and the database is great, the added value of the Torino Process is the people. You see it when you see what people have made out of it. And what they have made, sometimes, is really amazing. "

Eva Jimeno Sicilia,
Head of Systems Policy and
Country Analysis Unit, ETF

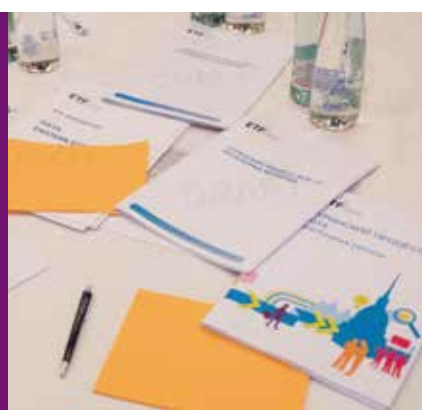


Highlight

Focused on the future

At the Torino Process regional conference in Morocco, a young entrepreneur from Algeria said: "We cannot design policies for the future with people from the past." This was not a reference to anyone's age, but a comment on the fact that designing policies for the future based entirely on thinking about the past is just not viable.

This reflects the evolution of the Torino Process methodology, which is becoming more forward-looking. It is not only about analysing the past, but also about developing foresighting capabilities, building scenarios, and supporting iterative policy improvement practices that are inclusive and innovative.





VET GOVERNANCE

Good governance is essential for translating effective policy making into practice, avoiding duplication of efforts, and building confidence among all stakeholders. It demands clear roles, vigorous institutions, and transparent decision-making. In VET, responsibility for system reforms is too often concentrated in a single central ministry, leading to blockages and inefficiencies and, potentially, poor decision-making processes. The ETF's work helps partner countries align with international advances in multi-level governance, bringing decision making into clearer focus at local, national and regional levels, and across sectors.

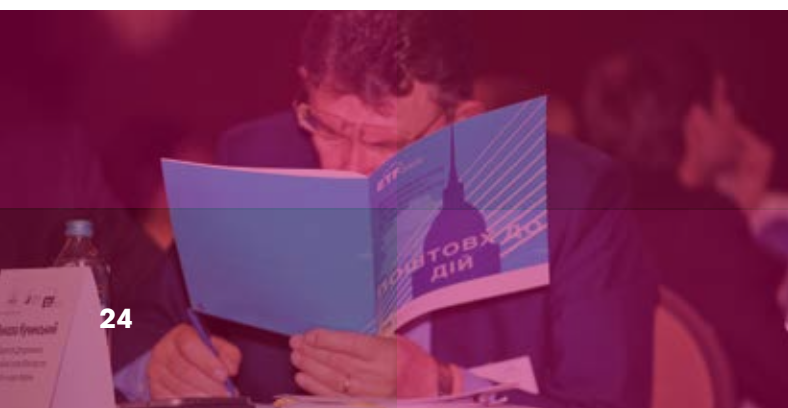
Articulating and encouraging good governance is central to everything the ETF does. Governance is important because decisions are made by people, institutions are made of people, and reforms are carried out to benefit people. Thus, when our partner countries, or our colleagues in EU institutions, want to make progress in skills-matching, or improving qualifications, or quality assurance, the inevitable questions are, who are the people responsible for it, and what is their accountability? This applies equally at local, regional, sectoral, or national level.

We work with all the relevant actors, whether they are in government, or other state institutions, or from the spectrum of social partners and civil society. Reforms can only be successfully implemented if all these people have a common understanding, share a common vision, and are aligned to common priorities. Any system has to have the right architecture to support the activities that happen within that system; in our case, that

means things like teacher training, qualifications, entrepreneurial learning, and so on. The system needs to have a structure that functions efficiently, and is appropriately transparent. Here, transparency simply means that everyone knows who does what, who makes the decisions, and what rules they must follow. Efficiency, transparency, and accountability; these are the basic principles of good governance, along with subsidiarity – that is, ensuring that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level.

“ The way we’re analysing institutional cooperation is new. We’re using a triangulation model, connecting the national, local, and sectoral levels. It establishes a clear framework while allowing for the full diversity of actors. I think it’s important to have really concrete descriptions of governance within the triangle, to make it tangible for everyone. ”

Siria Taurelli,
Strategic Project Leader,
VET Governance, ETF





In 2016, we continued to work on the promotion of partnerships from an effective governance perspective. Partnership entails many things, and we have been developing concrete actions to accompany the concept. For example, in social dialogue, we've been helping partner countries to scale up dialogue, from specific local and sectoral platforms to the national level. Across all our partner countries, we worked with stakeholders to raise the position of skills in the social dialogue agenda.

Similarly, the importance of funding and financing solutions has become more visible and more compelling. In terms of partnership, this means that public and private sectors have to agree on cost-sharing, at least to some extent. It also means granting individual schools some degree of autonomy or flexibility in managing contracts or local enterprise agreements. Our focus now is on helping social partners to improve their own expertise, their knowledge of the mechanics of VET systems. We are currently developing a package to support capacity building for social partners, which includes work already carried out on an inventory of governance structures in partner countries, and which is linked to the country progress indicators of the Torino Process.

Decentralisation is another important development. More countries are becoming serious about decentralising responsibility for decision making in VET, and regional councils, which bring people together from all the various standpoints, are particularly important in this process. It links to the issue of funding and financing too, because

one of the first questions any regional council will ask is about the degree of autonomy they have in managing at least part of the available VET funding.

Governance holds a dual role in our work, both as a transversal function of VET systems, and as an ETF strategic project in its own right. This is highlighted in the area of country-to-country peer learning, in which more and more of the insight we are able to facilitate comes not from EU Member States or international bodies, but from other partner countries. This is proving to be very effective, and is now occurring at unprecedented levels. Three areas in particular offer fertile territory for peer learning opportunities – increasing the role of social partners; strengthening the capacity of regional councils; and scaling up the work on VET financing.

