

#TeamEurope

Initiative Opportunity-driven Skills and VET in Africa (OP-VET)

Annual Progress Report Year 1

Implemented by

Enabel

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Dear reader,

This document offers a snapshot of the first progress made under the Team Europe Initiative on Opportunity-driven Skills and VET in Africa (TEI OP-VET). The Programme's first year has been both challenging and promising, laying the foundation for a results-oriented focus in the coming years. The Programme aims to contribute to reducing youth unemployment in Africa by aligning skills and VET programmes with decent employment opportunities generated by Global Gateway investments.

Achieving this objective requires full engagement with the private sector and the establishment of action-oriented partnerships between public and private actors for skills development at the local, national and regional levels. The VET Toolbox programme which ended in summer 2025, tested the opportunity-driven approach in eleven African countries, showcasing the enthusiasm of the private sector, the training providers and most importantly the graduates for this approach. While it paved the way for the TEI, substantial effort will still be needed to scale this approach from a pilot to a paradigm shift in skills development and VET in Africa.

With four agencies working closely together, the Programme has significant capacities to pursue this goal. However, success depends on expanding collaboration beyond the Programme and extending cooperation with other Team Europe actors to make this Team Europe spirit a reality.

Enjoy your reading.

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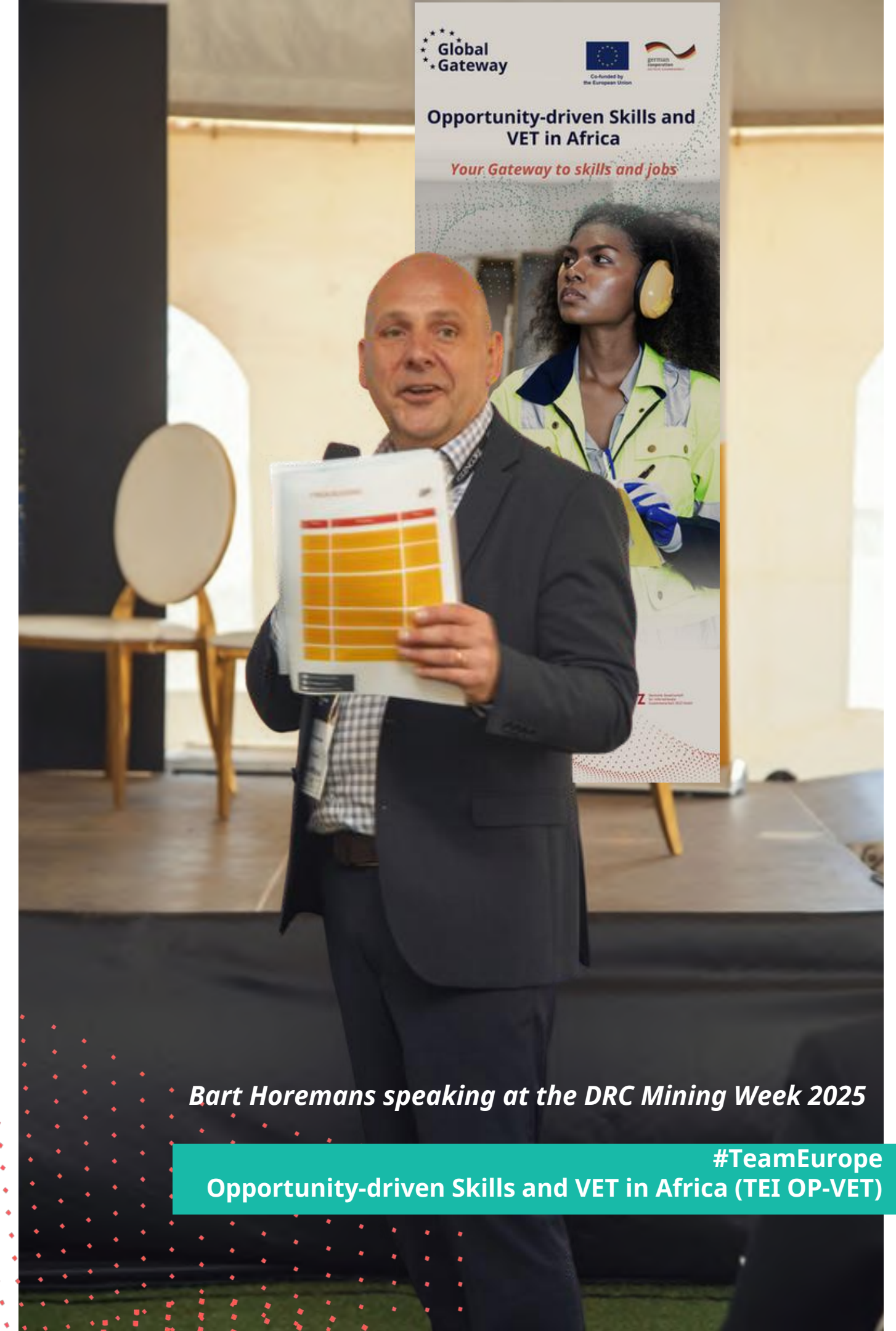
About the Programme

