Cooperation with neighbouring countries is an EU priority. It strengthens democracy, facilitates development and growth, and contributes to shared prosperity. The EU’s enlargement, neighbourhood and development policies put this priority into action.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) works in the context of the EU’s external relations policies in 30 neighbouring countries. As a specialised EU agency it contributes to the development of human capital in its partner countries. Here are some examples of the work we do at thematic and country level:

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING AND SME SKILLS

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent the vast majority of firms and account for half to three quarters of total employment in the ETF partner countries. Realising their potential depends to a large extent on skills of current and potential entrepreneurs and employees. The ETF’s work comprises policy reviews that support governments in defining policies that promote entrepreneurial skills and the development of human capital for small businesses. The ultimate aim is to boost competitiveness and job potential.

The ETF’s action builds on the human capital dimensions of the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) carried out by the ETF, the OECD, the European Commission and the EBRD. The SBA indicators track policy progress, evaluate capacity gaps and allow the ETF to provide policy options to bring forward developments in three areas: entrepreneurial learning, training for women’s entrepreneurship, and skills for SMEs.

The ETF unpacks countries’ education and training systems to determine how entrepreneurship promotion can be addressed. Emphasis is given to entrepreneurship as a key competence i.e., how education and training contribute to a ‘can do’ mind set. Together with national governments, the ETF works on policy changes, adjustments to curricula and teacher training. These are already part of reform plans in a number of countries. Kosovo, for example, has developed standards for entrepreneurial learning as part of its wider effort to build a national qualifications framework.

Training for women’s entrepreneurship is given special attention by the ETF. An ETF good practice scorecard encourages training providers to better engage with policymakers, helping not only to shape policies but ensuring they are more effective. Supported by an on-line good practice platform, the scorecard is a key tool for peer learning and exchange between leading training providers across all ETF partner regions.

ETF policy assessments point to poor data availability on training situations and the needs of start-ups, early phase and growth businesses. Closing the gap between what businesses need and training offer is essential to building efficiency and effectiveness into national training systems. The ETF promotes improved coordination between the range of stakeholders involved in human capital development across all ETF partner countries. For example, Georgia’s initiative to build more strategic intelligence on the training needs of its manufacturing sectors followed the ETF’s SBA assessment and recommendations.
ADAPTING TRAINING TO REGIONAL NEEDS IN UKRAINE

There are nearly 1000 public VET providers in Ukraine. Demographic decline, the increasing preference of young people for higher education, and poor facilities in vocational schools make it difficult for them to attract students. Schools also struggle to meet the changing needs of the labour market. The restructuring of vocational schools became especially urgent in 2013 when funding for VET providers was transferred from central to regional level, increasing the burden on regional budgets.

Restructuring the vocational school network and better matching the supply and demand in VET were priorities that Ukraine and the ETF agreed to cooperate since 2011. The evidence-based methodology the ETF proposed was piloted in the Dnipropetrovsk region in close cooperation with the regional authorities, social partners and the education community. A survey of enterprises identified which jobs, professions and skills were needed in the regional labour market and which and how many VET programmes were offered by the VET providers.

The findings enabled regional policy makers to assess how the publicly financed training provision can be made more cost-efficient and more targeted for the labour market, ensuring the employability of graduates and fair access for young people and adults to learning opportunities. In Dnipropetrovsk it has led to the closure of some VET programmes and the opening of new ones. The results were disseminated in an international conference in 2013 for all regions of Ukraine and neighbouring countries, which struggle with the rationalisation of vocational school networks.

The ETF methodology will be used in three other regions in 2015. The ETF is building governmental and regional capacities to use the results of the analysis for drawing up scenarios for restructuring VET institutions and assessing the impact of different options in the complicated socio-economic context. The results of ETF project will support implementation of the Law on Higher Education, adopted in September 2014, which stipulates the transfer of 200-300 current higher education institutions to the VET system by 2016.

DEΛERINΛΓ ΝΗΣΗΛΓΟΝ ΟΞ ΛΑΡΒ ΣΡΙΝΓ ΢Ν ΤΙΝΗΣΙΑ ΣΡΗΕ ΣΝΕΔΝΓ ΝΗΣΗΛΓ ΣΝΕΔΝΓ ΑΝΔ ΣΡΙΝΓ

The ETF was one of the first international agencies to offer support to the post-revolutionary government in Tunisia in 2011. The country’s new strategy for the reform of VET for the period 2014-18 was inspired by the findings and recommendations of the ETF’s Torino Process. The analysis stressed the need to develop a national VET system that responds to the needs of businesses, individuals, and society, as well as Tunisia’s diverse regions.

Currently, there are three major areas of ETF action:

Entrepreneurial learning: in this area in 2014, the ETF, in cooperation with GIZ and OECD, reviewed how entrepreneurship is addressed in vocational schools. Based on this review, the ETF supported the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment in engaging VET stakeholders and international donors to develop an entrepreneurial learning policy in VET. The work includes collecting examples of good practice, building more effective education-business cooperation, and linking VET policy to general and higher education.

