

# **Evaluation of ETF Activities in Syria**

**March 2006**

## **Executive Summary & Final Report**



## BACKGROUND

The European Training Foundation<sup>1</sup> is a EU agency whose mission is

*To assist the partner countries in developing quality education and training systems and in putting them into practice.*

Its support is targeted to 4 geographical areas (Candidate countries, South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and MEDA countries). ETF activities take place upon request of either the Commission services or a partner country, or else on its own initiative. In general terms, ETF's role could be defined as that of a "facilitator", working together with local authorities and the EC, with the overall objective of paving the way for larger scale EC interventions or local reforms.

The entire intervention of ETF in Syria, in the years between 2000 and 2004, has involved the implementation of 22 "administrative projects" for an overall commitment of €1,907,090. Most of the activities carried out by ETF in Syria are concentrated in the following **3 main projects**, that represent around 97% of the total budget committed in the country in the period 2000-2004: i) Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme (PAS); ii) Observatory Function (OF); iii) Support to MoVET; iv) other projects.

In this evaluation exercise, we decided to take the three projects general objectives as expected results at country level and we have elaborated anew the general and the specific objectives, in order to describe ETF intervention in the country, as described in the following table.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVE

*To assist EC services and support the EC policy objectives by enhancing the national capacities to develop vocational training systems capable of contributing to efficient labour market development, and to social and economic development in the Mediterranean societies in general and in Syria in particular*

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

*Services to the EC - Assist EC centralised and decentralised services in the design of vocational training related MEDA projects, capitalising on previous pilot experience and maximising the impact of such projects.*

*Provision and analysis of information - Contribute to national capacity to collect, analyse and forecast employment / training needs and enhance the compatibility of approaches at a Mediterranean regional level*

### EXPECTED RESULTS

*Increased capacity of industrial and business sector and the government to jointly manage and implement sound apprenticeship modalities and thus supporting the responsiveness of Syrian VET system to labour market needs.*

*A system for data collection and analysis on employment, qualifications and training that will provide decision-makers with reliable information for policy design, developed.*

*Project for the Modernisation of the Syrian VET/employment system and its links to the labour market, identified and designed*

<sup>1</sup> The views and opinions expressed in the report are those of the evaluators, and, as such, do not necessarily reflect those of the European Training Foundation. The European Training Foundation does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this report and accepts no responsibility for any consequences of their use.

## RELEVANCE

### PILOT APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME (PAS)

The specific objective of the apprenticeship scheme project was: *“To increase the capacity of all participating stakeholders to implement a sound pilot apprenticeship scheme by 2003 with the involvement of approximately 500 apprentices”*. The Relevance analysis took into consideration the consistency of this objective with Syrian context and priorities, as well as the relevance of the interventions adopted in order to achieve this objective.

Our conclusions are that the intervention on the apprenticeship modalities implemented by ETF was a clear and recognised priority for the entire country and not only for the education sector. In addition, the PAS can be considered consistent with the Programmes and priorities of the EC in Syria while the newly funded EC intervention on VET (MoVET) will ensure its support to the continuity of a reform process that has just started. This assessment is backed up by the information collection conducted in Syria that has outlined how all local stakeholders, at different level, have appreciated the ETF intervention on the apprenticeship scheme as particularly relevant and well timed. Relevant interviews have been conducted with i) the State Planning Commission, ii) The Ministry of Education, iii) the Chambers of industry and iv) the responsible for the implementation of the MoVET (EC Delegation and selected PMU).

*We believe that the typology of intervention selected by ETF for the PAS has revealed to be the optimal feasible solution in order to facilitate and strengthen the institutional network necessary for the setting up of a new apprenticeship modalities in the country. Even when these chosen modalities of intervention have lead to a slower project pace and to a series of organisational constraints.*

In fact, only following these interventions modalities it would have been possible to prepare the ground for a more comprehensive EC intervention in the sector, even if, as expected, a bigger project will have to face additional constraints and difficulties. As a matter of fact, both Syrian political stakeholders and the international experts responsible for the MoVET declared that this new big project will not start its institutional activities from zero, but will take maximum advantages of what was previously done by ETF.

### OBSERVATORY FUNCTION (OF)

The specific objective of the setting up of an Observatory Function was: *“To support the development of Syrian capacities for information on labour market and needs forecast on employment, qualifications and training (the ‘Observatory’ function) through capacity building and expertise support actions”*.

The setting up of an observatory function was proposed directly from ETF to the Syrian SPC, after the study called *“stocktaking of local capacities in monitoring VET system and skills need”*, which proved the need of a centralised information centre on LM data. On this issue, the former country manager stated that *“The observatory addresses [...] the need to build in proper information and analysis systems that would allow to identify current and future needs of the labour market and translate that into VET provision needs”*. This means that, even if not directly identified and requested from the Syrian government, in a context where information on LM is hardly collected, disseminated with difficulties and often not fully relevant, the setting up of an effective OF could be considered particularly appropriate with the objective of supporting the modernisation process of the local LM and of providing useful information to all future activities on the issue. Objectively, it has to be underlined that the project suffered, since its

beginning, of a lower than expected commitment from many of the institutions involved. In fact, even if the Observatory had the chance to take maximum advantage of previous positive institutional network created during the apprenticeship scheme, local organisational support was weak and the selected team had the availability of a physical place where to work only in the latest period, after 2 years of project implementation.

On the implementation modalities side, two obstacles were clear and foreseeable since the beginning: i) the lack of a strong leadership among the high number of public bodies involved; ii) the lack of specific technical support on two of the three main identified components necessary for the development of the Observatory. These difficulties could be overcome with a more driving approach and a longer presence in the field, but, at the same time, only a strong commitment of local institutions can ensure the achievement of lasting results. Therefore, the approach chosen has to be considered the right one if the entire project objective is seen on a longer run basis, while this approach has to be considered “*too soft*”, if the objective was to set up an effective observatory able to provide useful and usable information during the implementation of the MoVET. In other words, the Evaluation Team believes that the approach adopted by ETF, was the best possible approach for a centre of expertise with its characteristics. Nevertheless, maybe different results could be achieved with the intervention of a technical assistance agency, able of “pushing harder” for the project.

### **SUPPORT TO MOVET**

The support given by ETF to the MoVET was mainly concentrated on identifying the typologies of activities to be implemented and then formulate the related financial proposal and the necessary calls for tender. Those activities are compulsory and, therefore, it is not valuable to assess their relevance.

In any case, we believe it is particularly consistent with the overall EU strategy of

intervention in Syria to assign these activities directly to the ETF, which had certainly the best possible background knowledge in order to carry on this task. In fact, being a EC centre of expertise, ETF is supposed to have not only technical knowledge, but also a clear picture of EC projects' financing and implementation modalities.

## EFFICIENCY

In this evaluation exercise, we have assessed efficiency as the capacity of i) spending the amount of funds available, ii) completing in time the foreseen activities. This second section was only based on ETF information. In this chapter we have also included an additional assessment on projects dimension.

The mechanism for commitments and payments for each project used by the ETF entails that funds can be committed during year X (Committed C1) and, for the part not spent in the same year, automatically carried forward for commitment the following year (Committed C8) whereas, funds could be spent the same year they are committed (Spent C1) or the following one (Spent C8), out of the committed C8. In general, what is committed in year X (committed C1) has to be spent in the same year (spent C1) or in the following one (Committed C8 and Spent C8). The amount of funds not spent goes back to the overall Commission budget.

*ETF has been efficient in using the funds made available by the Commission, being capable of spending little less than 90% of them.*

To this regard, the mechanism of the year X and X+1 has probably played an important role. On one side, this relieved from the burden of “spend now, else give it back” thus giving the possibility of taking into account changes in the immediate needs and to readjust financial

	Committed	Paid	Paid/committed
Pilot Apprenticeship scheme	974.319,9	905.645,9	93,0%
Observatory Function	525.679,4	402.021,1	76,5%
Support to MoVET	352.600,0	305.693,1	86,7%
Others	54.490,7	47.278,4	86,8%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>	<b>1.660.638,5</b>	<b>87,1%</b>

allocation accordingly. On the other side, it hindered ETF to procrastinate beyond a 2 years span. However, ETF projects did not show an homogeneous capacity of absorbing funds, the OF showing, in this sense, a slower spending

path, maybe directly caused by the fact that part of the available funds (ITF) did not have to be given back after 2 years.

The close collaboration with ETF and the field mission to Syria gave us a deeper understanding with regards to the typology of activities carried out by the agency's internal staff, which resulted to be involved not only in the management of the projects but also in providing direct technical support. The table below presents a further, extended version of the projects dimension assessment which includes the costs for i) running and managing the activities, ii) internal human resources and iii) internal staff field missions.

The **project dimension** calculations estimated

Year	Committed (€)	HR expenditure (€)	Missions (€)	Total (€)
2001	387.284,1	69.601,0	13.559,0	470.444,1
2002	469.695,8	74.802,0	25.650,0	570.147,8
2003	712.734,5	76.753,0	58.137,0	847.624,5
2004	337.375,7	68.304,0	28.901,0	434.580,7
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>	<b>289.460,0</b>	<b>126.247,0</b>	<b>2.322.797,0</b>

the level of funds dedicated to Syrian activities to be around €2,3 million, rather than the €1,9 initially defined by financial figures we have been provided with at the beginning of the evaluation exercise. This underlines how ETF conducts an extensive number of tasks when carrying out an intervention, taking care of the managerial part while also directly providing technical assistance: its experts are as much involved as the external ones specifically contracted.

The table presenting the implementation status of the activities provided by ETF staff demonstrated that the agency has been very efficient in completing the activities within the planned time: to date, out of 40 activities, only 2 are still under implementation. This shows not only a good ability in carrying out activities, but also a capacity in setting objectives and expected results that are realistically achievable. However, activities have witnessed a number of constraints that

partially hindered their effectiveness, as described in the related section.

The evaluation exercise also contains an assessment of the possibility to set up a local PMU with the objective of carrying out ETF activities in Syria. In fact, many stakeholders interviewed have pointed out that a stable presence of the ETF would have facilitated the implementation of the projects thus leading to more effective results. This, indeed, i) entails a different logic of intervention, which probably gives up part of the ownership and of the sustainability while, eventually, fostering achievements in the short run; ii) could be intended as a donor like technical assistance intervention rather than a knowledge based assistance provided by a centre of expertise. As we want not to argue on strengths and weaknesses of these two diverse logic of interventions, yet we consider it useful to present a rough estimate of the costs ETF would have sustained in the case of setting up a specific PMU.

Our conclusions are that the expenses of the alternatives with/without PMU would have not differed considerably. This stresses out that running and operating a small PMU could have been somehow more effective, because it would have reasonably speed up the operations. In addition, it would have cut some travel expenses while ETF internal staff could have taken care only of the management of the activities. A stable presence would have allowed some economy of scale between the projects. On the other side, it would have not allowed to leave such significant level of ownership to local stakeholders and it would have probably negatively affected the overall sustainability of the intervention.

	Without a PMU (€)	With a PMU (€)
ETF HR	289.460	115.784
ETF travels	126.247	50.499
Running activities	1.907.090	1.334.963
Cost of the PMU	0	764.800
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.322.797</b>	<b>2.266.046</b>

## EFFECTIVENESS

### PILOT APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

Effectiveness at project level analyses if and how the PAS has:

**Enhanced the management capabilities of the VET at institutional level.** As recognized by many stakeholders, the intervention of the EU agency has given a crucial push to something that was perceived as necessary which, yet, never found the proper ground for an actual start up. On one side, ETF successfully created a direct link between the schools and the companies while, on the other side, it has been supporting the independency of the VET board. However, the objective of setting up a solid VET management structure has not been yet fully accomplished as in fact this activity is included in the MoVET.

**Improved the quality of the courses.** Given the technical weaknesses of some of the TTT courses and of the revised curricula, we can anyhow assess ETF as being effective in enhancing the quality of the courses. The new scheme has given to students the skills of a worker who is ready to enter the labour market.

*Entrepreneurs have confirmed the effectiveness of the new courses by pointing out that the productivity of the new employees is, with no doubt, higher in the case of graduates from the apprenticeship scheme.*

**Facilitated the implementation of future VET intervention in the country.** We can affirm that the pilot intervention on apprenticeship has specifically paved the way for the implementation of the MoVET (according to the EC, the Pilot project “has fertilized the ground”). In particular, it has been: i) Effective in choosing the pilot formula, ii) Effective in initializing the Syrian environment to a new concept and praxis; iii) Effective in providing the Commission with a blueprint at the procedural and

management level; iv) Effective in providing a “core group” for cascade training.

### OBSERVATORY FUNCTION

To date, the OF task force, set up in 2003, is not yet fully operative and, therefore, it has not yet produced any output such as studies, analysis etc. The project had a slow and partially delayed start which hindered its well functioning, yet the OF team has been set up and it is now operative.

On one hand it is too early to evaluate effectiveness, as the output produced is too low and, on the other hand, the few data collected and made available so far appear not to be really effective nor anyhow tailored to endow the users with the kind of analysis they need. However, the EC Delegation has shown a positive attitude towards the OF, asserting that “being the development of a VET strategy one of the component of the MoVET, the observatory could constitute a key element to provide useful inputs”: this underlines that the project is relevant yet so far not effective.

### SUPPORT TO THE MOVET

The identification and formulation of the MoVET has been concluded, while the support to the start up phase of the project is still on going. According to the perception of the relevant AIDCO representative we met, dealing with ETF, rather than with international experts working on framework contracts, has brought a number of comparative advantages: i) closer relationships with the local stakeholders; ii) higher visibility to the European Commission. On the other hand, a few difficulties have been also outlined: i) the intervention of the ETF has somehow ingenerated confusion, among Syrians stakeholders, on the different role of the EU and of the ETF, the former being the donor and the latter a center of expertise; ii) ETF has not been fully exhaustive and punctual in providing feedbacks to the Commission on the activities carried out.

In general, ETF demonstrated a strong capacity and skill with regards to technical issues such as needs identification, background analysis, project formulation, whereas, on the other hand, it has not been as effective when dealing with procedural issues such as tender preparation and launching. Talking to both ETF and the Commission allowed us to seize a gap between the two, given by their different role: this has caused some problem of reciprocal comprehension and, especially from the ETF side, of understanding precise EC requirements in terms of procedures.

## IMPACT

The Impact of a series of intervention at country level can be analysed rigorously only if a significant period of time has passed since the end of the projects to be evaluated. This is not the case for this evaluation exercise, which is mainly concentrated on i) one project ended in 2004 (PAS), ii) one on-going project (OF), iii) one project ended in the year 2005 (Support to MoVET). In addition, the pilot characteristics of the projects implemented suggest us to consider their impact in the light of future EC interventions and, therefore, it would be more useful and rigorous to make this assessment when the main EC intervention in the field, the MoVET, will have produced its first outcomes.

Overall, the activities implemented and the diplomatic action carried out by the agency have, to some extent, fostered the relationships among institutions, both at public-public and public-private level.

*Public-private dialogue has received an important push thanks to ETF intervention and, in particular, thanks to the PAS.*

As stated in the effectiveness section, ETF had to start up almost from zero, and it has still been able to achieve important results. The PAS has boosted the dialogue between the Governments, the schools and the entrepreneurs, which is already producing workers whose skills are closer to those demanded by the factories. The enhanced dialogue will, most likely, produce effects on the structure of the VET system as it is feasible to foresee a shift to a more demand driven one.

ETF activities have certainly given momentum to a more general reform process in the VET/LM sector especially for management issues. At schools level, the new management procedures introduced by the ETF could produce an impact in terms of establishing more "democratic" procedures: as teachers have the possibility to give their contribution to the decisional process this can, on one hand,

ameliorate the quality and the variety of the programmes and strategies undertaken.

Therefore, the Evaluation Team believes that the specific objective of assisting the EC in the design (and the implementation) of VET related projects has been positively achieved. In this sense, the results of the activities carried out so far represent a remarkable starting point on which the new projects can build on as, in fact, they have boosted a reform process at different levels (schools, entrepreneurs and institutional), making the relevant Syrian environment acquainted with the path it should follow for the coming years.

On the other hand, the Evaluation Team believes that it is too early to assess the capacity of the OF project to contribute to national capacity to collect, analyse and forecast employment / training needs. In fact, the Observatory (which is now operative) has not yet produced any study and/or analysis. Objectively, the ETF intervention on the OF has certainly contributed to the setting up of a centralised unit responsible of managing and analysing training and LM needs, but the impact analysis should be conducted verifying if the quality of the Observatory products responds to the needs of relevant local public and private identified beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, the OF is now almost fully operative and, therefore, the Evaluation Team believes that, in the near future, the first requests of data and analysis will be delivered and, consequently fulfilled. Probably a process of learning by doing will be then commenced.

A simple quantitative impact assessment, conducted calculating the possible the improvement of labour productivity of the apprentices, showed that the project main objective (to assist EC centralised and decentralised services in the design of vocational training related MEDA projects) has been achieved through the implementation of a series of activities capable of producing

direct positive effects on local labour productivity and salaries. Therefore, when calculating European public expenses mobilised in order to achieve the PAS objective, we should reduce them of the direct monetised effects of the project (around  $\frac{1}{4}$  of project total budget), because those effects are, by themselves, a positive added value for the Syrian economy.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The characteristics of the activities implemented in Syria, which are, in most cases, intended to prepare the implementation of larger and more comprehensive interventions, tend to reduce the meaning of a sustainability analysis. In fact, in this specific case, the capacity of having long lasting effects (also after the end of the availability of project funds) loses part of its importance, because the Syrian VET and apprenticeship system will be supported for five more years, thanks to the implementation of the more comprehensive MoVET. Eventually, this project will include in its activities a specific support to all 4 apprenticeship schools which took part in the pilot phase as well as to the school of Homs, which has just adopted the apprenticeship modalities elaborated with the support of ETF.

At the same time, even if not yet fully operative, the Observatory Function will certainly benefit from the implementation of the MoVET, which will request, at a certain stage, the availability of crucial data and information on the LM.

These observations are suitable for both the PAS and the OF. While, it is clear, that the support given by ETF to the preparation of the tendering procedure and the setting up of the PMU of the MoVET is not an activity that is intended to have long lasting effects after its end.

Nevertheless, during our interviews we have asked to Syrian and European stakeholder to assess to what extent structural changes and reforms, facilitated by ETF, were able to keep on track also without the existence of a larger EU project on the VET system. The answers received were mainly outlining the fact that the on going reform process is still encountering such a high number of difficulties that, without any additional external support, many of the implemented activities would lose their pace in the short run.

In conclusion, the activities carried out by ETF in Syria, if taken alone, can not be considered sustainable in the medium long run, meaning that their positive results will not last for more than 2-3 years after the end of the financed projects.

But, as stated above, the point of view of a sustainability analysis in the case of pilot interventions should be modified; in fact, a pilot action is not expected to be sustainable by itself, while its results and the related experience gained should be useful for future activities. In any case, the conclusions on the sustainability of the two analysed projects have to be separated.

***The Evaluation Team believes that sustainability has not to be considered one of the objective of the PAS.***

The main purpose of the project was to pave the way for future wider programmes and, in this sense, we have already specified how the PAS prepared the implementation of the MoVET and therefore, in this sense, it is perfectly acceptable to carry out a set of activities that can not be evaluated alone, but need to be framed in the wider context of European intervention.

***Differently, the analysis on the OF needs to take into consideration the fact that, even if the observatory can be ancillary to the implementation of any future activities in the field of Labour Market, the set of activities carried out should have been sustainable by itself.***

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSIONS

The ETF pilot apprenticeship scheme and Observatory Function projects have to be considered a positive first step in order to sustain the transition of the local labour market economy towards a market driven system. Nevertheless, these positive results obtained by each of the two projects have to be intended mainly on the:

- i) *Improvement of the dialogue between different institutions*
- ii) *Fertilization of the ground for the implementation of further intervention in the sector*

In other words, if we intend the pilot scheme as a preparation for the future apprenticeship system in the country, then it is certain that the set up of working teams coming from different institutions represents an achieved result that will last for a significant number of years; while, at the same time, if the project was evaluated only taking into consideration its direct effects on the apprentices, the expenses seemed to be non justified. The Evaluation Team believes that the project has to be assessed also for the indirect benefits it produced on teachers, schools management and on the general environment. In addition, the excessive turnover experienced from the staff of the MoE, outlines how the importance of the project was not sufficiently perceived by the Ministry and how the value of fiscal incentives was underestimated by project responsible.

In the same way we can intend the OF as being a positive experiment of network creation for the dissemination of relevant information, this even if, up to now the OF did not produce any tangible result. Moreover, it has to be underlined that the choice of leaving the ownership of any activity to local stakeholders and beneficiaries (as requested to centre of expertise like ETF), has the positive characteristic of raising local awareness and

capacities, but, at the same time, it has the constraint of not having a full control on project pace and improvements.

The formulation of the MoVET and the support to its starting phase, has been perceived as technically perfect by the team of the PMU just installed in Damascus, while a EC civil servant underlined a non sufficient knowledge of EC procedures. However, this could be partially due also to the fact that this support was not initially foreseen in the EC request but added at a second stage with limited time for the Foundation to have proper training on those issues. Therefore, we can conclude that ETF has a particularly good capacity of acting as a centre of expertise, but, at present, it is less prepared to deal with European procedures and bureaucracy.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE ETF INTERVENTION

The recommendations we provided are not concentrated on the weaknesses or the bottlenecks of specific interventions, mainly because they are now passed and the specificities will never be the same. Therefore, the recommendations we are proposing can be considered as general, with the objective of improving the modalities ETF carries out its projects, in Syria and elsewhere.

ETF obtained a significant level of visibility in the country, but part of the effectiveness of the interventions has been lost because of a lack of political weight during project implementation. This observation is also proved by the fact that all interviewed stakeholders noticed that activities were going much smoother and faster when the ETF working group was in place, while they were much slower during their absence.

*Therefore, if it was not possible (or non convenient) to set up a specific ETF-PMU in the country, it would have been efficient to obtain a higher involvement of the local Delegation in project follow up activities.*

The interventions of ETF in Syria (and probably elsewhere) have to be evaluated at two different levels: i) the capacity of the pilot actions to “pave the way” for future developing projects in the country; ii) the direct results obtained by each project. We believe that in the Syrian case, this dichotomy was not sufficiently underlined in the ETF project documentation.

*As a result, the role of the agency does not appear to be clear vis à vis external stakeholders (local beneficiaries and counterparts, evaluators, other donors, etc.).*

ETF should clearly distinguish between a support provided only in terms of managerial and organisational issues and an assistance which embeds also specific technical issues.

We believe that the strong capacity ETF has demonstrated in communication and working with local stakeholders should be seen as an advantage. However, it is important that ETF will in the future be able to exploit this ability keeping its *super partes* point of view, accepting the limits some times deriving from its role of a centre of expertise which operates in support to EC policies.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EVALUATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL

This evaluation is, mainly, based on qualitative information gathered during the different field visits paid by the Evaluation Team. In fact, the absence of an ETF **internal monitoring system** was already outlined in the evaluation ToR, as a result, the entire exercise has been designed, since the beginning, assigning a particular weight and importance to the activity of information and data collection. Nevertheless, the Evaluation Team believes that information and data made available by the contracting counterpart (ETF) was not always complete and excessively scattered. Therefore, in this section, we provide a list of shortages encountered, together with simple suggestions aiming at filling some of the most relevant gaps. However, it is clear that the

design of a comprehensive internal monitoring system able to report physical, financial and procedural advancements of each projects' activity would be the optimal solution.

