VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING GOVERNANCE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Good multi-level governance and the effective development of vocational education and training (VET) in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (SEMED) are now widely recognised to have significant economic and labour market potential as well as an important social role to fulfill. Across the region, the situation is characterised by the rapid growth of the youth cohort - thus, jobseekers – and this is in stark contrast to the limited numbers of good quality job opportunities being produced in the labour market.

This has particularly adverse effects on the opportunities of young people, who already constitute a strongly disadvantaged group that faces difficulties accessing the labour market and uncertain futures. This is an alarming issue looking at the rate of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in the region. Further, women in the SEMED countries, though performing well in education across the region, have among the lowest labour market participation rates in the world. VET is now also expected to be innovative in terms of helping learners to gain a wide range of transversal as well as technical skills and competences, and to respond to changing labour market skills needs. However, VET is not yet highly regarded by learners, their families and employers across the region.

This cross-country regional report is a research output of ETF’s Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean (GEMM) Project. The regional project aims to increase vertical and horizontal participation and coordination of VET stakeholders in VET policy-making at all stages of the policy cycle in order to establish improved governance models and procedures. The ambition is to support to improving the relevance and quality of vocational training systems, and their contribution to facilitate the employability of women and young people.

The report is the key outcome of first phase of GEMM project activities mainly based on mapping, analysing and self-evaluating VET governance in the countries. The mapping focused on three key policy areas of governance of initial vocational education and training (i-VET) and continuing vocational training (CVT): planning and management, finance and funding and quality assurance. The emphasis was placed on analysing the roles and functions of different public- and private-sector actors who play – or could play - a key role in VET governance.

Further, the mapping was strategically planned as an ETF capacity building method working together with key stakeholders in the countries. It provides a multi-level governance perspective on the different levels of VET management (international, national, sectoral, territorial/local- and training provider).

The research is based on a methodology developed by the ETF. In 2013 and 2014, the ETF worked very closely with public and private sector stakeholders in the participating countries that provided primary information and gave access to secondary information and to other key informants. The primary activities were mapping, self-evaluation and validation, and a national report (fiche in the case of Egypt) was developed. The nine country reports/fiche are the main source of data for this cross-country report.

Further, the research is being used to inform capacity building activities and local pilot projects that also form part of the GEMM Project.

The report is addressed to VET policy makers in the region, including the social partners and business community, VET professionals’, and other practitioners and experts.

2 The countries are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia.
* 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.
3 All these documents (methodology, validated country reports) and other papers are available in GEMM community page: https://connections.etf.europa.eu/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUuid=ccdd8022-1c23-42ac-8699-608048458814
Planning and management

Governments across the region now recognise that VET has a significant role in achieving social and economic objectives of the national development plans and/or human resource development strategies. However, in spite of numerous attempts by ministries and VET agencies to reform various aspects of VET provision – often involving a focus on a single aspect such as a reform of curriculum, the introduction of a new set of qualifications or the introduction of a new VET or quality council - tangible improvement through VET policies and reform plans often proves difficult to achieve and less successful than expected. In other words, reforms that focus on a few single issues tend to be less successful than expected.

Even in countries where more extensive approaches to reform have been set up, successful implementation has proved difficult (e.g. Tunisia and Morocco on the theme of needs-led and competence-based training). Thus, VET continues to have low social status and is seen as less than effective by employers, remaining a second choice on the part of learners and their families and lacking of an innovative edge and failing to improve skills supply whilst not satisfying demand. All these issues are among the barriers that have to be overcome.

The central government departments or agencies (whether, variously in the education, labour or higher education ministries or in other ‘training’ ministries such as agriculture and industry) tend to hold more-or-less exclusive and centralised power of decision for aspects such as curriculum, administration, finance, qualifications, accreditation and awards and for teacher training. That government departments and agencies that manage VET provision in all the countries of the region have highly centralised procedures. This is an issue and a contrast with the definition of good multi-level governance in VET.4

Three models are in evidence for the organisation and management of VET at national level in the countries of the region.

- **Type 1**: A lead ministry takes overall responsibility for the management of VET (e.g. Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia).