“ Key words would be cooperation and coordination, but then it's really about between whom? It's between education and employers, it's between national governments and local level governments. Being smart enough to regulate these relationships, or make some sort of new social contract. Bringing clarity, this is what we want. ”

Ivana Aleksic,
Senior Education Specialist, Serbia





Highlight

Green shoots in Ukraine

A free trade agreement between the EU and Ukraine, which commenced in 2016, aims to create new sources of prosperity for Ukraine's people, companies, and entrepreneurs. VET is a key component of the agreement, because of its potentially important role in economic growth, competitiveness, innovation, and regional development. As part of the 2016–17 round of the ETF Torino Process, and building on the work of many VET stakeholders in Ukraine, we partnered with the Ministry of Education and Science to develop a pilot project involving five regions. The project focuses on some of the challenges in the proposed decentralisation of Ukrainian VET policy, and our cooperation with the ministry resulted in a Green Paper addressing the main issues and policy options.

In April 2017 a technical meeting and high-level policy forum explored VET policies in this context. Drawing on the ETF's strong track record in providing a platform for policy dialogue and expertise sharing, the event facilitated, among other things, a response to the need for a renewed vision in VET policy in Ukraine. The first session of the event's second day was organised around high-level national and European representation, and was led by Volodymyr Groysman, the Prime Minister of Ukraine. The Green Paper itself informs a strategic approach to a revamped legislative framework in VET, and the event contributed to enhanced commitment on the part of regional and national stakeholders to continue developing effective and innovative VET. This work helps to lay the groundwork for further significant EU support to Ukraine's VET system in the period 2018 to 2020.



Highlight

Switched-on ICT in Vojvodina

In Serbia we are working with the autonomous province of Vojvodina, focusing on the ICT sector. ICT is important to Vojvodina and the Serbian economy as a whole, because it offers a means of diversifying economic activity in a country still dependent on agriculture. In Vojvodina, ICT is projected to overtake agriculture in generating GDP in the near future. We've been helping to empower the local ICT cluster, consisting of employers, start-ups, VET providers, and learners. We worked with them on a skills needs analysis, which included higher education needs, but also secondary level and post-secondary VET. The report was presented at the end of April 2017, in Novi Sad.





VET PROVISION AND QUALITY

Although the ETF's work is focused on coherent and sustainable VET and employment policies, it is not involved in the delivery of VET itself. However, it supports partner countries in important areas of policy implementation. These include continuing professional development for VET teachers and trainers, the relevance, attractiveness and accessibility of VET, and the implementation of quality assurance. The emergence of a focus on work-based learning, particularly in the Eastern Partnership and the candidate countries, has seen an increase in the range of partnerships with the ETF and partner countries in this area, including the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

2016 saw the publication of a position paper and a policy briefing on the ETF approach to quality assurance. Events in the SEET and SEMED regions, hosted by Ireland and Austria respectively, kick-started the roll-out for this approach. They focused on helping countries to develop transnational cooperation, to help steer policy development on quality issues. Each event also offered a 'deep-dive' in other areas of quality assurance. The SEET event explored the role of teachers and trainers in quality, and the transversal dimension of quality assurance; while the SEMED event focused on the internal and external evaluation of VET providers. Delegates examined questions about who should be involved, what kinds of organisations might need to be set up or brought into the conversation, and what methodologies to pursue. In 2017 we will run similar events involving partner countries from Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The commitment shown by colleagues, both from partner countries and from the host countries, was exemplary – they were busy from eight am to six pm each day. These are technical, demanding topics, but everyone was very much engaged. Being hosted by experts, practitioners, and policymakers from EU Member States is attractive for partner countries, because EU policies and instruments are valuable for developing qualification systems, and for the quality assurance both of the systems and the qualifications within them. Among other things, that supports possible future mobility, or the attraction of inward direct investment, based on skills and qualifications that can be understood externally. For our hosts from the Member States, there are political, economic, and social reasons for their continuing commitment. There was a strong sense of support from everyone, from ministers to trainers. They understand the challenges partner countries face, and there were many offers of further help.

The Skills Connexion project (2015–17) mapped and reviewed work-based learning schemes in participating countries. We are building on its success, ultimately targeting all partner countries, rather than selecting two or three. We want to work with all the different mechanisms in the area through a forum that will bring strategic players together, towards the end of 2017. Skills Connexion demonstrated that the level of interest in partner countries is extremely high. Over the last year, we organised visits for partner country delegates to centres in European countries from Wales to Spain and Sweden, providing opportunities for them to learn from these countries' different systems, and consider options for their own.





“ Following the Riga Conclusions’ medium-term deliverables, we conducted a survey in the candidate countries, and the results showed that learning is a top priority. We will continue to support these countries with implementing and monitoring learning policies and practice. ”

Helmut Zelloth,
Strategic Project Leader,
VET Provision and Quality, ETF

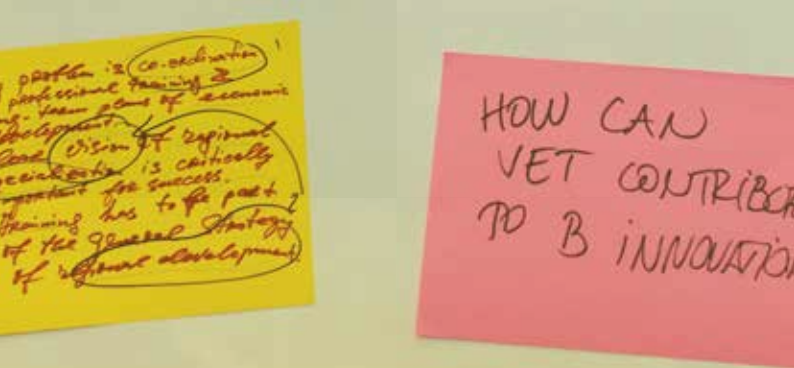
We have also developed a new readiness tool, based on a model which helps countries identify where they currently stand, before deciding which options to pursue and which to deprioritise. It maintains our policy of sharing expertise, while supporting the specific priorities that each country has selected. For example, in Moldova they used the readiness tool to decide on pursuing a practical tool for quality assurance of internships. Ukraine wanted to set up peer learning visits to other countries on particular topics, while in Georgia we drafted an options paper and a survey on financing, to help them reflect further on their choice of direction. Although Skills Connexion was a three-year project, it’s a pipeline that goes on. The focus in the future will be even more on tailor-made policy advice, promoting differentiation according to every country’s specific context, while recognising the importance of common areas of interest, such as work-based learning.

As the first of the five priority areas identified in the 2015 Riga Conclusions⁷ on medium-term deliverables by ministers responsible for VET from across EU Member States, candidate countries, and European Economic Area countries, work-based learning is a growing focus of our support to partner countries.

