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European Training Foundation



The ETF is a European Agency that helps transition countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems, and in the context of EU's external relations policy

Skills and Vocational Education and Training (VET) Policies: the civil society role in defining the policies, and the who is who in the MENA region

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, includes Education and Lifelong learning (LLL) among its goal. Namely, the Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.¹

At country systems level, several actors contribute to the achievement of such a goal: the Government (under its relevant Ministries), as well as civil society, including social partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and other non-state actors. Therefore, the SDG 17 on partnerships is equally important, because in order to achieve inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning, civil society should be considered as a relevant partner.

What the ETF did in order to tap on this issue?

The European Training Foundation (ETF) has been working on good multilevel governance for skills development and VET for a number of years. More recently, the ETF has brought into the multilevel governance concept the civil society organisations’ role, with a view to them playing a representative, recognised and effective role in skills and VET policies.

The outcome of this work is supporting policy debate, policy analysis and advice to partner countries on the benefits of a real dialogue and coordination between state and non-state stakeholders, at both vertical and horizontal levels. Realising a relationship and partnership would contribute more effective, accountable and inclusive formulation, implementation and steering of skills and VET policies.

In 2018, the ETF launched a survey to further explore the CSOs role in the skills and VET governance in the MENA region, to test some of the main conclusions of the Round Table on CSOs held in 2015². The survey relied on an online questionnaire and a focus group discussion. The findings have shown that CSOs ensure proximity to groups and territories at risk of exclusion. CSOs play therefore a unique role in skills development, one that complements the formal skills and VET providers’ role. Their contribution is however underrepresented in the system governance, mainly due to scattered and rather informal nature of their action³.

Invitation to paper submission on civil society

The ETF and Menapar invite papers to be presented at the Menapar Annual Conference IV on the following or closely related areas:

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1

² “Vocational education and training governance in ETF Partner countries: what role for civil society?” ETF round table conclusions 2015

³ “Civil society contribution to VET policy dialogue in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region”, ETF 2019 forthcoming

- Theory and evidence of CSOs contribution to skills development and VET policies in the MENA region, including e.g.
 - The role of CSOs in enhancing youth inclusion and employment
 - The role of CSOs in enhancing micro and small enterprises sustainability
 - The role of CSOs in training, re-skilling or upskilling of migrants
- Theory and evidence of CSOs innovative potentials in education and training for skills developments in the MENA region, including innovation in e.g.
 - learning pedagogy and ways of delivery
 - adult learning
 - employability and employment
 - skills financing
- Who is who, theory and evidence of how governments and CSOs interact in the MENA region, including e.g.
 - mapping CSOs' complementarity in shaping, implementing, and evaluating skills and VET policies
 - what forms of dialogue between CSOs and governments
 - advocacy and other methods to influence governments and take a role in the skills system governance
 - independent reviews of public policies