- **Type 2**: There are different sub-systems under the management of different ministries, and a co-ordinating council is in place to achieve greater coherence between the sub-systems (e.g. Jordan).

- **Type 3**: There are also different VET sub-systems operated through ministries such as education, industry and higher education, but in this case there is no coordinating body (e.g. Egypt, Israel, Libya and Palestine).

The trend is for Type 3 countries to shift governance arrangements towards Type 1 or Type 2.

The organisation of VET varies according to whether it comes under the responsibility of a single ministry, or of several different ministries and agencies, perhaps with a coordinating council. For each of the three types, the evidence points to the conclusion that where several public sector agencies are engaged separately in aspects of VET governance, gaps and overlaps in responsibilities, roles and pathways are a prominent and dysfunctional feature of the whole VET system.

Indeed, the evidence suggests that current approaches to VET governance are rigid and this means also that pathways for learners are inflexible in all countries. Furthermore, VET systems are isolated and substantially marginalised from the mainstream governance of the wider education systems, and this makes it difficult to approach more integrated and open lifelong learning developments. The private sector of training is growing in the region, and in some countries (e.g. Jordan, Lebanon) manages large numbers of training establishments, which are expected to follow specific norms set out by the state. Informal apprenticeship across the region is a large sector of activity, and lies outside official education, training and social welfare channels.

Highly centralised management of VET systems is in evidence in all the countries. On the other hand, there is growing recognition that an effective VET system cannot be micro-managed from the centre. Across the region, a range of decentralising pilots and initiatives has been tried out. Much can be learnt from these concerning the need for good, multi-level governance in VET. The centralised governance systems mean that territorial (i.e. sub-national) and local initiatives are only likely to be successful if they have approval from the central authorities in most current contexts across the region.
However, increasingly, governments and their agencies and other major stakeholders are recognising that an effective VET system can no longer be entirely managed from the centre. This is leading to a growing emphasis on dialogue and partnership between stakeholders. Governments in all the countries in SEMED have formally identified social partners and engaged them to some extent in dialogue. This may be through established councils and procedures, such as tripartite bodies (Algeria, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia) or a VET council (in particular, the E-TVET Council in Jordan), or through more ad hoc arrangements (Egypt, Israel and to a lesser extent Lebanon and Libya).

However, such dialogue takes place mainly at the early stage of policy formation, with little engagement in implementation, review and/or evaluation. Practically speaking, the existence of partner councils and consultations demonstrate that there is dialogue, but the public sector remains reluctant to share the decision-making processes. Indeed, better using of coordination mechanisms for improving effective multi-participation, implementation, review and evaluation of VET policy making will be needed.

Employers have their own representative bodies, but their capacity for handling VET policy and reform varies and in several countries in the region employer representative organisations are in need of improved capacity. In some countries trade union federations perform an active role in dialogue, but in others they are largely missing from VET dialogue. Improve capacities of employees’ representatives is also a challenge.

In countries where training levies operate to support the provision of continuing training, employers’ organisations (e.g. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) tend to have a more prominent role for continuing training provision. However, even when there is dialogue, ministries are reluctant to give an active or management role to social partners (except for Morocco). Further, it remains the case that continuing training is underdeveloped and marginalised throughout the region. CVT lacks clear management, objectives and policies.

A territorial dimension to VET governance has gained ground in some countries. Indeed, the evidence of the mapping indicates a trend to more projects and initiatives that engage both stakeholders and researchers. Currently, and in spite of on-going policy dialogue in the region between government and employers about their nature and objectives and ways to make the system more efficient (e.g. Algeria). The status of levies on employers is constrained. For example, there is on-going policy dialogue in the region between government and employers about their nature and objectives and ways to make the system more efficient (e.g. Algeria). The status of levies on employers is in suspense in Jordan as a result of a lengthy legal case.