In Montenegro we helped set up a scheme to place teachers in industry for a period, giving them an opportunity to update their industry knowledge and skills. We encouraged the creation of an overarching partnership involving business, providers, and ministry staff, to try out the scheme by placing some teachers in industry to find out what worked, and what didn’t. Based on this insight, the scheme has gone from a pilot to a national roll-out, with two full-time people brokering it, and larger numbers of teachers, schools, and employers participating. Similarly, we established a pilot project in Albania to help a school take more responsibility for staff professional development. This involved carrying out a needs analysis, planning appropriate training for different members of staff, and prioritising and setting up the training. Gaining the capability to plan for the future in this way represented a stepping up in their own professional activity, and created an enhanced sense of pride and self-worth among teachers – traditionally a group with a relatively low self-image in that region.

⁷ See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf





Moreover, at the beginning of 2017 the government enacted a new VET law which formally recognised this way of promoting professional development as a national requirement. The ETF pilot was not the sole driver for this legislation, but it was an opportunity to try it out, confirm that it worked, and demonstrate that teachers are willing to step up and take it on.

" Both for our hosts in EU Member States and the delegates from partner countries, being able to talk to people with the same problems, being faced with the same demands to change policy, can be very illuminating. Participants know that they're going to get some new learning. "

Elizabeth Watters,
Senior Specialist,
VET Policies and Systems, ETF

Another 'bottom-up' project which has reaped rewards is in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Two information technology teachers, working across three schools, wanted to get colleagues to collaborate and use information technology more generally in their pedagogy. We were able to support them in carrying out training, developing guidance, and holding workshops to share resources, so that over the course of 2016 staff worked collaboratively across the three schools. This year they will extend the project to 11 vocational schools, spread throughout the south of the country.

It shows that supporting teachers who are enthusiastic empowers them to step up and lead region-wide, and maybe nation-wide, change. The bigger mission is to share an enhanced self-awareness of the teaching profession in an environment where that may not have been the case before, but where successful reform is more likely to happen if they are given the opportunity to lead it. Overall, the message is that working at the interface between policy formulation, implementation and monitoring helps to ensure that policies are launched and then implemented in a smart, informed way.



" In the new Skills Agenda we have been looking at three aspects related to skills development. One of them is improving the quality of skills provision, so working on the supply side of skills, making sure supply is accessible and good quality, and looking at future skills development. We try to build on the expertise that the ETF has, and I think that's one of the important bridging functions that we see for the ETF, its capacity not only to translate developments and policy orientations at a European level into the work they are doing in the partner countries, but also bringing their experience from the partner countries to influence policy direction in Europe. "

João Santos,

Deputy Head of Unit, Vocational Education and Lifelong Learning, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission



Highlight

Spend less, get more



In June 2016, VET policymakers and employer groups from the Eastern Partnership region met in Torino under the Skills Connexion banner, for a three-day workshop exploring ways to improve outcomes for learners, employers, VET institutions, and society. Many different types of work-based learning were discussed, including apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training, work placements, and simulated companies. The workshop reflected the role of work-based learning as a key part of VET reforms. Keynote speaker Alexandra Costa Artur, Director at Imanovation in Portugal, shared the findings of a European study into the cost-effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes from the employers' perspective. "ETF partner countries can learn that short-term investment is a long-term benefit that really supports business," she said. "An apprenticeship is less expensive than a recruitment process."

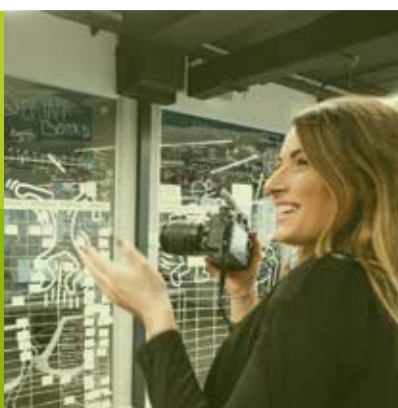




Highlight

Weaving new ways

A recent visit to Turkey included visits to companies in three different sectors. One of them was Comfytex, a leading Turkish exporter in the textile sector. Our initial intention was just to discuss the different experiences of the candidate countries and the Member States with Comfytex CEO, Hasan Küçük. But during the course of the conversation, we thought why not go one step further and ask whether he might be interested in joining the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, an EU initiative bringing governments and industry stakeholders together to strengthen the quality, supply, and image of apprenticeships. To our surprise, Mr Küçük immediately said, "Why not? Can we sit together and discuss this?" So we sat down with him and with representatives from the European Commission, and after 20 minutes he said, "I'll join the Alliance!" Comfytex is therefore the first company from an ETF partner country to join.





Highlight

Khorog calling

Access to high-quality continuing professional development (CPD) for vocational teachers and trainers in Tajikistan is still challenging. While developments in information and communications technologies offer great potential, resource constraints and outdated content remain major obstacles. In 2014, we launched an initiative to create Communities of Practice in the major cities of Tajikistan. These communities involve groups of school directors and employers, who meet regularly to look at ways of improving professional and institutional practices.

In June 2016, we supported the delivery of a policy forum in Khorog. We worked in close partnership with the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Central Asia and the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment. The event was delivered as a webinar blending face-to-face and online sessions. The 60 participants included 24 present in Khorog, a further 26 accessing the event online from other places in Tajikistan, two contributors from neighbouring Kazakhstan, and two ETF staff in Turin.

Despite some technical constraints, the delivery of online events like this in Tajikistan offers a sustainable solution for more frequent and accessible CPD initiatives in the country. Truly realising the benefits of digital innovation for modern and viable CPD programmes is a long journey, for EU Member States as much as for partner countries. The Khorog webinar was a successful step in the right direction.

One *child*,
ONE *teacher*,
ONE *book* & one *pen*
can *change the world*



QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS

People have qualifications – countries have qualification systems. It is necessary to clarify this distinction if we are to help partner countries effectively develop the elements that make a better qualification system, for instance a national qualifications framework (NQF). Similarly, people need qualifications that are based on rigorous elements, so they can make their skills visible to others, particularly employers, learning providers, and governments. As a consequence of that visibility, they have better prospects in terms of the transferability of their skills within local, national, and international labour markets.