The **documentation** provided to the evaluators in order to develop the initial desk phase of the exercise was excessive, not fully tailored and not well organised. In fact:

- the modalities financial figures and relevant documentation are collected at ETF do not appear to be adequate for a centre of expertise which is responsible to carry out interventions of the dimensions and the duration experienced in Syria. As described in the report, the intervention of ETF in Syria is composed by 22 “administrative project”, but 97% of the commitments are referred to three interventions. In order to avoid this confusion (between administration and technical necessities) and misunderstanding, in the future, it would probably be sufficient to **assign a second internal code** able to explain the linkages between the projects.
- The **amount of documents**, related to the implementation of activities in Syria, we received was **enormous** (around 75 Mbites for 530 files). This set of information was not always relevant, in general, non well organised, and not always referable to one project. We believe that, given the small dimension of these evaluations at country level, it is not necessary to provide the evaluators with **all** the documents elaborated during the project implementation, and that the desk phase could be much more efficient and less time consuming (for the evaluators and for the ETF Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation unit), if the basic documentation for the evaluation would be limited to the most relevant one.
- The two **projects' aggregations**: i) ETF services 1, 2 and 3 and ii) the division between regional and national

interventions, were, for evaluation purposes, rather meaningless. In fact, the whole PAS and the whole support to the MoVET are catalogued under service 1, while the whole OF is catalogued under service 2, while regional interventions count for less than 5% of the total commitments. Therefore, we could not extrapolate any additional relevant information by aggregating data into these available categories. In order to facilitate the evaluation, we believe that a desegregation under strand 1 – support to the commission, should be done. In fact, the difference between projects which are in support to the Commission but have also direct effects on local beneficiaries, like the PAS, and projects that are merely in support of future EU interventions (like the support given to the MoVET) should be clear since the beginning. At the same time, we believe that, in strand 2, a distinction between information, analysis and capacity building should be done.

The **financial figures** the Evaluation Team has been provided with were excessively aggregated and, in addition, it resulted difficult to assess the level of investment actually referable to Syria due to many regional activities., in fact:

- The first project tables received contained 12 national projects (for a total commitment of around €1.500.000) and 18 regional interventions (€735.000). A further analysis proved that that **only part of regional interventions could actually be referred to Syria**. In the future, it would be important to collect and prepare a correct financial table of national and regional projects to be included in the ToR.
- The financial tables we received only contained the **aggregated figures** of commitments and expenses (C1 + C8) of all the “administrative projects”; further financial desegregation have been made available at the end of the evaluation

exercise. We do not know to what extent the extraction of these figures was complicated, but we do believe that they should be used for any future evaluation at country level.

- The financial tables we have been provided with did not contain any reference to the **amounts planned** to be committed. For this reason, the Evaluation Team has not been able to draw any indication on ETF capacity of committing the planned financial resources. It would be important, in the future, to understand whether this figure is actually available and used for the financial arrangements between the EC and the ETF.

The **evaluation work plan**, proposed by the Evaluation Team in the technical offer, did not take into consideration the fact that it would have been useful to discuss again with the ETF staff some specific issues raised and outlined by Syrian stakeholders. Therefore, we propose, for future evaluation, to foreseen two visits to ETF, one at the beginning of the desk phase and the second after the field mission paid into the country under evaluation. In addition, it has to be outlined that the typologies of intervention carried out by the ETF are extremely particular; therefore, any comparison of the assessed evaluation criteria (in particular when referring to project expenses and related efficiency) with other project implementing agencies may not lead to interesting results.

*Therefore, we suggest that, in the future, evaluations at country level are not assigned separately for each country, but in group of 3-4 comparable (geographically, culturally, and economically) countries.*



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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONIMS**

<b>ACI</b>	Aleppo Chamber of Industry
<b>CIDA</b>	Canadian International Development Agency
<b>CoI</b>	Chamber of Industry
<b>CSU</b>	Central Statistic Unit
<b>DCI</b>	Damascus Chamber of Industry
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>DG EAC</b>	DG Education and Culture
<b>DFR</b>	Draft Final Report
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ET</b>	Evaluation Team
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FR</b>	Final Report
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HCI</b>	Homs Chamber of Industry
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>HRD</b>	Human Resources Development
<b>ITF</b>	Italian Trust Fund
<b>LF</b>	Logical Framework
<b>LM</b>	Labour Market
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoI</b>	Ministry of Industry
<b>MoL</b>	Ministry of Labour
<b>MoVET</b>	Modernization of Vocational Education and Training
<b>OF</b>	Observatory Function
<b>PAS</b>	Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme
<b>PMU</b>	Project Management Unit
<b>SEBC</b>	Syrian European Business Centre
<b>SPC</b>	State Planning Commission
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TTT</b>	Training Teachers and Trainers
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>WP</b>	Work Plan

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The views and opinions expressed in the report are those of the evaluators, and, as such, do not necessarily reflect those of the European Training Foundation. The European Training Foundation does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this report and accepts no responsibility for any consequences of their use.

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the final report of the evaluation of the activities carried out by the European Training Foundation in Syria between 2000 and 2004. The evaluation exercise has started in May 2005 with the desk phase and has included one visit to ETF in Turin (22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2005), one field visit in Syria (11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2005) and one day meeting in Brussels (12<sup>th</sup> of December 2005).

The first section of this report is dedicated to the reconstruction of the **background** of the interventions in the country, in this section the Logical Framework of ETF activities in Syria is provided.

The second section of the evaluation describes the **data collection phase** and it reports the main set of qualitative information gathered.

This set of information allowed the evaluation team to assess the **five main evaluation criteria**: Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability. The report contains a section dedicated to each of the criteria.

Final **conclusions and recommendations** are provided at the end of the evaluation and are divided in two specific sections: the first dedicated to recommendations aiming at improving future ETF interventions, the second specifically tailored at supporting the implementation of further evaluation exercises.

All the sections of the evaluation are briefly summarised in the **executive summary**, which is mainly concentrated on final conclusions and recommendations.

The report also contains the following five **annexes**: i) list of people met during the exercise, ii) the three information and evaluation questionnaires submitted to ETF staff, Syrian stakeholders and European Commission staff, iii) the minutes of the feedback seminar of the evaluation exercise held in Turin as of March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006. We did not include the questionnaires filled in by Syrian stakeholders interviewed as annexes, because, in many cases, the questionnaire was used only as a check list and therefore not all the answers are always filled in. In any case, the information collected are all summarised in the section dedicated to data collection.

In order to facilitate the access to all the relevant material collected and produced during this evaluation exercise, we set up a specifically dedicated Web site, which is accessible at the following address: [http://83.103.101.26/etf\\_syria](http://83.103.101.26/etf_syria). Documents are protected into a reserved area, accessible with the use of specific login and password. The site will be operative for two years after the end of the evaluation and, in any case, it will be at ETF disposal for any specific need.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **1.1. THE ETF INTERVENTION IN SYRIA**

#### **1.1.1. Context**

The European Training Foundation is a EU agency whose mission is “*to assist the partner countries in developing quality education and training systems and in putting them into practice*”: its support is targeted to 4 geographical areas (Candidate countries, South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and MEDA countries). ETF activities take place upon request of either the Commission services or a partner country, or else on its own initiative. In general terms, ETF’s role could be defined as that of a “facilitator”, working together with local authorities and the EC, with the overall objective of paving the way for larger scale EC interventions or local reforms. In doing so, ETF supports the local stakeholders and the EC by selecting and making available specific expertise during all project phases. In particular, ETF executes background and feasibility studies, designs activities to be undertaken, provides technical assistance during the implementation phases through its experts, and supports the dialogue among stakeholders, as well as the dissemination of information, through conferences and workshops. The functioning of the ETF is based on the concept of leaving the entire ownership of the reform programs to the beneficiaries: these are supported and advised throughout all the operational phases, and provided with fine-tuning recommendations before, during and at the end of the projects’ activities; however, they are always given the actual management of the operations. In general, ETF is instrumental to the building of the countries’ capacities in managing and implementing projects: improved relevance and sustainability could be reasonably pointed out as the main focus of the agency’s interventions.

ETF intervention in Syria started in 2000, a period of increasing awareness of the changing needs and requirements that derive from globalization and raising competition in the regional and international markets. A centrally planned economy, Syria was starting to undergo important changes, aimed at shifting towards a market economy. At that time, in order to meet the high demand for quality and standardization of products and services, as well as to prepare for the future free trade zone between EU and MEDA countries, the Syrian Government was preparing a structural modernization of the industrial sector, which included an upgrading of the labour force in terms of general abilities, knowledge and skills.

The Syrian economy appeared not to be ready to fully meet the changes coming from abroad in the demand for quality products: its economy was dominated by a large public sector, which employed the majority of the work force; at the same time, the private sector contribution to the GDP was higher than that of the public sector. The situation of the labour market, in terms of active work force and of the unemployment rate was not easy to assess, due to the existence of a large informal sector that weakened the significance of the few available data.

The intervention of ETF in Syria, started out with the implementation of a study aiming at analyzing the major constraints featured by the Syrian Vocational and Educational Training (VET) System and its capacity to respond to Labour Market (LM) needs. In particular, the following main limits were highlighted by the study:

- The study described the VET system as mostly school based with limited work based training: the influence from the world of work in the management, course design and/or

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delivery was found to be inexistent. No dialogue was recorded between schools and enterprises.

- The VET system was found to be designed to meet the needs of large state enterprises under a centrally planned economy and its management was centralized.
- Curricula were dominated by general and theoretical subjects with little integration with practice.

As specified in the documentation received from ETF, the Syrian VET system could be defined as being supply driven rather than demand driven; therefore, its relevance to the labour market needs is limited. Improvements in the VET system are hindered also by other structural limits of the LM, such as:

- the weakness of the specific information system concerning the VET and the labour market, that does not provide relevant information to policy makers;
- the limited understanding among enterprises of the need and benefits of training;
- distorting elements such as: i) the large size of the informal sector, that accounts for some 40% of the total labour force of the country, ii) the public industrial sector, that is still the major employer in Syria;
- a low number of labour market institutions, a lack of vocational guidance and counselling system, the absence of employment services;
- a limited role of the associations, of both employees and employers, which play an administrative rather than a political role; presently the Chambers of Commerce and Industry are emerging as active partners (especially the Damascus Chamber of Industry - DCI).

In addition, since the beginning of our evaluation exercise, the Evaluation Team (ET) has identified the **lack of dialogue between the public and the private sector** as one of the main obstacles to economic reforms, in general, and to the reform of the educational system, in particular. This observation has been confirmed and stressed with particular emphasis i) during our visit to ETF in Turin, where more than one expert involved in Syrian activities reported an improved level of dialogue between public and private sector on the occasion of the implementation of the pilot apprenticeship scheme project; and ii) during our field mission, where local stakeholders from the involved ministries and the Chambers of Industry (CoI), underlined the importance of the creation of mixed working groups coming from different institutions, not only for the apprenticeship scheme project, but also for wider future interventions.

International donor assistance to Syria, has been targeted mostly to the industry, environment and water sectors, with a limited intervention focused on the VET system: this has been targeted by a few non coordinated interventions from bilateral cooperation partners (Germany, France, Japan, Italy) and by including training in sectoral programmes (industry, health, etc). To date, a structured and more comprehensive intervention in the VET/LM sector is implemented by the European Commission (EC):

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- **Through the ETF:** in fact, the Agency has supported (since 2000) the introduction of a pilot apprenticeship scheme, an initiative aimed at tackling some of the main constraints of the VET system and at preparing local institutions to manage the larger EC interventions in the sector. Meanwhile, since 2002, ETF has launched an initiative aimed at improving the labour market information system (Observatory Function).
  - **Through the European Commission,** which agreed with the Syrian Government, in 2002, a Country Strategy Paper, summarising the new strategic framework for the assistance under the MEDA programme over the period 2002-2006. Within this framework, it has launched, in 2004, a 25 MLN € project for the modernisation of vocational education and training (VET)/employment system in Syria<sup>1</sup> (MoVET), the preparatory phases of which have been conducted by ETF between 2002 and 2004. Other initiatives are implemented within the MEDA Regional Programmes, that target several countries of the region. In Syria the implementation of these EC initiatives is supported by ETF.

### 1.1.2. The Projects

The entire intervention of ETF in Syria, in the years between 2000 and 2004, has involved the implementation of 22 projects for an overall commitment of €1,907,090. A little less than 70% of this amount was dedicated to ETF Service 1 - “Support to the Commission and dissemination of EU policies”; 27,6% can be catalogued under ETF Service 2 – “Provision and analysis of information and data in support of Commission and partner countries”; while only a limited section of one regional project was dedicated to ETF Service 3 – “Development activities”.

This large number of projects reflects the way ETF has to manage its budget in order to respect the principle of annuality, but does not provide a clear picture of the real ETF intervention in the country. In fact, many of the “administrative projects” are interlinked and are, often, nothing but the continuation of the same project. With the support of the former country manager, it has been possible to aggregate interlinked projects; in so doing, we found out that most of the activities carried on by ETF in Syria are concentrated in the following **3 main projects**, that represent around 97% of the total budget committed in the country in the period 2000-2004:

1. **Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme (PAS):** which includes the projects with the following codes: A55, A56, B03.01, C03.01, D05.02. All these projects are included in the ETF Service 1 – Support to the Commission category.
2. **Observatory Function (OF):** which includes the projects with the following codes: A59, C09.01, C.10.01, D07.02, D07.04 All these projects are included in the ETF Service 2 – Provision of information and data category.
3. **Support to MoVET:** which includes the projects with the following codes: B04.02, C04.01, D05.03 All these projects are included in the ETF Service 1 – Support to the Commission category.

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<sup>1</sup> The experts selected for the management unit of this project have started their activities few weeks before our field mission in Syria and we had the occasion to meet them directly, as presented below.

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Apart from these 3 projects, other activities are mainly referred to regional projects<sup>2</sup> which include a section dedicated to Syria, such as seminars, publication and overall Mashrek studies. These activities represent no more than 3% of the total commitments in the country and, therefore, we have decided to exclude them from our evaluation exercise and to concentrate our analysis on national interventions. This choice partially modifies our initial engagement. In fact, the evaluation ToR requested to choose 3 case studies to be evaluated in detail, but considering that almost all the ETF intervention in Syria can be summarized in 3 projects, the entire evaluation will be dedicated to these case studies and to their overall capacity to support the EC intervention in Syria as well as to contribute to reforms at country level.

## **1.2. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERVENTION**

This chapter presents the overall intervention logic of ETF activities in Syria, and a detailed description of the three main projects introduced above. All information contained in this chapter derive i) from the analysis of the documentation received during the desk phase, ii) from the information collected during our field mission in Syria. Specific Projects Logical Frameworks (LF) were already available, therefore, we decided to present them in the original form elaborated by ETF during the implementation phase.

### **1.2.1. Overall ETF intervention logic**

Two main aspects have to be underlined before presenting the Intervention Logic of ETF activities in Syria:

- ETF operates (in Syria and elsewhere) under specific requests from local stakeholders and the EC, with little or no contribution to steer or shape such requests; therefore, the Logic of Intervention of ETF activities is not entirely under its control. ETF presents its Work Programme every year, defining general objectives for every region, but does not elaborate its own intervention strategy in the countries, as it operates essentially in support of wider EC strategies. However, since 2005, ETF drafts Country Plans for each of its partner countries detailing the objectives and activities.
- The main mission of ETF is indeed to support the EC development strategies and, therefore, objectives and expected results have to be analysed and screened against those initially agreed upon between ETF and EC. Therefore, the evaluation of ETF activities in Syria has to assess whether or not the activities implemented in the country have been able to respond to the overall objectives detailed for the MEDA region in the ETF annual Work Programme (please refer to pages 12-13 for the 2004 WP on [www.etf.eu.int](http://www.etf.eu.int) ) and to specific further EC requests.

At the same time, ETF activities can, by themselves, have positive effects on local institutions and beneficiaries actively involved in projects implementation, even when those results do not necessarily lead to a tangible service for the EC. In these cases the project intervention logic is the one elaborated between ETF and the local stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> The only project directly referable to Syria which is not included in our sub-division is A57 – Overview of VET system in Syria

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Having analysed the ETF documents of the main projects implemented in Syria, it appears that the Logical Framework of these projects tend to be focused on the direct effects of the interventions and do not always fully take into consideration the role of ETF as being mainly a service provider to the Commission, or at least do not expand their logical framework to that level.

The evaluators have been asked, during the visit to ETF, to duly take this aspect into account and, therefore, to place the Logical Framework at the highest level of Program objectives<sup>3</sup>.

As a result, the evaluation analyses both aspects of ETF intervention in Syria, assessing the capacity of the implemented projects to achieve their own expected results and objectives and estimating to what extent those results have been able to support the Commission development strategies. This is even more important in the Syrian context, where the MoVET has just been launched and therefore, the pilot activities could be directly mainstreamed into one comprehensive project.

Accordingly, in order to include these observations but to respect, at the same time, the LF presented in the documentation of the projects, we have decided to place our “observation level” for the country evaluation **two steps higher** with respect to the level presented in each project LF. This means that the general objectives of the three projects are taken, in this evaluation, as expected results at country level and that we have elaborated anew the general and the specific objective to describe ETF intervention in the country.

The general objective, taken from the 2004 ETF WP, is directly linked to the impact assessment of each locally implemented project. The specific objective is mainly dedicated to the assessment of the capacity of ETF to deliver useful services to the EC. The lower levels of the ETF intervention logic (expected results and activities) are nothing but the higher level of the three projects intervention logic. This proposal<sup>4</sup> has been approved by ETF internal evaluation team during the inception phase of the evaluation.

<b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b>	<i>To assist EC services and support the EC policy objectives by enhancing the national capacities to develop vocational training systems capable of contributing to efficient labour market development, and to social and economic development in the Mediterranean societies in general and in Syria in particular.</i>
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Almost 70% of the activities undertaken by ETF in Syria fall under the ETF Service to the European Commission, which has, as a general scope, the one of “responding to needs articulated by the Commission services in the operation of the MEDA Programme and the development of the Euro-Mediterranean policy”. This object has been translated into different categories of

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<sup>3</sup> The former country manager and the current responsible for the Observatory function have both declared that final results of implemented projects have to be assessed at the highest level and therefore verifying whether or not: i) the Apprenticeship scheme project has improved the capacity to find a job in the private sector for the participants and ii) the Observatory on the LM provides useful information to the main local stakeholders.

<sup>4</sup> This proposal contains the idea that ETF, implementing activities in support of the EC, is, at the same time, trying to achieve positive results for final local beneficiaries. In some cases, it might be incorrect to place those two objectives in sequence, but we thought this was the best way to express the specificities of ETF intervention.

activities to be implemented in the region; the category that best fits for defining the specific objective of ETF activities in Syria 2004, is the design of Vocational Training related MEDA projects, as stated below in the Specific Objectives *encadré*. The residual 30% of the activities are related to the objective of contributing to the improvement of the national capacities to collect, analyse and forecast employment/training needs.

<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Services to the EC</b> - Assist EC centralised and decentralised services in the design of vocational training related MEDA projects, capitalising on previous pilot experience and maximising the impact of such projects.</li> <li>2. <b>Provision and analysis of information</b> - Contribute to national capacity to collect, analyse and forecast employment / training needs and enhance the compatibility of approaches at a Mediterranean regional level.</li> </ol>
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The expected results of the first specific objective are an increase in the responsiveness of the Syrian VET system to the labour market needs and the identification and design of a project for the modernization of the VET system to be implemented by the EC under MEDA Programme; the expected result linked to the second specific objective is the development of a data collection and analysis system that can provide reliable and policy focused information.

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased capacity of industrial and business sector and the government to jointly manage and implement sound apprenticeship modalities and thus supporting the responsiveness of Syrian VET system to labour market needs<sup>5</sup>.</li> <li>2. A system for data collection and analysis on employment, qualifications and training that will provide decision-makers with reliable information for policy design, developed.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>3. Project for the Modernisation of the Syrian VET/employment system and its links to the labour market, identified and designed.<sup>7</sup></li> </ol>
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In order to achieve the above listed expected results, ETF designed a series of activities to be implemented between 2000 and 2004 that are included in the 3 mentioned main projects, i.e.:

- The Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- The Observatory function
- The support to the MoVET

<sup>5</sup> p.38 B03.01 - Validation and inception mission report: *ETF support to the introduction of a pilot apprenticeship scheme in Syria 2001-2003*.

<sup>6</sup> p.3 ToR - Med Department Work programme 2002 Project B07-03: *Observatory function development: Other countries capacity building Syria*.

<sup>7</sup> p.8 ToR b04.02: *project identification and formulation technical and vocational education and training in Syria (MEDA II)*.

In addition, ETF implemented a number of other activities, most of which under request of the European Commission. Some of them were related to the 3 main projects, being supportive of the MEDA initiative or providing further analysis of the VET and of the LM system in the Mashrek region (and in Syria) as well as promoting the dissemination and the dialogue among relevant stakeholders through seminars and workshops. Finally, the joint study with the World Bank and the dissemination of the Leonardo experience appear to have a weaker link with the 3 projects.

<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Implementation of a Pilot apprenticeship scheme project co-managed by private sector and government in a selected number of sectors and schools.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Setting up of an Observatory function for data collection and analysis on employment, qualifications and training that will provide decision-makers with reliable information for policy design responsive to labour market needs.</i></li> <li>3. <i>To support the EC by providing an analysis of the present situation and a project proposal on the Modernisation of the Syrian VET/employment system, due to be implemented under the MEDA Programme.</i></li> </ol>
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### **1.2.2. Pilot apprenticeship scheme**

For all the three listed projects, we have reported the LFs precisely as we found them in ETF documentation, but we have added some comments on the consistency of these projects with the above defined specific objective of ETF intervention in Syria as well as on their implementation modalities specifically addressed during our field mission in Syria.

The first request of an ETF intervention for an apprenticeship project came from the Syrian Ministry of Education (MoE). As a response, ETF turned to the EC to verify whether such an intervention would have been consistent with the overall strategy in the region and in the country. In 1999, the EC promoted an identification mission in order to assess the feasibility of a MEDA (I) VET project in Syria. The main overall project was never approved, but, as a result, the implementation of a smaller pilot project on apprenticeship was agreed. The Pilot Apprenticeship scheme project, implemented by ETF, started in 2000 with a workshop during which Syrians stakeholders, ETF and EC had the possibility to devise the coming intervention.

The real Pilot scheme was launched in 2001 with two projects: i) innovative practices in apprenticeship scheme (A55) and ii) support to the Syrian Ministry of Education (A56). 2001 was, indeed, a year for:

- preparation, dedicated to studies and analysis of the Syrian VET system, in order to assess strengths and weaknesses and to identify the actual needs. Study visits were organised in 2 countries: Egypt and Denmark as part of the analysis phase (comparison with different systems).
- Organization of the project activities into 3 components: i) framework conditions, ii) teachers and trainers training and iii) curricula development. Four sectors were identified

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for the pilot scheme: mould making, mechanical handling, automatic control and ready to wear clothes.

- Seminars aimed at stimulating the debate, to raise the awareness of stakeholders, including private enterprises.

The total amount committed over four years has been of around €970.000. Four schools have been involved (three in Damascus and one in Aleppo) and a series of steering committees, follow-up bodies and working groups made of local staff coming from the different involved institutions (MoE, CoI, Schools, Ministry of Industry - MoI, etc.), were created. The technical assistance has been implemented with the involvement of internal ETF<sup>8</sup> staff and with the support of selected international experts who were in Syria for around 1 week each month (often more than one expert per mission) for the entire project duration.