Funding mechanisms (through which providers receive their allocated budgets) are on a traditional, recurrent input basis. Training providers are not incentivised to supplement income through sales of goods or services, or to improve efficiency, performance and outcomes. However, in just a few countries policies are under consideration or being introduced to use funding as a mechanism to generate improved outputs. In this respect, the introduction of budget by objectives in Tunisia and Morocco could be an important
forward step, even though the lack of a clear methodology and data for a VET management information system hampers its effectiveness.

Quality assurance

Current quality control procedures commonly focus on inputs such as building requirements and numbers of teachers employed. Where there are several VET subsystems, as in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, different quality control procedures tend to apply. Quality control tends to be a centralised function of the responsible government ministry or agency. The approach taken to quality control tends to depend strongly on the predominant practices of the particular ministry, thus subsystems of VET that come under education, labour and higher education ministers generally have rather different quality norms and cultures. As the previous section on management of VET implies – there is currently a limited, though growing, interest in developing a shared, and partnership approach.

Quality control refers to auditing procedures whose function is to check that norms and regulatory requirements are conformed to, and there is little if any interest in improving performance. Quality assurance, on the other hand, refers to a wider range of norms, requirements and procedures, which are intended both to ensure that requirements are adhered to, and to establish a culture and procedures through which system performance and outcomes can be improved. Policy interest is growing in quality assurance procedures to contribute to outcomes such as systemic improvements, raising standards, making VET more responsive and improving the employability of graduates.

Over the past few years, all the countries in the region have become more firmly committed to developing an approach to their VET systems in which quality assurance appears as a strong component. The reform of existing qualifications, identification of the need new qualifications, curriculum renewal and the development of national qualifications frameworks are all tools that the governments have considered and began to develop in this respect.

Thus, new quality assurance agencies (such as the NAQAAE in Egypt and CAQA in Jordan) have been or are being established in several countries. Tunisia developed careful approaches to quality assurance, as part of implementing a competence-based approach (APC) to VET teaching and learning. Israel keeps the national curriculum, examinations and inspection under firmly central control, so as to ensure quality in provision, reforms and initiatives - while the education networks, local authorities and providers exercise a considerable degree of autonomy in other respects.

Many of the countries (including Egypt and Jordan) have piloted the development of new standards for introducing reformed VET qualifications and curricula based more closely on researched and identified labour market skills needs. The development of a national qualifications framework (NQF) is identified as an umbrella for developing quality standards in most countries across the region. It must be remembered that NQF is not fully operational yet anywhere in the region, so the policy intentions that lie behind the development have not yet been tried and tested. Everywhere, the standards, quality and relevance of vocational teacher training appears to be a major issue and challenge, as does the provision and effectiveness of continuing professional development.

In summary, while there are clear signs of a growing emphasis on quality assurance, initiatives have been limited until now (with the possible exception of Israel and Tunisia). Furthermore, a lack of effective management and labour market information systems inhibits the development of a quality assurance approach in all the countries, without exception.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of further analysis of the national findings in the nine countries, the added value of mapping VET governance in the first phase of GEMM project is to have strategically involved 9 countries in the SEMED region in cooperative working process, through which they have jointly identified specific operational objectives and common challenges addressing VET governance reforms. These are related to the following cross-regional pointers:

1. Improve collaboration and coordination between the national public authorities responsible for all aspects of the education and training system.
2. Engage more deeply with the social partners and civil society (in particular private sector) throughout the VET policy cycle and for improving the alignment of VET supply with labour market demand.
3. Allocate decision-making to the most appropriate levels and piloting appropriate devolution of specific decision-making and accountability to territorial and local levels, including VET providers.
4. Involve teacher and trainers communities and VET providers (including social partners) in qualification and curricular reform through formal and non-formal consultation mechanisms, to shift to a more competence-based approach to teaching and learning.
5. Ensure effective coordination to connect education and training sub-systems to shift to coherent and flexible pathways for meeting citizens’ lifelong learning needs.
6. Support more purposeful allocation of resources and introduce more innovative approaches to finance for meeting the challenge of securing sufficient VET financing.
7. Create a framework and culture for quality assurance and management permeating the different VET policy areas.
**TUNISIA**
Region: Gabes

**Thematic Field: Labour market needs analysis - skills matching**

**Sector: Mechanic and building and construction**

The project designs and implements additional/complementary short training courses for job seekers, reducing the high unemployment rate of graduates.