“ I am really impressed by the toolkit and the self-assessment tests. When I looked through the questions, I had a clear picture of what we need to do. ”

Karol Jakubik,

Main State Advisor, Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Slovakia

The biggest highlight of 2016 was undoubtedly the introduction of a new ETF toolkit to help partner countries find and use the right tools for developing their qualification systems. The toolkit features a publication which sets out the context, and provides

details of policy issues relating to the four ‘pillars’ of national qualification system reform – legislation, stakeholders, institutions, and quality assurance. It also includes self-assessment tools designed to help policymakers identify their current situation, and plan for change. The publication is accompanied by a series of videos using illustrations and straightforward language, to make the issues accessible to all stakeholders. We held a conference in Brussels in November 2016 to showcase the toolkit, at which over 150 delegates, including representatives from ETF partner countries, EU Member States, European and international institutions, and global experts, participated under the banner ‘Getting organised for better qualifications’.

The focus of the conference was very much on discussing the messages and ideas within the toolkit. Conference delegates tested the self-assessment tools, participated in workshops on each of the four pillars, and debated the concepts in plenary and panel sessions. Overall, the response to the toolkit was very positive, with delegates expressing tremendous support for its introduction as an analytical tool for assessing national qualification systems, and identifying where they need to improve. Since then, we have seen the toolkit being used in countries from Tunisia to Belarus. At times, this is in the context of in-country workshops run by the ETF, while there are growing reports of partner country colleagues using it independently.





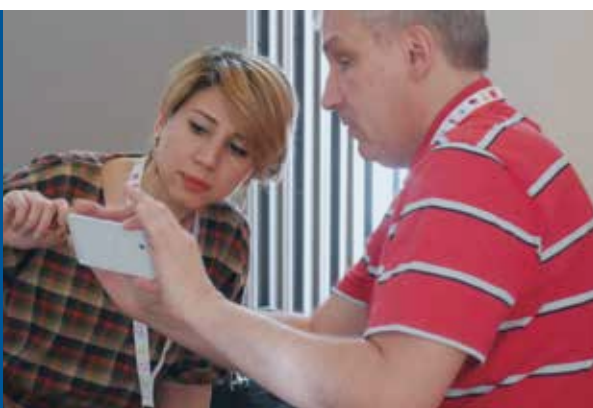
“ When it comes to the NQF, ownership works at two levels. First, employers have a structural role in the development of standards and assessment of qualifications. Second, we have a role in validating qualifications in sector committees, and employers have membership of the VQA. That puts us as on an equal footing with the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education. ”

Fatih Tokatli,

Director, External Affairs, Training and Projects,
Turkish Employers Association of Metal
Industries

The ETF’s Qualifications Platform has contributed to the evaluation of the toolkit’s self-assessment function too. The Platform is an online worldwide community for people working on qualifications, hosted and managed by the ETF. Recently, a group of special correspondents – partner country contributors with an interest in both qualifications and the development of online communities – met in Tirana to discuss using the Platform for blogging about general qualifications and qualification system reforms, as well as specifically on aspects of the toolkit. The group has grown in numbers, with a brief that has broadened as their confidence increases. People continue to join the nearly 800-strong online community, to read and comment on the content available there.

Last year, both Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia referenced their NQFs to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), representing a major step forward in relating their systems to EU standards. We had helped Kosovo secure membership of the EQF Advisory Group, a meeting of experts from EU Member States to which our partner countries and non-EU European states are invited. We supported the Kosovo representatives with training, and with the preparation of reports. We also developed a technical guide to help them implement the referencing process. We have carried out inventories of qualifications in several countries as part of the process of modernisation, demonstrating that partner countries are focusing on the right issues, such as learning outcomes and matching EQF definitions, and that labour market stakeholders are involved in the development of qualifications.





Highlight

Getting organised in Ukraine

In February 2016 we visited Ukraine and saw that, while some progress had been made with an existing NQF implementation programme, only part of the activity had been carried out. We made an evaluation of what had been done, and spoke with all the stakeholders that were involved in the first plan. Then a team started to work with the Ministry of Education, using the ETF 'Getting Organised' toolkit. They carried out an extensive stakeholder mapping exercise, and used the self-assessment tools as far as they were ready at that time. However, continuing with a plan that had only partially worked didn't make sense. We helped to formulate a new plan, which was approved by ministers in December and is now being implemented. This new plan has gained greater buy-in from stakeholders, and people are more willing to commit to their responsibilities. We are also working on establishing a website for the NQF, and supporting the monitoring of the implementation plan. As the wider decentralisation of VET governance continues in Ukraine, this work will provide a 'glue' between the different institutions and their goals, in order to make sure that there is communication that sticks.

" I think the difference between this toolkit, and its launch conference, and previous publications and conferences, was that we managed to integrate the toolkit as a genuine communication tool in a way we hadn't done before. "

Michael Graham,
Strategic Project Leader,
Qualifications and Qualification Systems, ETF





Highlight

Telling the NQF story

Communicating what an NQF is and how it works remains a challenge – and a top priority – among most, if not all, partner countries. In 2016, we helped Albania to develop a handbook explaining the NQF and its benefits. This is now being shared with stakeholder groups, uploaded on various websites, and distributed to learners and teachers, as well as policymakers and experts. Many other countries are developing communication campaigns aimed at general audiences, not just institutions or particular sectors. This is not only about promoting the value of clear, trusted qualifications, it's also about helping countries maintain national coherence as they make the transition to more decentralised governance of education and training. The ETF itself has set a high bar for standards of strategic communication in this area, winning an Award of Excellence in the International Association of Business Communicators' 2017 Gold Quill Awards, in recognition of the communications campaign for the qualifications toolkit.



THAN THE FRAMEWORK



EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY (INCLUDING SKILLS AND MIGRATION)

Aligning skills supply from the VET system to skills demand in the labour market helps learners and workers keep up with the ever-increasing pace of change in the requirements of employers. Better alignment of supply and demand is also an important contributor to reducing unemployment and low-quality employment, and addressing the challenges of migration. Working with partner countries, destination countries, and migrants themselves allows the prospect of managed, circular migration in which each party benefits – known as the win-win-win scenario.