In 2001, ETF committed almost €250.000, spending around €111.000 (around 45%). In 2002, ETF launched the project B03.01, that covers activities from 2001 to 2003, and represents the second phase of the pilot apprenticeship scheme. ETF committed around €240.000, spending €180.000 (75%). The final phase was launched in 2003 (project C03.01), to which ETF committed €114.000. During this phase all activities have been completed and Aleppo local institutions made a request for assistance to ETF. In order to fulfil the request, the pilot scheme activities have been extended, in 2004, to the Aleppo area, with the project D05.02<sup>9</sup>, for which ETF committed another €124.000. This included the implementation of training courses in 2 sectors: mechanical handling and ready to wear clothes. A reconstruction of the project intervention logic is presented below<sup>10</sup>, in which we do not include the list of activities.

#### GENERAL OBJECTIVE

*To increase the responsiveness of Syrian VET system to labour market needs by increasing the participation of the industrial and business sector in the definition and implementation of VET provision schemes*

Even if not explicitly mentioned in the basic documentation of the project, it is clear that one of the main purposes of this pilot phase consists in **paving the way for the implementation of the wider and more comprehensive MoVET**, operative since the second half of 2005. Therefore, as explained above, the evaluation takes into consideration both aspects of this project, its direct effects and its capacity to prepare the ground for the MoVET.

#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

*To increase the capacity of all participating stakeholders to implement a sound pilot apprenticeship scheme by 2003 with the involvement of approximately 500 apprentices.*

In order to fulfil the above mentioned objective, the ETF Pilot scheme project has been divided into 3 components that concur to the upgrading in the quality of the courses delivered thus allowing an improvement of the capacities of the trainees.

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<sup>8</sup> The involvement of internal ETF staff in all Syrian activities has been particularly high, as proved by the overall number of days spent in Syria (513 in the four years).

<sup>9</sup> Although the project title is “Support to start up of MEDA project”, it is, indeed, an extension of the 2001-2003 pilot scheme.

<sup>10</sup> The objectives and expected results included in the logical framework are those elaborated by ETF within the “Validation and inception mission report, 18-26 January 2001” (p.38).

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EXPECTED RESULTS
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<i>Capacity of managing the VET system by the Syrian Government upgraded</i> <i>Teacher and trainers training courses set up in 4 selected sectors</i> <i>Curricula upgraded and adapted to new requirements of apprenticeship scheme</i>
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The table next page shows the entire set of expected outputs for each one of the 3 project components. The managing capacity is upgraded through the provision of training courses and a series of handbooks of procedures and information; the courses delivered for teachers and trainers address different needs at different levels, ranking from basic to specialized ones; curricula are revised, upgraded and adopted and a national unit for the innovation of curricula is introduced.

### 1.2.3. Observatory function

The preparatory phase of the Observatory Function project started in 2001, with the project A59 “stocktaking of local capacities in monitoring VET system and skills need”. The study spotted the main features of the Labour Market information system in Syria and highlighted which were the needs for intervention: it came out that the country was lagging by far behind some of the neighbouring countries. In particular, Jordan had just experienced the upgrading of its Labour Market information System and could, therefore, be used as a positive best practice to learn from. The analysis on the local LM information system highlighted, as the main constraint, the fact that local stakeholder were not used to “ask for the information” and, therefore, the system resulted to be totally “supply driven” and, therefore, underutilised.

Following the study, the Syrian SPC agreed with ETF to launch the Observatory function in 2002, with project B07.03. The activity was not demanded by local stakeholders, but directly proposed by ETF. An initial seminar gathered some of the main stakeholders: i) the Damascus Chambers of Industry and of Commerce, ii) the Ministry of Education and of Labour, iii) the State Planning Commission and iv) the Statistical Office. It represented a moment for discussing the state of the art with regards to the LM information system and its links with the labour market needs. Following the seminar, the Syrian task force for the development of the Observatory function was set up. However, during the first year, the pace of the project activities resulted to be slower than expected. Anyhow, this project could count on the experiences already had in the Mashrek region, especially in Jordan and on the stakeholders’ confidence in ETF, as a result of the on going Pilot apprenticeship scheme.

In 2003, a change in the strategy occurred: the external expert was backed up by a Jordan that had previous experiences as a team leader in Jordan for some similar projects run by the CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). A report was produced on the next steps to be undertaken by the Observatory. For 2003, ETF activities fell under project C09.01. In 2004, the decision of setting up the Observatory was signed by the Prime minister, underlining the interest and the commitment of the Syrian government in undertaking a reform path in this direction. During this year the Observatory collected and re-organized the set of information already existent from different sources, with the aim of making it available to the interested stakeholders. ETF activities for 2004 fall under project D07.02 and include the support to the activities of the Observatory as well as a study on human resources.

In addition to the specific objective indicated in the documents, this project aims also at **increasing the effectiveness of future EC intervention in the field of VET/LM**. In fact, the provision and analysis of information is one of the main services delivered by ETF to the Commission, with the scope of creating the conditions for improving the effectiveness of any intervention on LM in the region. To date, the Observatory activities are still in their initial phase: the team, composed of Syrian experts in statistics appointed by the Ministry, have yet to overcome problems of logistics and of availability of technical equipment. The following table shows the project intervention logic<sup>11</sup>:

<b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b>
<i>To develop a system for data collection and analysis on employment, qualifications and training that will provide decision-makers with reliable information for policy design and to increase the transparency of partner countries labour markets both for producers and users of information.</i>
<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</b>
<i>To support the development of Syrian capacities for information on labour market and needs forecast on employment, qualifications and training (the ‘Observatory’ function) through capacity building and expertise support actions.</i>
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Key network of stakeholders identified;</i></li> <li>2. <i>Common vision and shared understanding among local key stakeholders on the Observatory function concept developed;</i></li> <li>3. <i>Syrian task force for the development of the ‘observatory function’ set up;</i></li> <li>4. <i>Report on concrete needs in terms of relevant labour market information needed for VET policy design and next steps to be taken, developed by Syrian taskforce;</i></li> <li>5. <i>Exchange of experiences and discussions at international/regional level strengthened</i></li> </ol>

#### **1.2.4. Support to MoVET**

In 2000, the European Commission had already started to consider an extensive intervention in Syria in the training sector. However, the actual launch of the activities by the EC was delayed and, meanwhile, the pilot apprenticeship scheme, implemented by ETF, started its activities.

In 2001 the European Commission stipulated an informal partnership with ETF in order to formulate projects under the MEDA II Programme. In particular, since then, ETF has been in charge of conducting the feasibility and identification phases instrumental for the start up of a comprehensive MoVET, that was planned for 2005. This represented an alternative procedure for the EC which, generally turns to international experts engaged through framework contracts.

The positive experience with the pilot project, together with the level of commitment proved by local public and private institutions, represented a positive background to ensure the feasibility of a large MEDA project (around 25 MLN €). In fact, starting from 2002, the EC made a specific request to ETF in order to support the preparatory phase of the MoVET in Syria in 3 steps:

<sup>11</sup> The objectives and expected results included in the logical framework are those elaborated by ETF within the “Med Department Work programme 2002 Project B07-03: Observatory function development: Other countries capacity building Syria” (p.3).

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- In the first year, ETF conducted a feasibility identification analysis (project B04.02) that provided a review of the Syrian VET/employment system and the labour market, with a focus on the transition mechanism from school to work. The study also identified the major weaknesses and provided indications regarding measures to be undertaken in order to modernise the existing VET/LM system. The identification report was discussed during a workshop with some of the main Syrian stakeholders.
  - The second step of the assignment was the identification phase, project C04.01 (2003). ETF assignment was to elaborate a project proposal, based on the findings and recommendations of the previous feasibility study. Also this project proposal was discussed and validated during a workshop with the main Syrian stakeholders. The approval and adoption of the proposal by the EC arrived in 2004 and, in the month of October, the project started.
  - The last phase of this assignment for ETF has consisted in delivering technical and operational support to the launching phase of the MoVET. Then a tendering procedures had been opened and the PMU staff was selected and is now operational.

The following table reports the logic of intervention of the project<sup>12</sup>:

<b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b>
<i>To identify and design a project for the Modernisation of the Syrian VET/employment system and its links to the labour market</i>
<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</b>
<i>To analyse the existing situation, propose a comprehensive framework for the modernisation of VET/employment system and identify measures for its implementation</i>
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Report with analysis of the Syrian VET/employment system and the labour market and problems identification, produced and approved by EC</i></li> <li>2. <i>Project proposal, on the basis of the option selected after the identification phase, defined and approved by EC</i></li> <li>3. <i>Support to the EC for the preparation of a draft financing proposal and the draft Technical and Administrative Provisions, provided</i></li> </ol>

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<sup>12</sup> The objectives and expected results included in the logical framework are those elaborated by ETF within the “*ToR b04.02: project identification and formulation technical and vocational education and training in Syria (MEDA II)*” (p.8).

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## 2. DATA COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

During the evaluation exercise we have collected data and information from 3 major sources: ETF internal staff, Syrians stakeholders and European Commission. For this purpose, we made use of interviews and questionnaires. In particular, ETF staff opinions have been collected through interviews in Turin (June 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>), during the inception phase; those of the Syrians stakeholders during the field mission paid by the ET in November (11<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup>); finally, the opinions of the EC have been collected during a field visit in Brussels held as of December, the 12<sup>th</sup>.

The following section describes the methodology used for the collection of data and opinions while it provides an indicative aggregation of the main answers received. In this section, we report the entire set of information gathered without any comment and/or elaboration, in order to present the neutral information source on which we based our evaluation exercise. The lack of any monitoring system on ETF activities in Syria (and elsewhere) did not allow us to use detailed quantitative data on many of our analysis. It has to be clearly stated that all the information contained in the tables of this section do not provide our point of view rather it outlines the opinions of the different stakeholders interviewed.

### 2.1. DATA COLLECTION AT ETF

The collection of data and opinions of the ETF internal staff has been accomplished in three different phases. The first phase was the desk study, during which we reorganized and optimized the information provided by the ETF. As a second step, the ET conducted a number of interviews to the ETF staff in Turin: these first direct contacts have been instrumental in particular for the reconstruction of the logic of intervention and for re-aggregating the 22 “administrative projects” into 3 main ones (plus a few scattered regional activities). The final phase deemed to collect opinions in a more detailed and focused way, through the submission of a **qualitative questionnaire** that specifically addressed the five evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability). In addition, a **table of activities** has been delivered to the ETF project managers, through which we collected data on the capacity of completing planned activities on time.

Each questionnaire accounted for 16 closed-answer questions and 2 open ones: the table below aggregates these 18 questions into 8 main issues, reporting the answers provided within the 5 questionnaires submitted.

The list of ETF staff that received and responded to the questionnaire is in the Annex of people met and interviewed.

*1. In general, do you think that ETF activities could be considered consistent with the EC intervention in Syria and how was the understanding by ETF of the needs of the Syrian VET and labour market system? Which one of the projects do you think to be the most consistent?*

4 out of five answers were extremely positive, considering ETF activities to be 100% consistent, while in 1 case activities resulted to be “pretty much” consistent. Answers were less positive when assessing the understanding of the needs: 3 considered this to be “definitely appropriate” while for two of the interviewees this was rather “sufficient”. In

<p>general, all of the activities had positive relevance assessment although the support to the MoVET received a slightly better response.</p>
<p><i>2. In your opinion, have the activities of ETF contributed to a better understanding of the overall EU strategy in Syria among the relevant stakeholders and among the final beneficiaries?</i></p>
<p>For 2 of the interviewees, among the stakeholders, activities contributed more than it was expected while another 2 have assessed the contribution good “as expected”: in one case, the answer has been more cautious when stating that it was “difficult to say”. Similar replies when referring to the final beneficiaries of the intervention.</p>
<p><i>3. What is, in your opinion, the value added represented by ETF in supporting the European Commission delivering its activities in Syria?</i></p>
<p>In general, ETF work could be regarded as instrumental for paving the way for the MoVET while boosting the reform process in the VET sector and enhancing a the dialogue between public and private sector. In addition, it has been pointed out how ETF “created a very solid and trusty relationship with the counterparts in Syria”: this, together with the “capacity in analysing strategic issues in the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) and in using experiences in similar environments” is facilitating the MoVET implementation in the country.</p>
<p><i>4. Do you think that the availability of higher amount of funds would have increased the effectiveness of the activities undertaken, by ETF, in Syria? Which project should have them been devoted to?</i></p>
<p>For 3 out of the 5 interviewees, a higher amount of money would have permitted an increase in the effectiveness of the intervention (“definitely, in 2 cases, “slightly” in the other) while the two remaining stated how the funds available were just appropriate. If more money was available, these should have been destined to the Pilot project or to the Observatory (2 answers each), in 1 case it has been pointed out that general organization and management would have benefited from it while one of the interviewee affirmed that funds should have been rather destined to sustain the close work “with policymakers in developing employment policy broadly”. In general, as someone pointed out, “more funds would have allowed for a full time person to be posted in Syria” whose presence would have, most likely, increased the impact of the intervention as a whole.</p>
<p><i>5. In your opinion, which of the projects have met major consensus among Syrians and the European Commission? (rank 1 –minimum, to 5 –maximum consensus)</i></p>
<p>Although the majority of the answers to this multiple question has been left blank, yet they provide useful indications which could be said to be in line with those provided by the Syrians and the EC. According to the ETF, among Syrians, all projects met high consensus, maximum in the case of the PAS and the support to the MoVET and slightly less in that of the OF. The degree of consensus decreases if tested on the Commission, which is, however, considered to be satisfied for the support received in the identification phase of the MoVET (only one answer, marking a 5) and for the PAS (one marking 5 and one marking a 4) while the consensus towards the OF is said to be sufficient.</p>
<p><i>6. In your opinion, as a result of the ETF activities in Syria, has the dialogue between public and private sector increased? How do you assess the overall impact produced by the 3 major projects?</i></p>
<p>All interviewees agreed on considering that the work conducted by the ETF has definitely contributed to the enhancement of the dialogue between the public and the private sector which, before 2001, was virtually absent. The PAS has generated an impact that is assessed to be higher than expected: this project has boosted a “dynamic of change” yet, a wider impact</p>

<p>on the system will be ensured by the MoVET. For the OF, the impact produced is considered “good as expected” and, although it is probably too early to have a clear-cut perception yet “the fact that there is a permanent team staffed and funded by the Syrians is a good indication that this function has been embedded in the Syrian system”. Finally, the impact of the support to the MoVET is assessed “good as expected” as, in particular, ETF could count on a “prior knowledge and understanding of the situation in Syria and a solid relationship with key Syrian counterparts”.</p>
<p><i>7. Do you think it is already possible to anticipate structural improvements in the Syrian labour market as a result of ETF intervention?</i></p>
<p>All interviewees agreed on stating that it is too early to spot structural improvements which will, most likely, take place in the medium -long run. The intervention of the ETF and, in particular, the PAS, have positively affected the local institutions involved at a procedural level yet, reforms need to come with political changes: in general, structural changes “will not depend on ETF intervention, neither on the intervention of any donors rather they have to do with Syrian policies”.</p>
<p><i>8. Do you think that the projects will keep the track once ETF support will come to an end? In general, the Syrian environment will be able to sustain the reform process in the VET/LM system once ETF support will be over?</i></p>
<p>Answers resulted to be very positive with regards to the sustainability of the PAS for which “further improvements are foreseen”, especially in Aleppo: this project is, in fact, already going on without ETF support and, in addition, “the MoVET will (or should) put in place a whole series of changes at system level that should ensure sustainability”. Responses are less positive for the OF for whom more support by the ETF is said to be still needed. The capacity of the general environment in continuing the reform process depends on the commitment of the Syrian side to “carrying on with those reforms without the support of the European Commission funds”, however, “education is a priority in the next 5-year plan and it seems that all efforts will be made by the relevant authorities. Nevertheless, some other support by ETF is probably still necessary”.</p>

## 2.2. DATA COLLECTION IN SYRIA

This paragraph provides a detailed description of the field mission carried out by the ET in Syria as of November 11<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup>. As specified within the Inception Report, the field mission represented a key step in order to collect all of the indispensable information for the evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative. This paragraph is divided into 3 specific sections: i) the interviewees, which describes the typology of stakeholders interviewed in both Damascus and Aleppo; ii) the methodology, which describes the approach used by the ET for conducting the interviews; iii) the outcome, which presents the major information collected, aggregated by evaluation criteria.

### 2.2.1. The interviewees

The list of people to be met during the field visit was agreed with ETF. The complete list is in Annex to the report.. During the field mission we have met 31 stakeholders working within 16 different bodies. Each one of them benefited from the implementation of the activities although in a different way and at different level:

- At **political level**, interviews have been conducted mainly to functionaries and managers within the State Planning Commission (SPC) and the MoE: the former is the counterpart

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for external donors willing to operate in Syria, while the latter is the natural stakeholder for issues related to educational system reform. In addition, we met the National steering committee for the apprenticeship scheme, the Damascus Directorate of Education, the Observatory function Unit and the Aleppo Governorate of Education Department.

- **Schools** can be pointed out as the main direct beneficiaries of the ETF intervention: on one hand, students benefited from the new, upgraded, curricula and teachers improved their skills and knowledge thanks to the training courses while, on the other hand, the schools' structures benefited from newer and more advanced technical equipment, provided by the Syrian Government. Interviews were conducted at Adnan Merdan School of Damascus and at Al Asadi School of Aleppo.
- At private level we had the chance to meet many **entrepreneurs**, mostly as member of one the Chamber of Industries. Their involvement within the activities could be split in 2: on one side, the chambers supported the implementation of the PAS, at both technical and financial level; on the other side, the companies could already appreciate the first results of the apprenticeship in terms of a better prepared, newly graduate, labour force. In particular, we met representatives from DCI, Follow up office for Apprenticeship scheme - Damascus Chamber of Industry, Aleppo Chamber of Industry (ACI), Homs Chamber of Industry (HCI) and SEBC – Syrian European Business Center.
- At EU level, we contacted the EC Delegation in Syria. We did not have the chance to personally meet the relevant *fonctionnaire* while in Damascus: hence, information have been collected through the submission of the questionnaire via email. In addition, we had the chance to meet the experts of the PMU of the MoVET.

A detailed daily schedule of our field mission in Damascus and Aleppo, with the complete list of the persons met, has been delivered to ETF at the end of the field mission.

### 2.2.2. The methodology

In order to conduct the interviews in Syria we envisaged a qualitative and a quantitative questionnaire. Both questionnaires have been used as a guidance for the interviews and they focused on the following issues:

- A first section always entailed a general description of the involvement of the interviewee within the ETF activities, with details about how operations started, how he and his body have come into contact with the ETF and how deep was interviewee's degree of involvement within the projects.
- The second section generally focused on relevance. In this case, the interviewee had the chance to describe if and how the projects were already devised by the Syrians before ETF intervention, if and how these have been fine tuned and/or boosted by the EU agency and if and to what extent this latter was prepared for this task.
- The third section focused on the modalities ETF used to implement its activities. Comments and observation were concentrated on the degree of the effort put by ETF in carrying out the projects, if there was something that remained undone or not targeted the right way. The discussion entailed both a procedural and a political level of analysis so

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that, on one hand, observations by the interviewees generally addressed the merit of the methodology used by ETF while, on the other hand, they focused on the political role it has or it has not played.

- The fourth section was concentrated on major achievements and constraints of the activities carried out by ETF and on the assessment of the impact they produced both at political (i.e., if and to what extent the dialogue between private and public sector has raised) and at technical level (i.e., if and to what extent the graduates from the apprenticeship schools could count on a higher initial salary with respect to those coming from the traditional VET).
- The last section of the interview always endorsed a final assessment of issues related to the sustainability of the projects implemented with the support of the ETF.

In general, some questions have revealed to be excessively technical and the questionnaire maybe too long, although this represented a blueprint for the sake of the interviews, the pattern we followed steadily consolidated as a learning by doing process. In some cases, interviews have been conducted in Arabic with the support of the local expert.

### 2.2.3. The outcome

The table below reports our re-aggregation of the answers we collected; in the table the questions posed during the interviews are aggregated so as to address the evaluation criteria while, the answers, are divided for typology of stakeholder.

*1. In your opinion, at the time activities were started how was the understanding by ETF of the needs of the Syrian VET and labour market system: did ETF address issues that could be considered relevant according to Syrians needs?*

In general, the answers to this question have been very positive from the representatives of both the political and the private world. The major point stressed out was that the idea of a Pilot apprenticeship scheme had already been developed within the DCI which had already started to cooperate with the MoE. Schools pointed out that the idea of modernizing the apprenticeship, so as to make it more demand driven, had already been in their mind since the past years. In the case of the entrepreneurs, the need to start a reform of the VET system had raised as a response to the high costs held by the companies in order to re-train the employees freshly graduated from the VET schools. Schools, on their side, had realised how, a direct interface with factories, was of the utmost importance for effectively improving the skills of the students. Both entrepreneurs and schools stressed out that the major accomplishment by ETF has been understanding these new ideas and unexpressed wisdoms and boosting them. During the interview, a representative of Adnan Merdan School affirmed that “ETF gave us the push to communicate with factories, to make modernization real. Moreover, we already believed in team working: ETF made us realize it while improving the level of democracy in the management process so that also the opinions of the teachers started to be taken into account”.

The answers provided during the interviews also underlined how the “pilot” formula has brought along advantages also for the implementation of future interventions alike. In fact, ETF has been able to remove some of the constraints that hindered the financing of a more

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comprehensive project of reforms, to be included in the MEDA I programming period. In the case of the OF project, ETF preparation and understanding of the background resulted to be definitely appropriate thanks, in particular, to the activities of analysis and of partnership building conducted by its experts during the field visits.

*2. With respect to the expectations you might have had before the intervention, how do you judge ETF' effectiveness in achieving the results?*

This question did not receive direct answers regarding the level of effectiveness achieved by the projects, while it was taken as an occasion to express a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the lack of financial incentives. The majority of the stakeholders, mainly the teachers and the OF team, somehow had expectations of an enhanced personal income as a result of the activities promoted by the ETF. Teachers, in particular, pointed out how, in order to join the training activities, they were forced to leave second jobs; whereas the involvement in the training has, so far, not produced any increase in their incomes. In the case of the OF team, this feeling appeared to be exacerbated with the frustration deriving from a general dissatisfaction with how the project had been, to the point, managed and ran.

This topic has been thoroughly discussed also by the entrepreneurs and the institutional stakeholders, who, yet not personally interested by a raise in their salary, pointed out that one of the reason for a low quality VET system in Syria unquestionably resides in the low wages of the teachers. The issue of non satisfactory salaries led the discussion towards the importance of the creation of a VET financially and administratively independent body, with the objective of making it autonomous in hiring and firing policies, and to foster the increase in the teachers salary level. The idea of an independent VET body, stuck in a midway limbo between the unsaid and the undone since 1974, is now receiving a new push thanks to the intervention of ETF and to the MoVET, which have been putting a considerable effort also on such diplomatic and political issues.

*3. Do you think that a bigger effort by ETF, in terms of technical assistance and support, would have increased the effectiveness of the activities undertaken in the period 2001-2004?*

All interviewees agreed on assessing as definitely positive the effort put by the ETF in carrying out its activities in Syria. However, some of the stakeholders lamented a certain degree of slowness by the ETF in meeting a number of demands made by projects beneficiaries. Furthermore, some beneficiaries underlined the need of receiving more assistance on the technical side, which they did not receive even when translated into specific requests.