The project which has been designed with the involvement of local actors will start by selecting a number of companies that have reported skills shortages as an issue. A profiling of job seekers will follow with a view to filling the companies’ needs if the job seekers can acquire additional skills. Training courses will be delivered covering both technical and soft skills and a follow up of the insertion of the job seekers in the labour market will be carried out.

The implementation of this project will require substantial capacity-building activities targeting public and private-sector partners involved in the project.

The project will be a real opportunity to set up a partnership platform involving employers’ representatives, employment councillors, training providers, trainers and others.

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**ALGERIA**
Region: Blida

**Thematic Field: Labour market needs analysis – skills matching**

**Sector: Building and construction and agro food**

This project aims to improve at local level the visibility and the efficiency of the Fonds National de développement de l’apprentissage et de la formation continue (FNAC) - a public institution established to promote apprenticeship and continuous training through different mechanisms. Bringing FNAC closer to enterprises at local level will enable it to better analyse and respond to enterprise needs. This will be achieved through:

- Developing new tools to identify the labour market needs and their deployment in a selected number of sectors.
- Building the capacity of FNAC counsellors and responsible HR counsellors in enterprises.
- Setting up an information system so that the needs identified at local level.

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**LIBYA**
Region: Tripoli

**Thematic Field: Labour market needs analysis – skills matching**

**Sector: Tourism and hospitality**

This project analyses tourism and hospitality sector needs in the Tripoli region. Promoted by the tourism college and the hotel association both based in Tripoli, the focus is to build the partnership between these actors by analysing sector needs and matching them with the college’s training provision.

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**EGYPT**
Region: Monufia

**Thematic Field: Labour market needs analysis-skills matching**

**Sector: Agriculture**

The main objective is to establish a decentralised partnership between enterprises and TVET providers with the aim of contributing to high quality and relevant TVET provision capable of addressing labour market needs. This will be achieved through three main activities:

- Building capacity of the various partners in the labour market to better identify the skills needs of new entrants, conducting a gap analysis and determining priorities.
- Customising training programmes to meet needs.
- Reviewing the ‘Capital Project Scheme’ so that it contributes to schools’ development, students’ employability and teachers’ development.

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**Pilot Projects**

Pilot projects are an important part of GEMM. Each country will undertake a project aimed at addressing the quality and relevance of VET at a (local) regional level.

The nine proposals selected for pilot projects focused on one or more of the following: employability for youth and women; improvement of governance at local level; empowerment of local actors and focus on specific local needs. Some projects are designed and implemented in cooperation with NGOs, government agencies and international organisation and some test and build on tools developed in previous projects.

Seven pilot projects deal with matching of local skills needs, confirming ETF preliminary findings that although many countries in the region have developed approaches to labour market analyses, there is little awareness or ability to implement them at the local level. The two other projects deal with career guidance and the tracking of graduates.
**PALESTINE**

Region: West Bank, Ramallah Mount  
Thematic Field: VET graduate tracer study  
Sector: Multi-sectoral

The objective is to refocus programs provided by the TVET institutions towards better employability, especially for the young and women. This will be done by developing a TVET graduate tracking system (tracer study) involving all relevant stakeholders: the government, the accreditation and quality assurance agency, employers, employment offices and agencies, trade unions and professional associations, federations, academic staff and management in educational and training institutions, prospective students and their parents and families, and current and former students (graduates).

**LEBANON**

Region: Beirut and Lebanon Mount  
Thematic Field: Career guidance/orientation  
Sector: Industrial

This project provides career guidance services to VET graduates, in particular to support their entry in the labour market. This will be done through building capacity of staff within the VET directorate general in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to coordinate and supervise career guidance services and through the establishment of Guidance Employment Offices (GEO) in one VET school and at central level (DG-VTE) to pilot these services. This project is implemented in cooperation with the Institut Européen de coopération et de développement (ECD) and other partners. Five other VET centers will be involved in this activity.

