

# **DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR BETTER PARTNERSHIP IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET), LIFELONG LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE**

## **(WORKING DOCUMENT)**

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this note is to describe the competences that social partners need in order to be effective in all forms of dialogue for vocational education and training (VET). This note contains a reference framework for developing targeted capacity-building programmes for social partners in ETF partner countries involved in all forms of dialogue on VET at both policy and operational levels. It can be used by social partner organisations to develop training programmes and peer-learning programmes to improve the skills of its representatives.

The involvement of social partners contributes to better VET. Recent policy documents (Riga Conclusions (European Commission, 2016b), New Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2016a)) at EU level confirm and promote more significant cooperation with social partners. Evidence shows that when social partners are actively involved in the VET system, the quality of VET is significantly improved. The active engagement of social partners has been identified as one of the success factors in VET reforms and innovation (Caves and Bauman, 2018). In the ETF partner countries, social partners' involvement has increased (ETF, Cross-country analytical report 2012–2018). The stronger involvement of social partners in the VET policy cycle emerged as one of the top priorities in the Torino Process (ETF, Torino Process 2016–2017). Good multi-level governance in VET is about applying the principles of participation and accountability so that social partners have a clear mandate and role in VET policies, including financial and human resources. Good multi-level governance in VET aims to reinforce interaction with and participation of stakeholders such as social partners.

## 2. Capacity building for social partners: What are we talking about?

Social partners represent employers' associations and trade unions, thus reflecting the two sides of social dialogue/industry (ILO; Cedefop, 2008; ETF, 2012). The EU cross-industry joint statement of 2016 (Business Europe, 2016) states that social partners need to create the institutional settings to allow dialogue to take place and to be effective.

Social partners lack the theoretical background, organisational negotiating skills, knowledge of economic and social issues, up-to-date technological provision and financial resources to modernise

and improve operationality and have limited modernising capacity, even for basic activities (EurWORK, 2017). The same source distinguishes various forms of capacity building. Human resources, membership and administrative capacities make up one set. A second set comprises process-oriented capacities, participation in policy making and setting up structures for dialogue. A final set is the capacity for organisational development. This note focuses on human resource capacities relating to VET. This note addresses only some of the necessary conditions for social partners to function in an optimal way.

ETF publications have also mentioned the need for organisational and individual capacity to contribute effectively to the dialogue on VET (ETF, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013).

#### *Capacity building as a tool for the full involvement of social partners*

Many definitions exist for capacity building and capacity development. Most models include three levels of capacity building, namely the individual, organisation and system levels. Capacity development is the process through which abilities are developed, strengthened, adapted and maintained over time at all levels. The focus or purpose of capacity building is to change and maintain the intended change or goal in a given context. It is about what and how to change, to develop and to sustain.

The following are definitions of capacity building:

- 'A process that improves the ability of a person, group, organization or system to meet objectives or to perform better' (USAID, 2003).
- 'The ability of individuals, institutions, and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner' (United Nations, 2010).
- 'Acquiring resources ... and integrating them in a way that leads to change in individual behaviour and ultimately to more efficient and effective operations of institutions and organizations' (Langaas et al., 2010).
- 'Capacity building is an approach to development, rather than a set of discrete or pre-packaged interventions' (Oxfam UK, Ireland 1997).
- 'A systematic and integrated approach ... to develop and continuously improve governmental, organizational and individual competences and capabilities necessary ...' (International Atomic Energy Agency).

- 'Capacity development is understood as the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time' (OECD, 2006b).
- 'Capacity for development is the availability of resources and the efficiency and effectiveness with which societies deploy those resources to identify and pursue their development goals on a sustainable basis' (Otoo et al. [World Bank], 2009).

According to EurWORK (2017), the concept of capacity building should be approached in the following terms:

'Capacities of social partners in the Member States can be built through e.g. financial, legal, analytical, institutional and political support. This should be ensured at all levels, depending on the needs of countries and social partners, including to become stable organisations (Declaration, paragraph 28).'<sup>1</sup>

Eurofound, in a working document, has defined capacity building as 'the enhancement of the ability of the social partners to participate effectively in social dialogue at different levels (EU, national, sectoral, regional and company level)'.

Potter and Brough (2004) describe capacity-building interventions as the response to a hierarchy of capacity building needs (see Figure 1). Figure 1 explains the relationship between the various levels of capacity-building interventions. If you have tools, someone has to be able to use those tools. If there is a law to regulate the involvement of social partners, social partners need to be sufficiently organised in order to contribute.

The hierarchy of needs (Figure 2) also determines the complexity and timeframe of the intervention. Capacity-building interventions at system level are more complex and require more time. To achieve sustainability, interventions at all levels are required.

Moreover, capacity building is a broad term and the intended goals or change objectives require a variety or combination of interventions. It should not be used to refer to learning (training) only. Learning

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.buinessurope.eu/sites/buseur/files/media/position\\_papers/social/2016-06-27\\_quadri-partite\\_statement\\_signed\\_on\\_a\\_new\\_start\\_for\\_social\\_dialogue.pdf](https://www.buinessurope.eu/sites/buseur/files/media/position_papers/social/2016-06-27_quadri-partite_statement_signed_on_a_new_start_for_social_dialogue.pdf).

and its various forms are a part of the capacity-building strategy. Capacity-building projects in the existing literature are often a combination of the various types of intervention, as shown in Figure 1.

In the context of optimal or full social partner involvement in VET, full capacity means the existence of an institutional and legal framework with a role for social partners at all levels of the VET policy cycle, with all the necessary resources at their disposal.

From the point of view of capacity building or capacity development at system level, interventions require more time and effort than, for example, supporting social partner organisations in acquiring knowledge and skills relating to VET. In practice, the ETF's support and capacity-building interventions depend on the demand from partner countries, their circumstances and the resources available.

Annex 2 of this note describes the ETF intervention in Moldova to support the capacity of sectoral social partners.

Capacity building in this note specifically addresses the individual competences of social partner representatives when involved in VET policy cycle scenarios. What knowledge, skills and competences (KSCs) do social partner representatives require in their involvement in VET policies at all levels?

## Capacity building pyramid

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Christopher Potter and Richard Brough

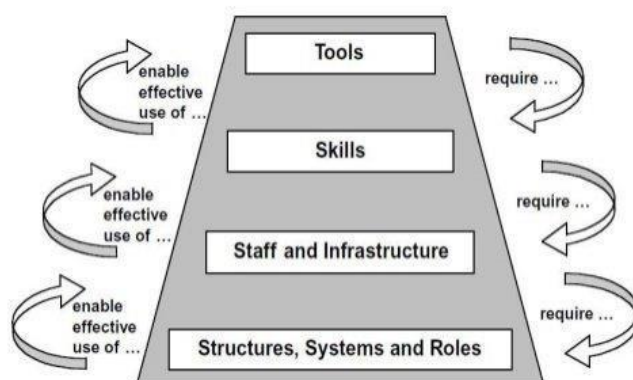


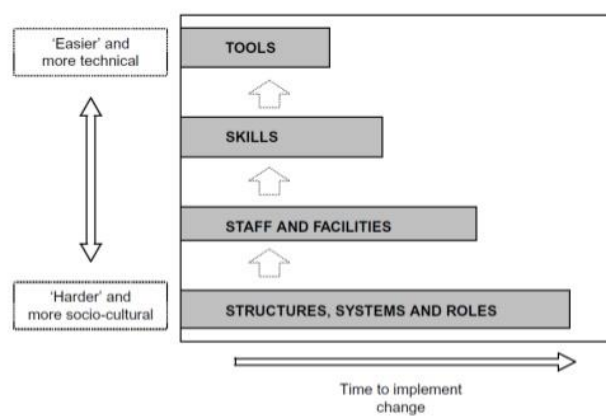
Figure 1. Capacity pyramid

Source: Christopher Potter, Systemic capacity building, Health Pol and Planning

Figure 1

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Christopher Potter and Richard Brough



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Figure 2

### 3. Social dialogue in VET

Social dialogue is defined as the process of exchange between social partners to promote consultation and collective bargaining. Social dialogue can be bipartite (involving representatives of workers and employers) or tripartite (also involving public authorities and civil society). It can take place at various levels, namely company, sectoral/cross-sectoral and local, regional, national or transnational levels (Cedefop, 2014)<sup>2</sup>. Social partners are employers' associations and trade unions forming the two sides of social dialogue (Cedefop, 2014).