Aligning employment expectations with the realities of available jobs and the skills required to access them is a major challenge globally, including in Sub-Saharan Africa. This gap can only be addressed by increasing the pool of jobs. Sub-Saharan Africa presents investment opportunities that can expand this pool, yet one of the key challenges for investors is to find skilled workforce.

The Team Europe Initiative on Opportunity-Driven Skills and Vocational Education and Training in Africa (TEI OP-VET) acts as a bridge between the private sector, which creates employment opportunities, and the skills development/VET sector, aligning skills development to the specific employment opportunities.

The TEI OP-VET brings in partnership the European Commission, BMZ and four Member State agencies (Enabel, Expertise France, EDUFI and GIZ) to enhance the transition into employment, by (re)orienting skills and VET interventions towards (decent) employment opportunities linked to Global Gateway (GG) investments in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Programme is closely aligned with the Global Gateway (GG) and its 360-degree approach, which seeks to drive transformative change through a holistic strategy that combines investment in physical infrastructure with initiatives in skills development, education, regulatory frameworks, etc. Covering all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Programme forms a central part of the EU-Africa GG investment package, supporting the development of skills in GG priority sectors: digital, transport, health, climate and energy.



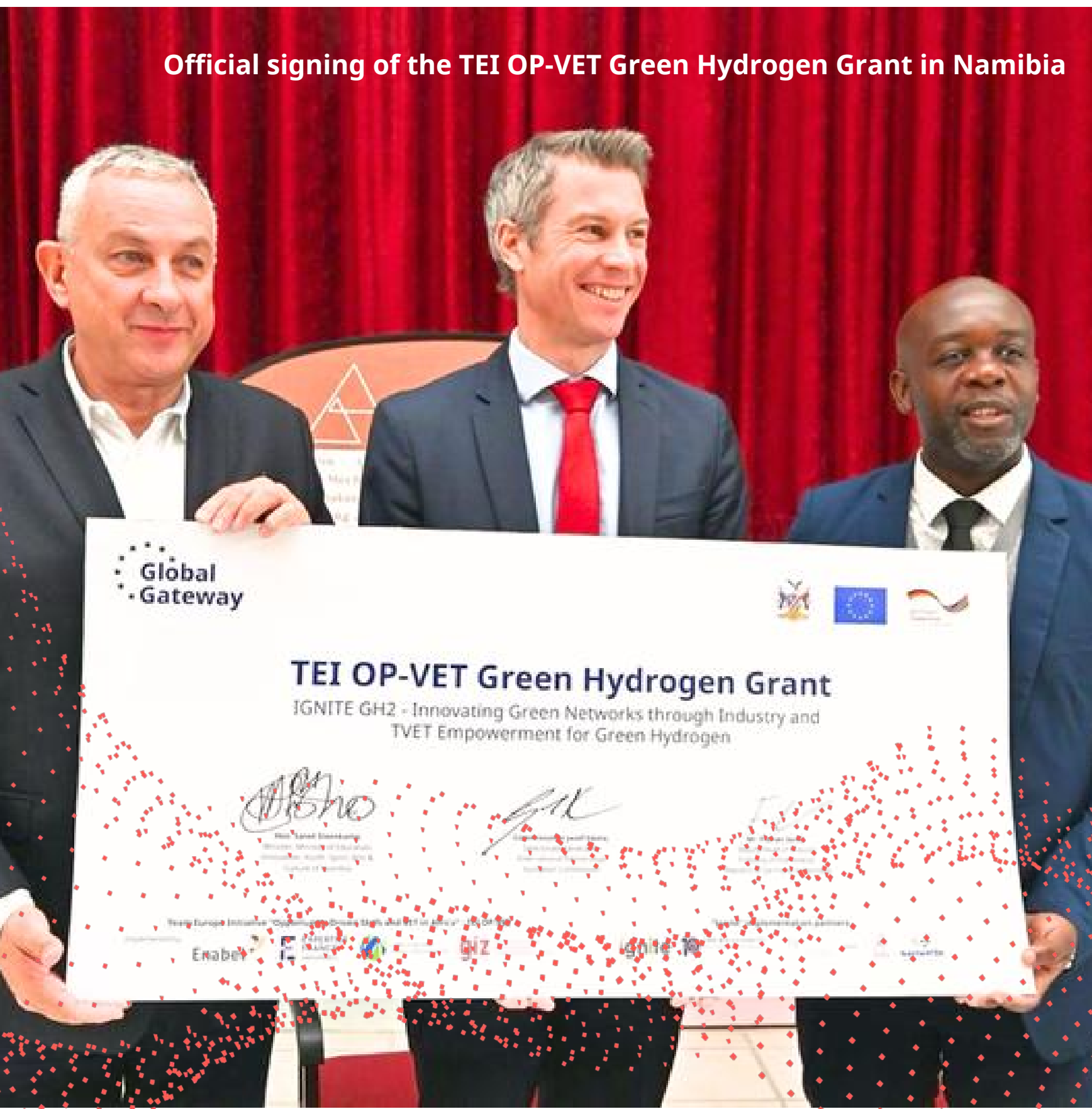
Bart Horemans speaking at the DRC Mining Week 2025