**ISRAEL**

Region: South of Israel  
Thematic Field: Labour market needs analysis – skills matching  
Sector: Industrial (multi-sectoral)

The overall objective is to enhance capacity at the local level to develop strategies for human resource development to boost socio-economic development of the south of Israel. This objective will be achieved through:

- Carrying out a labour market needs analysis
- Updating curricula and setting up mechanisms to ensure regular updates.

The implementation of the project is overseen by a national committee involving stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the Manufacturers Association of Israel, regional/local authorities, the Federation of Trade Union (Histadrut) and an educational network for TVET.

**JORDAN**

Region: Al-Zarqa Governorate Mount  
Thematic Field: Labour market needs analysis – skills matching  
Sector: Retail sales sector

This project supports local VET partners and stakeholders to build greater cooperation to increase the employability of youth in the Al-Zarqa Governorate. In cooperation with the International Labour Organization, the International Youth Organisation and the Jordanian Career Education Foundation, the project aims to develop and implement one apprenticeship training programme in the retail sector targeted to women. GEMM will cover activities related to supporting and building the capacity for customising/revising the training programme, developing training materials and providing support to trainers to implement the newly developed curricula. GEMM will also develop some career guidance materials and conduct a follow-up study of graduates.
GEMM: HELPING VET ACTORS TO LEARN AND WORK TOGETHER

The ETF’s Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean region (GEMM) project, funded by the European Union, focuses on improving the governance of VET systems in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. It will run from 2013 to 2016. The objective of the project is to improve the employability of young people and women in the region.

GEMM is a regional project with a national focus that will help to build the capacity of governments, employer and employee organisations and civil society. The aim is to enable them to work in partnership to increase the relevance and quality of vocational training systems. Project activities include mapping and analysing governance, innovative and concrete pilot projects in all countries, study visits as well as exchanging good practice through conferences and national workshops.

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

Through GEMM, VET governance will be addressed at two levels – national and sub-national.

At national level, policy makers, authorities and social partners will be involved, while sub-nationally the project targets schools and those working on skills development locally. By bringing different players from different parts of the system together, national policies can be more easily adapted to local realities. At the same time, this kind of partnership can help successful local initiatives to have an impact on national reforms.

The aim is to boost the relevance of VET, improve quality and upgrade the capacities of different stakeholders.

FINANCING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE: PRIORITY AREAS FOR VET REFORM

Quality assurance and financing have been selected as priority areas for reform. Improving the quality of vocational education and training implies tackling the system as a whole - from planning to evaluation. The emphasis must be on outcomes: adequacy of skills, dropout and completion rates, access and equity, employment rates and the types of jobs that graduates find. Diversifying funding and optimising allocation and management are also important areas for reform.

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH CONCRETE ACTION

Capacity building activities at national or central level include gender equality in VET and employability. Pilot projects will address the quality and relevance of VET especially in terms of the employability of women and young people. Issues will be mainly tackled at local level in an attempt to even out local development and reduce disparities between regions.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Several capacity building activities are planned, including the following:

• First cross-country-event for Jordan, Israel, Morocco and Palestine in March 2015 in Jordan on “Skills needs analysis and tailoring of training programmes to local needs”

• First pilot project cross-country-event for Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Lebanon in March 2015 in Jordan on “Skills needs analysis and tailoring of training programmes to local needs”

• First EU study visit for Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Lebanon on 14-16 October 2014 in Romania on “Partnerships for Quality Assurance”

• Second EU study visit for Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Jordan in February 2015 in the Netherlands on “Partnerships for Quality Assurance”

• Second pilot project cross-country-event for Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Jordan in September 2015 in Lebanon on “Skills needs analysis and tailoring of training programmes to local needs”

• Second cross-country-event for Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Algeria September 2015 in Lebanon on “Skills needs analysis and tailoring of training programmes to local needs”

• Regional Conference in Morocco: in May 2015 “Matching VET Supply and Demand through Labour Market Information Systems”

• Third study visit in Morocco in May 2015 on “Governance for VET Reforms in Partnership”

MORE INFORMATION: WWW.ETF.EUROPA.EU/GEMM