Social dialogue for VET is the process of exchanges about VET. It concerns the integration of social partners in the three dimensions of any VET system: what to teach, how to teach and how to govern the overall system. The social partners mediate between the world of work and education. As they represent companies and employees and are institutionally integrated into the VET governance system, social partners contribute to the relevance, quality and legitimacy of VET systems (ETF, 2011a). The dialogue usually takes place through existing cooperation mechanisms between VET stakeholders. Social dialogue in VET is part of the multi-level governance system of VET in which social partners are involved. The dialogue and cooperation take place at different levels of the VET policy cycle.

In practice, social partners are involved in various types of committees or councils. The precise role and functions of social partners vary from system to system in a given country or region. The various types of committees and councils are as follows:

- national/central councils for VET or HRD (human resources development) policies;
- councils under different ministries;
- regional/decentralised councils;
- sector councils (economic sectors);

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<sup>2</sup> European social dialogue refers to discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations representing the two sides of industry (employers and workers). It takes two main forms: a tripartite dialogue involving the public authorities; a bipartite dialogue between the European employers and trade union organisations. This takes place at cross-industry level and within [sectoral social dialogue committees](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=329&langId=en): cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=329&langId=en>



- councils of VET agencies;
- councils at VET centre level.

The functions and policy areas of these councils vary according to the country and system in which they operate. These 'dialogue platforms' also touch different VET policy areas. The main areas are quality assurance; management of VET qualifications and curricula; validation of informal and non-formal learning (VINFL); work-based learning (WBL); identification and matching of skills in the labour market; career guidance and counselling; and involvement in training standards for teachers and trainers (GEMM data collection tool, 2015).

The ETF has developed a methodology consisting of a set of VET governance functions to analyse and map VET governance systems (ETF, GEMM data collection tool, 2015). In this note, the ETF analytical framework is the starting point for describing what social partners are expected to do and what they should be able to do. It is a functional approach with the advantage that it focuses on actions, and is flexible and context independent when defining competences for social partners. VET functions refer to the following main topics:

- formulation of VET national policy strategies;
- provision of a legal and normative framework;
- mobilisation of financial resources;
- management of public and private partnerships for VET and skills provision;
- evaluation and review of VET policies;
- research and development (R&D) and data provision.

The accountability and participation of social partners in VET governance is related to the roles that social partners have in a given context or system. A high level of participation can exist when, for example, it is supported by a legal framework. If this is not the case, such participation becomes a goal to achieve. Social partner roles vary between different countries and systems. The social partner role can be that of initiator, strategic actor, decision maker or co-decision maker, implementer, assessor or evaluator, funder or co-funder; it can be a purely consultative role, an officially recognised role, or another type. The ETF hopes that focusing on individual capacity building in VET for social partner representatives will both reinforce social partners' existing roles and support them to achieve or identify new goals.

## 4. Competence framework for social partners in social dialogue for VET

What KSCs are required to enable social partner representatives to act efficiently and effectively?

This could cover a wide spectrum, given the variety of VET functions and policy areas in which social partners are involved.

The competence framework describes what social partners do and the competences required to do it properly from the perspective of the VET governing functions described above. The specific tasks and required level of competences of social partners will differ depending on the system and country in which they operate. The differentiation and specification of the competences takes place in the application, which takes into consideration the features of the context. This mapping will assist social partners to recruit or nominate suitable VET experts or provide input to develop training and capacity building for social partner representatives. For example, a social partner organisation might decide to hire an external expert and give him/her the mandate to act on the organisation's behalf. Alternatively, the organisation may decide to train members of boards or councils.

### Methodology for mapping knowledge, skills and competences (KSCs) related to possible tasks of social partners in dialogue situations or committees

The process distinguishes knowledge (K), skills (S) and competences (C) for the purpose of identifying learning outcomes and the content of capacity-building programmes. The separate description of KSCs are considered as one whole. The KSCs formulated are general and are not specific to one country or system context. Depending on the features of the specific context, a part of this framework can be used to develop or identify content for a specific programme.

## Context-independent general competence framework (no specific country context/system)

The possible general tasks of social partners are derived from the VET functions described as 'main tasks' in the following table.

VET governance functions	Main tasks for social partners	Skills, competences ('is able to...') and knowledge	Possible type of committee/council
<b>Formulate VET national policy and normative frameworks (goals, strategies, plans)</b>	<p>The social partner representative gives advice on or takes initiative in formulating policy from the point of view of the social partner he or she represents.</p> <p>The representative provides national VET strategic orientation in the various policy areas.</p> <p>The representative's contribution/input in the committee concerned reflects the vision of the social partner he or she represents.</p>	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– presents the social partner's vision of a VET strategy/policy</li> <li>– evaluates and judges policy strategies for VET policy areas from the point of view of the social partner</li> <li>– interacts and negotiates with other social partner representatives and members of the relevant committee/council on VET strategy and policy framework</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different visions and points of view</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– use relevant arguments to convince others</li> <li>– listen actively and show interest in others</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind during presentation, interaction and negotiation</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– all relevant past and actual VET strategies of the country</li> <li>– the relevant VET policy areas of the country/system</li> <li>– the social partner's vision of VET in the various policy areas</li> </ul>	<p>National or central VET/HRD council</p> <p>Regional/decentralised VET/HRD council</p> <p>SSC</p>
<b>Provision of legal regulatory/normative framework</b>	<p>The social partner representative advises on, takes initiatives and evaluates the legal framework in the various policy areas.</p>	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyses legal and normative frameworks</li> <li>– develops and proposes concrete elements for legal and normative frameworks</li> <li>– evaluates existing frameworks</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different visions and points of view</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partners</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind during analysis and proposal</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– existing legal and normative frameworks of VET</li> </ul>	<p>National or central VET/HRD council or decentralised/regional VET/HRD council</p> <p>Sub-working groups designing and drafting the legal and normative framework</p>
<b>Management of VET provider networks</b>	<p>The social partner representative provides advice, decides on and evaluates the strategy and operations of VET</p>	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reports on the skill needs of the social partner</li> <li>– uses information about the skill needs in the development of qualifications and curricula, and in assessments of the various learning paths</li> <li>– recommends policies and operations for VET provision</li> </ul>	<p>Boards of networks of VET providers at both central/national and</p>