One of our success stories in recent years has been our coordination with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) on the project Make It Match, under Platform 2, Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies. A three-year project which started in 2014, the idea behind Make It Match was to create a network for the EaP countries in the field of skills anticipation. The network includes representatives from ministries of labour and education, from public employment services, employers, and trade unions. In some countries research institutes are also involved, given the data-led nature of skills anticipation work.

There are people who have been in this network from the beginning, and over the three years this became not only a network in the sense that its members met regularly, but also because they have worked so effectively across as well as within the six countries. Although the final conference for

Make It Match takes place in 2017, this approach can deliver further good results, if countries are willing to maintain the network and, as far as possible, continue to work with the same people.

In last year's Highlights and Insights report we mentioned the creation, in partnership with ILO and Cedefop, of six 'how-to' guides drawing on best practice in skills anticipation and matching. The guides are now available, and formed the basis of a week-long learning programme launched by the ETF in October 2016. The programme featured training sessions on all the tools and methodologies described in the six guides, with practical examples. The event was designed so that one person per partner country could attend, and 24 countries participated.

" The skills anticipation learning programme was very useful, because it provides the data, methodologies and tools to do the job and start the policy-making process. The ETF is helping to provide a bright future for labour market systems and VET institutions in the partner countries. "

Ahmed Elgeushey Hassanein,
Deputy Minister for Technical Education, Egypt





To make the programme more widely available, we are creating an e-learning tool, again, with practical examples to support the theoretical guides. The plan is to begin with two or three modules, to test the usability of the software that hosts the e-learning materials, and the design and usability of the interface, before rolling out the whole programme. This represents new territory for the ETF, and is part of the organisation's growing digital maturity.

Employment, Skills and Employability is a new strategic project within the ETF, only two years old, so it is not surprising that it is at the leading edge of digital innovation, but has not yet established the sustainability of outcomes that are such an important feature of other ETF strategic projects.

One of things that we want to do in the coming years is measure skills mismatch in our partner countries. This will require new approaches to data availability and data accessibility, which vary considerably from country to country. 2017 sees the start of piloting in four countries, to see whether we can align these methodologies to the different country situations with limited data. The eventual aim is to do this regularly, in the same way that Cedefop does for EU Member States.

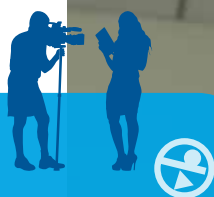
However, we have to bear in mind that we work with countries in different stages of economic transition, some still struggling with legacy systems and others with instability and conflict.

“ If you look at the Torino Process in 2010 or 2012, employment and skills-matching and related issues were not as high a priority then as they are now. You can see in the current round that, for every country, skills and labour market demand is a top priority. Policy thinking is going that way, towards the role of education and training in addressing skills needs. ”

Daiga Ermsone,
Strategic Project Leader,
Employment and Employability, ETF

At the same time, we work in a fully integrated way with all the areas covered by the ETF's mandate, promoting a holistic and coherent approach. For instance, in 2017 the ETF is hosting a conference on migration issues, the main aspect of which will be validation and recognition of qualifications. The qualifications team will take the lead on those issues, and our combined networks will support the partner countries as they deal with the challenges. There may be many issues, but they affect the same people.





Highlight

Tracing in Moldova

A country-led initiative in Moldova followed a decision to pilot tracer studies, investigating employment outcomes for VET graduates. They decided to do a school-based tracer study in 20 schools, and the ETF is helping by training the team of local experts who will manage the study in the schools. This ensures the right level of expertise is available, even though they had not done tracer studies in this way before. The intention is to run the study at national level next year, and potentially to make it an annual activity. While we will continue to support the network of trained experts with data analysis, we expect that from next year they will be able to run the study without our assistance.





Highlight

Sharing and changing for the better

After a recent crisis in currency and prices affected the labour market in Azerbaijan, policymakers realised that they needed more structure in the area of skills-matching. Through the network set up by the ETF with the EaP Platform, a high-level representative from the Ministry of Labour encouraged us to visit and meet with the Minister, to persuade him that a more integrated system was needed. The Minister decided to draft a memo to the Prime Minister, to establish the need at the highest level and to gain the necessary buy-in of all ministers. We hope to support the creation of an inter-ministerial working group, which would be a major step forward in policy planning in this area for Azerbaijan. This happened as a result of the Make It Match experience, showing how knowledge sharing can lead to genuine change – albeit still a work in progress.





ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING AND ENTERPRISE SKILLS

Competitiveness is just as important to the development of capable individuals as it is to the growth of businesses, sectors, and economies. But competition works best when infused with cooperation and the ability to identify talent and build teams. The teaching of entrepreneurship skills such as confidence, problem solving, risk management, and creative thinking is increasingly central to VET, and supporting women and SMEs in particular can make a major contribution to wider enterprise, employment and social cohesion outcomes.

“ Entrepreneurship is fundamental, it’s critical to understand exactly what it means. The output of our education systems, VET in particular, should not be job seekers but job shapers. ”

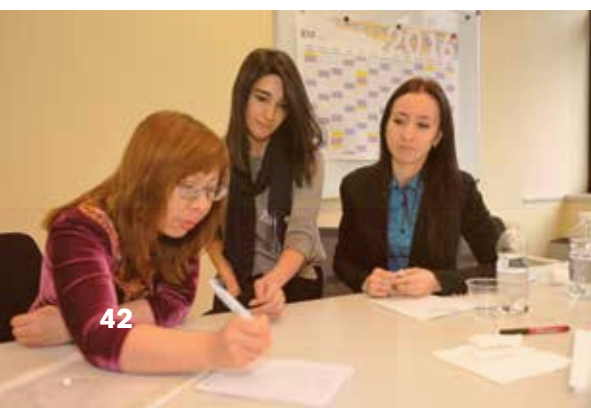
Jordi Curell,
Director, Labour Mobility,
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion,
European Commission

One of the challenges in this area is ensuring a common understanding of the terms ‘entrepreneur’ and ‘entrepreneurial learning’, since they are used very differently depending on the context. Indeed, the etymology of ‘entrepreneur’ can be traced back to an early 19th-century term for a musical director. In recent times, it has been mostly associated with individuals who start a new business, particularly if

they go on to sell that business and start another one. But today, as articulated in an ETF definition from 2009, we see an entrepreneur as “someone who seeks out opportunities, takes initiatives often based on risk and through new ventures decides how resources can be most effectively applied.” Such opportunities may or may not be profit-based, and may not be commercial at all. Therefore, we have agreed a definition of ‘entrepreneurial learning’ with partner organisations such as ILO, UNESCO, UNEVOC, and GIZ which reflects this. The definition states that entrepreneurial learning encompasses “all forms of education and training, both formal and non-formal, which contribute to an entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial behaviour with or without a commercial objective.”