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Welcome Workshop held at the start in 2024. Together with DG-INTPA, Private Sector representatives and the TEI OP-VET team members

Official signing of the TEI OP-VET Green Hydrogen Grant in Namibia



The Programme, under the overall coordination of Enabel, runs over a five-year period and is structured around **three pillars**:



**Request-based
Technical Assistance
Facility**

Aim: to support EUDs, EIB/EBRD, EUMS and their partners to orient VET interventions towards concrete employment opportunities

PILLAR 1

**Regional exchange &
Public-Private
Partnerships**

Aim: to promote exchanges between the private sector, public sector and VET providers to enhance PPPs and PPDs

PILLAR 2

**Competitive funding
mechanisms and
facilitation of grant
implementation**

Aim: to fund and implement OP-VET and skills projects in selected GG priority areas and related value chains in SSA

PILLAR 3

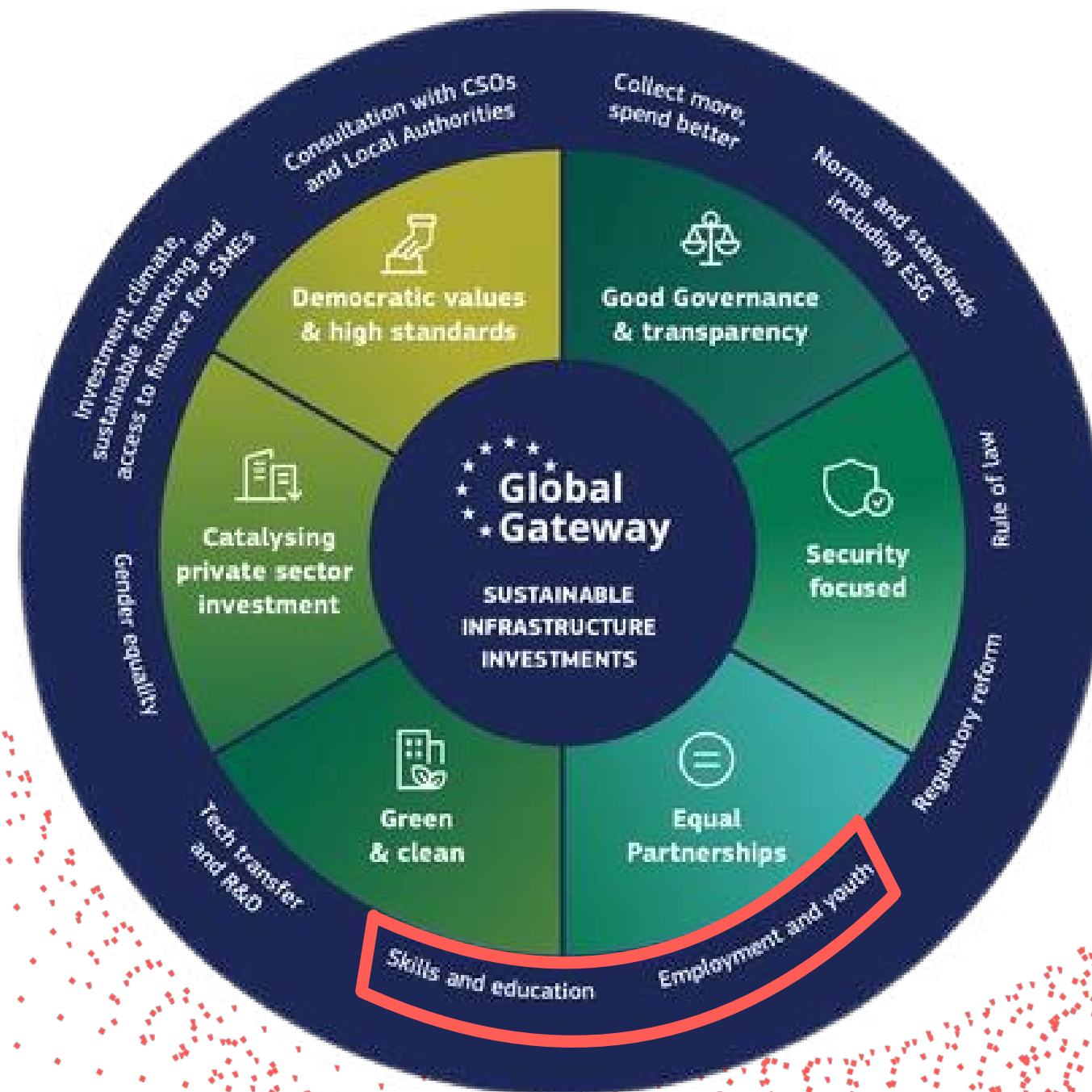
Overall management **Enabel**

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OP-VET approach

The Programme applies the opportunity-driven VET (OP-VET) approach. The starting point of this approach is the identification of concrete employment opportunities. From here, the training programmes are designed to address the specific skills required for these jobs, facilitating access to employment.

When coupled with investments, value chain development, private sector engagement and public-private partnerships, VET and skills development equip individuals with the skills needed and strengthen regional economies by bridging the gap between education and employment.