	provider networks or centres in various policy VET areas. (Examples include curricula, WBL, assessment and certification.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitors and evaluates policies and operations in VET provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyse different visions and points of view</li> <li>represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>interpret the different needs of the social partners</li> <li>keep goals, strategies and plans in mind in the recommendations</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the most relevant learning outcomes (LOs) implemented in VET (WBL, dual education system, etc.)</li> <li>the most important concepts in VET (learning paths, quality, assessment, certification, qualification, quality assurance, credits, LOs, curricula, etc.)</li> </ul>	decentralised/r egional level  Boards of VET centres
<b>Mobilisation of financial resources</b>	The social partner representative collects, manages or co-manages funds from companies and their employees or from public funding sources.	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plans the appropriate use of funds for the intended beneficiaries, companies and employees or future employees</li> <li>distributes funding according to established procedures</li> <li>analyses the effectiveness of the VET funds</li> <li>proposes improvements in the funding mechanisms</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>represent the interests of the social partners</li> <li>interpret the different needs of social partners</li> <li>keep goals, strategies and plans in mind during planning, distribution and proposals</li> <li>maintain a long- and short-term view of the financial situation</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the various funds and funding mechanisms of VET</li> </ul>	Central or decentralised VET/HRD councils, sector councils, boards of VET agencies
<b>Management of public-private partnership for VET and skills provision</b>	The social partner representative co-manages VET/skills provision at all levels. (Occupational standards, recognition of skills, WBL, assessment, continuing vocational training, etc.)	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reports on the skill needs of the social partner</li> <li>uses information about the skill needs in the development of occupational standards, the validation of skills, and continuing training activities</li> <li>recommends policies and operations for VET and skills provision</li> <li>monitors and evaluates policies and operations in skills and VET provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>represent the interests of the social partners</li> <li>interpret the different needs of social partners</li> <li>keep goals, strategies and plans in mind in the management of public-private partnerships</li> <li>act at different levels</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the required skills for VET/skills provision</li> <li>the most important concepts in VET and skills provision (WBL, quality, assessment, certification, qualification, quality assurance, credits, LOs, training programmes, curricula, etc.)</li> </ul>	Boards of networks of provision partially or fully owned by social partners, SSCs, boards of working groups of skills/VET agencies
<b>Evaluation and review of VET policies</b>	The social partner representative evaluates and drafts	<p><b>Skills:</b></p>	National/centr al and decentralised/r

	opinions on VET policies in various policy areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– identifies the most relevant VET policies at the appropriate level(s) in which he or she is involved</li> <li>– analyses the VET policies from the point of view of the social partner's strategy</li> <li>– drafts opinions and proposals about VET policies</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different strategies at different levels</li> <li>– think and act in a solutions-oriented way</li> <li>– formulate an opinion</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind when formulating opinions</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– relevant VET policies at different levels</li> </ul>	<p>regional VET/HRD councils</p> <p>SSCs</p>
<b>Research and development (R&amp;D): data and statistical provision</b>	The social partner representative provides or processes statistical data from other sources on skill needs and the labour market, as input for the various VET policy areas.	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– identifies data relating to skill needs and the labour market</li> <li>– interprets the data in relation to VET policies</li> <li>– uses the data to formulate policy recommendations or for decision making</li> <li>– produces reports with data on skill needs and the labour market</li> <li>– formulates VET policies or amendments based on the data</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse and interpret relevant data</li> <li>– translate data into policy recommendations</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind when formulating VET policies</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– different relevant sources of statistical data</li> </ul>	All types of committee

## How to use the general framework

### A. Capacity building and learning in the country and system context

The goal is to develop a capacity-building programme that is tailor-made for the country or institutional context. Capacity building takes into consideration the individual, organisation and system level. The various levels are interrelated. For example, knowledgeable social partners in VET contribute to capacity at organisation level and system level. The capacity-building pyramid in Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between capacity building at the different levels of intervention.

This note addresses the skill levels of social partners. Thus, capacity building is here situated mainly at the level of content and various forms of learning, though it should be kept in mind that capacity building goes beyond actions relating to 'learning'.

The ETF defines learning actions for policy makers with reference to two processes, **problem solving** and **reflection** (ETF, 2008, p. 16). In **problem solving**, learning is an attempt to solve a real-life problem. For example, following an ETF-organised capacity-building session, sector committees in Moldova produced a sector skill report to comply with what is required in the Law on Sector Committees. The ETF acted as facilitator and supported the Moldovans to produce this report by identifying common content, producing and subsequently discussing the report in order to improve it.

**Reflection** concerns different points of view and a broadening of one's own viewpoint. In this learning process, individuals question their preconceived ideas by contrasting them with new ones. This usually takes place in peer-learning events.

It could be argued that both processes are applied in the combination of experiential learning and peer-learning methods.

**Experiential learning**, according to Kolb (1984), is 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience'. It is a holistic approach to learning and combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour (Kolb, 1984, pp. 20–21) (see Figure 3). Put simply, it is about 'learning by doing'. This was summed up by Gentry (1990): 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.'

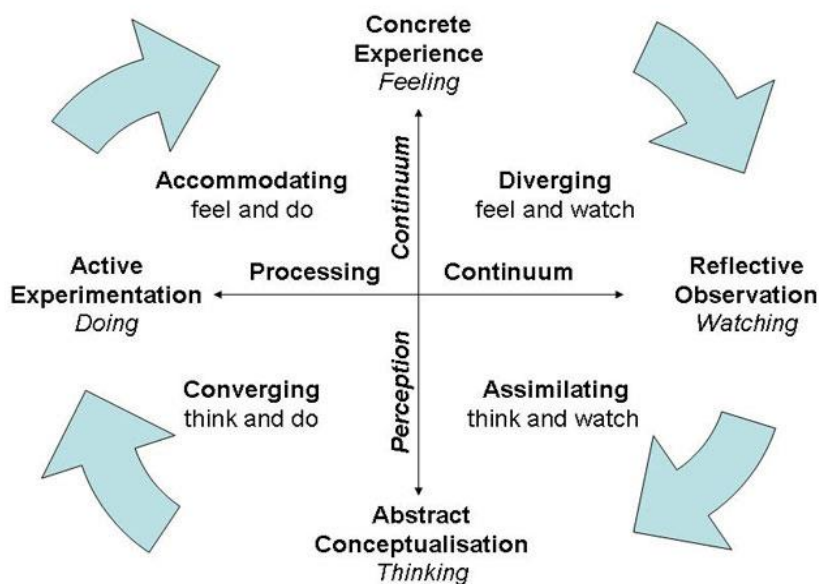


Figure 3

**Peer learning** is an instrument that aims to strengthen mutual learning and deepen the exchange of good practice between countries and systems that share similar concerns in order to develop a common understanding of success factors (ETF, 2008, p. 40). Peer learning underpins an improved mutual knowledge of VET systems, issues and developments; it provides conditions for networking, exchanges of experience and cooperation among VET experts, stakeholders, policy makers; and it leads to better performance in terms of policy formulation and implementation. There are two crucial elements to be taken in account in peer learning, namely the selection of the policy issues and the composition of the peer-learning team, as the peer learning needs to improve both the capacity of social partners and the corresponding outcome. In Moldova, for example, the team included key members of the sector committees and relevant stakeholders. The topic related to an important task, linked to the Law on Sector Committees; collaboration with stakeholders and specific skills were required in order to complete the task. The specific aim was to produce sector skill reports for VET policy/content in Moldova.

The development of a capacity-building programme has two parts.