In general, the majority of the stakeholders pointed out how ETF missions were too short, this assessment always leading to considering that a stable presence of 1 or 2 ETF experts, if not yet of a small PMU, would have definitely allowed a better interaction between the different actors, with an increase in the effectiveness of the intervention.

*4. Do you think that the dialogue and the cooperation between public and private sector in Syria has increased over the past 5 years? If so, has ETF contributed to this achievement?*

As stated by the majority of the local stakeholders interviewed, the enhancement of the dialogue among the public and the private sector is, probably, the major achievement of the activities carried by the ETF in Syria between 2001 and 2004. Thanks to the PAS, in the past 5 years, the MoE, the MoL and the SPC had the chance to actively collaborate with the CoIs and the private companies, with the objective of setting un an effective apprenticeship system. The beginning of the public-private cooperation has been highly appreciated by the entrepreneurs while the MoE has kept a more understated attitude towards it, yet recognizing

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the importance of a process in which ETF had played a key role. The same kind of positive view came also from PMU for the MoVET which outlined that “probably the most impressive result of ETF has been the enhancement of the cooperation among MoE and the CoIs, especially in Aleppo and Homs. For this reason, many stakeholders address the Pilot apprenticeship scheme project as the partnership programme”.

5. *In your opinion, as a result of the training received by teachers and trainers and of the revised curricula, has the quality of the related vocational courses improved? Please, point out some of the problems encountered (technical, incentives etc)*

This question entails a two sided answer that, on one hand, highlights the positive impact produced by the changes in the schools that benefited from the pilot apprenticeship project while, on the other hand, it emphasizes the major weaknesses of the project activities. Basically all interviewees agreed on asserting that the quality of the courses has definitely improved as a result of the training received by the teachers and of the new curricula: this enhanced quality has positively affected the skills of the students. The improved technical skills have been tested at work: according to some of the entrepreneurs we met, the employees just graduated from the apprenticeship school had a substantial better performance when on duty, as a result of the drilling period spent in the factories. One thing often underlined is that workers coming from the traditional VET schools always needed a period of re-training; in recognition of this fact, entrepreneurs are generally ready to pay a higher salary to the employees graduated from the apprenticeship school.

However, the implementation of the PAS related activities has encountered a number of weaknesses, some of them could be attributed to the ETF, some other has to be ascribed to the general environment. In particular, the ACI stated that it has been necessary to review and to fine tune the curricula developed in Damascus. In the case of the engineering production, the curricula appeared to be too specialized and high level for both trainers and students while, those developed for the garment, were not so sufficiently well devised. In fact, the skills actually acquired seemed not to justify a 3-year apprenticeship course and, at the same time after 3 years of apprenticeship the graduates should endeavour at a higher starting position in the factories.

Students have probably realized that their learning expectations were not fully met: this, for the ACI, could be envisaged as one of the reason for the sensible drop in the number of students enrolled in 2005 at Al Asadi school of Aleppo with respect to 2004. However, most of the drop out are girls, underlining a specific gender obstacle as in fact some of the parents did not consider acceptable to send their daughters to a mixed school.

In general, most of the stakeholders agreed on affirming that as ETF carried out an excellent job in boosting, organizing and managing the pilot apprenticeship scheme yet, it should have provided more support in terms of technical know-how. Finally, some problems derived also from the drop out of a number of teachers from the TTT courses: the reasons for this have been ascribed mainly to the lack of financial incentives.

6. *How do you judge, so far, the effectiveness of the ETF in setting up and making work the Observatory Function?*

The meeting with the Observatory Function allowed us to conduct a focus group thanks to the active participation of all the six members of the team. In general, the political and institutional point of view has been brought by the Team leader, whereas the 5 operative experts have given their contribution on the technical side. Overall, the team appeared to be frustrated with a number of constraints met up to that point and that actually hindered the well functioning of the Observatory. They underlined logistical problems (ranging from the non availability of an ad hoc office to the lack of an independent internet connection) as well as technical ones. Syrian institutions, on their side, did not show the same level of

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commitment of the PAS. To some extent the Observatory is still lacking a full recognition and accountability at institutional level; in particular, at the beginning of its activities, the distinction between the role of the Observatory and the one of the Central Statistic Unit (CSU) was not clear. Afterwards, as the project somehow settled itself down, precise commitments were made so as to separate it from the SPC and making it an independent, private body which could sell its services to the market (as it is in Jordan). However, if the SPC and the MoE generally agreed on a progressive autonomy of the Observatory, on the other hand, other bodies, such as the MoL, showed an interest in having it under their control. From the technical point of view, the team members pointed out a non thoroughly satisfactory assistance by the ETF which, according to them, did not provide the expertise required so as to cover all of the Observatory working areas yet being able to positively devise and operate the project.

In general, it has been pointed out that, so far, the Observatory has been producing data rather than information, without any focused analysis and, in general, limited just to secondary data. A widespread feeling underlines how the Observatory would be destined to fade away without external support, whether by ETF or by the EC through the MoVET.

7. *Do you believe that ETF activities have actually facilitated the implementation of the more comprehensive MEDA training project by removing obstacles and barriers in the relevant environment?*

In general, answers to this question have been positive in assessing how the work conducted by the ETF has prepared the ground for the implementation of the MoVET. As outlined especially by the Chambers and the entrepreneurs, ETF has been successful in sustaining the enhancement of the dialogue between the public and the private sector, a *conditio sine qua non* for the sake of any future intervention on VET. Moreover, the concept of an apprenticeship methodology, that directly create linkages between schools and factories, is now more accepted than it was before, although the limited number of schools targeted does not allow for too general considerations. The Apprenticeship project has thus introduced, at a pilot level, a methodology that will be further developed and extended by the MoVET while, as the EU Delegation pointed out, “ETF activities in Syria have paved the way for a MEDA programme in VET, being very important in terms of awareness raising, spreading of concepts and developing relations between public and private operators”. However, still according to the Delegation, “the scope of the scheme was too limited to be determinant for the project” as, in fact, due to the limited number of schools targeted a “critical mass” has not been reached.

The EU Delegation has also pointed out that “the observatory can constitute a key element to provide useful inputs during the implementation of the MoVET”.

8. *Do you think that, in general, the Syrian environment will be able to sustain the reform process in the VET/LM system once ETF support will come to an end?*

Common answer to this question was that ETF intervention is leading towards the MoVET and, therefore, as the former will leave, the latter will follow by taking over the activities. The 4 pilot schools of the PAS will be included within the new project, while the request of information on the LM coming from the MoVET will sustain the activities of the OF.

Nevertheless, most of the stakeholders interviewed has resolved to be quite sceptical when outlining that, without the MoVET, both the PAS and the OF would be destined to fade away. In particular, school teachers and the OF team appeared to be negative on the possibility of continuing their activities without any further external support; while the CoIs declared to be more optimistic and confident on the sustainability of the apprenticeship scheme.

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### 2.3. DATA COLLECTION AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

During the mission to Brussels we had the opportunity to meet functionaries of AIDCO and of the DG Education and Culture whereas it has not been possible to meet anyone at DG Relex. The data collection methodology has been the same used in Syria, i.e. interviews conducted on the blueprint of a specific questionnaire, partially modified with respect to that presented in the Inception Report. This fine tuning has been necessary as we acquired a different perspective and general awareness of the ETF intervention as a whole and, thus, of the role of, and the relation with, the European Commission. In order to present the answers, we aggregated them into 3 main issues:

<i>1. What is, in your opinion, the main added value brought to the European Commission by ETF?</i>
From the EC perspective, dealing with ETF rather than with external experts through framework contracts has brought a number of comparative advantages such as more flexibility and visibility together with an enhanced understanding with the Syrians stakeholders given a more stable and enduring presence of the agency with respect to an external expert. Moreover, on one side, ETF is a vehicle that helps disseminating also abroad those practices and methodologies in the field of education devised and implemented within EU member states and candidate countries while, on the other side, it brings a more international perspective when involved in the expert groups with DG EAC and CEDEFOP.
<i>2. Do you believe that the ETF activities have facilitated future EC interventions in Syria? In general, how do you assess the implementation modalities adopted by the agency?</i>
According to AIDCO, the PAS has “fertilized the ground” for the implementation of the MoVET. However, the Commission has outlined as, in Syria, stakeholders generally make confusion between EU and ETF, missing to clearly distinguish between the two while, the different roles, the former being a donor, the latter a centre of expertise, should be unmistakably remarked. The staff interviewed at the EC also underlined that ETF itself ought to be more effective in underlining this difference while, vice versa, this confusion probably turned to be a positive factor for the agency. Feed back to the Commission also resulted to be less efficient and punctual than expected, especially in the case of the OF.
<i>3. How do you assess ETF work in supporting the MEDA training project?</i>
The main task the Commission demanded from the ETF was to conduct the identification and feasibility phase of the MoVET: this resulted to be satisfactorily conducted, with the expected results achieved although, in some cases, the Commission lamented a not entirely critical and detached point of view when providing feasibility indications. In fact, ETF’s close relation with the Syrian environment, one of the main positive feature of its intervention, turned to be, to some extent, also a flaw, as it partially made the agency fail to have the required <i>super partes</i> point of view. At the same time, the EC staff interviewed underlined that ETF seemed not to be fully aware of EC internal procedures.

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### 3. RELEVANCE

The assessment of the Relevance of ETF interventions in Syria is based on the answers to the following three main issues, and takes into consideration the consistency of both the project objectives and the related implementation modalities:

- **Consistency with local context and priorities and with EC development strategies in the country-** Were the interventions on the apprenticeship modalities and on the Observatory function a priority for the country? If yes, has the local government supported these expressed priorities? Were the interventions consistent with EC strategies in Syria?
- **Relevance of the typology of interventions** - Was the idea of intervening with an externally financed pilot project considered to be adequate to the Syrian context? Was it the best solution to pave the way for a future more comprehensive EU intervention on the Educational sector?
- **Relevance of the implementation modalities** - The implementation modalities chosen by ETF were the optimal solution for the achievement of the expected results?

A different approach has been chosen when relating with the preparation of the financial proposal of the MoVET. In fact, this ETF intervention must be seen only as a direct support to the Commission and, therefore, analysed accordingly. Nevertheless, as specified above, the characteristics of each ETF intervention have suggested us to conduct a separated analysis for each of the three project.

#### 3.1. PILOT APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

The specific objective of the apprenticeship scheme project was: *“To increase the capacity of all participating stakeholders to implement a sound pilot apprenticeship scheme by 2003 with the involvement of approximately 500 apprentices”*. This Relevance analysis takes into consideration the consistency of this objective with Syrian context and priorities, as well as the relevance of the interventions adopted in order to achieve this objective.

##### 3.1.1. Consistency with local context and priorities and with EC development strategies in the country

During our inception phase we had the chance to acknowledge that the request for the support in setting up an apprenticeship scheme came directly from the SPC in the year 2000. The EC judged this intervention consistent with the overall strategy in the region and in the country, the condition set by the Commission was to start up with a limited number of activities, that concerned only a limited number of sectors, with the involvement of the ETF.

In accordance to this scheme, the ETF staff involved in project implementation had judged it to be fully coherent and consistent with the Syrian needs and with the specific context on which the project was going to have effects on. In particular, the former country manager had the occasion to participate, as an observer, to the identification mission of a MEDA I VET project in Syria that

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was not approved, but which gave, to ETF staff, the chance to have a clearer picture of the Syrian context.

Therefore, during our field mission in Syria we had the objective of verifying this conclusions through the collection of i) local stakeholders' and EC Delegation points of view and ii) reliable quantitative and qualitative data on governmental intervention and commitment on the apprenticeship modalities. On this matter, relevant interviews have been conducted with i) the State Planning Commission, ii) The Ministry of Education, iii) the Chambers of industry and iv) the responsible for the implementation of the MoVET (EC Delegation and selected PMU).

This activity of data and information collection has proven us that all local stakeholders, at different level, have appreciated the ETF intervention on the apprenticeship scheme as particularly relevant and well timed.

- The **State Planning Commission** has declared that the modernisation of the entire VET system and the setting up of an apprenticeship scheme has been one of the highest government priorities since 3-4 years. The SPC has ensured the maximum possible commitment in the near future, in order to solve the existing implementation and organisational problems.
- The **Ministry of Education** has been pointed by other members of the apprenticeship scheme to be not fully cooperative. In fact, the staff appointed by the MoE has suffered an excessive turnover, causing serious delays and difficulties in project implementation. Nevertheless, the current position of the staff interviewed within the Ministry is of high commitment on VET and apprenticeship reforms.
- The people interviewed at the **Chambers of Industry** of Damascus, Aleppo and Homs have underlined that the lack of skilled and qualified labour force is one of the most challenging constraints for future industrial development in the country.
- The newly established **PMU** responsible for the implementation of the MoVET has spent the first months of its mandate in assessing the level of commitment of different public and private bodies to the entire VET reform and came to the conclusion that this modernisation process is highly demanded by the private sector and supported by relevant public institutions.

On the objective point of view, four main arguments support these overall shared declarations:

- The setting up of a €25 million project (the biggest EU project in the country) in support of the Modernisation of the local VET system, financed under the umbrella of MEDA II seems a tangible proof of the level of commitment of local and international institutions on the issue.
- The equipment of the two apprenticeship schools visited during our field mission, which seemed well above sufficiency, proving a remarkable budget allocation from the Ministry of Education<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, it has been impossible to obtain the exact figures of the budget allocated by the MoE to the schools included in the project. The team leader of the PMU of the MoVET shared with us the opinion that the schools were and are well equipped and that the effort done by the MoE is remarkable.

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- The spontaneous involvement of the CoI of Homs, which decided to enter the apprenticeship scheme, even when the ETF support had come to an end. Proving a local tangible need for this kind of reforms.
  - The decision to create (under the MEDA II project) an independent body responsible for the managing of all VET interventions in the country. This means that the MoE has declared to be ready to lose part of its control on the VET system, in order to facilitate the structural organisation and management of its activities.

Similarly, relevant functionaries interviewed at DG EAC, AIDCO and of the EC Delegation, pointed out how the activities of the PAS could be well regarded as consistent with the Programmes and strategies of the EC in the country. In fact:

- The person interviewed at DG EAC outlined how the DG does not have a conscious strategy in third and in candidate countries. In this sense, ETF, as a centre of expertise, plays a complementary role to DG EAC by disseminating the procedures and quality methodology standards abroad. In addition, ETF provides an “international point of view on VET issues when it is involved with other experts group such as CEDEFOP”.
- The interviews conducted at EU level outlined the appropriateness of the PAS intervention, with the objective of paving the way for future EC intervention in the field. Its consistency appears more evident when considering that the MoVET will take over the PAS.

In conclusion we believe that the intervention on the apprenticeship modalities implemented by ETF was a clear and recognised priority for the entire country and not only for the education sector. In addition, the PAS can be considered consistent with the Programmes and priorities of the EC in Syria while the new MoVET will ensure its support to the continuity of a reform process that has just started.

### **3.1.2. Relevance of the typology of interventions and of the implementation modalities**

The typology of intervention set up by ETF on the PAS can be summarised with the following statements:

- A small **technical assistance and institutional building** 3 year pilot project (around €970.000, plus internal ETF expenses, as presented in the Efficiency section) concentrated on three schools in Damascus and one in Aleppo (which came later upon a direct request of the ACI) and on four sectors (mould making, mechanical handling, automatic control and ready to wear clothes).
- A “**facilitator role**” of ETF, which assigned the entire project ownership to local institutions, mainly the SPC, the MoE and the CoIs. The modality chosen to assign the ownership to local institution has been the creation of a series of steering committees, follow-up bodies and working groups made of local staff coming from the different involved institutions (MoE, CoI, Schools, MoL, etc.)

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- A specific institutional work conducted by ETF in order to **set up a long-lasting relationships between public and private bodies** involved in the apprenticeship scheme. Other technical project activities were implemented with the support of selected external international experts, who were in Syria for around 1 week each month (often more than one expert per mission) for the entire project duration. These experts were mainly giving technical assistance on organisational modalities and implementation procedures.
  - Direct and continuous involvement of **internal ETF** staff in project activities.
  - Use of abroad **study visits** to present other countries solutions.

Even if the two involved chambers of industry have both declared that the idea of setting up an apprenticeship scheme in the country was in place since long time and that the great majority of technical capacities to implement this project were already available at country level, all interviewees recognised that without a direct intervention of an external international body it would have been impossible to actually launch (and keep alive) this reform with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

At the same time, all institutional bodies interviewed, agreed on the fact that a larger VET reform project would not have had the capacity to affect some specific institutional relationships, which has been, on the opposite, the case with the pilot apprenticeship scheme. The small project dimension and the small number of schools involved facilitated the direct contact between technical and political staff and helped the creation of an effective network of professionals.

All Syrian stakeholders interviewed outlined that the selected local working groups were much more active when the ETF experts were in place; while, during their absence, project implementation was sensibly slower. This issue and its budget implications are specifically addressed in the efficiency section, in any case, it is important to underline that, in principle, a project with such an important institutional building component, is very difficult to be effectively managed with the exclusive use of short term experts. The positive effects derived from the presence of a stable PMU were specifically outlined by the majority of the Syrian interviewees.

Nevertheless, the idea of making ETF act as an external facilitator, leaving the entire ownership of the project to local institutions has, in some cases, lead to a lack of overall coordination which was mainly underlined by the CoIs staff. The idea of setting up a working team of 14 people coming from different public and private institutions (7 from the MoE – functionaries, schools directors and teachers, and 7 from the CoI) was approved and considered positively at all levels. Even if, at the end, almost all the working group participants coming from the MoE left the apprenticeship scheme within the first year. In any case, we have to highlight that, at the moment of our field visit to Syria, the personnel of the MoE responsible for the apprenticeship and for the VET reform was all changed but that, in principle, their declarations of commitment to the issue were clear and strong.

During the implementation phase of the PAS, ETF did not act as a mere executing agency, but its internal staff was directly involved in many project activities, specifically at institutional building level. The declarations collected during our field visit have proven that, this direct intervention of internal ETF staff was accompanied by a particularly high (and not standard) level of commitment of the involved people. This has, surely, facilitated the creation of positive professional relationships, even if it has not been sufficient i) to ensure project continuity at the MoE level and ii) to make the necessary pressure in order to facilitate the creation of incentives

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for the local working group participants. Nevertheless, the innovative characteristics of the project and the difficulties to ensure continuity during the years, suggest that a direct participation of ETF internal staff has to be considered crucial in order to obtain the institutional objectives of the project. The particularly positive impression made by the former country manager on locally interviewed stakeholders strengthens this observations.

The typology of support and training given by ETF can be catalogued under the umbrella of organisational and managerial support and institutional building. ETF project did not provide any specific technical intervention on the sectors involved in the apprenticeship scheme; i.e. ETF experts trained local staff on how to revise curricula, but did not give direct support in the revision of any particular curriculum<sup>14</sup>. This choice seems perfectly coherent with the role of “facilitator” ETF has assumed and with the idea of a project ownership completely handled to local institutions. Nevertheless, it has lead to the achievement of smaller direct project results and has been criticised by the staff CoI and by some school teachers. The ET considers that a part of the intervention on organisational modalities could be substituted by some technical supervisors able to understand to what extent the technical work conducted by local working groups was solid and internationally recognised.

At EC Delegation level, the capacity of such kind of pilot intervention to ensure long-lasting effects on institutional relationships was seriously questioned. In fact, it has been underlined that the small project dimension (and the small number of schools involved) if, on one side, made the achievement of some institutional results easier, on the other side, did not reach a critical mass able to ensure the preparation of a solid ground for project of much greater dimensions. Our opinion is that the efforts made in order to improve the relationships between public and private institutions, highly appreciated by local stakeholder and specifically underlined by the former country manger, have to be taken as one of the most relevant project component, even if this was done on a small scale.

We believe that the typology of intervention selected by ETF for the PAS has revealed to be the optimal feasible solution in order to facilitate and strengthen the institutional network necessary for the setting up of a new apprenticeship modalities in the country. Even if these chosen modalities of intervention have, in some cases, lead to a slower project pace and to a series of organisational constraints. In addition, these interventions modalities of the pilot project have certainly helped the preparation of the ground for a more comprehensive EC intervention in the sector, even if, as expected, a bigger project will have to face additional constraints and difficulties. In fact, both Syrian political stakeholders and the international experts responsible for the MoVET declared that this new big project will not start its institutional activities from zero, but will take maximum advantages of what was previously done by ETF.

In conclusion, the apprenticeship scheme itself, its selected typologies of intervention and its specific implementation modalities seem to us to be relevant with the local context and with the declared objectives to be achieved. The level of commitment of local institutions and of the EC on the reform of the entire VET system is a clear evidence of the priority of this sector, while the non approval of a MEDA I VET project has forced the implementation of a pilot scheme aiming at creating the necessary institutional background for future reforms. The idea of assigning to local institutions such a high level of project ownership perfectly fits with the necessity of “working at institutional building level” more then directly on the apprenticeship one. This may

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<sup>14</sup> During the field visit, it has been possible to verify that the only direct technical support was given in the mechanical handling sector, which was indeed the one with lower local capacities. At the same time, the necessity of a technical supervisor role in the remaining sectors was often underlined and requested.

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have lead to smaller direct results, but has ensured a remarkable improvement in the dialogue between public and private sectors.

### **3.2. OBSERVATORY FUNCTION**

The specific objective of the setting up of an Observatory Function was: “*To support the development of Syrian capacities for information on labour market and needs forecast on employment, qualifications and training (the ‘Observatory’ function) through capacity building and expertise support actions*”. This section analyses the priority of this intervention and the relevance of the related implementation modalities.

#### **3.2.1. Consistency with local context and priorities and with EC development strategies in the country**

The setting up of an observatory function was proposed directly from ETF to the Syrian SPC, after the study called “*stocktaking of local capacities in monitoring VET system and skills need*”, which proved the need of a centralised information centre on LM data. The proposal was coherent with the contemporary implementation of the PAS and it is also to be intended as a preparatory work in order to provide useful information during the implementation of future and more comprehensive intervention in the VET and LM fields.

On this issue, the former country manager stated that “*The observatory addresses [...] the need to build in proper information and analysis systems that would allow to identify current and future needs of the labour market and translate that into VET provision needs*”. This means that, even if not directly identified and requested from the Syrian government, in a context where information on LM is hardly collected, disseminated with difficulties and often not fully relevant, the setting up of an effective OF could be considered particularly appropriate with the objective of supporting the modernisation process of the local LM and of providing useful information to all future activities on the issue.

In line with this observation, relevant local stakeholders declared to be fully collaborative and committed to the project. Nevertheless the understanding of the project objective itself and its basic knowledge was much lower then what we found for the apprenticeship scheme, especially within the MoE.

Objectively, it has to be underlined that the project suffered, since its beginning, of a lower than expected commitment from many of the institutions involved. In fact, even if the Observatory had the chance to take maximum advantage of previous positive institutional network created during the apprenticeship scheme, local organisational support was weak and the selected team had the availability of a physical place where to work only in the latest period, after 2 years of project implementation.