Regionalisation of human resources development: the ETF facilitated territorial governance in this area in the Medenine region in the south of Tunisia in 2012-14. The project linked regional authorities and education and training institutions with businesses, trade unions and NGOs to better meet the needs of the local labour market.

Now, the ETF works with the central government to explore opportunities to use the same approach in other regions.

Supporting government capacity to produce and analyse data: the ETF offers training and coaching sessions to policy makers and statisticians to better understand, produce, analyse and use relevant VET data and indicators. The first session was offered in June 2014.

In addition, the ETF at the request of the EU Delegation in Tunis, is designing a support plan in the areas of VET, employment and migration for 2015-16. The €10-15 million actions will be part of the Mobility Partnership with the EU.
MAKING POLICY VISION A REALITY IN ALBANIA

The new government, in office since September 2013, recognised the need for large-scale reforms in education. It took decisive steps that included bringing all VET under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. However, the challenges are huge: most vocational schools have poor facilities and outdated equipment. Outside the capital, the supply of training is not coordinated. Qualified vocational teachers and adequate training materials are lacking.

The ETF has supported the government’s reform drive. The recently adopted National Employment and Skills Strategy and Action Plan 2014-20, which provided a clear vision and a path for the government and donors to overcome these problems, were both prepared with the expert contribution of the ETF:

The ETF complemented these strategic documents with a review of capacity building needs of the key institutions charged with the implementation, and a plan to monitor the progress of reforms. The ETF has also drawn up a nationwide skills needs analysis, a feasibility study to set up multifunctional VET centres that would cater to the needs of both young and adults, as well as a baseline survey analysing the conditions of all public VET providers in a comprehensive manner for the first time.

The ETF continues to assist Albania in the development of a qualifications system, and how the network of public VET providers, including the qualifications offered by them, could be realigned. Albanian participants will join in a regional vocational teacher training project, built on earlier ETF initiatives.

IMPROVING COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND BUSINESS IN KAZAKHSTAN

To improve the transition of young people from school to work, the Kazakh government promotes work-based learning and regular training of students in enterprises. The setting up of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the establishment of a tripartite organisation “Kasipkor” stimulated education and business partnerships and strengthened the role of employers in VET.

The development of education and business cooperation and improving its quality was identified as a priority for action in the ETF’s Torino Process assessment of the state of country’s VET in 2012. Building on an earlier more general analysis in 2010, the ETF further documented education and business cooperation in three different regions of Kazakhstan: city of Almaty (economy based on small and medium-sized enterprises), Pavlodar region (highly industrialised area), and Kyzyly-Orda region (agriculture-reliant and low population density). In 2014 a mapping of VET providers and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in the regions were carried out and obstacles and success factors of cooperation identified.

The national and regional authorities will use the results of this appraisal to expand education and business cooperation and raise the quality of education and training through improved practical and work-based learning. It also is expected to lead to national, regional and sectoral partnerships for more effective education and business cooperation.

The survey will provide answers to policy makers and practitioners on how to prepare training courses, monitor the students, check quality and evaluate the relevance of the training in the curriculum. It also will generate good practice on other forms of education and business cooperation, such as use of company trainers in schools or provision of training equipment.
UPCOMING EVENTS

The week beginning 17 November 2014 will see four major events hosted by the ETF. In addition to its Governing Board meeting involving all EU Member States, European Parliament representatives, various European Commission Directorate Generals and observers from the partner countries, the following meetings and conferences will also take place:

LOCAL SKILLS MATTER: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

This conference is part of a series of actions that the ETF is undertaking to support its partner countries to move towards more participatory multilevel governance. It aims to bring forward earlier discussions and will focus on the importance of the local level in shaping and implementing human capital development policies.

This event offers the opportunity to explore a number of successful practices in entrepreneurial communities in the ETF’s partner countries. It will provide a platform for debate and draw key policy lessons on the efficient vertical (among actors at different levels) and horizontal (among actors at the same level) collaborative governance within a multilevel governance approach to human capital development.

POLICY LEADERS’ FORUM - YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY: FROM POLICY FORMULATION TO RESULTS

The 2014 Policy Leaders’ Forum is the third such event involving ministers and high level officials from the Arab Mediterranean countries organised by the ETF. It will continue the VET policy dialogue launched in 2012-13 and focus on youth employability as a key priority for VET policy makers in the region. As in previous years, the PLF is intended to provide opportunities for ministers to share and learn from the experiences of their peers with the overall objective of enhancing the effectiveness of public policy. More specifically, the 2014 PLF will give ministers the opportunity to reflect together on which policies deliver concrete results for youth employability and how to formulate effective education and training policies.

ETF@20

In the context of all these formal ETF meetings an event is also being organised to mark the 20th anniversary of the ETF. The objective is to raise awareness among ETF stakeholders and partners on the ETF’s significant contribution to human capital development in fostering sustainable growth and democratic societies over the past 20 years. Key local and national authority representatives will speak at the event as will other significant contributors to the ETF’s first successful 20 years of activity.