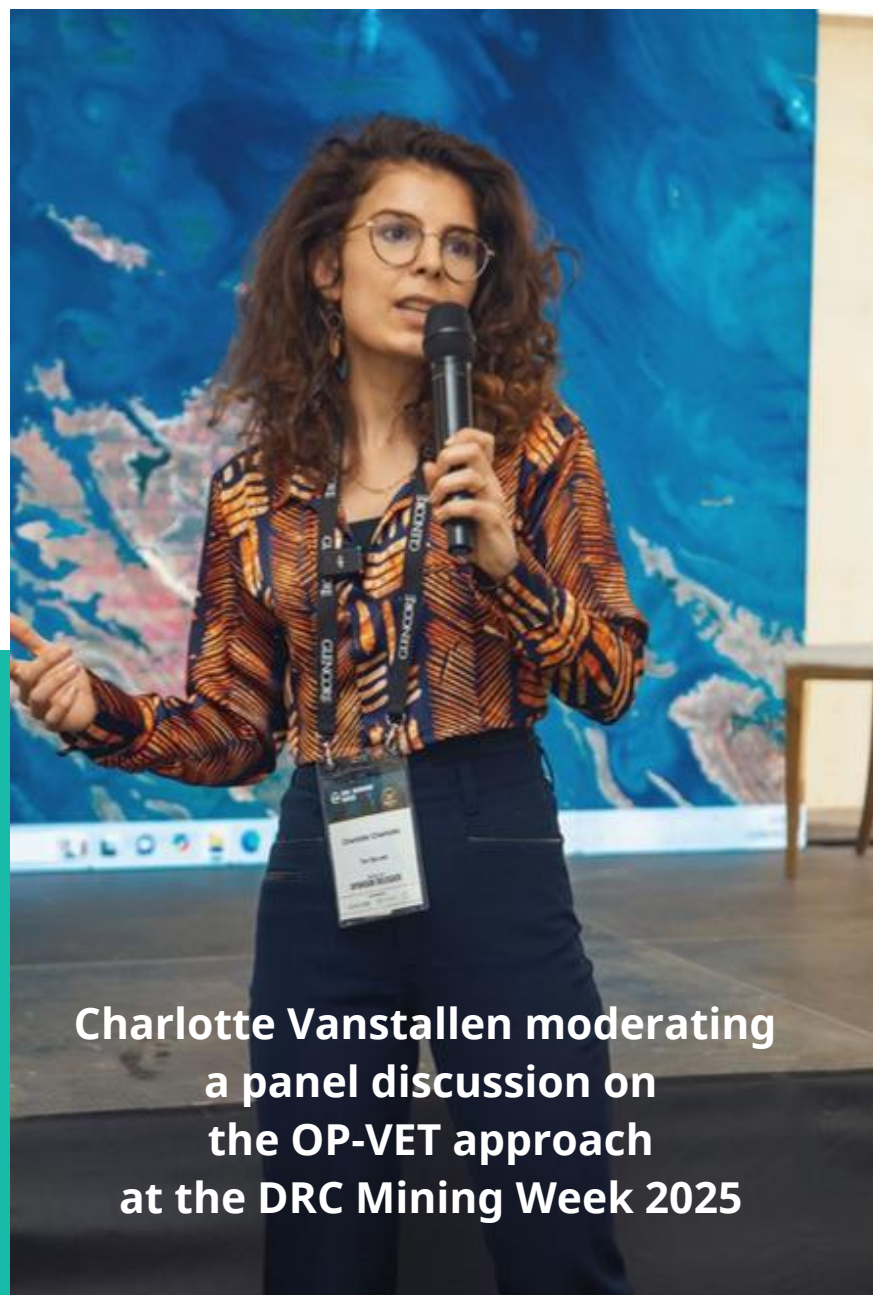
Global Gateway 360° approach

Achievements

The goal for Year 1 (March 2024 - February 2025) was to establish the foundational elements necessary for effective execution as from Year 2 onwards. Several key milestones were achieved:

- Launch of the Technical Assistance (TA) Facility and reception of the initial requests (Pillar 1)
- Mapping, conceptualisation and approval of initial regional exchanges to promote public-private-partnerships for opportunity-driven VET and skills development stakeholders, as well as the implementation of the first regional exchange in Uganda (Pillar 2)
- Selection of the first six projects to implement OP-VET and skills projects in selected GG priority areas in SSA (Pillar 3)

These achievements were possible through close collaboration, supported by various mechanisms established during the first year, including coordination spaces at multiple levels, and reflection spaces to facilitate shared understanding. Additional key elements for joint implementation were also put in place, such as the reconstruction of the theory of change, providing shared goals and a common framework for joint monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management. The first steps towards a digital presence took also place to ensure effective communication across the Programme.



Charlotte Vanstallen moderating
a panel discussion on
the OP-VET approach
at the DRC Mining Week 2025



Technical Assistance Facility

Pillar 1 is a **Technical Assistance Facility (TAF)** that supports the (re)orientation of ongoing or planned skills/VET interventions in partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa towards concrete employment opportunities created by public and private investments under the Global Gateway Investment Package.

The launch of the TAF at the end of Year 1 marked a major milestone. The Facility became fully operational with tailored and structured information sessions for different groups of potential requesters, including EU Delegations (EUDs), European institutions, EU Member State representatives, implementing agencies and private sector actors. By the end of Year 1, 14 potential requesters had expressed interest, and three initial requests were submitted, coming from EUDs in Chad, South Sudan and Senegal.

These achievements were possible thanks to leveraging good practices from similar experiences, the development of a detailed manual to guide the operationalisation of the Facility, inter-agency collaboration, early engagement with key stakeholders, and building of a pool of sectoral experts to respond to requests.

Despite this progress, several challenges remain that will shape future actions. These include increasing private sector involvement in requests and dedicated sessions to private sector actors with adapted language and materials; providing clearer guidance on eligibility criteria and available services; and exploring digital tools adapted to the private sector to improve visibility of the Facility.

