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WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER RESULTS: MOBILISING STAKEHOLDERS, CREATING PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Multi-Level Governance: Making the most of partnerships

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INTRODUCTION

All countries in the region, as worldwide, face rapid change and uncertainty, intensified by technological changes, digital transformation and other global trends such as climate change, demographic shifts and migration flows. The impacts of these changes on employment and skills are complex and bring both opportunities and risks for individuals, communities, and states. Countries need to anticipate and manage the transition towards the future, if they want a future they like.

Partnerships are essential to manage transitions and to ensure opportunities for all, as governments are crucial to guide the change but cannot deal with all changes alone. In order to put in place human-centric employment and skills policies, all actors need to be mobilized, so that they can co-create the future together through a **Good Multi-level Governance (MLG) to develop and optimise the use of their human capital.**

MOBILISING PARTNERS AND CREATE PARTNERSHIPS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

In the Southern Mediterranean region, countries are aware of the key role that efficient governance mechanisms in policy implementation as well as to address socio-political and economic challenges, including changes and transformations.

Setting up good multilevel governance mechanisms is a key feature of most of partner countries reform processes of countries in the South. Good multilevel governance is a model for policy-making management based on coordinated action to effectively involve public and private stakeholders at all possible levels (international, national, sectoral, regional local, provider) in objective setting, implementation, monitoring and review. Good multilevel governance in the human capital and skills development sector aims to reinforce the interaction and participation of all stakeholders while improving the relevance, accountability, transparency, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of policies¹. Despite human capital development/education and training vision developed by countries from the South include governance and partnership as key pillar of their reform processes, there is still a long way to go to achieve functioning and efficient multi-level governance systems.

As mentioned in the introduction, partner countries are aware that “**policies can no longer be effective unless they are prepared, implemented and enforced in a more inclusive way**” and ensure the participation of different actors. This has translated in different mechanisms put in place to improve coordination (vertical and horizontal²) among key partners as well as different forms of partnership. Each country decides on which actors to involve and in which phase of the policy cycle, their specific role and responsibility and the way they interface.

¹ ETF-GEMM project 2015, based on Cedefop (2011) and EU Committee of the Regions (2009)

² The vertical dimension refers to the links between higher and lower levels of government (supranational, national, regional, local), including their institutional, financial, and informational aspects. The horizontal dimension refers to cooperation arrangements between authorities and society in the context of social dialogue

COMMON CHALLENGES FACING PARTNERSHIPS IN THE REGION

Southern Mediterranean countries, as mentioned above, have been making efforts in recent years to move human capital development and particularly education and training higher up in the policy agenda. Policy makers in these countries are acknowledging that investing in human capital is key to a sustainable development. Thus, the role of education, training, skills development in the region is being increasingly enhanced.

Countries in the South show differences in terms of the speed and form of reforms based on multilevel partnership approaches. There are still substantial needs in relation to reviewing and implementing new institutional arrangements for effective policy coordination among major (public and private) actors. In this regard, some promising practices have been introduced to shape national actors' coordination and for involving in a more effective way also regional/local actors and social partners.

Despite efforts, partnerships and coordination mechanisms remain rather limited in some countries. The high centralisation of policy making, mostly steered by public authorities and the limited cooperation with the private sector and other actors such as the civil society, hampers implementation of reforms and is an obstacle to change. It also creates a distance between the skills offered and the skills needed, resulting in an education and training offer that is mostly supply driven. In addition, the short-term vision of skills provision, based mostly on urgent needs to employ people, does not support longer term skills development visions, anticipating changes and there is little if any consideration of lifelong learning. As a result, in most countries in the South, provision is mainly limited to initial training, with weak continuing training and training for labour market entry systems.

Both GEMM regional project³ outcomes and Torino Process⁴ findings indicate that the involvement of employers and the private sector in education and training governance exists but is limited for the most part to broad consultations. This leads to key weakness of the current skills development systems: important vertical and horizontal mismatch of skills requirements of the labour market, since there is insufficient liaison between stakeholders on the demand and supply sides. The rigidity of qualifications - and the absence of pathways between different education levels and between vocational education and training and higher education contributes to the perception that vocational education and training qualifications offer little possibility for progression and career development. Government rules and regulations tend to be rigid and to be based on highly centralised approaches, with little devolved autonomy to more local levels. The management procedures often lack transparency, and management and labour market information systems are not sufficiently well-developed to serve planning and decision-making processes. In addition, financial provision for education and training (and particularly for VET) tends to be insufficient to meet modern training needs and the ways in which funding of training provision is dispensed from the centre does not contribute towards improving system and provider performance. Furthermore, allocation of funds remains input-oriented rather than performance-based.

Some countries have shown progress in the involvement of social partners, social dialogue and in promoting partnerships, including public private partnerships. However big disparities exist among the

³ GEMM, Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean, is a European funded project implemented by the ETF between 2014 and 2017.