- What are the needs, the goals and the content?
- What methods should be used to achieve these goals?

The competence framework provides support in defining specific learning objectives from the point of view of individual social partners. It serves as a reference framework that describes possible required skills that will enable social partners to function within a VET environment.

The design of a capacity-building programme needs to take into account the specific needs, resources and context. What institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms – including both horizontal and vertical mechanisms, public–private partnerships, and VET governance stages – are in place? The ETF has developed a tool to determine these governance characteristics (ETF, 2018 Data collection tool, ETF Inventory Governance). This inventory provides specific information about social partners' involvement in VET policies. At this stage, the relevant VET areas, such as qualifications or VET provision, will emerge. These specifications will provide context and concretise what social partners need in terms of KSCs.

The second step is to identify intervention methods. Various learning methods can be applied, such as experiential learning, peer learning, active learning and learning by seeing, as described in the previous paragraph.

### **B. Collaboration with national development organisations, EU delegations, EU agencies and international organisations (ILO-UFM)**

Given the wide range of countries and themes covered by the ETF, resources to design and implement in-depth capacity-building programmes are not always available. Therefore, it is envisaged that collaboration with other organisations will take place.

National donor organisations or international organisations such as the ILO might have projects and strategies to support social partners in social policies or VET. The skills dimensions is not always strongly highlighted, which offers an opportunity for the ETF to contribute towards a more complete



approach to empowering social partners. An example of such a collaboration modality would be for the ILO and ETF to agree on a synergetic approach in which the ETF develops the skills element, for example, a programme to support social partners within the envisaged legal mandate. In practical terms, the ETF would either develop the content and or provide the programme, depending on the resources available. Thus, the nature and content of a specific intervention in a given country depends on the needs and the existing actions.

The following scenarios provide opportunities for collaboration.

A concrete example is the sub-regional Western Balkans Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) project implemented by the ILO. In this project, one of the objectives is to improve the effectiveness of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes. The countries covered in this IPA II project are Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo.

In the SEMED region, during the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) ministerial conference in September 2016 in Jordan, the representative social partners of the EURO-MED region signed a declaration on social dialogue in which skills development was one of the key areas.

In Ukraine the ILO decent country programme, which gives little attention to the skill dimension, envisages the strengthening of the role of social partners.

Eurofound is an EU agency focusing on the development of social employment and work-related policies. Social dialogue is inherent to the agency's themes. With Eurofound it was agreed to explore together the capacity building of social partners, and Eurofound has started a project to address this issue.

## 5. Case study: Moldova – Strengthening VET sector skill councils (SSCs)

## Introduction

As part of its work in Moldova on VET governance, the ETF has identified areas for improvement in the performance of sector skill councils (SSCs). In Moldova, SSCs exist to bridge the gap between the education sector and the demands of the labour market. Sectoral social partners and line ministries of the economic sectors concerned make up the SSCs.

In this context, the ETF has created a tailored-made capacity-building programme to improve the performance of SSCs by addressing the individual skill levels of their members.

From the perspective of an integrated capacity-building programme, organisational and system interventions, as well as those at the individual level, are required in Moldova. Examples include the establishment in law of the expected tasks, mechanisms for cooperation with other institutional stakeholders, and the optimisation of the internal functioning of SSCs and the sectoral social partners as members of them. The tasks of the social partners in the model become contextual even if, as mentioned, many operational modalities (institutional arrangements) are not defined in the law nor agreed with all the relevant stakeholders.

## Focus area and beneficiaries of the capacity-building programme

The main reference document relating to SSCs' performance is the law prepared under the national Ministry of Labour. This law, drafted in 2016 and approved by the end of 2017, recognises and strengthens the role of SSCs by putting more pressure on their performance. The translated text of the law (draft version) appears in Annex 1.

The expected duties of SSCs as described in the Law on Sector Committees in Moldova are as follows:

- a) harmonise the interests of the social partners in developing the regulatory framework on initial and continuing training, assessment and certification of skills;
- b) develop proposals on policy documents at national and sectoral level in training, and endorse draft laws for training purposes;
- c) conduct research on the labour market and collaborate with public-private, non-profit organisations to identify trends in the sector, labour needs, and skills requirements of economic

sectors in order to provide information on the development of the necessary skills in the education system;

- d) identify the occupations for which standards should be developed;
- e) initiate, coordinate and carry out the process of drafting and revising existing occupational standards in the relevant branch of economic activity;
- f) participate in the preparation of qualifications in accordance with the methodologies on the development of professional qualifications;
- g) participate in the development of a National Qualifications Framework;
- h) coordinate curricula modules/disciplines in technical vocational education;
- i) participate, through their representatives, in the qualifying examination and the certification of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning, and support thesis or diploma projects;
- j) make proposals on updating the Classification of Occupations in Moldova;
- k) other activities established by the statute in the interest of the branch of activity they represent.

In agreement with SSC members and international partners (such as the ILO), the ETF has developed a capacity-building programme to deliver the skills needed to perform a specific task described in the law, namely the delivery of a report on trends in the skills required in a sector (task C). The direct beneficiaries of this capacity-building programme are the members of the six SSCs established in Moldova for specific sectors: Construction, Agriculture and Food Industry, IT and Communication, Transport and Road Infrastructure, Trade, and Light Industry.

The programme implies knowledge of skill needs and the ability to identify and gather information relating to the specific sector. Where can such information be found? How can the results be communicated to the Ministry of Education when the details relate to VET? How should the information be used in continuing vocational training (CVT) policies?

The related competences and content for capacity building are therefore concrete.

In this scenario, only some of the VET functions and related tasks and competences that are described in the competence matrix are covered. The same applies for the duty described as participation in the elaboration of qualifications. This means that good knowledge is required on how learning outcomes in qualifications are related to occupational standards. Once clear on these needs, a tailor-made programme can be developed.

## Capacity-building methodology



Figure 4

The capacity-building process started with an analysis of the Moldovan context, of the draft (at that time) Law on Sector Committees and of the capacity status of SSCs. The next step was the needs assessment to identify and draw up the KSCs required to perform the required tasks satisfactorily. The following table is adapted to the Moldovan context of SSCs.

<b>VET governance functions</b>	<b>Main tasks for sectoral social partners</b>	<b>Skills, competences ('is able to...') and knowledge</b>	<b>Reference to duties in the law in Moldova</b>
<b>Formulate VET national policy and normative frameworks (goals, strategies, plans)</b>	<p>The sectoral social partner representative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– gives advice or takes the initiative in formulating policy from the point of view of the social partner he or she represents;</li> <li>– provides strategic orientation in the policy areas mentioned in the law.</li> </ul> <p>The representative's contribution/input to the committee concerned reflects the vision of the social partner he or she represents.</p>	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– presents the social partner's vision of a VET/lifelong learning strategy/policy</li> <li>– evaluates and judges policy strategies for VET policy areas from the point of view of the social partner</li> <li>– interacts and negotiates with other social partners and members of the relevant sector committee</li> <li>– committee/council on VET/lifelong learning strategy and policy framework</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different visions and points of view</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– use relevant arguments to convince others</li> <li>– listen actively and show interest in others</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind during presentation, interaction and negotiation</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– all relevant past and actual VET/lifelong learning strategies of Moldova</li> <li>– the relevant VET policy areas of the VET system</li> <li>– the sectoral social partner's vision of VET in the policy areas mentioned</li> <li>– the vision of the other social partners (unions' and employers' side)</li> </ul>	<b>Duty a:</b> Harmonise the interests of the social partners in developing the regulatory framework on initial and continuing training, assessment and certification of skills.
<b>Provision of legal regulatory/normative framework</b>	The social partner representative advises on, evaluates or proposes policy documents in the various VET/lifelong learning policy areas relating to their sector.	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– identifies and interprets existing legal and normative VET frameworks</li> <li>– analyses legal and normative frameworks</li> <li>– develops and proposes concrete elements for legal and normative frameworks</li> <li>– evaluates existing frameworks</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different visions and points of view</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind during analysis and proposal</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– various policy areas</li> <li>– existing legal and normative frameworks</li> </ul>	<b>Duty b:</b> Develop proposals for policy documents at national and sectoral level in training and endorse draft laws for training purposes.
<b>Management of VET</b>	The sectoral social partner representative provides advice,	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reports on the skill needs of the social partner</li> </ul>	<b>Duty h:</b> Coordinate curricula