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Strategic mission of the Technical Assistance
(TA) Facility Request team in Senegal

Regional exchanges

Pillar 2 focuses on **promoting public-private partnerships for opportunity-driven VET and skills development through regional exchanges.**

Significant progress was made with the validation of the first regional exchanges and the development of guidelines and tools. The first event took place in Uganda during the 10th edition of the Energy Access Investment Forum (EAIF) 2025, which gathered actors from over 40 countries in the renewable energy sector. The Programme contributed through a spotlight session on skills development in renewable energy investment, a panel discussion on green jobs and capacity reinforcement, and an EU pavilion exhibition. Through these efforts, the team inserted VET themes into the agenda, reaching 50 actors, mostly from the private sector. The OP-VET presence was made possible through close collaboration with ARE networks, which are also a member of the Private Sector Advisory Board (PSAB), inter-agency coordination and extensive preparatory meetings.

This first event also highlighted key challenges to address moving forward, including the need to increase the participation of public and VET actors to enhance opportunities for public-private partnerships; tailor engagement approaches to SMEs; leverage synergies with EU initiatives; ensure regional exchanges are strategically selected to maximise impact; reinforce digital visibility; and find strategies to increase the response rate to monitor results.

A photograph of Heli Mikkola, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a patterned black and white top and a pink lanyard. She is seated at a table with a microphone and a water bottle, speaking during a panel discussion. The background is a blue screen with the text "Kampala, U" and a location pin icon.

Heli Mikkola sharing expert insights during a panel discussion at the ARE Energy Investment Forum in Uganda

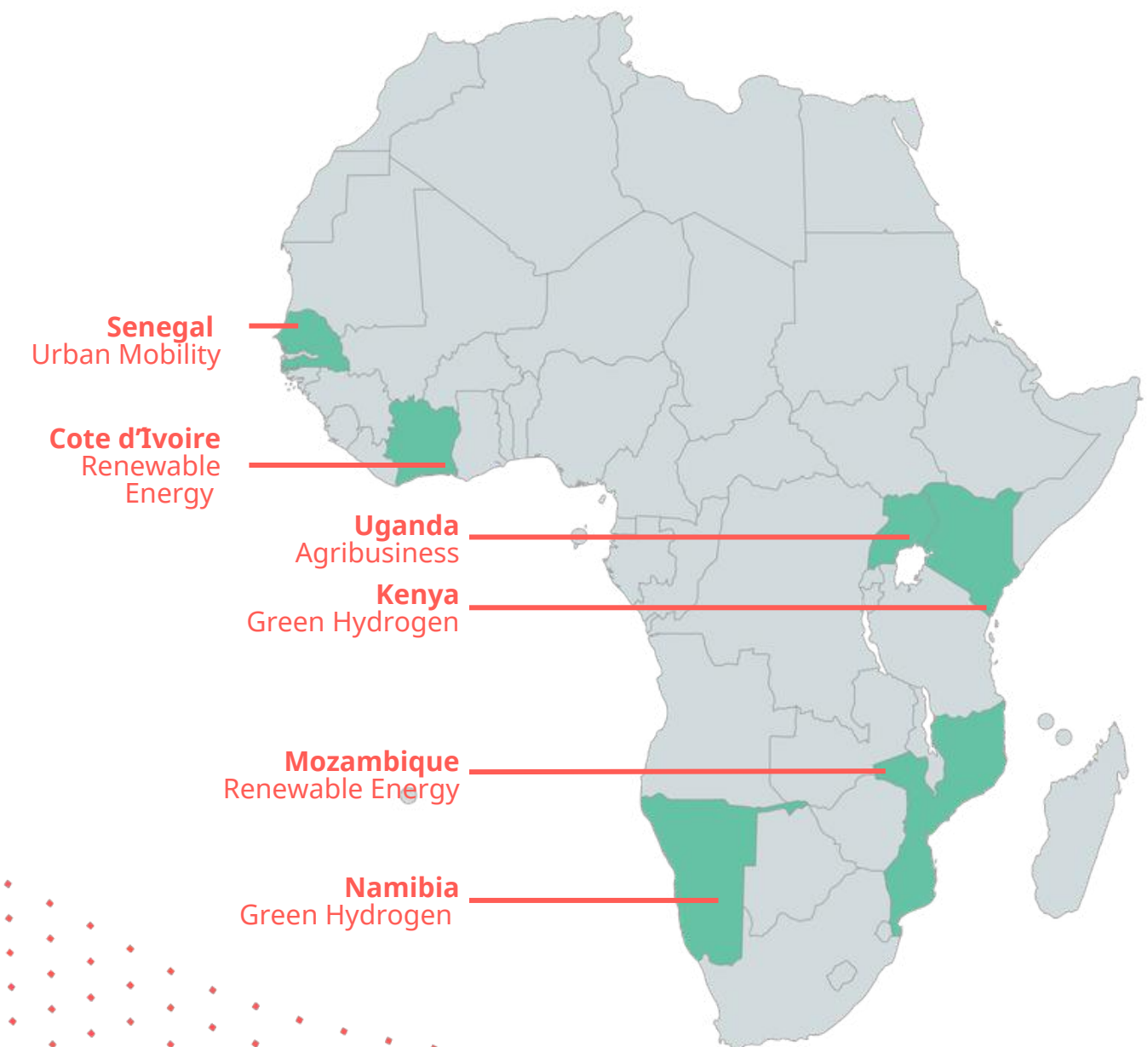
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Opportunity-driven VET and skills development projects