“ The entrepreneurial learning agenda has had huge benefits. The progression model within the framework is impressive, and our aim is to integrate entrepreneurship into the curriculum while also using the competences to act as a catalyst for wider awareness of opportunities. ”

Dáithí Murray,
Vice-Principal, St Paul’s High School,
County Armagh, Northern Ireland



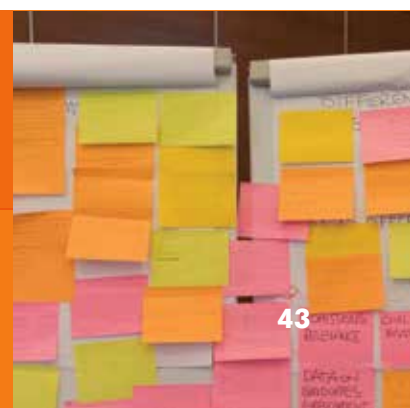
Our partner countries have diverse environments in relation to entrepreneurship and, therefore, different approaches to the design and implementation of appropriate entrepreneurial learning strategies. The publication of the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework by the European Commission has spurred a number of developments, and contributed to other, existing partner country activities in this area. Moreover, the Commission specifically asked the five candidate countries (Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey) to give more attention to key competences in general, including the entrepreneurship competences, as part of their VET improvement plans, in light of the Riga Conclusions.

“ EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan and his Dublin office colleagues were hugely impressed with this particular aspect of the work of the ETF in cultivating and awarding ‘international best practice’ in SME development. ”

Aidan Harte,
Managing Director, Optimum Results Ltd,
Ireland, ETF Best Practice Award winner 2016

In our broader work in this strategic project we look at how to identify good practice. We developed a good practice scorecard for training, which we use in three training areas: young entrepreneurs, women’s entrepreneurship, and small businesses. We use the scorecard to help the training community gain an understanding of who they are in relation to other actors, in their sector and in the wider enterprise landscape. It helps them with self-assessment, and when a training provider thinks their work meets the criteria of the ETF scorecard, they can put it forward for good practice peer review.

Submitting work for peer review affords the prospect of getting an international stamp of approval, in the event that it receives an ETF Good Practice Award. That can be used for marketing purposes, which is good for the training provider, and it helps to encourage other training providers working in the same policy area to explore good practice.





One of our objectives is to encourage policymakers to spend more time talking to practitioners – vocational training organisations, schools, universities, and so on – to establish innovative trends in training, where it works well, and how much it costs. The policy world needs to reach out to the practitioner world, but at the same time, the practitioner world can do more to help ministers, department heads and other policymakers consider new ideas or good practice in their policy discussions.

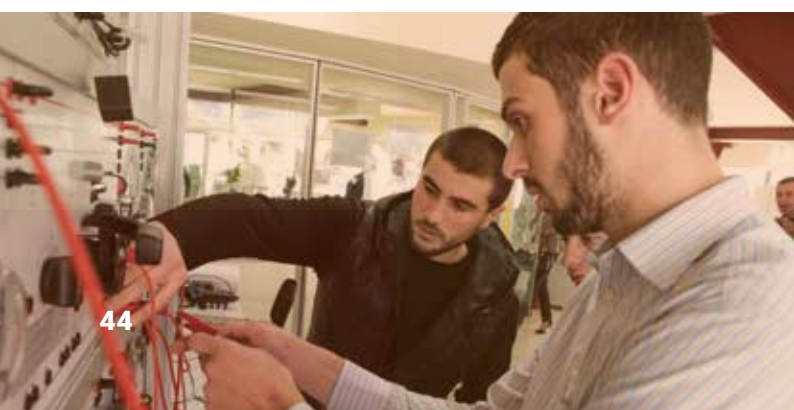
At the ETF we can bring them together through the scorecard and peer review processes, and help them to explore the links between excellence in practice and policy development.

**“ Policies are not for politicians.
Policies are for people. ”**

Anthony Gribben,
Strategic Project Leader, Entrepreneurial
Learning and Enterprise Skills, ETF

“ In November last year there was a big event in Montenegro, where good practices in entrepreneurial learning were presented. The objective was to put entrepreneurial learning more on the agenda. There is a strong national partnership there, and the more we can show what is going on, the more the partnership is considered as a group that can advise policymakers. It also helps to get entrepreneurial learning included in other national strategies. ”

Kristien Van den Eynde,
Specialist, Entrepreneurship and
SME Skills, ETF





Highlight

Belfast benefits

In April 2016, delegates from the six countries of the Eastern neighbourhood met at Queen's University Belfast for the Second International Conference on Entrepreneurial Learning in the Eastern Partnership Region. Together with colleagues from the ETF and other international experts, and entrepreneurs and educators from Northern Ireland, they set out to explore the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework developed by the EU, and examine its implications for curriculum and teacher training.

The second in a series of Eastern Partnership Platform 2 conferences on entrepreneurial learning, this three-day event 'walked the talk' in terms of entrepreneurial skills by delivering the majority of its content through innovative participatory workshop sessions, interviews and debates, and field trips to local centres of entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurship excellence. The conference was supported by the ETF and the European Commission, in line with bilateral and multilateral programming of DG NEAR, and is among the priorities under the Eastern Partnership Platform 2 chaired by the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW).





Highlight

Special needs, special innovation

Mermisi College in Georgia has a growing international reputation for innovation in providing VET courses for learners with special needs. This includes entrepreneurial learning, which benefits in the same way as other curriculum areas from Mermisi's combination of peer learning, multi-disciplinary support teams, teacher training, social partnership, and inclusive design of premises. The strength of the College's local partnership programme has been key to its success in helping students and graduates achieve their potential in employment and enterprise. Agreements with local micro and small businesses have seen students experience entrepreneurship competences in the real world through workplace training, while staff also benefit from opportunities to update their own skills and industry knowledge.