⁴ Torino Process is an evidenced based and participatory analysis of human capital development issues and policy responses in the ETF partner countries.

countries, particularly between the Maghreb and the Mashrek. Civil society is not yet involved in the social dialogue related to skills development and human capital development.

MAGHREB-MASHREK, A GAP IN PARTNERSHIP APPROACHES...

Countries in the Maghreb region (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) have progressively more and more involved social partners in policy making and in human capital development vision building. In Morocco for instance, the labour code ensures participation of social partners in policy decision making and they are also well represented in the dialogue related to skills development, both from the employers and the employee's sides. Morocco has recorded good progresses on horizontal coordination mechanisms, also pushed by the process of decentralisation initiated some years ago. This cooperation is the result of an extensive consultation process accompanied by conventions signed in all sectors focusing on multilevel partnership approaches (at national, regional and even at training provider levels) and financing (e.g. use of the levy financial mechanism for skills development). Morocco also provides an interesting example of public private partnership through the setting up of training institutes whose management is delegated to representatives of the private sector in key economic sectors for growth and development.

Tunisia has also achieved a lot in involving social partners at both national and regional/local level through the process of decentralisation of powers to the region as a key strategic priority. The economic development plan is the result of this joint coordination effort. Regarding public-private partnership social partners and government are working together to develop this concept as a strategic choice to meet the challenges of economic and social development. PPP can serve to develop and strengthen the infrastructure, to encourage public investment in partnership with the private sector and to benefit from the technical know-how and experience of the private sector.

Algeria has set up the legislative framework for the setting up of platforms for dialogue between the different actors. In particular the partnership council, which has both a representation at national level and at local level, brings together concerned actors to discuss policy issues and policy responses regarding skills development. Since the partnership council, in particular at national level, had known some difficulties in meeting and decision making, a reform of the membership as well as of the coordination mechanisms has been promulgated in a new decree dated 2018. At providers level, VET centres of excellence are an example of close cooperation between the public and private sector in the identification of skills needs and its provision. As Morocco and Tunisia, Algeria set up also a levy mechanism to support skills development and particularly apprenticeship where more than 50% of VET students are enrolled.

In the Mashrek region, with the exception of Israel, social dialogue as well as partnership in skills development are less developed but still there are cases of good practice worth mentioning.

In Jordan the ongoing technical and vocational education reform ambition to create a Skills Development Corporation (SDC) with an essential role of monitoring system progress. In parallel, the HRD Strategy (2016–2025) is a positive development as it opens up to the creation of new employer-led institution as key recipient for developing comprehensive human capital development policies. At operational level, the Higher Commission for Human Resources Development, headed by the Prime Minister counts three members from the employers' side and three from the workers side.

In Egypt, the social partner's role is mostly consultative (non-decision making) at national level, through the participation in several cascading Councils (e.g. TVET Council, Skills development Council). Perhaps, the most promising initiative to boost public-private structures, are the Enterprise Training Partnerships (ETPs) – 12 at sectoral level and 14 at regional/governorate level.

In Palestine, employers' representatives have seen their role recognised with the inclusion in the revised Higher Council for TVET while the workers' union still lacks a clear role in skills development social dialogue. The National Strategic Comprehensive Program for Employment in Palestine (2015-2020) also offers an opportunity for increasing engagement of the social partners in policy making, include as one of the objectives to create innovative partnerships that facilitate job matchmaking, working with local businesses and labour force to build partnerships that connect employers and job seekers based on local needs and gaps.

Social partners in Lebanon are active in policy making to a larger or lesser extent depending on the organisations. Very recently, in view of the need to set up specific measures to facilitate access to the labour market, in particular of Lebanese youth, the public and private authorities have launched the process to design and implement a systematic and harmonised national Employer's Survey. Such a survey would support the monitoring of labour market developments and skills needs and would complement the Labour Force Survey. Lebanon is one of the countries in the region with most active civil society organisations. However, their role in policy decision making is still rather limited.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SET UP AND IMPROVE EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

The improvement of MLG in skills development in the region depends on three factors⁵:

1. increased involvement of social partners at all the stages of the policy cycle and decision-making process in a structured and coordinated manner;
2. increased flexibility in training provision decision-making processes to allow skills development agencies and training providers to be more autonomous and responsive to the labour market;
3. setting up and enforce mechanisms for accountability of all actions carried out by the public institutions and stakeholders⁶.

ISSUES FOR REFLECTION

- How to continue building the right capacities of social partner organisations for increased and effective participation in policy making cycle in the region?
- How to assess the effectiveness and performance of emerging HCD bodies and councils for supporting policy making in the region?
- Are the governmental public actors involving effectively social partners in practice? Or just, do they continue doing it in rhetoric way?
- Is it public –private cooperation the next step after implementing social partnership concept? It will be a proactivity from private sector to be more involved in skills development in the region?

⁵ EU-ETF-GEMM project 2014-2017