Pillar 3 focuses on the **funding and implementation of OP-VET projects** aligned with GG priority areas and (regional) value chains in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The selection of the first six OP-VET projects marked another major milestone for the Programme. The call for proposals attracted 331 applications from a wide range of stakeholders across the 21 targeted countries. The evaluation and selection of projects was possible through coordinated inter-agency outreach, stakeholders mapping and the use of a dedicated digital platform that ensured an efficient application process. The first six selected projects cover six countries and four priority areas, laying the groundwork for tangible results in facilitating transition to employment through opportunity-driven VET initiatives.

Several points of attention emerged during the process, notably the varying understanding of the OP-VET approach among applicants and the high workload associated with processing a large volume of submissions. Looking ahead, efforts will focus on strengthening the applicants understanding of the OP-VET approach, refining the selection procedure of the following lot of projects and exploring AI-supported tools to streamline evaluations.





Strengthening the #TeamEurope spirit during the Reflection day workshop

Outlook

In the coming months, the Programme will enter its full implementation phase, strengthening collaboration and visibility while beginning to generate its first tangible results. The focus will be on reinforcing synergies across pillars, engaging strategically with partners and ensuring coherent delivery across all pillars.

Key priorities include:



Enhancing collaboration at different level: Across pillars to ensure timely knowledge sharing and more effective coordination; with EU Delegations to leverage their networks and contextual insights; and with other actors such as DFIs, multilateral actors, VET authorities, TEIs, and other EU initiatives to promote the OP-VET approach.



Strengthening strategic collaboration: to promote co-creative decision-making with DG INTPA to ensure efficient oversight and foster EU positioning in policy dialogues.



Deepening private sector engagement: through the operationalisation of the Private Sector Advisory Board (PSAB); development of a dedicated toolkit and communication materials; mapping and analysing the private sector landscape; and participation in thematic events. New communication channels tailored to private sector audiences will also be explored.



Visiting a corn flower mill in Chad
during the TA Facility mission

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Visit to a recycle plant in the DRC
during the DRC Mining Week 2025

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Developing a competency development framework: to communicate the OP-VET approach consistently and effectively across stakeholders.



Promoting the Technical Assistance Facility: through targeted information sessions and bilateral discussions.



Leveraging regional exchanges insights: to adapt formats, criteria, and tools to maximize contribution to Programme's objectives.



Supporting implementation of OP-VET projects: by strengthening the OP-VET approach in the second round of funded projects (Lot2 projects) and establishing onboarding and support mechanisms for the already selected projects (Lot1 projects).



Operationalising the MORE Framework: including the development of dashboards, databases, and a centralised knowledge repository to enhance evidence-based management.





Fostering continuous knowledge exchange: through continuous internal sessions and external discussions such as webinars with other actors.



Establishing a communication and knowledge management task force: to strengthen Programme visibility and ensure alignment across agencies.



Reinforcing joint implementation: through the preparation of common position notes on key topics, including cross-cutting themes, to clarify their scope and guide mainstreaming across pillars; by mapping agency presence and resources in Sub-Saharan Africa to better understand added value and limitations; joint missions and other actions to strengthen joint implementation.