<b>provider networks</b>	decides on and evaluates the strategy and operations of VET provider networks or centres in various policy VET areas. (Examples include curricula, WBL, assessment and certification.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– uses information about the skill needs in the development of qualifications and curricula, and in assessments of the various learning paths</li> <li>– recommends policies and operations for VET provision</li> <li>– monitors and evaluates policies and operations in VET provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different visions and points of view</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– interpret the different needs of the social partners</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind in the recommendations</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the most relevant learning outcomes (LOs) implemented in VET</li> <li>– the most important concepts in VET (learning paths, quality, assessment, certification, qualification, quality assurance, credits, LOs, curricula, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>modules/disciplines in technical vocational education.</p> <p><b>Duty c:</b> Conduct research on labour market and skill trends reports.</p> <p><b>Duty I:</b> Participate in assessment of skills.</p>
<b>Mobilisation of financial resources</b>	The social partner representative collects, manages or co-manages funds from companies and employees or from public funding.	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– plans the appropriate use of the funds for the intended beneficiaries, companies and employees or future employees</li> <li>– distributes the funding according to established procedures</li> <li>– analyses the effectiveness of the VET funds</li> <li>– proposes improvements in the funding mechanism</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– interpret the different needs of social partners</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind during the planning, distribution and proposals</li> <li>– keep a long- and short-term view of the financial situation</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the various funds and funding mechanisms of VET</li> </ul>	<b>No relation to duties in Law on Sector Committees at this stage.</b>
<b>Management of public-private partnership for VET and skills provision</b>	The social partner representative co-manages VET/skills provision at all levels. (Occupational standards, recognition of skills, WBL, assessment, CVT, etc.)	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reports on the skill needs of the social partner</li> <li>– uses information about the skill needs in the development of occupational standards, the validation of skills, and continuing training activities</li> <li>– recommends policies and operations for VET and skills provision</li> </ul>	<b>Duties c, d, f, g, j:</b> Sectoral labour market reports, skill trends; identification of relevant occupations, development and revision of occupational

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– monitors and evaluates policies and operations in skills and VET provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– interpret the different needs of social partners</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind in the management of public-private partnerships</li> <li>– act at different levels</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the skills required for VET/skills provision via the occupational standards and skill trends reports</li> <li>– the most important concepts in VET and skills provision (WBL, quality, assessment, certification, qualification, quality assurance, credits, LOs, training programmes, curricula, etc.)</li> </ul>	standards, participation in the development of an NQF, updating the Classification of Occupations.
<b>Evaluation and review of VET policies</b>	The social partner representative evaluates and drafts opinions on VET policies in various policy areas.	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyses the VET policies from the point of view of the sectoral social partner's strategy</li> <li>– drafts opinions and proposals on VET policies</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse different strategies at different levels</li> <li>– think and act in a solutions-oriented way</li> <li>– formulate an opinion</li> <li>– represent the interests of the social partner</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind when formulating opinions</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the most relevant VET policies at the appropriate level(s) in which he or she is involved</li> </ul>	<b>Duty b:</b> Develop proposals on policy documents at national and sectoral level in training and endorse draft laws for training purposes.
<b>Research and development (R&amp;D): data and statistical provision</b>	The social partner representative provides or processes statistical data provided from other sources on skill needs and the labour market, as input for the various VET policy areas.	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– uses the data to formulate policy recommendations or for decision making</li> <li>– produces reports with data on skill needs and the labour market</li> <li>– formulates VET policies or amendments based on the data</li> </ul> <p><b>Is able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyse and interpret relevant data</li> <li>– translate data into VET policy recommendations</li> <li>– keep goals, strategies and plans in mind when formulating VET policies</li> </ul> <p><b>Has knowledge of:</b></p>	<b>Duty c:</b> Conduct research on the labour market and collaborate with public- private, non-profit organisations to identify trends in the sector, labour needs, and skills requirements of economic sectors in order to provide information on the development in the

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– data related to skill needs and labour market for the sector</li> <li>– VET policies</li> </ul>	education system of the necessary skills.
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The design of the capacity building (Figure 5) takes into account contextual factors, the draft law and the knowledge and skills needed to be able to execute the expected tasks.

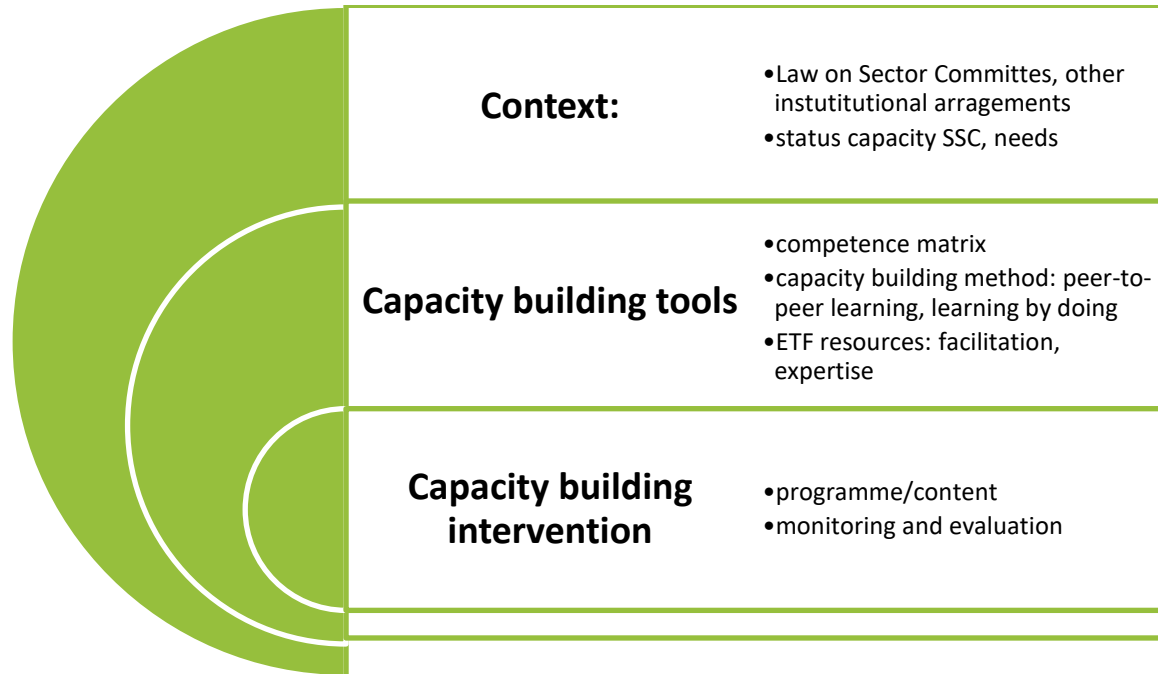


Figure 5

Given the resources available and assessment of the needs, the ETF and the SSCs decided to focus on one task in the law: *'Conduct research on the labour market and collaborate with public-private, non-profit organisations to identify trends in the sector, labour needs, and skills requirements of economic sectors in order to provide information on the development in the education system of the necessary skills.'*