In other words, what seemed to be, in principle, of highest priority for the Syrian Government has turned to receive insufficient inputs, in terms of financial and human resources. It was, in fact, clear since the beginning that a significant organisational effort would have been necessary in order to overcome the obstacles deriving from the implementation of a new centre of information, independent but connected with all involved institutions. Some specific collected information can be used to support this observations:

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- Logistic difficulties and in particular: i) unavailability, for long time, of a proper physical place where to set up the Observatory, ii) unavailability of any internal network nor of the Internet connection, iii) availability of one singular telephone line.
  - Scarce knowledge of the characteristics of the Observatory at the Ministry of Education;
  - Scarce attitude, as of today, to deal with information and data dissemination of many local public institutions.

In addition, it has to be outlined that the idea of “developing a system for data collection and analysis on employment, qualifications and training” is, by definition, coherent with the EC plans in the country, which, among others, is implementing a 25Mln € project on vocational training, which, in the near future, will turn to the OF in order to obtain information and analysis.

### **3.2.2. Relevance of the typology of interventions and of the implementation modalities**

The Observatory function project can be seen as a small technical assistance project (around €525.000), concentrated on i) demonstrating the operational modalities of such kind of institutions working in different countries; ii) training the selected team on the basic issues necessary for setting up the function. In details, the institutional building for Observatory was concentrated on 3 main sectors: data analysis, data warehouse and websites design.

The general characteristics of the interventions selected for the observatory follow the same modalities already analysed for the apprenticeship, in particular:

- ETF has mainly played a “facilitator role”, assigning the entire project ownership to the SPC, responsible of coordinating all other involved institutions: MoE, MoL, Ministry of Industry. ETF institutional work had the chance, in this case, to take maximum advantage of the existing network created during the implementation of the PAS.
- The technical assistance provided was mainly focused on organisational issues and networking of different institutions. Specific technical support was given only on data analysis, while no support was given on data warehouse and websites<sup>15</sup>. External experts were engaged for particularly short missions (3 days on average).
- Study visits abroad have been used with the objective of presenting other countries’ solutions and modalities of intervention.
- A local working group was set up.

This section of the relevance analysis aims at understanding if those activities were the optimal ones in order to support the development of an Observatory function in Syria. Both the former and the current ETF country manager of Syria believe that, if available, a higher amount of funds should have been devoted to the Observatory function, stating that “*More funds would have allowed for a full time person to be posted in Syria [...]*” and that “*The concept of network needs to be promoted as it is new in the Syrian landscape*”.

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<sup>15</sup> For details, please, refer to the Effectiveness section, p.42.

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These observations reflect the fact that the project is suffering some implementation difficulties and delays, which could probably be overcome with a longer and more tailored external intervention. At the same time, we believe that, if a mere role of “facilitator” could be sufficient to support the initial phases of a long-lasting reform of the local VET system, reform that was already in the mind of many public servants and private entrepreneurs, this could hardly be the same when dealing with a completely new approach of providing sensible information. Since the beginning, it was excessively difficult to imagine the implementation of such a function without a stronger, and more externally driven approach and without a longer presence of the experts in the field. The still existing low level of confidence between different public institutions together with the limited habit to work “on demand”, are constraints extremely difficult to be overcome.

In details, the OF implementation modalities contain two obstacles which were clear and foreseeable since the beginning: i) the lack of a strong leadership among the high number of public bodies involved; ii) the lack of specific technical support on two of the three main identified components necessary for the development of the Observatory. These difficulties could be overcome with a more driving approach and a longer presence in the field, but, at the same time, only a strong commitment of local institutions can ensure the achievement of lasting results. Therefore, the approach chosen has to be considered the right one if the entire project objective is seen on a longer run basis, while this approach has to be considered “*too soft*”, if the objective was to set up an effective observatory able to provide useful and usable information during the implementation of the MoVET. In other words, the ET believes that the approach adopted by ETF, was the best possible approach for a centre of expertise with its characteristics. Nevertheless, maybe different results could be achieved with the intervention of a technical assistance agency, able of “pushing harder” for the project.

### **3.3. SUPPORT TO MOVET**

The support given by ETF to the MoVET was mainly concentrated on identifying the typologies of activities to be implemented and then formulate the related financial proposal and the necessary calls for tender. Those activities are compulsory and, therefore, it is not valuable to assess their relevance.

In any case, we believe it is particularly consistent with the overall EU strategy of intervention in Syria to assign these activities directly to the ETF, which had certainly the best possible background knowledge in order to carry on this task. In fact, being a EC centre of expertise, ETF is supposed to have not only technical knowledge, but also a clear picture of EC projects’ financing and implementation modalities.

## 4. EFFICIENCY

This chapter investigates whether ETF has efficiently implemented its activities in Syria, by assessing: i) the capacity of spending the funds available, through the outbreak of the level of commitments and paid and the amount of unspent funds; ii) the real projects dimension, as obtained by adding up the costs for internal human resources and for field missions; iii) the capacity of completing the activities within the forecasted time horizon.

### 4.1. CAPACITY OF SPENDING THE FUNDS AVAILABLE

This paragraph provides a description of the spending procedures used by the ETF in its activities in Syria, together with an analysis on the capacity of spending the available funds. The table below briefly summarizes the financial amounts available for each project and it puts into evidence the fact that the 3 main projects absorb around 97% of the total budget committed, while the PAS takes up more than 50%

	2001	2002	2003	2004	Overall
Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme	248.849,9	240.734,0	360.736,0	124.000,0	<b>974.319,9</b>
Observatory Function	114.494,0	120.578,4	145.907,0	144.700,0	<b>525.679,4</b>
Support to MoVET		93.050,0	200.700,0	58.850,0	<b>352.600,0</b>
Others	23.940,1	15.333,3	5.391,5	9.825,7	<b>54.490,7</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>387.284,1</b>	<b>469.695,8</b>	<b>712.734,5</b>	<b>337.375,7</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>

Within the ETF annual budgetary system, funds can be committed during year X (Committed C1) and, for the part not spent in the same year, automatically carried forward for commitment the following year (Committed C8) whereas, funds could be spent the same year they are committed (Spent C1) or the following one (Spent C8), out of the committed C8. In general, what is committed in year X (committed C1) has to be spent in the same year (spent C1) or in the following one (Committed C8 and Spent C8). The amount of funds not spent goes back to the overall Commission budget. This mechanism does not apply for the Italian Trust Fund (ITF), which, as described farther on, has financed part of the OF.

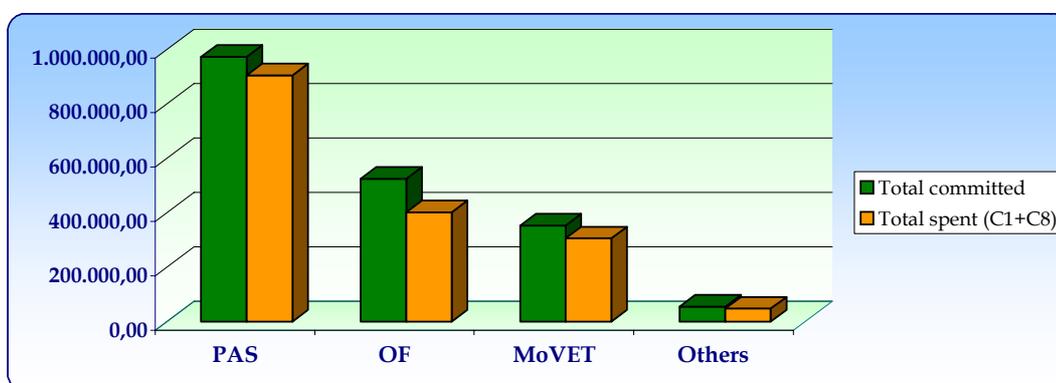
	Committed	Paid	Paid/committed
Pilot Apprenticeship scheme	974.319,9	905.645,9	93,0%
Observatory Function	525.679,4	402.021,1	76,5%
Support to MoVET	352.600,0	305.693,1	86,7%
Others	54.490,7	47.278,4	86,8%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>	<b>1.660.638,5</b>	<b>87,1%</b>

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Following the described budgetary system, we have been able to calculate:

- the paid/committed ration, which can be used as a proxy for the capacity of absorption of the committed funds<sup>16</sup>; and consequently;
- the amount of funds “unpaid”, i.e. given back to the overall Commission budget.

ETF shows a positive capacity of spending committed funds, outlined by an overall 87% paid/committed ratio. In this sense, the best performing project has been the Pilot apprenticeship scheme, for which 93% of the allocated money has been actually spent. The OF recorded a weaker performance: a number of its sub projects have suffered some difficulties especially in 2004, as in the case of the D07.02, with a Committed/paid ratio below 20% and as for D07.04, this latter being capable of spending 50% of what was committed.



The tables at the following page outline the size of funds “unpaid”, i.e., not spent neither in year X nor in year X+1. The first table describes the mechanism through which we obtained the yearly “unpaid” amount of funds, subtracting C1+C8 from the total commitments of year X and assigning it to fiscal year X (the year the funds were initially committed). The second table shows unpaid funds per project through years 2001-2004, while it also gives measure of their weights with respect to the projects size. ETF showed a good capacity of absorption, with around 13% of lost/committed ratio. However, a close look to the projects highlights that:

- **The PAS** (the project with the highest amount of funds assigned), absorbed 93% of the funds. In absolute terms, the capacity of spending of the Pilot project improved steadily from 2001 to 2003. In 2004, when ETF’s support have been extended to Aleppo, the capacity of spending the committed funds slightly worsened (around 8%).
- **The OF** level of “unpaid” funds, in absolute terms, almost doubled those of the PAS. Almost a quarter of the financial resources (23,3%) which the OF had access to, were given back to the Commission or, in the case of the ITF, remained within the availabilities of ETF. The ITF, which in 2003 and 2004 has financed the OF for as much as €134.550, did not require ETF to give money back after 2 years and, therefore, part of that 23,3% of “unpaid” funds are still available for the implementation of the OF. Nevertheless, we considered the X, X+1 rule

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<sup>16</sup> It was not possible to make any consideration on the capacity of committing planned funds given the lack of figures on programmed expenses.

as a benchmark of efficiency: hence, although the ITF's part of the funds not spent remained at the disposal of ETF still after 2 years, yet this outlines a non optimal capacity of absorbing (i.e., spending) the funds committed. All in all, the OF showed a capacity of absorbing funds poorer with respect to that of the other projects, which does not seem to be caused by higher than needed financial resources availability, because two out of the 5 ETF experts interviewed argued that, if a higher amount of funds was available, this should have been destined to the OF project. Most likely, causes have to be sought in a number of constraints occurred during the implementation phase, which delayed and partially hindered the well functioning of the project as a whole, reasons and dynamics being more extensively analysed in the chapter on effectiveness.

- The **support to the MoVET** training project has demonstrated a sufficiently good absorption capacity of 86.7%.
- **“Other” activities** absorbed 90% of the funds to them destined, in 2002 using an additional €50 off of the budget.

Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme					
	Committed	From prev Year	Paid same year C1	Paid following year C8	Unpaid
2001	248.849,9		111.488,6	110.708,0	26.653,4
2002	240.734,0	137.361,4	69.808,0	153.591,1	17.334,9
2003	360.736,0	170.926,0	276.349,6	69.864,3	14.522,2
2004	124.000,0	80.775,0	96.800,0	17.036,4	10.163,6
Observatory Function					
	Committed	From prev year	Paid same year C1	Paid following year C8	Unpaid
2001	114.494,0		50.000,0	33.451,0	31.043,0
2002	120.578,4	15.547,4	59.220,3	53.972,3	7.385,8
2003	145.907,0	58.905,5	87.926,3	32.900,0	25.080,7
2004	144.700,0	5.600,0	85.955,2	0,0	58.744,8
Support to MoVET					
	Committed	From prev year	Paid same year C1	Paid following year C8	Unpaid
2001					
2002	93.050,0		0,0	81.090,7	11.959,3
2003	200.700,0	93.000,0	148.006,0	30.849,3	21.844,7
2004	58.850,0	51.726,0	32.084,3	13.662,8	13.102,9
Others (Regional projects)					
	Committed	From prev year	Paid same year C1	Paid following year C8	Unpaid
2001	23.940,1		13.790,1	9.588,8	561,2
2002	15.333,3	10.150,0	4.600,0	9.501,6	1.231,8
2003	4.006,0	10.733,3	3.524,5	529,0	-47,5
2004	9.825,7	1.444,0	4.484,3	1.260,2	4.081,3

Funds not spent							
	2001	2002	2003	2004	Overall	Commitment	Unpaid/ committed
Pilot apprenticeship	26.653,4	17.334,9	14.522,2	10.163,6	68.674,0	974.319,9	7,0%
Observatory Function	31.043,0	7.385,8	25.080,7	58.744,8	122.254,3	525.679,4	23,3%
Support to MoVET		11.959,3	21.844,7	13.102,9	46.906,9	352.600,0	13,3%
Others	561,2	1.231,8	-47,5	4.081,3	5.826,7	54.490,7	10,7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>58.257,6</b>	<b>37.911,8</b>	<b>61.400,0</b>	<b>86.092,6</b>	<b>243.661,9</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>	<b>12,8%</b>

## 4.2. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECTS DIMENSION

The close collaboration with ETF and the field mission to Syria gave us a deeper understanding with regards to the typology of activities carried out by the agency's internal staff, which resulted to be involved not only in the management of the projects but also in providing direct technical support. In light of this fact, we re-calculate the actual projects dimension adding up: i) the cost of ETF internal human resources that have worked, during the period 2001-2004, to one or more activity in Syria and ii) the cost of their field missions.

In order to estimate the cost of the internal human resources, we collected, through questionnaires, the following information: i) the percentage of the yearly working time specifically dedicated to Syrians activities, ii) the position held in the project organisation and iii) the average gross salary per Temporary Agent category. The table below presents the results of this calculation:

ETF Staff	Month salary (€)	Annual salary for 13 months (€)	Time spent working on Syria (%)				HR cost (time spent*annual salary)			
			2001	2002	2003	2004	2001	2002	2003	2004
PM1	6.500,0	84.500,0	70%	70%	50%	10%	59.150,0	59.150,0	42.250,0	8.450,0
PM2	4.000,0	52.000,0	0%	10%	30%	30%	0,0	5.200,0	15.600,0	15.600,0
PM3	6.500,0	84.500,0	0%	0%	0%	10%	0,0	0,0	0,0	8.450,0
PM4	6.500,0	84.500,0	0%	0%	10%	30%	0,0	0,0	8.450,0	25.350,0
PM5	6.500,0	84.500,0	10%	10%	10%	10%	8.450,0	8.450,0	8.450,0	8.450,0
<b>Total</b>							<b>69.601,0</b>	<b>74.802,0</b>	<b>76.753,0</b>	<b>68.304,0</b>

The table shows the monetization of the time spent by the internal staff working on Syrian related activities. The peak of expenditure has occurred in 2003 when the OF started to be actually implemented. The table below presents the computation of the new projects dimension, which include also the expenditures for ETF internal human resources:

Year	Committed (€)	HR expenditure (€)	Committed+HR	HR/Committed
2001	387.284,1	69.601,0	456.885,1	18,0%
2002	469.695,8	74.802,0	544.497,8	15,9%
2003	712.734,5	76.753,0	789.487,5	10,8%
2004	337.375,7	68.304,0	405.679,7	20,2%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>	<b>289.460,0</b>	<b>2.196.550,0</b>	<b>15,2%</b>

Human Resources (HR) expenditures increase the dimension of the overall intervention of ETF in Syria by 15,2% and they provide a different perspective on the size of the ETF intervention. This significant HR expenses/Commitments ratio underlines the fact that ETF has, on one hand, managed the projects and, on the other hand, directly provided technical know-how to support the implementation of the activities. Generally, in the implementation of developing projects, we can assess that costs for management and backstopping represent around 8% of the total amount of funds.

We added to this calculation the ETF staff field missions expenses<sup>17</sup>, which include daily allowances, travel and accommodation expenditures. The table below presents a further, extended version of the projects dimension assessment which includes the costs for i) running and managing the activities, ii) internal human resources and iii) internal staff field missions.

Year	Committed (€)	HR expenditure (€)	Missions (€)	Total (€)
2001	387.284,1	69.601,0	13.559,0	470.444,1
2002	469.695,8	74.802,0	25.650,0	570.147,8
2003	712.734,5	76.753,0	58.137,0	847.624,5
2004	337.375,7	68.304,0	28.901,0	434.580,7
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.907.090,0</b>	<b>289.460,0</b>	<b>126.247,0</b>	<b>2.322.797,0</b>

As evidenced above, the activities in Syria between 2001 and 2004 absorbed, overall, about 2,3 million euros. In addition, the outbreak highlights a high number of days of field mission in Syria paid by the ETF internal staff. In fact, in 2003, 258 working days have been spent by ETF internal staff in Syria, proving, once more, how ETF internal human resources have dedicated a relevant amount of their working time directly to projects implementation.

#### 4.3. CAPACITY OF COMPLETING THE ACTIVITIES<sup>18</sup>

During the evaluation exercise, we collected data on the capacity of completing planned activities on time through a table of activities delivered to ETF project managers. The prompt and punctual completion of the table gave us a comprehensive picture of the projects implementation and allowed us the elaboration of the following 2 indicators: i) N° and Average % of the activities completed; ii) N° and Average % of the activities completed on time. The table below shows these data and indicators:

<sup>17</sup> Provided directly by ETF.

<sup>18</sup> The data and figures used within this paragraph are those provided by the ETF.

Project	N° of activities carried out	Completed	Completed		Still on going	% activities completed	% activities completed in time
			In time	Not in time			
Pilot Scheme	20	20	20	0	0	100%	100%
Observ. Function	5	4	4	0	1	80%	100%
Meda training	10	10	9	1	0	100%	90%
Others	5	4	3	1	1	80%	75%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>95%</b>

This table clearly puts into evidence an excellent capacity of ETF in completing the activities and in doing it within the planned time. As of 2005, 38 out of 40 activities have been completed (95%) while 36 out of these have been completed in time (95%). At project level, the PAS had a perfect performance, with all activities completed within the time forecasted; out of the OF activities, 1 is still going on (the HR survey in Syria, completed for less than 2/3) while the remaining ones have been completed in time; the support to MoVET has, at this stage, completed all of the activities and just one has been delayed beyond the programmed term (the preparation and launch of the tenders); among the other activities, only one is, at present, still being implemented (the assistance to EC in the implementation of ETE regional MEDA project)<sup>19</sup>.

These positive considerations have been confirmed by Syrian stakeholders, who pointed out a particularly good capacity of ETF in implementing the expected activities in time.

#### 4.4. CONCLUSIONS

The main findings of this chapter allows some final considerations:

- ETF has been **efficient in using the funds made available** by the Commission, being capable of spending little less than 90% of them. The mechanism of the year X and X+1 has probably played an important role. On one side, this relieved from the burden of “spend now, else give it back” thus giving the possibility of taking into account changes in the immediate needs and to readjust financial allocation accordingly. On the other side, it hindered ETF to procrastinate beyond a 2 years span. However, ETF projects did not show an homogeneous capacity of absorbing funds, the OF showing, in this sense, a slower spending path, maybe directly caused by the fact that part of the available funds (ITF) did not have to be given back after 2 years.

<sup>19</sup> This evaluation exercise covers the period 2001-2004, in any case, it has to be outlined that ETF is, at present, conducting other activities in Syria, as it responds to ad-hoc requests of the Commission such as contributions to the programming documents.

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- The **project dimension** calculations estimated the level of funds dedicated to Syrian activities to be around €2,3 million, rather than the €1,9 initially defined by financial figures we have been provided at the beginning. This underlines how ETF conducts an extensive number of tasks when carrying out an intervention, taking care of the managerial part while also directly providing technical assistance: its experts are as much involved as the external ones specifically contracted, the role of the agency being a centre of expertise that works upon request of the European Commission.
  - ETF has been very efficient in completing the activities within the planned time: to date, out of 40 activities, only 2 are still under implementation. This shows not only a good ability in carrying out activities, but also a capacity in setting objectives and expected results that are realistically achievable. However, activities have witnessed a number of constraints that partially hindered their effectiveness, as described in the related section.

## FEASIBILITY OF A LOCAL PMU FOR ETF INTERVENTIONS

ETF based its intervention on leaving the ownership of the activities to the local beneficiaries, providing technical assistance through experts, both internal and external, whose presence on the field was not stable, but limited to short periods (usually 5 to 10 days per month). However, many stakeholders interviewed have pointed out that a stable presence of the ETF would have facilitated the implementation of the projects thus leading to more effective results. This, indeed, i) entails a different logic of intervention, which probably gives up part of the ownership and of the sustainability while, eventually, fostering achievements in the short run; ii) could be intended as a donor like technical assistance intervention rather than a knowledge based assistance provided by a centre of expertise. As we want not to argue on strengths and weaknesses of these two diverse logic of interventions, yet we consider it useful to present a rough estimate of the costs ETF would have sustained in the case of setting up a specific PMU.

The establishment and running of a small PMU for 4 years would be instrumental for all of the activities implemented in Syria, in particular in carrying on coordination duties. We estimate that it would require: 1 long term expert, 2 short term

	N° of units	Cost (€month or unit cost)	N°months	Total (€)
LT expert	1	9000	48	432.000
ST expert	2	9000	12	216.000
Backstopping	1	800	48	38.400
Travels	112	400		44.800
Running costs		700	48	33.600
<b>Total</b>				<b>764.800</b>

experts, each one working 12 weeks per year and 1 full time secretary. The PMU would also entail running costs such as those for materials, equipment etc; we pictured that such a small PMU could be hosted in one room office within either the SPC or the MoE.

Our benchmark for the estimates of the operational and backstopping costs is the Syrian European Business Center – SEBC, that gave us indications about the current fees paid to international experts and to local employees in Syria and on the costs sustained in order to operate an office. The table above shows a breakdown of the forecasted costs.

The HR costs embed also allowances while travel expenses comprehend those for both long term and short term experts. In order to correctly assess the scenario with the presence of a PMU in Syria, we have estimated that: i) with a stable PMU, ETF internal staff would have to run only managerial activities, which we calculated to be 40% of the total ETF internal staff expenditures; ii) travel expenses of ETF staff could be cut, accordingly; iii) the total commitments of ETF could be cut of the expenditures for contracting external experts, a voice now embedded within the PMU costs. We never received these detailed figures, therefore we estimated it to be 30% of the total projects amount of funds.

The table shows the alternatives with/without PMU: according to this rough estimate, the total costs would have not differed considerably. This stresses out that running and operating a small PMU could have been somehow more effective, because it would have reasonably speed up the operations (many of the interviewees outlined the fact that activities lost momentum each time ETF expert would leave). In addition, it would have cut some travel expenses while ETF internal staff could have taken care only of the management of the activities. A stable presence would have allowed some economy of scale between the projects and it could have improved ETF responsiveness to some of the problems and demands coming from the Syrians beneficiaries yet, on the other side, it would have not allowed to leave such significant level of ownership to local stakeholders and it would have probably negatively affected the overall sustainability of the intervention.

	Without a PMU (€)	With a PMU (€)
ETF HR	289.460	115.784
ETF travels	126.247	50.499
Running activities	1.907.090	1.334.963
Cost of the PMU	0	764.800
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.322.797</b>	<b>2.266.046</b>

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## 5. EFFECTIVENESS

This chapter assesses the capacity of the activities carried out by ETF in Syria to achieve the expected results previously identified and agreed with local stakeholders. This exercise has been conducted on the basis of the **qualitative information** collected by the ET among the projects' beneficiaries together with information collected directly at the ETF. This analysis contains an assessment for each of the 3 projects, at two levels:

- **Activity level**, in order to investigate whether each conducted activity has been completed as expected and delivered the expected results.
- **Project level**, in order to assess the capacity of the entire project in achieving its specific objective. Obviously this analysis at project level can be considered much more solid for the PAS, which ended more than one year ago, then for the OF and the support to the MoVET, which are still on going.