These actions aim to strengthen the strategic positioning of the TEI OP-VET, foster stronger partnerships, and ensure a coherent and effective approach as the Programme moves into its next phase.



Visit to Don Bosco during TA Facility mission in Chad

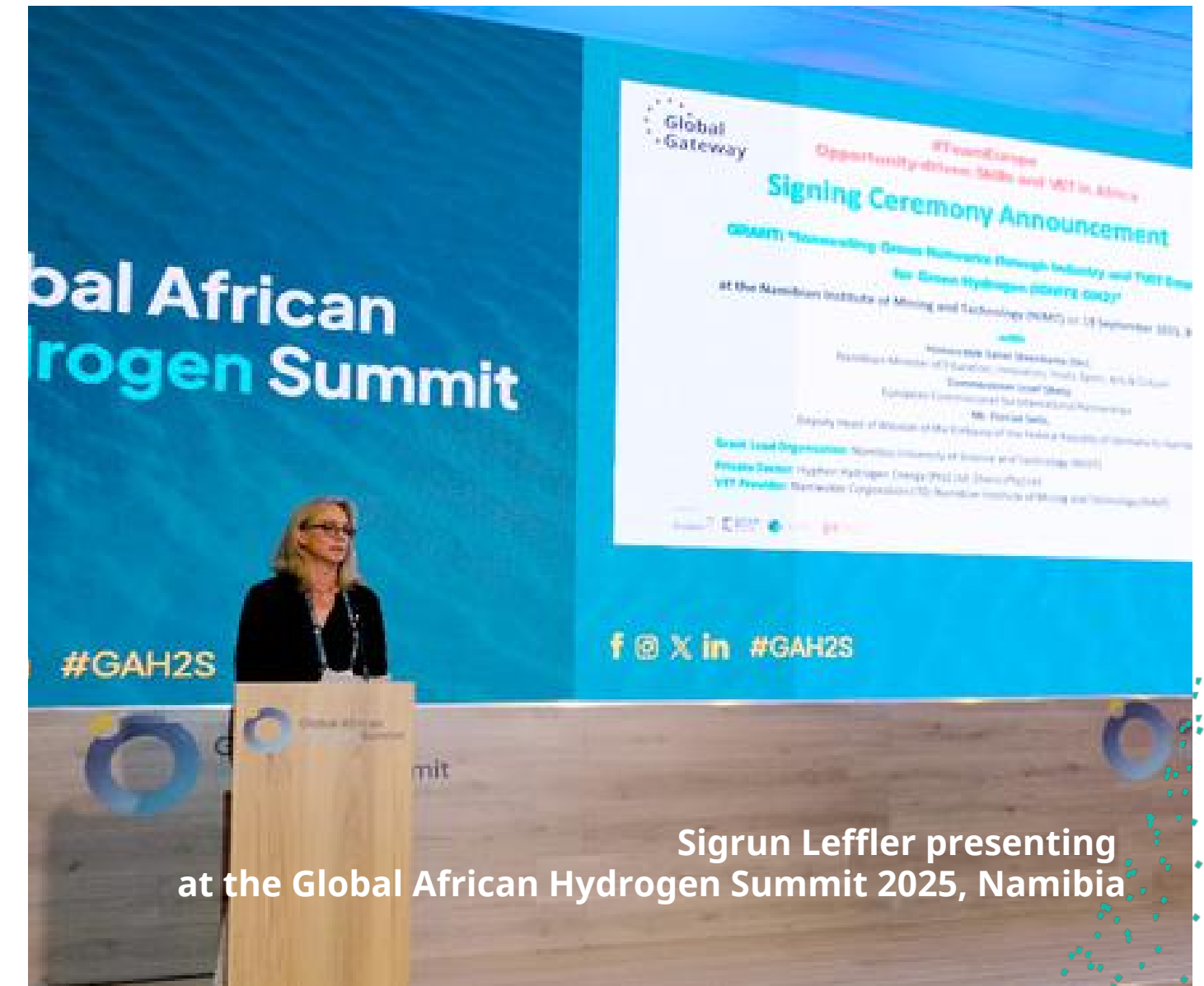
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Your Gateway to Skills and Jobs



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Sigrun Leffler presenting
at the Global African Hydrogen Summit 2025, Namibia

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