The rationale for this choice is that this task requires multiple types of tasks and skills, so is an appropriate choice from the point of view of return on investment. It is a task that touches on various functions in the competence matrix. The format of the capacity-building intervention is a combination of learning by doing and peer learning. The needs that emerged following this task related to issues such as:

- how to present this information;
- how to produce a report for VET;
- the format that should be used;
- the content of the report;

- the data collection method;
- the type of data that should be collected;
- who will produce the required data, and how;
- where data can be collected using existing resources;
- how such data can be translated into skills needs and trends;
- how the data can be analysed in relation to VET policies/areas, qualifications, occupational standards and the content of curricula;
- how and to whom the report should be communicated effectively.

Capacity-building implementation requires the organisation of activities, including mobilisation of resources such as expertise, facilitation and logistical organisation.

In the specific case of Moldova, activities started in 2016 and are currently ongoing. Figure 6 shows the calendar of activities, while their content, outcomes and follow-up are included in Annex 2.

The capacity-building package in Moldova included a focus group (November 2016), a number of interlinked workshops (2017–2018), and peer-to-peer learning (2018). All the activities were based on the active participation and involvement of participants. Moreover, the package aimed to promote partnerships, create networks and increase awareness of the potential power of influence in the hands of SSC representatives to contribute to VET dialogue. Thus, it is very important that the same participants are involved throughout the whole capacity-building programme and take part in all the planned activities.

This mix of activities supports both technical and content-oriented skills. At the same time, knowledge relating to subjects such as labour market information systems will also be acquired, together with process-oriented skills such as presentation, clear communication, negotiation and advocacy to promote partnerships and common understanding among SSC members.

The success of the capacity-building programme depends on the involvement of the relevant participants; therefore, individuals should be given sufficient time to take part in capacity-building activities and to put into practice the expertise they have acquired.

Throughout the capacity-building programme, SSC members were asked to carry out 'homework', under the overall coordination and support of an ETF local expert. For instance, participants were requested to produce:

- a draft sector report on a selected sector: all SSC members together ;
- a 'light' version for each of the six SSCs: each committee for its own sector;
- a strategy plan to involve the private sector: each committee for its own sector.

16 November 2016 – Chisinau, Moldova	Focus group on cooperation mechanisms of SSCs in Moldova
21 June 2017 – Chisinau, Moldova	Capacity building for SSCs
8 November 2017 – Chisinau, Moldova	Capacity building for SSCs
6 February 2018 – Chisinau, Moldova	Capacity building for collection and use of sectoral labour market information
29–30 May 2018 – Den Haag, Netherlands	Capacity building for enhancing sectoral dialogue
13 November 2018 – Chisinau, Moldova	Capacity building for SSCs: strategy plans

Figure 6

**Monitoring** will take place throughout the implementation process, with participants asked to self-assess their learning and provide feedback through a questionnaire submitted at the end of each activity. The questionnaire will evaluate the content and tools applied during the implementation of the capacity-building programme and can be used to adjust subsequent activities that are planned.

**Evaluation** will take place at the end of the entire capacity-building process through self-assessment by participants (via a questionnaire) as well as direct interviews in order to better clarify their overall learning and the impact it is going to have on the SSCs' performance.

## ANNEX 1

### Proposed Law on Sector Committees in Moldova

#### Chapter I

#### INTRODUCTION

##### **Article 1. Scope**

This law establishes the legal status, organisation and functioning of the sector committees for professional training (hereinafter 'sector committees'), the autonomous public institution of social partnership. The sector committees shall be constituted for the development of social partnership at the branch level in training.

##### **Article 2. How the legal framework for vocational training sector committees works**

(1) The sector committees are guided in their work by the Constitution, by this law, their statutes, international treaties to which Moldova is party and other regulations in the field.

(2) If the international treaties to which Moldova is party are established with provisions other than those contained in this law, international regulations must be put in place.

##### **Article 3. Basic principles of the activity of sector committees**

The basic principles of the activity of sector committees are:

- a) Legality;
- b) Equality of the parties;
- c) Parity of representation of the parties;
- d) Credentials of the parties;
- e) Compliance by the parties with rules of applicable law;
- f) Mutual trust between the parties;
- g) Making decisions, taking action within the rules and procedures coordinated by the parties;
- h) Performance of compulsory collective agreements and other arrangements.

##### **Article 4. Mission of sector committees**

(1) The sector committee is an institution of social partnership with legal personality, organised as an association under this Act according to the economic branch of activity, on a bi- or tripartite basis, with representatives of employers, trade unions and central public authorities, established to support vocational education through connections to labour market requirements.

(2) Sector committees are tasked with the duty of promoting the interests of social partners in the economic branch of activity in technical vocational education.

(3) Sector committees develop policies that represent the need for initial and ongoing training for skilled workers and labour market requirements of industries.

(4) Sector committees contribute to a system of information and analytical support from the labour market for vocational education.

(5) Sector committees support training activities of employers and employees in order to sustain economic sectors.

## Chapter II

# CONSTITUTION AND REGISTRATION OF SECTOR COMMITTEES

### Article 5. Establishment of sector committees

- (1) Areas of activity for which sector committees are established are in accordance with the Classification of Economic Activities of the Republic of Moldova at the division level.
- (2) The division constitutes a single economic sector committee.
- (3) The name reflects the relevant economic sector committee.
- (4) Sector committees established by the Association Agreement have at least two sides level economic sector based on the principle of parity.
- (5) The initiative for the establishment of sector committees belongs to any of the social partners.
- (6) The social partners who have signed the Association Agreement for the establishment of a sector committee become its founding members, and holders of rights and obligations in the sector committee established by statute.
- (7) The Association Agreement for the establishment of sector committee empowerment is signed by representatives of the founders, along with an approval of the statutes, training management and control bodies and designation of the person(s) authorised to represent the sector committees in the registration process.
- (8) The social partners shall appoint representatives to the governing bodies and control sector committees based on the principle of parity.

### Article 6. Statutes of sector committees

- (1) The statutes of sector committees will at least contain provisions on:
  - a) The names and addresses of the sector committees;
  - b) The objectives, tasks and duties of the sector committees, and the methods and forms of the same;
  - c) How the members of sector committees are appointed and terminated;
  - d) The rights and obligations of members of sector committees;
  - e) Organisational structure, the name of the management bodies and the formation of their terms of office and their duties;
  - f) Conditions for the adoption of meetings' decisions and changes, and the adoption of other decisions;
  - g) Procedural control over the activity of sector committees;
  - h) Training sources, etc.;
  - i) Reorganising and terminating the activities of sector committees, and their distribution, transmission and winding-up;
  - j) The manner of association of sector committees.
- (2) The statute of a sector committee may contain other provisions concerning its activities that are not contrary to the law.
- (3) The statute is signed by all the founders of the sector committee at the time of its formation.

