

COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: TUNISIA

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN VET AND SKILLS AND EU AND DONOR COOPERATION DURING 2018–19

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Tunisia remains a challenge. Despite availability of funding through a training levy and the existence of work-based learning legislation, the quality, relevance and attractiveness of VET provision in Tunisia is suboptimal.

In accordance with the 2016–20 National Development Plan, the Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE) has organised a VET reform around 14 projects. The main objectives include increasing VET attractiveness, supporting trainers' professional development, involving regional stakeholders, improving data collection and analysis, enhancing monitoring and evaluation, and developing an entrepreneurial mindset across the VET system. Implementation of the reform progresses at a slow pace with various new policies under development but limited results in terms of execution.

In 2018, the MFPE started redrafting the country's employment strategy, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO). It also helped coordinate international donor support for VET and employment reform by mapping financial and human resources. Human capital development in Tunisia is supported by, among others, French, German, Swiss and Italian bilateral cooperation, the ILO and the African Development Bank.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) cooperates with Tunisia in line with European Union (EU) external policy, in which the country is considered a priority. The EU has several ongoing programmes focused on increasing youth employability through education and training.

AN ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ETF'S 2020 OBJECTIVES

Specific objective 1: promote entrepreneurial learning across the VET system

This objective capitalises on earlier ETF entrepreneurial learning activities, based on the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp). Tunisia's focus on soft skills as a key competence provides an opportunity for ongoing work on entrepreneurship and digital key competences.

In 2019, the initiative was further consolidated and resulted in the inclusion of entrepreneurial learning modules in all VET curricula. Over the years, the ETF has supported the development of an entrepreneurial training module, the roll-out of training for VET trainers and piloting training students. In 2019, the ETF supported the development of a key competence evaluation tool based on EntreComp and launched the discussion on how Tunisian VET centres can become more entrepreneurial.

As part of regional research on continuous professional development, the ETF finalised a report on Tunisian VET trainers and discussed the findings with the main stakeholders of MFPE and the training agencies.

Specific objective 2: reinforce VET regionalisation to improve quality and responsiveness to local labour market needs

The ETF worked with the MFPE in the regionalisation component of the VET reform strategy. Building on previous results, the ETF provided conceptual and methodological knowledge of VET multilevel governance.

The Regional Initiative to Support Sustainable Economic Development (IRADA) has created the conditions for decentralisation in eight regions, through a project that has been fully operational since the end of 2018. ETF know-how was transferred in practical files as working tools to support the eight IRADA platforms.

Specific objective 3: reinforce monitoring of VET reform implementation

The ETF has helped Tunisian authorities to measure VET reform progress and VET system efficiency. This objective supports the government's prioritisation of VET reform projects and builds on the ETF's work in the previous four editions of the Torino Process, which promoted evidence-based policy analysis.

In April 2019, the ETF launched the fifth edition of the Torino Process in collaboration with the National Observatory of Employment and Qualifications. In close collaboration with the IRADA programme, the Torino Process has also been brought to the subnational level. Public and private stakeholders in each of the eight IRADA regions are mapping out the supply and demand of the technical VET sector.

In April 2019, Tunisia hosted a peer-learning visit of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance, in which a dozen regional colleagues reviewed the Tunisian quality assurance system for teacher training.

Specific objective 4: support EU external assistance and bilateral policy dialogue

The ETF supported the EU skills, employment and migration agenda and provided technical input on issues such as regionalisation and qualifications to support the IRADA programme. In the context of the discussion on the Mobility Partnership and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, the ETF finalised a study on employment and employability and is piloting a study on online vacancies through the use of big data.

ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

Specific objective 1: promote entrepreneurial learning across the VET system

The ETF will continue to develop key entrepreneurship competences within the framework of *soft* skills. The training programme will be scaled up and institutionalised throughout the MFPE. The ETF will further support the testing of an assessment tool. It will also support the development of the concept of entrepreneurial centres. Results of the regional continuous professional development survey (2019) may lead to the follow-up of one of the recommendations of the study to boost trainers' capacity in Tunisia.

Specific objective 2: reinforce VET regionalisation to improve quality and responsiveness to local labour market needs

The ETF will support the MFPE's work on VET governance regionalisation as part of the VET reform strategy. Continued ETF assistance with the IRADA project could include capacity building to help decentralise VET functions and to support public/private partnerships.

Following the implementation of the new decree on VET centre autonomy issued in 2019, the ETF envisages supporting the policy development around school autonomy including linkage to innovation through entrepreneurial centres.

Specific objective 3: reinforce monitoring of VET reform implementation

The main policy analysis outputs will include the fifth Torino Process assessment report on human capital development. The Torino Process is also implemented at regional level, namely in the eight regions of IRADA, creating synergies with the implementation of this project and further reinforcing the capacity of the regional antennas to analyse the supply and demand for VET in the regions.

Specific objective 4: support EU external assistance and bilateral policy dialogue

The ETF will support the EU delegation with technical input on regionalisation, qualifications and smart specialisation in relation to the IRADA programme.

On request of the European Commission or the EU delegation, the ETF will support EU–Tunisia bilateral policy dialogue with input for bilateral subcommittee meetings and European Neighbourhood Policy action plan monitoring, delivery of annual country fiches to the Directorate-General for Employment and follow-up of the Mobility Partnership. It may also provide input on human capital development approaches supporting other sector development programmes.

The ETF will advise on issues such as the portability of migrants' skills and qualifications within the context of Mobility Partnership discussions, regional migration and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. The second part of the pilot study on the use of big data for labour market matching should provide the necessary input in this context.

Also in 2019, the MFPE began to map programmes and activities to support VET reforms. Building on this initiative, the ETF could help to facilitate discussions among VET donors as part of the Torino Process consultations.

Other activities

Tunisia is an active member of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance, and activities will continue in 2020.

Tunisia will be involved as a member of the Communities of Practice, as a follow-up of the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration signed after the Ministerial Conference on Skills and Labour, held in Cascais, in April 2019.