Highlight

Partnership, policy, practice

In Montenegro, the National Partnership for Entrepreneurial Learning is an interdisciplinary group of relevant ministries, employers, providers, and entrepreneurs, representing the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Set up at the same time as Montenegro's first entrepreneurial learning strategy in 2008, their main role is to monitor and evaluate the strategy's action plan. This includes entrepreneurial learning in the education system, as well as training for SMEs, start-ups, and women entrepreneurs. They have been following developments in the EU such as the new Skills Agenda, the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, and so on, and are aiming to become policy advocates in entrepreneurial learning.

The ETF is supporting the National Partnership to build this broader role and gain greater visibility with policymakers. In November 2016 we ran a national good practice event to present examples, which the National Partnership had collected through a call for submissions based on the ETF methodology. The objective was to put entrepreneurial learning on the agenda by showcasing how much good practice is already happening. The event helped to demonstrate that the National Partnership is capable of providing advice to policymakers, and promoted the value of taking entrepreneurial learning into account in other national strategies.

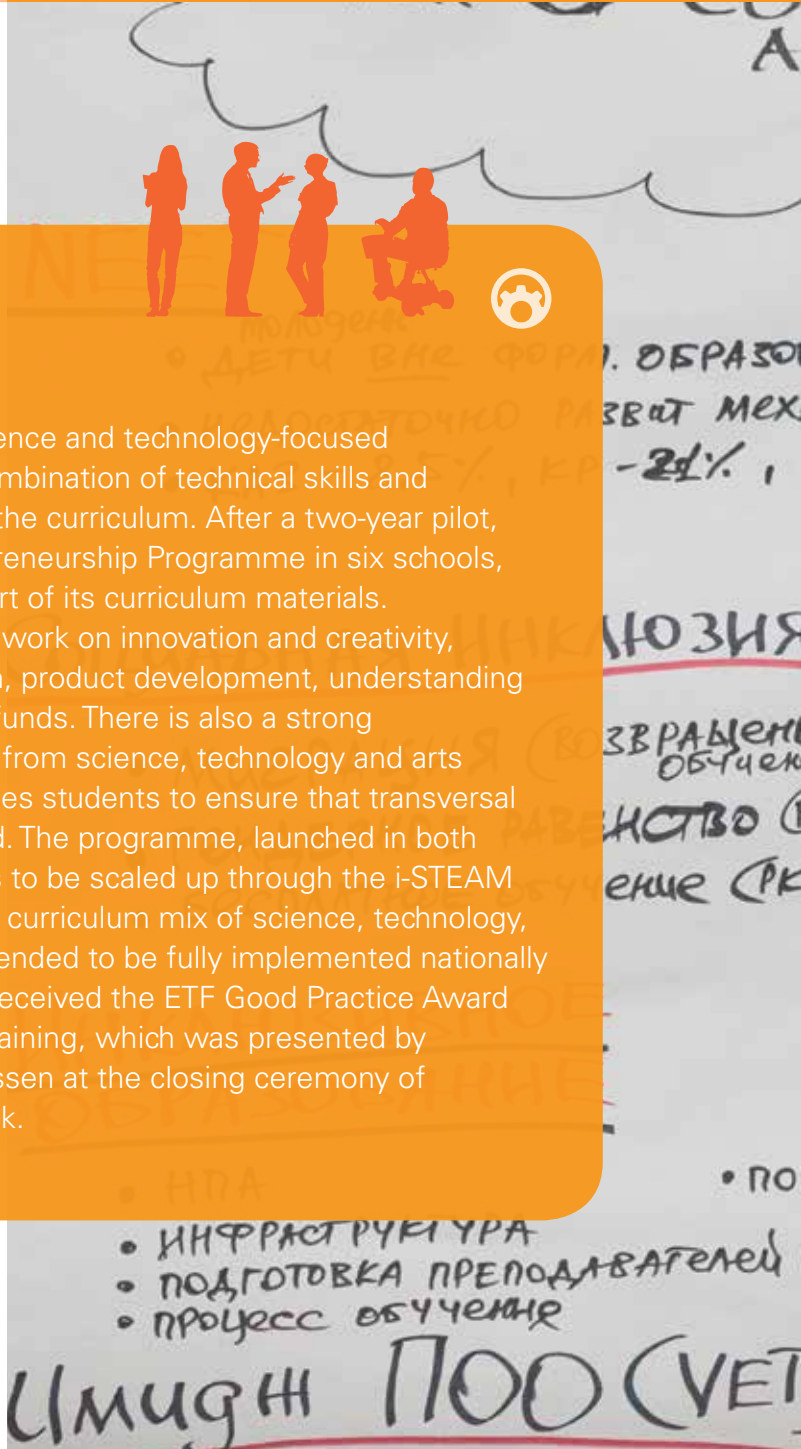




Highlight

Getting ahead of STEAM


ORT, Israel's 300-strong network of science and technology-focused vocational schools, is pioneering the combination of technical skills and entrepreneurship competences within the curriculum. After a two-year pilot, ORT launched the Technological Entrepreneurship Programme in six schools, with a '21st-century toolbox' at the heart of its curriculum materials. The toolbox supports student teams to work on innovation and creativity, market analysis, writing a business plan, product development, understanding intellectual property rights, and raising funds. There is also a strong cross-disciplinary element, as students from science, technology and arts courses collaborate with business studies students to ensure that transversal competences are shared and discussed. The programme, launched in both Jewish and Arab community schools, is to be scaled up through the i-STEAM initiative, which adds 'innovation' to the curriculum mix of science, technology, engineering, arts, and maths, and is intended to be fully implemented nationally by 2020. In 2016 the ORT programme received the ETF Good Practice Award in the area of Youth Entrepreneurship Training, which was presented by European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen at the closing ceremony of the first European Vocational Skills Week.