### Article 7. State registration of sector committees

(1) Sector committees are legal from the moment of their registration with the Justice Ministry in the State Register of Associations.

(2) For registration, the following documents shall be submitted:

- a) The application signed by a person authorised by the founders;
- b) Two copies of the statute;
- c) A copy of the Association Agreement for the establishment of a sector committee;
- d) Document confirming the headquarters;
- e) Proof of payment to the state.

(3) Amendments and additions to the charter of a sector committee are registered under the same procedure and the status as registration of changes and additions to legislation and are not subject to a modification fee.

(4) The Ministry of Justice is obliged to adopt, within one month of submitting the documents indicated in paragraph (2) of this Article, the decision to register the sector committee and issue the certificate of state registration or refuse registration.

(5) Failure of a sector committee to register within the deadline, or failure for reasons deemed unfounded, founders may be appealed in court in the manner prescribed by law.

## Chapter III

### DUTIES OF SECTOR COMMITTEES

#### Article 8. Duties of sector committees

(1) Sector committees have the following duties:

- a) Harmonise the interests of the social partners in developing the regulatory framework on initial and continuing training, assessment and certification of skills;
- b) Develop proposals for policy documents on training at national and sector level and endorse draft laws for training purposes;
- c) Conduct research on the labour market and collaborate with public and private, non-profit organisations to identify trends in the sector, labour needs, and skills requirements of economic sectors in order to provide information on the development of the education system to provide the necessary skills;
- d) Identify the occupations for which standards should be developed;
- e) Initiate, coordinate and carry out the process of drafting and revising existing occupational standards in the branch of economic activity;
- f) Participate in the elaboration of qualifications in accordance with the methodologies on the development of professional qualifications;
- g) Participate in the development of a National Qualifications Framework;
- h) Coordinate curricula modules/disciplines in technical vocational education;
- i) Participate through its representatives in the qualifying examination, certification of skills acquired in the context of formal, non-formal and informal learning and/or support for thesis or diploma projects;
- j) Make proposals on updating the Classification of Occupations in Moldova;
- k) Other activities established by the statute in the interest of the branch of activity they represent.

## Chapter IV

### BASIC RIGHTS OF SECTOR COMMITTEES

#### **Article 9. Rights of sector committees**

(1) A sector committee is vested with the following rights:

- a) To request and receive information from public and private entities for the conduct of its business;
- b) To set up expert groups in order to exercise its sphere of competence;
- c) To cooperate with other committees to harmonise existing sector policy documents on competence;
- d) To establish and develop, within the available expertise, partnerships with schools, to address the problems of vocational training;
- e) To consult the normative and legislative acts relating to their areas of competence before these are sent for approval.

## Chapter V

### HERITAGE SECTOR COMMITTEES

### RECORDS AND CONTROL BUSINESS SECTOR COMMITTEES

#### **Article 10. Heritage sector committees**

(1) Sector committees may own any property necessary to achieve their statutory goals.

(2) Resources for the formation of heritage sector committees are:

- a) Budget allocations;
- b) Funds of economic entities, as established by collective agreements;
- c) Funds acquired from projects funded by national and international organisations, donations, sponsorships and other sources as required by law;
- d) Provision of services in accordance with their duties;
- e) Other sources in accordance with law.

(3) The resources that form the assets specified in para. (2) are subject to taxation under current legislation.

(4) The property of sector committees must be used exclusively for the authorised purposes and cannot be distributed among its members.

#### **Article 11. Registration and control of activity of sector committees**

(1) Sector committees keep records of employment, and submit accounting reports and statistics as provided by law.

(2) Internal controls and management checks are carried out by the sector committees' auditing section.

(3) Control of financial activity is exercised by sector committees and tax organs of the state as established by law.

## Chapter VI

## Sector committee closures

### **Article 12. Cessation of sector committees**

(1) Sector committees will be dissolved in the case of:

- a) Reorganisation;
- b) Liquidation.

(2) The cessation of business sector committees are regulated by their state and the law binding it.

### **Article 13. Reorganisation of sector committees**

(1) Sector committees are reorganised in the manner prescribed by their statutes.

(2) In the case of reorganisation, sector committees' heritage is transmitted to newly established legal entities in the manner prescribed by the Civil Code. Sector committees cannot be reorganised commercial organisations or political parties.

### **Article 14. Liquidation of sector committees**

(1) A sector committee is liquidated by the decision of a general meeting of members proposed by at least two-thirds of the committee.

(2) Sector committees can be liquidated through court rulings in cases of infringement at the request of the prosecutor or the Ministry of Justice.

(3) The department can take the decision to liquidate a sector committee and set up a liquidation commission to determine the manner and the time of liquidation of the sector committee.

(4) Heritage liquidated sector committees cannot be transferred to commercial organisations, political parties or individuals.

### **Article 15. Removal of sector committees from the register of state sector committees**

(1) In case of the termination of its ability to perform the appropriate entry in the state register, the Ministry of Justice Sector Committees will submit the following documents:

- a) Request to delist from the state register of sector committees;
- b) The registration certificate (original);
- c) Document confirming payment to the state's budget issued by the tax authority;
- d) Constitutional documents;
- e) Act on the implementation of the destruction of stamps issued by the authorised body of the police;
- f) Copy of the notification about the liquidation of the sector committee, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova.

(2) In the case of liquidation of a sector committee, the Ministry of Justice issues its decision to cancel the registration certificate of the sector committee and strike it off the state register.

(3) Following the decision on the cancellation of the certificate of registration of a sector committee, and the sector committee having been struck off, the state register notifies the governing body of sector committees, the relevant bodies of the tax inspectorate, and the statistical offices, and publishes the details on the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova.

## Chapter VII



## FINAL AND TRANSITIONAL

### **Article 16. Final and transitional provisions**

(1) A sector committee established before its enforcement into law will be reorganised into a non-profit organisation with the status of legal personality and will take over all activities undertaken by them at registration.

(2) The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection will hold information and monitor the process of creation, and sector committees will report to the government on the progress of that activity.

## ANNEX 2

### The capacity-building programme and activities in Moldova

The starting point for the capacity-building programme in Moldova was the specific tasks relating to the delivery of 'sector reports for VET purposes'. No other guidelines or by-laws exist at this stage.

The capacity-building seminars were based on experiential and peer learning. Two capacity-building sessions took place in 2017 and three in 2018, continuing into 2019. The final version of the Law on Sector Committees was approved in November 2017, after the start of the capacity-building programme.

Prior to the first capacity-building workshop, a focus group was organised in November 2016 to collect ideas and define the mechanisms for cooperation of SSCs in Moldova and the support needed to strengthen their performance capacities and further work.

#### First capacity-building workshop

This focused on gaining a good understanding of one of the expected tasks described in the draft law.

The expected outcomes of the first capacity-building session were:

1. a proposed format for a sector report in Moldova;
2. a description of the conditions necessary to produce a sector report in Moldova;
3. a sector report to be presented at the second capacity-building workshop in November 2017.

The workshop was successful because the participants understood what producing a sector report means in terms of content and conditions.

The challenges, for a sector committee rather than as individuals, are:

- how to produce, share and communicate sector intelligence in an efficient way in Moldova;
- identifying the limitations and the opportunities in a Moldovan context when producing the report.