Nevertheless, this effectiveness analysis could not contain any quantitative assessment because of a lack of detailed data, figures and information. In particular we could not elaborate any:

- A) **Cost effectiveness analysis**, because the financial expenditure figures we received from ETF were excessively aggregated<sup>20</sup> and did not provide details on: i) the project component each expenditure was referred to, ii) the typology of costs (experts fees, reimburses, subsistence expenditure, conference organisation, study visits, etc.) the overall amount of commitments and expenditures were composed of. At this stage we do not yet know if those figures are available at ETF, or if they are simply not collected<sup>21</sup>.
- B) **Multicriteria analysis**, because the modality of collecting information through interviews and questionnaires in Syria has revealed to be open and effective, but still excessively qualitative. Essentially, the lack of any "evaluation culture" among projects' beneficiaries, did not allow us to ask for categorised answers. In addition, the number of stakeholders and beneficiaries directly referable to each expected result was too tiny and therefore any multicriteria analysis would have been biased by one or two specific answer.

During the field mission to Syria it has not been possible to collect information on the following expected results, i) PAS Policy paper developed; ii) PAS Handbook on best practice legislation on apprenticeship schemes developed as basis for future Syrian legislation; iii) report drafting on next steps for Syrian Observatory function development by national taskforce; iv) MoVET project proposal and workshop with Syrian stakeholders to present it, which are, therefore, not included in the analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> As presented in the efficiency section, the only financial figures we received are i) the total amount of commitments (C1 + C8) and the ii) total amount of expenditure (C1 + C8) directly referable to Syria.

<sup>21</sup> It is clear that, if those figures are available and we receive them before the official end of the evaluation exercise, we will, indeed, modify our report in order to include this missing analysis.

## 5.1. PILOT APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

### 5.1.1. Activity level

In this section we assess if and to what extent each one of the 8 different activities of the PAS, divided into 3 components, has been effectively conducted by pointing out the major strengths and weaknesses, as perceived by the stakeholders and the direct beneficiaries, thus leading to assessing the capacity of the single activity to produce the expected results. The table below presents, for each activity, on the left column, the expected results and, on the right one, the capacity of producing the expected results.

Expected result	Capacity of producing the expected results
<b>Component – Framework Condition</b>	
<b>The number of participating companies in the scheme increased</b>	The number of companies that participated in the PAS has steadily grown up from 2001 to 2003, when it went from 19 to 32 whereas, in 2004, this number dropped to 21. As we do not have ETF expected result in terms of N° of participating companies in the scheme by the end of the project, we can not really assess effectiveness as a planned/actual ratio. Anyhow, we assume that the expectations were for a growing number of companies involved within the scheme: this was actually achieved for the first 3 years while, as in 2004 the number dropped almost to the initial level. Overall the goal could be considered not to be fully achieved. During our interviews to local entrepreneurs and CoI we did not receive any further explanation on this significant drop.
<b>Solid VET management structure set up and operative</b>	ETF has played a very important political role in boosting a change in the VET management structure, so as to make it closer to the market principles, more flexible, thus more effective: this is, in our opinion, and in that of the majority of the stakeholders interviewed, an excellent result. In addition, ETF has given a concrete contribution to foster the creation of an autonomous VET board, more flexible and with its internal rules for human resources management and for operational issues. This kind of reform, which has faced, to some extent, a resistance at institutional level, has been inserted in the MoVET and therefore, all involved institutions have accepted it.
<b>“Handbook of procedures” delivered.</b>	The handbook of procedures resulted to be useful, especially at school level. These, in fact, could benefit from it and actually applied some of the procedures in it included being also complementary to some of the courses provided. It was stated that the adoption of the new procedures has enhanced the efficiency in managing schools activities while teachers resulted to be satisfied due to an increased participation in the decisional processes.
<b>Teachers and trainers training</b>	
<b>Capacity of teachers, trainers and supervisors increased</b>	According to the interviews to trainees and to the declaration of the staff of the CoIs of Aleppo and Damascus, this activity has contributed to improve the students skills through an enhanced preparation of the teachers. However, the effectiveness of the activity itself has been, to some extent, hindered mainly because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The lack of economic incentives for the teachers who left second jobs in order to participate to the training activities, hoping to get financial advantages from it. A first extra benefit was paid by the CoI, but when this came to an end, many of the teachers left the programme. Although part of the interviewees claimed that ETF was not able to enforce their rights, in</li> </ul>

	<p>terms of higher salaries, in front of the MoE, it has to clear that this problem goes beyond the direct responsibilities of ETF, which is not in a position to change salaries nor to foster any change in this direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Training courses have been assessed to be too short in order to guarantee to teachers the technical preparation they needed to apply the newly developed curricula.</li> <li>➤ Lack of training in technical fields such as engineering production or for the supervisors.</li> <li>➤ Lack of an English language course, which would have been highly appreciated and useful.</li> <li>➤ The MoE staff appointed to participate to training activities showed a low level of commitment and a high degree of drop out.</li> </ul> <p>Nevertheless, the very of the stakeholders interviewed recognized how the overall quality of the courses has improved thanks to the enhanced skills of the trained teachers. In particular, training provided in organizational and managerial issues resulted to be highly appreciated by the schools, which pointed out as this has helped increasing the level of participation in the internal decision process, this providing a new perspective in running daily schools' activities. In general, courses have produced results at both technical and managerial level yet, the former resulted to be less appreciated: ETF should have probably provided more comprehensive and more intense technical training courses while paying more attention to the links between the enhanced curricula and the upgrading of the trainers.</p>
<b>Curricula development</b>	
<p><b>Revision of the existing curricula in the four pilot sectors and pedagogical processes to align them with the apprenticeship concept</b></p>	<p>The work conducted by ETF has evidenced the capacity of revising the existing curricula used in the traditional VET so as to make them suitable for the apprenticeship. The new curricula are devised so as to include both courses in class and training on-the-job for the students. According to the majority of the stakeholders interviewed, students skills have been improved mainly due to the following 3 reasons: i) a more advanced technical equipments which students can practice on, ii) the direct exposure to work in factories, where students practice 2-3 days a week, iii) more advanced subjects taught in classes.</p> <p>The interviewees also pointed out a number of problems related to the new curricula which have, in fact, limited their effectiveness: i) in some cases, curricula resulted to be too innovative (especially those for engineering production) for the know-how and the capacities of the teachers that had to apply them and, for this reason, only a low percentage (less than 20%, according to ACI) of the curricula was actually applied (mainly in the case of the machinist); ii) Severe delays in the delivery of the equipment requested from the Al Asadi school to the MoE, caused a slower path in the application of the new curricula<sup>22</sup>; iii) curricula designed for garment presented technical weaknesses, thus the ACI revised them (this new version is yet to be approved by the MoE in order to be adopted in both Damascus and Aleppo); iv) the new garment curriculum was conceived so as to teach just basic skills that would require less than the 3 planned years for the entire scheme.</p> <p>In addition, the introduction of the new curricula is, to some extent, hindered at ministerial level, where there is still a push towards the teaching of rather traditional subjects (such as religion).</p> <p>ETF has been effective, mainly, in managing the introduction of the new</p>

<sup>22</sup> This information was provided by ETF after the delivery of our first draft of the final report, but it was never outlined by Syrian stakeholders interviewed.

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	curricula which major strength is represented by the direct link between students and factories where the former can acquire an on-the-job training and can increase the chance to be hired. In conclusions, ETF has been effective when providing organizational and managerial support, while results are less positive, when dealing with more technical contents.
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### 5.1.2. Project level

Effectiveness at project level analyses if and how the PAS has: A) enhanced the management capabilities of the VET at institutional level B) improved the quality of the courses; C) facilitated the implementation of future intervention on VET in the country. In particular, the MoVET benefits from many of the achievements of this pilot action.

- A) **Management capabilities of VET.** The activities carried out by the ETF have contributed to boost a reform process in the VET sector mainly by introducing the concept of the apprenticeship, up to that point, not yet developed in Syria although devised since a long time. As recognized by many stakeholders, the intervention of the EU agency has given a crucial push to something that was perceived as necessary which, yet, never found the proper ground for an actual start up. On one side, ETF successfully created a direct link between the schools and the companies while, on the other side, it has been supporting the independency of the VET board. However, the objective of setting up a solid VET management structure has not been yet fully accomplished as in fact this activity is included in the MoVET. The follow-up office for the apprenticeship scheme has occurred to be not very solid due to continuous turnovers in the representatives of the MoE: for this reason, work had to be started over and over each time, causing, in addition, a loss in the credibility and in the accountability of such a structure.
- B) **Quality of the courses.** Given the technical weaknesses of some of the TTT courses and of the revised curricula, we can anyhow assess ETF as being effective in enhancing the quality of the courses. In particular, ETF capacity lays on introducing, *ex novo*, the apprenticeship scheme. In this sense, it has been effective in building on the existing curricula used for the traditional VET courses, upgrading and adapting them for the apprenticeship scope. The new scheme has given to students the skills of a worker who is ready to enter the labour market. Entrepreneurs have confirmed the effectiveness of the new courses by pointing out that the productivity of the new employees is, with no doubt, higher in the case of graduates from the apprenticeship scheme.
- C) **Facilitation of future VET intervention in the country.** We can affirm that the pilot intervention on apprenticeship has specifically paved the way for the implementation of the MoVET (according to the EC, the Pilot project “has fertilized the ground”). In particular, it has been:
- **Effective in choosing the pilot formula**, as stressed out by both Syrians stakeholders and the EC. In fact, the feasibility study for a first comprehensive MEDA I VET project in 2000 resulted to be negative, a choice was made so as to prepare a softer entry strategy through a project that would address only a low number of schools. The ET considers the choice of the pilot formula to be the most effective for the purpose, even if the EC Delegation pointed out that “the apprenticeship scheme could have been expanded to reach a critical mass of schools”.

- **Effective in initializing the Syrian environment** to a new concept and praxis turning the idea of an apprenticeship system in the country in an operative project. This has certainly supported the setting up of any modernisation process within the VET system.
- **Effective in providing the Commission with a blueprint** at the procedural and management level.
- **Effective in providing a “core group”** for cascade training.

## 5.2. OBSERVATORY FUNCTION

### 5.2.1. Activity level

To date, the OF task force, set up in 2003, is not yet fully operative and, therefore, it has not yet produced any output such as studies, analysis etc. The table below describes the capacity of producing the expected results for each one of the activities carried out by the OF.

Expected result	Capacity of producing the expected results
<b>Elaboration of a Report on the structures and mechanisms for information and needs forecast on employment, qualifications and training in Syria</b>	As stated by the ETF staff, the Report has been completed and delivered in time, Syrians stakeholders interviewed, have assessed it to have been effectively carried out. In fact, the entire identification and preparatory phase of this project can be regarded as successfully achieved.
<b>Awareness raising seminars and study visit</b>	<p>The study visit paid in Jordan has been perceived as effective and instrumental for the understanding and the learning process, representing a good practice to build on. Nevertheless, the OF team showed a deep discontent caused by the fact that they did not receive yet the reimbursement for visit expenses (around €650 per person).</p> <p>Therefore, even if this activity has been effective as it reached the objective of providing a learning experience to the team, the occurrence of inefficiencies in the financial management procedures produced negative effects in terms of credibility of the Observatory project <i>vis à vis</i> the OF team.</p>
<b>Setting up of the Syrian task force for the development of the Observatory function</b>	<p>The activity of creating and making operative the OF structure has faced a high number of difficulties that delayed and hindered its functioning. In fact, project implementation modalities suffered of technical and managerial lacks. The following constraints have been highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ During the field visit (Nov. 2005), the OF was still waiting for a permanent structure. While using an office at the SPC, the OF did not have its own direct telephone line and could not easily access to the Internet. By the beginning of July the team should be moving to the same building of the MoVET PMU. Syrian institutions did not give to this issue the importance and relevance they declared, while ETF was not accountable for enforcing this issue.</li> <li>➤ The technical support provided by ETF has been considered of high quality yet incomplete. In fact, the external expert in charge of the technical assistance provided a high quality and effective support in the field of data analysis whereas, for data warehouse and website design, the team lamented the lack of whatsoever support or training. When realizing this shortage, the</li> </ul>

	<p>OF team asked ETF, through the Prime Minister Office, to send over experts that could cover those two fields but ETF sent again the same expert thus not filling this technical training shortage. Therefore, we can assess ETF as being only partially effective in carrying out this activity as it provided only a part, yet effectively, of the technical support it was needed. In conclusion, ETF showed two main weaknesses: i) not being able to provide all the technical support needed, ii) not being capable of promptly respond to the shortage outlined during project implementation.</p> <p>➤ The accountability of the OF, already argued by the local stakeholders, has been hampered also by the ETF itself when it had to appoint someone to represent Syria in the EU regional MEDA project on VET, Observatory Function and IT. In fact, ETF turned to the ministries, which appointed a brand new unit, causing the OF team to claim that there was an overlapping of functions and a non recognition of its role. At the end, ETF worked this “diplomatic” mistake out by asking the SPC to appoint somebody from the OF team. This episode eventually had a negative effect on the accountability of the Observatory Function.</p>
<b>HR survey in Syria</b>	As of November 2005, this activity resulted to be still on going, thus it is not possible to assess its effectiveness.

### 5.2.2. Project level

The project had a slow and partially delayed start which hindered its well functioning , and it has not yet produced any relevant output. Therefore it is too early to assess its overall effectiveness.

The Observatory did not yet receive any request for information, although it is starting to work on a Report on “evaluation of apprenticeship system” for the MoVET. To date, only the MoVET PMU and the ETF had the chance to benefit from the services provided by the Observatory but, as the Team Leader of the MoVET stated, “what has been provided is not really focused: secondary data rather than information, with no analysis”.

On one hand it is too early to evaluate effectiveness, as the output produced is too low and, on the other hand, the few data collected and made available so far appear not to be really effective nor anyhow tailored to endow the users with the kind of analysis they need. However, the EC Delegation has shown a positive attitude towards the OF, asserting that “being the development of a VET strategy one of the component of the MoVET, the observatory could constitute a key element to provide useful inputs”: this underlines that the project is relevant yet so far not effective.

## 5.3. SUPPORT TO THE MOVET

### 5.3.1. Activity level

The identification and formulation of the MoVET has been concluded, while the support to the start up phase of the project is still on going. Nevertheless, it is possible to assess the effectiveness of this intervention both at activity and project level.

Expected result	Capacity of producing the expected results
<p><b>Identification phase Report and initial meeting with main Syrian stakeholders.</b></p> <p><b>Approval and adoption of the Financial Regulation by EC.</b></p>	<p>The interviews to the PMU of the MoVET, to the EC and to the EU Delegation outlined a good capacity of the ETF in effectively conducting the identification phase and in drafting the related Report. As the PMU of the MoVET pointed out, the report drafted by ETF is an “excellent work, factual, detailed, professional and solid”. In fact, they found it more useful than the EC successively elaborated Terms of Reference.</p> <p>In general, all stakeholders interviewed agreed on affirming that the ETF has carried out a high quality work. ETF has been regarded as being capable of creating close links and collaborations with the local stakeholders which allowed a deep understanding of the needs and priorities of the country.</p> <p>However, according to a representative of AIDCO, the closeness with the Syrians has, to some extent, biased ETF in such a manner that its point of view could not always be judged as fully detached, causing some repercussion when studying the feasibility of certain activities. In addition, according to the EU Delegation, ETF has shown a less than expected capacity in respecting the deadlines. The ET believes that the closeness with the Syrians stakeholders has to be regarded as an advantage, because it allowed a better understanding of needs and priorities, especially in a former centrally planned economy such as Syria. Therefore, we believe that ETF effectively conducted this activity.</p>
<p><b>Recruitment of the PMU.</b></p> <p><b>Setting up of the Steering Committee.</b></p>	<p>The overall capacity of producing documents consistent with those used by the EC has to be regarded as not fully satisfactorily. In fact, as the Commission stressed out, ETF has shown a tendency in overproducing tenders which, somehow, emphasized a lack of experience of the agency with regards to tendering procedures and, in general, in producing procedural rather than technical documents. This could be one of the reason for delaying the launch of the tenders, which also caused a postponement in the setting and starting up of the MoVET PMU.</p>

### 5.3.2. Project level

According to the perception of the relevant AIDCO representative we met, dealing with ETF, rather than with international experts working on framework contracts, has brought a number of comparative advantages:

- **Closer relationships with the local stakeholders**, which could count on a **continuous** if yet not stable presence of the ETF during the 4 years. In this way, both Syrians and the Commission could always refer to ETF also once an activity would be over; whereas, when an external contract expires, it is rather difficult to get a hold of the expert ever after. Being involved in many activities in the country allows ETF to provide also a **high degree of flexibility**.
- Working through ETF gives a **higher visibility** to the European Commission as, in fact, the former brings along a set of procedures and expertise in line with those promoted by the latter.

However, the representative of AIDCO interviewed in Brussels stressed out also a few **difficulties** it had in dealing with the European Training Foundation:

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- The intervention of the ETF has somehow ingenerated confusion, among Syrians stakeholders, on the different role of the EU and of the ETF, the former being the donor and the latter a center of expertise. The Commission, particularly clear-cut on this point, stressed out that ETF should have made this distinction as clear as possible whereas it probably benefited from the fact that, being confused with the EU itself, gave ETF the chance to build on a well known trade mark.
  - ETF has not been fully exhaustive and punctual in providing feedbacks to the Commission on the activities carried out.

In conclusion, ETF demonstrated a strong capacity and skill with regards to technical issues such as needs identification, background analysis, project formulation, whereas, on the other hand, it has not been as effective when dealing with procedural issues such as tender preparation and launching. Talking to both ETF and the Commission allowed us to seize a gap between the two, given by their different role: this has caused some problem of reciprocal comprehension and, especially from the ETF side, of understanding precise EC requirements in terms of procedures.

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## 6. IMPACT

As already stated in the Inception Report, the Impact of a series of intervention at country level can be analysed rigorously only if a significant period of time has passed since the end of the projects to be evaluated. This is not the case for this evaluation exercise, which is mainly concentrated on i) one project ended in 2004 (PAS), ii) one on-going project (OF), iii) one project ended in the year 2005 (Support to MoVET). In addition, the pilot characteristics of the projects implemented suggest us to consider their impact in the light of future EC interventions and, therefore, it would be more useful and rigorous to make this assessment when the main EC intervention in the field, the MoVET, will have produced its first outcomes. Nevertheless, we provide in this evaluation two different analyses:

- A) **Impact on final beneficiaries of the Apprenticeship scheme**, this is the only project that came to an end (and that produced tangible results) before our evaluation; therefore we present a brief analysis on the improvement of Human resources productivity in the schools and in the sectors involved by the project. The objectives of this analysis is i) to understand to what extent this project has produced tangible monetised benefits which are able, by themselves, to justify the initial investments; ii) to estimate a monetised value of the intangible effects produced by the project.
- B) **Overall impact**, is focused on the capacity of the ETF interventions in Syria to attain the specific objectives defined in our LF; therefore: i) assist EC centralised and decentralised services in the design of vocational training related MEDA projects, capitalising on previous pilot experience and maximising the impact of such projects (mainly related to PAS and support to MoVET projects); ii) contribute to national capacity to collect, analyse and forecast employment / training needs and enhance the compatibility of approaches at a Mediterranean regional level (mainly related to the OF).

### 6.1. IMPACT ON FINAL BENEFICIARIES OF THE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

This paragraph deems to provide **quantitative indications**, through a simple cost-benefit analysis, on the impact produced by the Pilot apprenticeship scheme on the beneficiaries. This analysis is instrumental to assess whether the returns directly related to the project are able to equal the investment necessary to foster them. The field mission in Syria gave us the opportunity to collect data and opinions necessary to develop this exercise, during which we use quantitative figures and estimations. We believe the exercise can be useful because it provides a (rough) assessment of the benefits produced by the PAS. It has to be borne in mind that the increase in revenue of the trainees was not specifically an objective of the PAS: however, it represents an indirect impact which the ET regarded as worth being analysed. In addition, it has to be outlined that the quantification of direct project benefits gives us an indication of the rate of return of these specific public expenditures. Therefore, if project expenses are higher than benefits, we have to assume that the difference was committed with the purpose of attaining “other” indirect effects which can have a future impact in the longer run.

### 6.1.1. Costs

The overall cost of the project is calculated in terms of money allocated by the EC, through the ETF, in order to start up and operate the scheme, i.e. the total commitments for the period 2001-2004, including the cost for ETF internal staff and of field missions, as presented in the table. As the commitments for the Pilot apprenticeship scheme equals around 50% of the total commitments for

	Cost of the Pilot apprenticeship scheme
Commitments (€)	974.319,9
HR expenditures (€)	144.730,0
Missions (€)	63.123,5
<b>Total (€)</b>	<b>1.182.173,4</b>

all of the projects implemented in Syria, we estimate expenditures for ETF internal staff and for the field missions accordingly. The cost ETF sustained to start up and operate for the first 4 years the new educational system is about 1,18 million. We did not take into consideration the expenses sustained by the Syrian Government in equipping the 4 pilot schools and in providing financial support to the trainers and the functionaries involved in the scheme. These expenses represent an external assumption of our analysis.

### 6.1.2. Benefits

According to the information collected, Syrian entrepreneurs are willing to, and in some cases are, paying around 40% higher starting salary for the apprenticeship graduates, as a recognition of their enhanced productivity, with respect to those coming from traditional VET schools. The latter, in fact, need a period of retraining of around 2 years before catching up to a full productivity level.

The benefit directly imputable to the Pilot project could be, therefore, considered in terms of the higher salary earned by a worker in recognition of his enhanced skills and productivity which avoid the entrepreneur to underpin the cost for his retraining. In particular, we estimated that a worker that graduated from the 3 years apprenticeship scheme can count on a starting salary of around €196/month, with a spread of €56/month from the standard base salary (€140/month).

In order to estimate the overall benefit produced by the PAS we need to calculate the number of apprentices that have graduated and hired by a company ever after. The last class we take into consideration is that of 2006 (i.e. enrolled in the academic year 2003/2004), because according to our analysis we consider the project to be sustainable only for 2 years after ETF left (see sustainability section for details). Anyhow, it has to be considered that all 4 schools are included in the MoVET. As we know that an apprenticeship cycle is 3 years, we have 4 groups of graduates in Damascus, 2003-2006, and one in Aleppo, 2006, where the first academic year has been that of 2003/2004.

	Year of graduation					Total
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2006 - Aleppo	
Trainees	97	86	155	85	110	533
Graduate	80	71	127	70	90	438
Hired	40	35	64	35	45	219

The sources for the figures presented in the table are: i) documents provided by ETF and ii) the information collected through the interviews to Syrians stakeholders. Missing figures (in orange) have been estimated, as follows:

- We assumed that the drop/out rate remained stable between 2003 and 2006 (18%)
- We assessed a stable hired/graduated ratio of 50%, which derives from a survey<sup>23</sup> conducted by the ETF in 2003 and confirmed by our interviews.

Overall, out of the 533 trainees that enrolled during the four years, 2001-2004, during which ETF launched and managed the project, around 438 should be graduated by 2006 and approximately 219 hired by a company afterwards.