СПЕКТ

ВАНИЯ, ВНЕ ТРУДОУСТР
АНИЗМ

РГ- , РЧ- ✓ 

А, СЕРТИФИКАЦИЯ,
Е, ПЕРЕОРИЕНТАЦИЯ)
(ПРОФЕССИИ - ВЫБОР,
, КР, РТ, РЧ)

ВЫШЕШЕ
ОСВЕДОМЛЕННОСТИ
(ПЕРЕНОС)

РЕКОМЕНДАЦИИ

1. НЕЕТ

- ОЦЕНИТЬ МАСШТАБЫ, ГРУППЫ
- РАЗРАБОТКА МЕТОДОВ Ч (ПРЕВЕНТИВНЫЕ, РЕАКТИВНЫЕ)

2. СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ

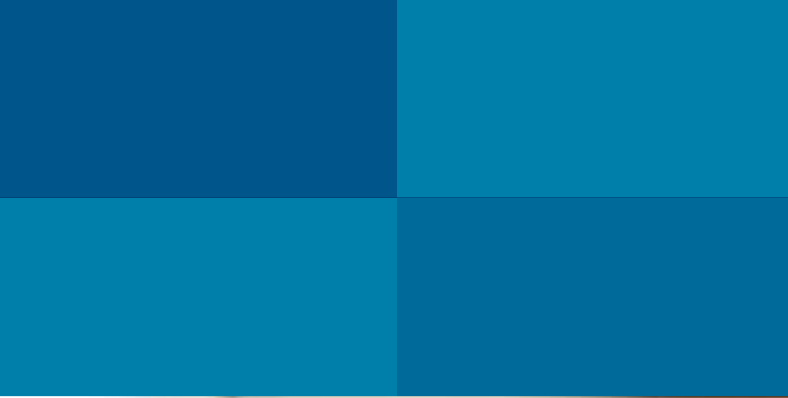
- ВЫЯВЛЕНИЕ МИГРАНТОВ (УЧЕТ)
- ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ ПОТРЕБ. В ОБРАЗОВАНИИ
- СЕРТИФИКАЦИЯ И ПЕРЕОРИЕНТАЦИЯ

3. ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ

- ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ
- ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ
- ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ
- ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ

4. ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ

- МОЖНО

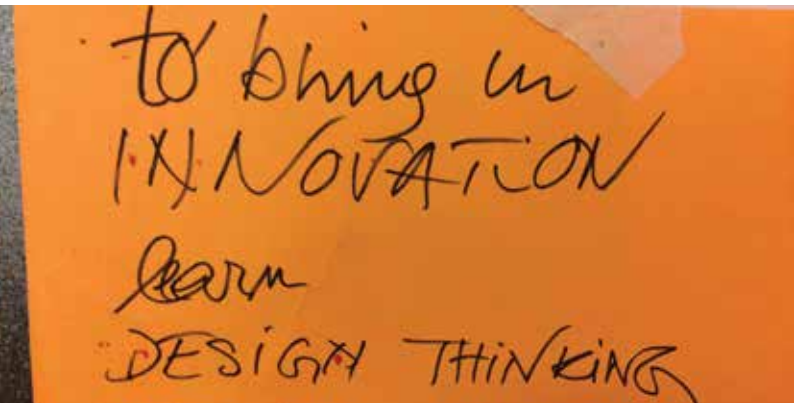
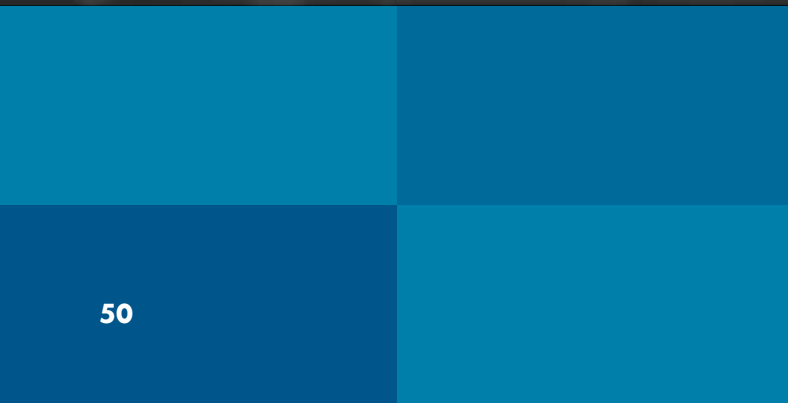


LOOKING FORWARD A NEW WORLD

Across the globe, wherever you look, from Albania to Brazil, from Canada to Denmark, the question of people's skills and competences has never been more important.

Whether we are considering the consequences of artificial intelligence, or large-scale population mobility, or the emergence of sustainable and purpose-led economic structures, the reality is that the success of these things depends on people's skills and competences. Vocational education and training, long hidden in the shadow of higher education, is fast becoming the critical element in promoting a world view in which everyone benefits from the acceleration of technological trends, shifting forms of social cohesion, and ambitions for equitable economic growth. Having said that, VET systems must become more proactive, more able to anticipate demand, and more resilient in the face of relentless change, if they are to succeed in serving their communities and countries.

Our job at the ETF is to be ready to accompany our partner countries on this journey, to support them in creating the minimum necessary resilience for adapting to the new world. This is now a big feature of our work – creating resilience, for people and for institutions. There are so many challenges today, individuals and institutions must be able



to shift their objectives and rapidly create new coalitions, refresh their thinking and always seek innovative outcomes. Those who are stuck in the logic of thinking “that’s the reality here, I can’t do things differently,” will miss what’s happening at the intersections of knowledge, the merging of knowing-to-do and knowing-to-be, which is where new opportunities arise.

As my term at the ETF comes to an end, and I reflect on the privilege of having led this unique organisation for eight years, I am convinced that this is where the path of skills must take us all – towards a world of communities, countries, and cross-border institutions that can manage challenges, in the form of both long-term trends and short-term shocks. This minimum necessary resilience requires the ability to act in completely unknown situations, and to do so effectively. It’s about the capability to adapt to internal and external challenges, and about preparedness as a constant condition, not a stage-managed reaction.

With the skills of policy analysis that we are helping to instil through the Torino Process, policymakers and other actors can build their capability to analyse where the potential threats and opportunities might appear, and to unpack them, with a view to understanding the causes

and designing possible actions. We must not be deterred by big changes ahead, but we must learn that the best response is not necessarily a perfect solution identified at the beginning of a process. Today, success is more likely to come from trying out different responses, gathering data – not only in the form of numbers, but also in the form of opinions and experiences – and building on that data to adapt continuously.

This is the new world, in which the ETF is well-equipped to succeed. Our success will be measured by the success of our support to the 29 vastly differing yet equally important countries whose partnership with us is both a source of great pride to me personally and, I hope, of satisfaction to their governments and their people.

Madlen Serban,

Director, ETF
June 2017



The ETF is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy.

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