#### Follow-up and content of the second capacity-building session

As homework, the sector committees had to produce at least one sector report based on the format agreed in the first capacity-building session. A key group composed of one representative per sector would produce the report for one sector. Each sector would decide whether they wished to produce a report. Finally, one sector report covering the construction sector was produced.

#### Second capacity-building workshop

This built on what had been done following the first capacity-building session.

The expected outcomes of the second workshop were:

1. improve the proposed format and content of sector reports in Moldova based on the self-produced report for the construction sector, so that the reports are fit for purpose;
2. produce a description of the conditions necessary to create sector reports in Moldova;
3. follow-up: identify further capacity-building needs in 2018 and follow-up activities until the next session in March 2018.

An important conclusion regarding the process of producing sector reports was that information and data resources are limited. The members of sector committees had difficulty collecting data. More options for gathering and generating data are necessary and, at the same time, there is a need for further capacity building. There is a lack of knowledge about who is producing the information, who is responsible, and what relevant data can be obtained from other stakeholders in the Moldovan institutional landscape, including partnerships with stakeholders. An example is the labour market observatory. The difficulty of finding information demonstrates the need for effective cooperation mechanisms to facilitate information exchange. What data can be gathered by members of sector committees themselves, for example through qualitative surveys? In other words, a pragmatic data-gathering methodology is needed describing the options for where and how to obtain the data and how to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders.

In relation to the content, it was agreed that a sector report should contain one section that is the same for all sectors and a sector-specific chapter complemented by detailed annexes. Although this task of describing trends/skills from the point of view of the law is intended for VET purposes, the participants recognise that there are many other opportunities to use this report. A sector skills/trends report can be used to communicate with companies and empower them to participate, to inform potential investors, and for continuous vocational training purposes. Finally, participants see it as an instrument to propose sectoral education and training policies to the authorities. The report is also an opportunity to highlight themes such as the entrepreneurial mind-set, anticipating developments both within and beyond the sector.

The sector committees have also underlined the importance of partnership, dialogue and communication in the process of producing a skills/trends report. This immediately raises the issue of the existence of cooperation mechanisms in the Moldovan VET landscape. The establishment of a 'technical secretariat' to support the sector committee in its mission was another issue mentioned as a possible action for the future.

The current stakeholders representing the centre of excellence, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour consider the report presented very useful and fit for purpose.

### Third capacity-building workshop

This session focused on the specific objective of the workshop: capacity building for the collection and use of sectoral labour market information.

The subject of this session was raised during the capacity-building sessions in 2017 and addressed the issue of where and how to collect data.

The capacity-building sessions envisaged the following outcomes:

- clarification of the roles and responsibilities of existing institutions and actors producing labour market information and the added value of the sector committees;
- awareness of the need to have effective coordination and dialogue mechanisms with other key stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, line ministries, the Labour Market Observatory (LMO), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the National Employment Agency (NEA);
- effective communication channels between and within sector committees, including with companies;
- linking sector committees with other bodies involved in social dialogue, including collective bargaining committees both at national and sectoral level.

The session was in two parts. During the first part, each stakeholder clarified its role and possible contribution towards sector committees. In the second, sector committees tried to identify how to set up a qualitative company survey.

### Outcomes

1. This session contributed to a better understanding of the requirements of the recently adopted Law No. 244 on Sector Committees (23.11.2017), of the importance of reregistration of existing sector

committees, and of the next steps for ensuring the functionality of the law and the efficiency of sector committees. More importantly, it provided a clearer picture on the role and responsibilities of different institutions for ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities of sector committees.

2. The session clarified the structure and format of a sector report; provided a better understanding of the responsibilities of the sector committees, and especially of the importance and content of the sector report and to whom the report is addressed; and gave clarity on the content and structure of a sector studies and sector skills report and, in particular, the quality of the content. The importance of disseminating the sector report was emphasised and recognised as factor in improving the matching process of supply and demand of skills/competences.

3. As mentioned, an important outcome of this session was the mutual awareness and understanding of the need to improve the cooperation of sector committees with various stakeholders (statistical service, employment services, education institutions, academic and research institutions, LMO, professional associations, employers' associations and others) in collecting and analysing information on the labour market and education.

The need to establish efficient dialogue and partnerships was recognised as a crucial factor in collecting and analysing data on the labour market and skills/competences, and in terms of mutual interests.

The challenge now is to establish partnership agreements, dialogue structures for collecting and exchanging data and information on the labour market and skills/competences.

4. There is better understanding of the techniques and methodologies for collecting and using sectoral information and, in particular, on how to involve companies.

5. There is a clear picture regarding the next steps for the capacity building of sector committees in Moldova, which is planned for 2018 with support from the ETF.

Taking into account the limitations of the ETF's resources for coaching and providing in-depth support for the sector committees in executing their task, some progress can be observed. The understanding of their tasks has improved considerably, as has the awareness that sector committees are one the actors in the Moldovan VET landscape. But, more importantly, there is an awareness that they are interdependent.

### Fourth capacity-building workshop

This was a peer-learning session that took place in the Netherlands with the Dutch counterpart, the organisation representing Dutch sector committees.

Objectives:

1. Peer-to-peer learning about the role and ability of a sector committee to produce a sector report and the contextual conditions for this to occur.

2. Exchange of knowledge on collaboration between companies, VET schools and organisations representing employers and sector committees. Understanding the motivation and drivers of the involvement of companies and employers' organisations.

The peer-to-peer element involved commenting on and discussing the Dutch and Moldovan labour market sector reports. A sector report and information about the VET systems from each side was sent to each delegation beforehand. The discussion and debate highlighted that the conditions for producing a sector report in Moldova are not optimal. The example report on the construction sector that was developed this year in Moldova is very detailed, containing a large amount of figures and data. It was not easy to gather and analyse these data. The Dutch counterparts suggested that the focus should be more on the qualitative dimension of the report and, in particular, on the required skills of future employees.

Following the presentations and discussion, interest was once more expressed in setting up partnerships in Moldova. Such partnerships would focus on quality VET and relevant qualifications.

For example, collaboration with the chambers of commerce in Moldova was suggested. These chambers, which are responsible for work-based learning, consist of a network of companies that can be exploited in terms of collaboration with the sector committees to enable the sector committees to fulfil their tasks, as described in the law for sector committees.

## **Outcomes**

One of the conclusions following the peer-learning exercise in the Netherlands, as well as previous capacity-building sessions, is that producing such a report with full labour market information is quite complex, and that the conditions required to produce such reports on a regular basis in Moldova have not yet been met. It was therefore decided to develop a simpler format containing more qualitative information and focusing more on skills requirements and on current and future occupations.

1. The decision was taken to develop and produce, for each of the six sectors, a sector report in a 'lighter' form, focusing more on skills and occupations.
2. The decision was taken for each sector to produce a strategic plan for that sector on how to involve more companies and representatives of companies in the sector committee's activities.

At the capacity-building session in November 2018, the sector committees presented and discussed the reports and the strategic plans. Leading Moldovan companies of the various sectors and relevant stakeholders will take part in the discussions.

As for 2019, with the support of the ETF, the focus will be the implementation of these strategic plans to involve companies.

## List of abbreviations

CVT	Continuing vocational training
ESAP	Employment and Social Affairs Platform
ETF	European Training Foundation
HRD	Human resources development
LO	Learning outcome
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
R&D	Research and development
SSC	Sector skill councils
UFM	Union for the Mediterranean
VET	Vocational education and training
VINFL	Validation of informal and non-formal learning
WBL	Work-based learning

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