Considering that a worker coming from the apprenticeship scheme earns a €6/month spread with respect to a normal base salary, in 1 year (12 monthly pay) he gets €672. Therefore, the benefit produced by the PAS for the year 2003 is calculated as €672 multiplied by 40 (€26.880), the number of graduates hired by a company. Same logic is applied for the following years.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2006 -Aleppo	Total
Sum of spreads for the current year (€)	26.880	23.695	42.706	23.419	30.307	-
Cumulative spreads year X, X+1...X+n (€)	26.880	50.575	93.280	-	-	<b>147.007</b>
Overall higher income	26.880	77.455	170.735	-	-	<b>317.742</b>

The first row shows the benefits gained every year by the apprenticeship graduates. We assumed that all the hired apprenticeship graduates will work in the company for, at least, the following 4 years. Therefore, in the second row, we calculated the cumulative sum of the yearly benefits so that, for example, in 2005, this is given by the sum of the benefits earned by the class of 2005 (€42.706), plus the €23.695 gained in 2005 by the class of 2004, plus the €26.880 gained in 2005 by the class of 2003.

The third row cumulates the **total benefit**, in terms of higher salaries, up to that year: we estimate that the total benefit, as of 2006 directly accountable to the Pilot apprenticeship project is slightly lower than **€318.000**.

According to the model above developed, the benefit produced by the PAS, in terms of higher salaries, does not equal the initial investment yet, it is possible to estimate the year when the benefit will overcome the cost. To develop this analysis we have estimated:

- The number of hired graduates coming from the 3 schools of Damascus as the average of the previous 4 years (45), stable every year.
- The number of hired graduates coming from the school of Aleppo as stable over the years (45)

<sup>23</sup> For figures, the ET referred to an assessment of the PAS trainees status (graduates, drop out, still training) as it resulted from a file provided by the ETF and simply named "Figures1".

This means that from the class of 2007 on, 90 graduates are hired each year by a company which is willing to pay €6/month spread on the base salary.

	2007	2008	2009 	2010
Sum of spreads for the current year (€)	60.480	60.480	60.480	60.480
Cumulative spreads year X, X+1...X+n (€)	207.487	267.967	328.447	388.927
Overall higher income	525.228	793.195	1.121.642	1.510.569

The table above shows the calculation between 2007 and 2010, when the monetized benefit should overcome the initial ETF investment of €1,18 million, i.e. the PAS would reach its “break even point”, where revenues equals the costs, by 2009/2010.

This simple model shows that:

- If direct effects of ETF intervention on the Syrian apprenticeship scheme will be sustainable until 2010, then the project would be able to pay its own costs. Otherwise;
- The positive effects of the project have to be seen not only as direct effects, but as the capacity of supporting the future implementation of further intervention alike, therefore, taking into account its intangible effects.

The sustainability analysis conducted suggests us that the benefits directly imputable to the PAS should not go beyond 2006; therefore, the cost of intangible positive effects can be assessed as the difference between the overall cost and the benefits gained in terms of higher salaries before 2007: €1.221.573 - €317.742 = €903.832<sup>24</sup>.

This analysis shows how the project main objective (assist EC centralised and decentralised services in the design of vocational training related MEDA projects) has been achieved through the implementation of a series of activities capable of producing direct tangible effects. Therefore, when calculating European public expenses mobilised in order to achieve the PAS objective, we should reduce them of the direct monetised effects of the project (around ¼ of project total budget), because those effects are, by themselves, a positive added value for the Syrian economy.

## 6.2. OVERALL IMPACT

This paragraph deems to provide an assessment of the impact produced by the ETF intervention, as a whole, on the Syrian environment. Specifically a qualitative assessment has been done in order to verify whether the 3 projects implemented have been able to:

<sup>24</sup> This very simple model does not consider: i) the inflation rate, ii) the level of commitment of Syrian institutions and stakeholders, iii) the possibility that other schools can use part of the activities developed by ETF to modernise their VET system (i.e. Homs)

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- Assist EC centralised and decentralised services in the design of vocational training related MEDA projects.
  - Contribute to national capacity to collect, analyse and forecast employment / training needs and enhance the compatibility of approaches at a Mediterranean regional level.

The activities implemented and the diplomatic action carried out by the agency have, to some extent, fostered the relationships among institutions, both at public-public and public-private level. Public-private dialogue has received an important push thanks to ETF intervention and, in particular, thanks to the PAS. As stated in the effectiveness section, ETF had to start up almost from zero, and it has still been able to achieve important results. The PAS has boosted the dialogue between the Governments, the schools and the entrepreneurs, which is already producing workers whose skills are closer to those demanded by the factories. The enhanced dialogue will, most likely, produce effects on the structure of the VET system as it is feasible to foresee a shift to a more demand driven one.

ETF activities have certainly given momentum to a more general reform process in the VET/LM sector especially for management issues. At schools level, the new management procedures introduced by the ETF could produce an impact in terms of establishing more “democratic” procedures: as teachers have the possibility to give their contribution to the decisional process this can, on one hand, ameliorate the quality and the variety of the programmes and strategies undertaken.

Therefore, the ET believes that the specific objective of assisting the EC in the design (and the implementation) of VET related projects has been positively achieved. In this sense, the results of the activities carried out so far represent a remarkable starting point on which the new projects can build on as, in fact, they have boosted a reform process at different levels (schools, entrepreneurs and institutional), making the relevant Syrian environment acquainted with the path it should follow for the coming years. This observation is confirmed by the following issues:

- The EC declared that the pilot actions have, indeed, “*fertilised the ground*” for future activities, even if the excessively small dimension of the intervention was outlined as a possible shortage of the PAS;
- The newly established PMU of the MoVET has declared that the work on apprenticeship conducted by ETF is already facilitating the implementation of their duties;
- The EC and the PMU of the MoVET have both recognised the quality of the support given by ETF in the preparatory phase as being particularly high, even if, some shortages on the knowledge of EC procedures were outlined.
- The on going process of setting up an independent body responsible of the Syrian VET system can be seen as a tangible impact of ETF, able to facilitate future EC interventions.

On the other hand, the ET believes that it is too early to assess the capacity of the OF project to contribute to national capacity to collect, analyse and forecast employment / training needs. In fact, the Observatory (which is now operative) has not yet produced any study and/or analysis. Objectively, the ETF intervention on the OF has certainly contributed to the setting up of a

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centralised unit responsible of managing and analysing training and LM needs, but the impact analysis should be conducted verifying if the quality of the Observatory products responds to the needs of relevant local public and private identified beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, the OF is now almost fully operative and, therefore, the ET believes that, in the near future, the first requests of data and analysis will be delivered and, consequently fulfilled. Probably a process of learning by doing will be then commenced.

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## 7. SUSTAINABILITY

The characteristics of the activities implemented in Syria, which are, in most cases, intended to prepare the implementation of larger and more comprehensive interventions, tend to reduce the meaning of a sustainability analysis. In fact, in this specific case, the capacity of having long lasting effects (also after the end of the availability of project funds) loses part of its importance, because the Syrian VET and apprenticeship system will be supported for five more years, thanks to the implementation of the more comprehensive MoVET.

In fact, this project will include in its activities a specific support to all 4 apprenticeship schools which took part in the pilot phase as well as to the school of Homs, which has just adopted the apprenticeship modalities elaborated with the support of ETF. At the same time, even if not yet fully operative, the Observatory Function will certainly benefit from the implementation of the MoVET, which will request, at a certain stage, the availability of crucial data and information on the LM.

These observations are suitable for both the PAS and the OF. While, it is clear, that the support given by ETF to the preparation of the tendering procedure and the setting up of the PMU of the MoVET is not an activity that is intended to have long lasting effects after its end.

Nevertheless, during our interviews we have asked to Syrian and European stakeholder to assess to what extent structural changes and reforms, facilitated by ETF, were able to keep on track also without the existence of a larger EU project on the VET system<sup>25</sup>. In particular, the questions were concentrated on the capacity of:

- The four **apprenticeship schools** included in the Pilot scheme to keep on updating their curricula in closed connection with the representatives of the CoI and to keep on training their teachers;
- The **OF task force** to be fully operative and its accountability recognised by all ministries;
- The private and public institutions (mainly SPC; MoE and CoIs) to set up an **independent body** responsible of managing and implementing any reform related to **the national VET system**.
- The **Homs apprenticeship school**, just entered into the scheme, to be able to make the apprenticeship modalities operative even if there was no support from the future MoVET.

The answers received were mainly outlining the fact that the on going reform process is still encountering such a high number of difficulties that, without any additional external support, many of the implemented activities would lose their pace in the short run. In particular:

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<sup>25</sup> In some cases, this activity resulted to be partially meaningless because many of the stakeholders interviewed, especially those who did not participate to the pilot phase since the beginning, had not a clear perception of the difference between the pilot project and the actual implementation of the MoVET.

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- **Schools directors** underlined that without a system of financial incentives for teachers it would be impossible, in the future, to keep on training teachers and to convince them to work for apprenticeship schools instead that for other traditional VET schools.
  - **Apprenticeship responsible at the CoIs** outlined that the revision of curricula can be done by them also without any additional external support, but that the transformation of these revisions into school programs is something that needs a strong collaboration of the MoE, which, on their opinion, would not be assured without the EU intervention.
  - **The OF task force** is still lacking credibility among local ministries and it is highly probable that without the MoVET, it would never gain the necessary momentum in order to be considered the central information point on LM issues.
  - The design of **independent body responsible for the VET system reform** has been assigned to the head of the follow up office for the apprenticeship, a person that has followed the implementation of the pilot phase since the beginning. His impression is that without the presence of a comprehensive external project aiming at modernising the Syrian VET system, he would not be in a position to foster this reform in the coming years.
  - **The director of the apprenticeship school of Homs** declared that they entered into the scheme, hoping that they would have been involved in the MoVET, as it has actually happened.

In conclusion, the activities carried out by ETF in Syria, if taken alone, can not be considered sustainable in the medium long run, meaning that their positive results will not last for more than 2-3 years after the end of the financed projects. But, as stated above, the point of view of a sustainability analysis in the case of pilot interventions should be modified; in fact, a pilot action is not expected to be sustainable by itself, while its results and the related experience gained should be useful for future activities. In any case, the conclusions on the sustainability of the two analysed projects have to be separated.

The ET believes that sustainability has not to be considered one of the objective of the PAS. The main purpose of the project was to pave the way for future wider programmes and, in this sense, we have already specified how the PAS prepared the implementation of the MoVET and therefore, in this sense, it is perfectly acceptable to carry out a set of activities that can not be evaluated alone, but need to be framed in the wider context of European intervention

Differently, the analysis on the OF needs to take into consideration the fact that, even if the observatory can be ancillary to the implementation of any future activities in the field of Labour Market, the set of activities carried out should have been sustainable by itself.

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## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1. CONCLUSIONS

This Final Report (FR) contains the evaluation of the entire set of activities implemented by ETF in Syria between 2000 and 2004, our findings can be summarised as follows:

- The overall **intervention logic** in the country, even if never comprehensively designed, derives from the implementation of 3 main projects (aggregation of 22 *administrative projects*, as explained above), which have been planned in strict connection with the Syrian stakeholders (mainly SPC) and the European Commission and Delegation. As a result, the entire set of activities conducted in the country can be considered coherent with the needs expressed by all relevant stakeholders. Nevertheless, it has not to be forgotten that ETF operates (in Syria and elsewhere) under primarily specific requests of the European Commission, with little margin to steer or shape such requests; therefore, the Logic of Intervention of ETF activities is not entirely under its control.
- The **difference between ETF** interventions and its role *vis à vis* the European Commission is, sometimes, confused. In fact, at a first look, the projects' documentation received from ETF, did not underline specifically its role in support to the Commission, outlining, only objectives and results intended to have positive effects on local institutions and beneficiaries. This observation has been confirmed during i) our interview in Brussels where a representative of AIDCO told us that "in Syria, stakeholders tend to make confusion between EU and ETF, missing to clearly distinguish between the two while, the different roles, the former being a donor, the latter a centre of expertise, should be unmistakably remarked: ETF itself ought to be more effective in underlining this difference"; ii) the field mission in Syria, where, some of the interviewed stakeholders (especially those not involved in the activities since the beginning) did not clearly understand the difference between ETF and EU activities. However, it has to be underlined that, to some extent, the documents we received were mainly meant for internal project use and not for distribution outside.
- The **external relationships** ETF has managed to set up with local stakeholders are exceptionally positive. During our mission in Syria, we had the chance to meet many professionals who collaborated directly with ETF internal staff, and all of them underlined the capacity of ETF to understand local needs and to cooperate at any level. At the same time, we found a sort of "dissension" between ETF and the Commission, as outlined by a EC civil servant in Brussels which substantiate mainly on: i) the lack of communication of results between ETF and the EC (especially on the OF); ii) an excessive "closeness" between ETF and local counterparts, which led, in some cases, ETF to have a "non *super partes* role". On this issue, our conclusion is that, if well managed and communicated, this particularly positive capacity of collaboration between ETF and local stakeholders should not be seen as an obstacle, but taken as an advantage able of facilitating future interventions.
- All projects implemented can be considered to be **highly relevant** for the local context, being this relevance recognised and identified by all local and European stakeholders. Nevertheless, in the case of the OF, initial constraints were probably underestimated and the technical support provided was not always completely focused. In addition, the basic ETF choice of acting only as facilitator, without taking a stronger leadership in the OF, may have had a negative effect on the project implementation, at least on the short run.

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- ETF has demonstrated, in Syria, a good capacity in **completing all foreseen activities**, but a non homogeneous aptitude in **spending the amount of money initially committed**. In fact, while the PAS has absorbed nearly 100% of the funds available in the foreseen timeframe, the OF project has encountered some difficulties in spending part of the available funds in the initially planned schedule.
  - The **Pilot apprenticeship scheme** demonstrated a good capacity of achieving expected results, especially if the project is analysed as a pilot intervention aiming at paving the ground for the future MoVET; the pilot intervention, in fact, has succeeded in strengthening the dialogue between public and private institutions involved in secondary technical education (mainly MoE, schools and CoIs), facilitating their collaboration. At the same time, the results obtained by the activities included in the three project components (Framework Condition, Teachers and Trainers training, Curricula development) have been generally appreciated by local counterparts, even if it is too early to assess the effects they had on the local apprenticeship system. The effectiveness of the activities implemented during the **OF project** are much less assessable, mainly because the project now steadily in place has to be considered positively, while the still existent lack of credibility of the observatory will certainly negatively affect the project capacity of achieving results. The activities conducted in supporting the EC for the **formulation and the financing phase** of the **MoVET** have been considered particularly positive on the technical point of view; some remarks have been pointed out by the EC stakeholders, who found ETF not sufficiently aware of EC internal procedures. However, this could be partially due also to the fact that this support was not initially foreseen in the EC request but added at a second stage with limited time for the Foundation to have proper training on those issues.
  - The **impact** of the ETF activities in Syria is particularly difficult to assess, considering that one project is not yet completed (OF), while the first apprentices have finished the 3-year period of school in 2005. Nevertheless, the activities implemented have certainly facilitated the implementation of the MoVET (“fertilized the ground” is the expression used by the EC Delegation interviewed), even if, objectively, the dimension of the pilot intervention is not sufficient in order to allow a complete mainstreaming of best practices elaborated. The evaluation also contains a brief quantitative analysis aiming at assessing the number of apprentices needed in order to re-pay the investments of the project. This analysis, although biased by the shortage of quantitative figures, suggests that the benefits directly imputable to the PAS should not go beyond 2006 and, therefore, that the project produces benefits in terms of higher salaries which are lower than the initial investment. Nevertheless, the difference between costs (estimated as equal to €1.221.573) and direct benefits (estimated as equal to €317.742) seem to the ET a positive and effective investment which will produce future benefits in terms of smoother and more efficient implementation of the MoVET.
  - If projects are assessed as stand-alone interventions, they result to be **non-sustainable** in the medium run. In fact, although we have collected many positive comments on the results the projects have achieved, all local stakeholders interviewed outlined that without a further intervention in the sector, many of the progresses obtained would fade away. Nevertheless, we believe that the implicit characteristics of the PAS (which represent almost 50% of the total amount committed in the country) allow us to consider this intervention as a preparation for a future bigger programme, and therefore, its sustainability should be evaluated together with the more comprehensive intervention. This approach should not be followed for the OF, which, in its initial design, was supposed to be sustainable at the end of the ETF intervention.

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- The availability of **objective data and figures** for this evaluation has resulted to be partially incomplete. The way ETF collects and manages its own budgetary figures could be integrated with more details on specific activities, in order to allow a deeper evaluation at national level. In this sense it has to be underlined that, towards the end of our evaluation exercise, we have received a table with the details of the 2005 expenditures related to Syria. The ET believes that this table could be considered particularly useful for future evaluation because it improves the understanding of the budgetary structure of each intervention. At the same time, the absence of any monitoring system at country level, which should report the physical advancements of any project implemented, has forced the evaluators to base all their comments on qualitative information, which sometimes were not homogeneous. Probably, the limited availability of funds does not allow the creation of a monitoring system organised at country level, nevertheless, this absence does have a negative effect on the overall quality of the evaluations conducted.

In conclusion, the ETF pilot apprenticeship scheme and Observatory Function projects have to be considered a positive first step in order to sustain the transition of the local labour market economy towards a market driven system. Nevertheless, these positive results obtained by each of the two projects have to be intended mainly on the:

- **Improvement of the dialogue** between different institutions;
- **Fertilization of the ground** for the implementation of further intervention in the sector.

In other words, if we intend the pilot scheme as a preparation for the future apprenticeship system in the country, then it is certain that the set up of working teams coming from different institutions represents an achieved result that will last for a significant number of years; while, at the same time, if the project was evaluated only taking into consideration its direct effects on the apprentices, the expenses seemed to be non justified. The Evaluation Team believes that the project has to be assessed also for the indirect benefits it produced on teachers, schools management and on the general environment. Nevertheless, the excessive turnover experienced from the staff of the MoE, outlines how the importance of the project was not sufficiently perceived by the Ministry and how the value of fiscal incentives was underestimated by project responsible.

In the same way we can intend the OF as being a positive experiment of network creation for the dissemination of relevant information, this even if, up to now the OF did not produce any tangible result. Moreover, it has to be underlined that the choice of leaving the ownership of any activity to local stakeholders and beneficiaries (as requested to centre of expertise like ETF), has the positive characteristic of raising local awareness and capacities, but, at the same time, it has the constraint of not having a full control on project pace and improvements.

The formulation of the MoVET and the support to its starting phase, has been perceived as technically perfect by the team of the PMU just installed in Damascus, while the EC staff underlined a non sufficient knowledge of EC procedures. Therefore, we can conclude that ETF has a particularly good capacity of acting as a centre of expertise, but is less prepared to deal with European procedures and bureaucracy.

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## 8.2. RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE ETF INTERVENTION

The recommendations we are including in this FR are not concentrated on the weaknesses or the bottlenecks of singular interventions, mainly because they are now passed and the specificities will never be the same. Therefore, the recommendations we are proposing can be considered as general, with the objective of improving the modalities ETF carries out its projects, in Syria and elsewhere.

- A) We noticed a non complete collaboration between ETF and the different bodies of the EC, and specifically the local Delegation. This behaviour has been outlined during our mission to Brussels where a EC civil servant pointed out that “ETF acts as if it was a financing agency and not a “centre of expertise”. This is confirmed by the way ETF deals with local stakeholders, acting autonomously, without any specific “political” support coming from the EC. In addition, we recorded a lack of a communication procedure, aiming at keeping informed the EC on the results obtained by the on-going projects. Nevertheless, during our final feedback seminar, ETF involved staff outlined how: i) the partial lack of communication was, mainly, due to the high number of projects followed by each officer at the EU Delegation, associated with a significant level of turn over of its staff; ii) ETF has organized a number of meeting and workshops which, many times, EC representatives have failed to attend. In general, ETF obtained a significant level of visibility in the country, but part of the effectiveness of the interventions has been lost because of a lack of political weight during project implementation. This observation is also proved by the fact that all interviewed stakeholders noticed that activities were going much smoother and faster when the ETF working group was in place, while they were much slower during their absence. Therefore, if it was not possible (or non convenient) to set up a specific ETF-PMU in the country, it would have been efficient to obtain a higher involvement of the local Delegation in project follow up activities.
- B) As clearly outlined in our Inception Report, the intervention of ETF in Syria (and probably elsewhere) have to be evaluated at two different levels: i) the capacity of the pilot actions to “pave the way” for future developing projects in the country; ii) the direct results obtained by each project. We believe that in the Syrian case, this dichotomy was not sufficiently underlined in the ETF project documentation. As a result the role of the agency does not appear to be clear *vis à vis* external stakeholders (local beneficiaries and counterparts, evaluators, other donors, etc.)
- C) ETF should clearly distinguish between a support provided only in terms of managerial and organisational issues and an assistance which embeds also specific technical issues. In fact, we have noticed that the organisational support was complete and well appreciated, while some specific technical issues were not thoroughly conducted and created unfulfilled expectations among beneficiaries.
- D) We believe that the strong capacity ETF has demonstrated in communication and working with local stakeholders should be seen as an advantage. However, it is important that ETF will in the future be able to exploit this ability keeping its *super partes* point of view, accepting the limits some times deriving from its role of a centre of expertise which operates in support to EC policies.

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### 8.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EVALUATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL

This evaluation is, mainly, based on qualitative information gathered during the different field visits paid by the ET. In fact, the absence of an ETF **internal monitoring system** was already outlined in the evaluation ToR, as a result, the entire exercise has been designed, since the beginning, assigning a particular weight and importance to the activity of information and data collection. Nevertheless, as stated in the conclusions, the ET believes that information and data made available by the contracting counterpart (ETF) was not always complete and excessively scattered. Therefore, in this section, we provide a list of shortages encountered, together with simple suggestions aiming at filling some of the most relevant gaps. However, it is clear that the design of a comprehensive internal monitoring system able to report physical, financial and procedural advancements of each projects' activity would be the optimal solution.

A) The **documentation** provided to the evaluators in order to develop the initial desk phase of the exercise was excessive, not fully tailored and not well organised. In fact:

- the modalities financial figures and relevant documentation are collected at ETF do not appear to be adequate for a centre of expertise which is responsible to carry out interventions of the dimensions and the duration experienced in Syria. Probably because of the way ETF has to manage its budget, “administrative projects” are designed in order to be no longer than one year, even when the whole intervention lasts four years, as it is the case for the PAS. These “administratively-based” organisational modalities have probably forced the project managers to set up many different interlinked projects, which are nothing but the same comprehensive intervention divided into administrative units. This characteristic is not clearly understandable by an external public and have caused, to the evaluators, a significant delay in the first desk phase. In addition the aggregation between related project has been done with the support of the former country manager. We do not know if, in her absence, this exercise would have been feasible. As described in the report, the intervention of ETF in Syria is composed by 22 “administrative project”, but 97% of the commitments are referred to three interventions. In order to avoid this confusion (between administration and technical necessities) and misunderstanding, in the future, it would probably be sufficient to **assign a second internal code** able to explain the linkages between the projects<sup>26</sup>.
- The **amount of documents**, related to the implementation of activities in Syria, we received was **enormous** (around 75 Mbites for 530 files<sup>27</sup>). This set of information was not always relevant, in general, non well organised, and not always referable to one project. We believe that, given the small dimension of these evaluations at country level, it is not necessary to provide the evaluators with **all** the documents elaborated during the project implementation, and that the desk phase could be much more efficient and less time consuming (for the evaluators and for the ETF Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation unit), if the basic documentation for the evaluation would be limited to the following:
  - i) list of projects, with a clear indication of interlinked projects and of the figures related to commitments and payments referred to the following categories: expertise, workshops,

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, the codes of the projects included in the PAS are the followings: A55, A56, B03.01, C03.01, D05.02, a simple indication at the end of each project code could be useful in order to easily classify the five interventions under the same umbrella.

<sup>27</sup> These documentation included: different revisions of the same document, internal communications, official letters of intent signed by the counterparts, all versions of PP presentation used for difference conferences and meetings, internal timetables, mission reports, etc.

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study visit, publication, others<sup>28</sup>; ii) description of each project (each ToR had a project presentation at the beginning), upgraded yearly<sup>29</sup>; iii) list of internal and external experts involved in the project; iv) list of requests and modifications expressed by beneficiaries and counterparts, with annexed the activities undertaken to respond accordingly; v) any internal evaluation elaborated. Additional documents, such as mission reports, workshop presentations, seminar agendas, etc. should be made available only under specific requests.

- The two **projects' aggregations**: i) ETF services 1, 2 and 3 and ii) the division between regional and national interventions, were, for evaluation purposes, rather meaningless. In fact, the whole PAS and the whole support to the MoVET are catalogued under service 1, while the whole OF is catalogued under service 2, while regional interventions count for less than 5% of the total commitments. Therefore, we could not extrapolate any additional relevant information by aggregating data into these available categories. In order to facilitate the evaluation, we believe that a desegregation under strand 1 – support to the commission, should be done. In fact, the difference between projects which are in support to the Commission but have also direct effects on local beneficiaries, like the PAS, and projects that are merely in support of future EU interventions (like the support given to the MoVET) should be clear since the beginning. At the same time, we believe that, in strand 2, a distinction between information, analysis and capacity building should be done.

B) The **financial figures** the ET has been provided with were excessively aggregated and, in addition, it resulted difficult to assess the level of investment actually referable to Syria due to many regional activities., in fact:

- The first project tables received contained 12 national projects (for a total commitment of around €1.500.000) and 18 regional interventions (€735.000). A further analysis proved that that **only part of regional interventions could actually be referred to Syria**. Therefore, we have asked to the former ETF Syrian country manager, and currently MEDA area manager, to support us in the assessment of the real percentage of regional interventions referable to Syria. The result of this analysis was that not all of the initially indicated projects included activities in Syria and that only a portion of the other projects was, representing not more than 5% of total commitments (around €90.000). In the future, it would be important to collect and prepare a correct financial table of national and regional projects to be included in the ToR.
- The financial tables we received only contained the **aggregated figures** of commitments and expenses (C1 + C8) of all the “administrative projects”; further financial desegregation have been made available at the end of the evaluation exercise. They have been used to elaborate the box provided at the following page. We do not know to what extent the extraction of these figures was complicated, but we do believe that they should be used for any future evaluation at country level. In addition a cost-effectiveness analysis could have been conducted if financial figures (expenses) of each project were divided by project component (for the PAS) or activity, again an information probably already available, but not standardised.

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<sup>28</sup> This list has been provided for Syria in the year 2005 as an example and seems to us particularly useful and clearer if compared to the project list received at the beginning.

<sup>29</sup> We have been informed that, starting from 2006, a specific progress reporting template to be used for each project has been adopted.

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- The financial tables we have been provided with did not contain any reference to the **amounts planned** to be committed. For this reason, the ET has not been able to draw any indication on ETF capacity of committing the planned financial resources. It would be important, in the future, to understand whether this figure is actually available and used for the financial arrangements between the EC and the ETF. It seems that those figures, which would allow external auditors to have a deeper understanding of the general financial advancement are not, until now, organised at country level.

#### DETAILS OF BUDGETARY STRUCTURE

At the end of the evaluation exercise we received a table containing a more detailed and disaggregated presentation of the budget of each project implemented in Syria. A slight re-elaboration was needed in order to assign each activity to one of the 3 main projects identified in Syria. The table specifically contains the following information: i) Commitment number, ii) Title of the expense, iii) Typology of expense (divided into expertise, publication, study visit, workshop, other), iv) Project, v) Amount committed, vi) Title (which indicates the origin of the funds available, in Syrian case Title 3 indicates the EU funds, while Title 4 indicates the Italian Trust Fund), vii) Year of the commitment

The figures provided are not complete and do not contain details of related payments, but they are sufficient in order to give some suggestions for future possible analysis and evaluation to be elaborated for Syria and elsewhere. In particular, the following aggregations appear to be relevant:

- The aggregation of **commitments and expenses for the different typology of expenses** gives an idea of the main characteristics of each project and indicates the importance in the use of workshops, study visits and publications with respect to the expenses dedicated to “expertise”. Country and projects comparisons could be assessed. In Syria it seems that around 92% of commitments are dedicated to buy “expertise”. In the PAS and in the support to MoVET the importance of workshops, study visits and publications appears extremely marginal, while in the OF workshop organisation counts for around 5% of the activities. Regional activities are mainly dedicated to publications.
- If available, the comparison between the **capacity of spending available funds divided by expenses category** can give an idea of main financial constraints that are eventually slowing project implementation.
- The **origin of funds**, explicated by the column Title, could be useful in order to assess the weight of external funds for each country (i.e. ITF). In Syria, the weight of the ITF can be assessed as being around 6-7% of total commitments.
- The possibility to link the expected results with the related amount of money committed and spent, would allow the evaluators to set up a **cost-effectiveness analysis**, which, if compared with international standards or with similar ETF activities could provide useful indications. It seems to the ET that the title of the financed activities specified in the provided table is sufficient in order to link activities to project components and expected results, nevertheless the link should be successively checked with the support of ETF staff.

- C) The **evaluation work plan**, proposed by the ET in the technical offer, did not take into consideration the fact that it would have been useful to discuss again with the ETF staff some specific issues raised and outlined by Syrian stakeholders. Therefore, we propose, for

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future evaluation, to foreseen two visits to ETF, one at the beginning of the desk phase and the second after the field mission paid into the country under evaluation.

In addition, it has to be outlined that the typologies of intervention carried out by the ETF are extremely particular; therefore, any comparison of the assessed evaluation criteria (in particular when referring to project expenses and related efficiency) with other project implementing agencies may not lead to interesting results. Therefore, we suggest that, in the future, evaluations at country level are not assigned separately for each country, but in group of 3-4 comparable (geographically, culturally, and economically) countries. This will allow the evaluators to make comparisons and internal benchmarks while it will allow the ETF to rank performances, which, on the other hand, are not comparable when the evaluations are conducted by different external experts. If ETF can not (or does not want to) follow this recommendation, we think it is necessary that the internal ETF evaluation unit defines more specific guidelines for evaluation at country level, based on quantitative indicators initially agreed. Useless to say that this process would need, at first, the set up of a centralised monitoring system.

## **ANNEXES**

**ANNEX 1.**  
**LIST OF PERSONS MET**

<b>PERSON</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>INSTITUTION AND POSITION (WHEN AVAILABLE)</b>
Mrs. Raghad Abbas	Syria	Adnan Merdan School (Teacher)
Mrs. Kawkab Al Aboud	Syria	Follow up office for Apprenticeship scheme - Damascus Chamber of Industry (HRD department and apprenticeship coordinator)
Eng. Assem Al Ayoubi	Syria	Observatory function Unit (Member of the Unit/Ministry of Industry)
Mr. Ahmad Al Hafez	Syria	Homs Chamber of Industry (Board member)
Mr. Anton Al Jouni	Syria	Aleppo Chamber of Industry (Apprenticeship scheme coordinator)
Mr. Aziz Al Sekhneh	Syria	Aleppo Chamber of Industry (BoD member/BoD member of Al Assadi School Aleppo)
Eng. Bassam Albaba	Syria	Ministry of Education (Supervisor)
Eng. Ahmad Ba'ayoun	Syria	Damascus Directorate of Education (Apprenticeship supervisor)
Eng. Bassam Bahsas	Syria	Observatory function Unit (Member of the Unit/Ministry of Education)
Ms. Fabienne Bessonne	Syria	EC Delegation (Head of operational section "Human and social development)
Mr. Talal Boufi	Syria	Observatory function Unit (Member of the Unit/Ministry of Industry)
Mr. Jean Marc Castejon	Turin	ETF (Country manager for Syria)
Mrs. Noha Chuck	Syria	SEBC (National team leader)
Mr. Haitham El Yafi	Syria	Damascus Chamber of Industry (Board member)
Ms. Lara Elsayed	Syria	Aleppo Chamber of Industry (Garment technologist and marketing consultant)
Mr. Ghassan Flaihan	Syria	Adnan Merdan School (School director)
Mr. M. Ghrewati	Syria	Aleppo Chamber of Industry (board member)
Mr. Abdul Rahman Habboush	Syria	Al Asadi School Aleppo (School director)
Mr. Henrik Huitfeldt	Syria	ETF (Project Manager)
Mr Moustafa Kazziha (Head of the Apprenticeship unit)	Syria	(Head of the Apprenticeship unit) Follow up office for Apprenticeship scheme - Damascus Chamber of Industry
Mr. David Kerrigan	Syria	PMU of the MEDA II

		Modernization of VET project– Syria (Procurement advisor)
Mrs. Khawla Konyna	Syria	Observatory function Unit (Member of the Unit, Damascus Chamber of Industry)
Mrs. Milada Luka	Syria	Adnan Merdan School (teacher)
Mr. Alastair Mac Phail	Brussels	EC DG Education and Culture
Mr. Gerard Mayen	Turin	ETF (Team leader for Observatory function development/Regional dimension)
Mr. Issam Oghli	Syria	Syrian State Planning Commission (Head of PMU of VET programme/Local team coordinator for the Observatory function)
Mr. John Paton	Syria	SEBC (Director)
Mr. Sergio Piccolo	Brussels	EC Aidco (Vocational training and labour market department for MEDA)
Mrs. Nazek Rahmeh	Syria	Observatory function Unit (Member of the Unit/Ministry of Labour)
Mrs. Sabine Roth	Syria	PMU of the MEDA II Modernization of VET project– Syria (LM expert, GFA consulting group)
Mr. Nouredin Salaheddin	Syria	Ministry of Education (Director of vocational and technical education)
Mr. Maher Shiekh Najieb	Syria	Ministry of Education (Deputy Director of VT department)
Eng. Ahmad Shrineh	Syria	National steering committee for the apprenticeship scheme (Member of the committee and production manager of Alhafez Company)
Mrs. Eva Jimeno Sicilia	Turin	ETF (Head of Med Department)
Mr. Karl Axel Skjølstrup	Turin	ETF (Country manager)
Mrs. Bushra Zakzak	Syria	Damascus Chamber of Industry (Assistant of group advisor)
Mr. Nawaf Zedan (Training and development manager)	Syria	SEBC (Apprenticeship scheme coordinator)
Mr. Mohammad Zeidan	Syria	Aleppo Governorate of Education Department
Ms. Sara Zennaro	Syria	EC Delegation (3 <sup>rd</sup> secretary – Social and human development)

Please note that Ms. Fabienne Bessonne and Mr. Jean Marc Castejon have not been personally met but they completed the submitted questionnaire.

**ANNEX 2.**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED TO ETF STAFF**

Name	
Last name	
Position held inside ETF	
Gross salary	

Between 2001 and 2004, which of the following projects implemented by ETF in Syria did you work at?

- Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- Observatory function
- Support to MEDA training project
- Other (specify)

.....

1. In general, do you think that ETF activities could be considered consistent with the EC intervention in Syria?

- Yes, ETF activities are 100% in line with the overall EC intervention logic
- Yes, they are pretty much consistent with EC intervention logic
- No, ETF activities appears not to be totally consistent with EC intervention logic
- No, ETF activities do not appear to be consistent with EC intervention logic; ETF intervention logic would need to be fine tuned, accordingly

2. In your opinion, at the time activities were started how was the understanding by ETF of the needs of the Syrian VET and labour market system?

- Definitely appropriate
- Sufficient
- Sufficient, but to some extent improvable
- Needed to be further deepened

3. Which of the following projects do you think to be the most consistent with regard to the needs and priorities of Syria in VET and labour market system?

- Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- Observatory function
- Support to MEDA training project
- Other (specify)
- All

Explain why

.....

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4. In your opinion, have the activities of ETF contributed to a better understanding of the overall EU strategy in Syria among the relevant stakeholders?

- Yes, more than it was expected   
Yes, as expected   
Not really   
Difficult to say

5. And among the final beneficiaries?

- Yes, more than it was expected   
Yes, as expected   
Not really   
Difficult to say

6. What is, in your opinion, the added value represented by ETF in supporting the European Commission delivering its activities in Syria?

7. As a percentage of your yearly working time, how much time did you dedicate to Syria?

<b>Percentage</b> <b>Year</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
0-20%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20-40%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40-60%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
60-80%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
80-100%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. In the remaining time, which other country/ies was your working time dedicated to?

9. Do you think that the availability of higher amount of funds would have increased the effectiveness of the activities undertaken, by ETF, in Syria?

- Yes, definitely   
Yes, slightly   
No, the amount of funds was appropriate   
No, same results could have been achieved even with less money

10. If more financial resources were available to ETF for Syria, to which of the following would you think that they should be devoted?

- Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- Observatory function
- Support to MEDA training project
- General organization and management
- Other (specify)

.....

11. In your opinion, as a result of the ETF activities in Syria has the dialogue between public and private sector:

- Definitely increased
- Slightly increased
- Remained the same
- Has worsened
- Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

12. In your opinion, which of the following projects have met major consensus? Please, rank 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is maximum consensus:

<b>Project / Stakeholder</b>	<b>Among Syrians</b>	<b>Within EC</b>	<b>Within ETF</b>
<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Observatory function</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Support to MEDA training project</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. How do you assess the impact of the ETF support to the implementation of the MEDA training project in Syria?

- Excellent, more than expected
- Good, as expected
- Fair, but less than expected
- Difficult to say
- Comments (if any)

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14. How do you assess the overall impact produced by the Pilot apprenticeship scheme on the overall Syrian VET/LM system?

- Excellent, more than expected
- Good, as expected
- Fair, but less than expected
- No impact produced
- Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

15. How do you assess the impact produced by the Observatory function project on the general Syrian VET/LM information system?

- Excellent, more than expected
- Good, as expected
- Fair, but less than expected
- No impact produced
- Difficult to say

16. Do you think it is already possible to anticipate structural improvements in the Syrian labour market as a result of ETF intervention?

- Yes, it is already possible to notice some structural changes
- It's too early: structural changes will occur within 3-4 years
- It's too early: structural changes will occur in the long run
- No structural changes will be, reasonably, produced by ETF intervention

Comments (if any)

17. Do you think that the following projects will keep the track once ETF support will come to an end?

<b>Sustainability</b> <b>Project</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme in Damascus</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme in Aleppo</b>	<b>Observatory function</b>	<b>Support to MEDA training project</b>
Yes, and further improvements are foreseen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, if major stakeholders will keep the same commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, although further support by ETF would help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, without further support by ETF it will not	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. Do you think that, in general, the Syrian environment will be able to sustain the reform process in the VET/LM system once ETF support will come to an end?

- Yes, and further improvements are foreseen
- Yes, if major stakeholders will keep the same commitment
- Yes, although further support by ETF would help
- No, without further support by ETF it will not

Notes and comments

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**ANNEX 3.**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED TO SYRIANS STAKEHOLDERS**

Name	
Last name	
Work place	
Position held inside the work place	

Between 2001 and 2004, which of the following projects implemented by ETF in Syria did you participate to?

- Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- Observatory function
- Support to MEDA training project
- Other (specify)

.....

1. In your opinion, at the time activities were started how was the understanding by ETF of the needs of the Syrian VET and labour market system?

- Definitely appropriate
- Sufficient
- Sufficient, but to some extent improvable
- Needed to be further deepened

2. In general, do you think that ETF activities could be considered coherent with the Syrian national strategy in the fields of Vocational education and training (VET) and labour market reforms? (i.e., ETF activities have been in line, not overlapping nor out of target with respect to the national strategy)

- Yes, ETF activities are 100% in line with the overall Syrian national strategy
- Yes, they are pretty much consistent with the Syrian national strategy
- No, ETF activities appears not to be totally consistent with the Syrian national strategy
- No, ETF activities do not appear to be consistent with the Syrian national strategy; ETF intervention logic would need to be fine tuned, accordingly

3. Which of the following projects do you think to be the most consistent with regard to the needs and priorities of Syria in VET and labour market system?

- Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- Observatory function
- Other (specify)
- All

Explain why

.....

- 
4. With respect to the expectations you might have had before the intervention, how do you judge ETF' effectiveness in achieving the results?

Excellent, ETF was more effective than I expected

Good, ETF was as effective as I expected

Fair, but ETF was less effective than I expected

Poor, ETF was not effective in achieving results

5. Do you think that a bigger effort by ETF, in terms of technical assistance and support, would have increased the effectiveness of the activities undertaken in the period 2001-2004?

<b>Opinion</b> <b>Project</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme</b>	<b>Observatory function</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Yes, definitely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, slightly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, the support provided was appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, same results could have been achieved even with less support by ETF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. In your opinion, as a result of the ETF activities in Syria has the dialogue between public and private sector:

Definitely increased

Slightly increased

Remained the same

Has worsened

Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

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7. In your opinion, as a result of the training received by teachers and trainers, has the quality of the related vocational courses improved?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, slightly
- No, it remained the same
- No, it has worsened
- Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

8. In your opinion, as a result of the revised curricula, has the quality of the related vocational courses improved?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, slightly
- No, it remained the same
- No, it has worsened
- Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

9. Do you believe that the Pilot apprenticeship scheme has actually facilitated the implementation of the more comprehensive MEDA training project?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, slightly
- No, it did not affect the implementation of the MEDA training project
- No, it has negatively affected the implementation of the MEDA training project
- Difficult to say

Explain:

.....

10. Do you think that future EC interventions in the country will benefit from the improvements to the VET/LM information system introduced by the Observatory function project?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, slightly
- No, probably not
- No, definitely not
- Difficult to say

Explain:

11. Compare the level of understanding of the EU human resources development strategy in Syria, before 2001 and today; rank 1 to 5, where 5 is perfect understanding and 1 is no understanding at all:

<b>Understanding</b> <b>Year</b>	<b>Before 2001</b>	<b>Today</b>
Your level of understanding		
Stakeholders level of understanding		
General beneficiaries level of understanding		

12. If your comprehension of the EU human resources development strategy in Syria, that of the stakeholders and that of the general beneficiaries has improved since 2001, to what extent do you think this has to do with ETF intervention?

<b>Opinion</b> <b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Your comprehension</b>	<b>Stakeholders in general</b>	<b>General beneficiaries</b>
The comprehension of the EU HR development strategy in Syria has improved thanks to ETF intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The comprehension of the EU HR development strategy in Syria has improved thanks also to ETF intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The comprehension of the EU HR development strategy in Syria has improved due to several reasons and, in a slight way, also due to ETF intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The comprehension of the EU HR development strategy in Syria has improved, but not thanks to ETF intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. In your opinion, which of the following projects have met major consensus? Please, rank 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is maximum consensus:

<b>Project Stakeholder</b>	<b>Your consensus</b>	<b>Within stakeholders</b>	<b>Within general beneficiaries</b>
Pilot apprenticeship scheme			
Observatory function			
Other (specify) ...			

14. How do you assess the contribution in shifting to a more demand driven VET system produced by the Pilot apprenticeship scheme?

- Excellent, a cornerstone in order to reform the VET system
- Good, an important support in order to reform the VET system
- Fair, but not fundamental in order to reform the VET system
- Poor, it has been not helpful at all in order to reform the VET system
- Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

15. How do you assess the impact produced by the Observatory function project on the general Syrian VET/LM information system?

- Excellent, a cornerstone in order to raise the quality of the VET/LM information system
- Good, an important support in order to raise the quality of the VET/LM information system
- Fair, but not fundamental in order to raise the quality of the VET/LM information system
- Poor, it has been not helpful at all in order to raise the quality of the VET/LM information system
- Difficult to say

16. Do you think it is already possible to anticipate structural improvements in the Syrian labour market as a result of ETF intervention?

- Yes, it is already possible to notice some structural changes
- It's too early: structural changes will occur within 3-4 years
- It's too early: structural changes will occur in the long run
- No structural changes will be, reasonably, produced by ETF intervention

Comments (if any)

17. Do you think that it is already possible to appreciate any improvements in the human resources productivity in Syria as a result of ETF intervention?

- Yes, it is already possible to notice some improvement in the HR productivity
- It's too early: improvements in the HR productivity will occur within 3-4 years
- It's too early: improvements in the HR productivity will occur in the long run
- No improvements in the HR productivity will be, reasonably, produced by ETF intervention

Comments (if any)

18. Do you think that the following projects will keep the track once ETF support will come to an end?

<b>Sustainability</b> <b>Project</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme in Damascus</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme in Aleppo</b>	<b>Observatory function</b>
Yes, and further improvements are foreseen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, if major stakeholders will keep the same commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, although further support by ETF would help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, without further support by ETF it will not	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Do you think that, in general, the Syrian environment will be able to sustain the reform process in the VET/LM system once ETF support will come to an end?

- Yes, and further improvements are foreseen
- Yes, if major stakeholders will keep the same commitment
- Yes, although further support by ETF would help
- No, without further support by ETF it will not

Notes and comments

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**ANNEX 4.**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED TO EC STAFF**

Name	
Last name	
DG	
Position held	

1. In general, do you think that ETF activities could be considered consistent with the Syrian VET/LM system national strategy?

- Yes, ETF activities are 100% in line with the overall Syrian national strategy
- Yes, they are pretty much consistent with the Syrian national strategy
- No, ETF activities appears not to be totally consistent with the Syrian national strategy
- No, ETF activities do not appear to be consistent with the Syrian national strategy; ETF intervention logic would need to be fine tuned, accordingly

2. In your opinion, at the time activities were started how was the understanding by ETF of the needs of the Syrian VET and labour market system?

- Definitely appropriate
- Sufficient
- Sufficient, but to some extent improvable
- Needed to be further deepened

3. In your opinion, the activities implemented by ETF under the two main capacity building projects (Pilot apprenticeship scheme and Observatory Function), were appropriate in order to pave the way for the implementation of larger EC interventions in the country.

	<b>Pilot apprenticeship</b>	<b>Observatory Function</b>
Definitely appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficiently appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not Sufficiently appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not appropriate at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. If ETF did not exist, to whom do you think that the European Commission would turn in order to obtain the same typology of support for its activities in Syria?

- To private consultants
- To its internal resources
- To its internal resources, after further strengthening relevant expertise
- It would create an EU agency, specialized in vocational education and training reforms

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5. Is there any region or country where EC, in sustaining interventions in the field of VET/LM system, has turned to expertise other than that of the ETF? Explain:

6. How do you assess ETF overall efficiency in conducting the activities in Syria?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

7. In your opinion, which of the following would it be more likely to be appreciated by EC with regards to ETF activities in Syria?

- Less money spent and same results
- More money spent and proportionate improvement in the results obtained
- Keep the path undertaken so far

8. Do you think that the availability of a higher amount of funds would have increased the effectiveness of the activities undertaken, by ETF, in Syria?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, slightly
- No, the amount of funds was appropriate
- No, same results could have been achieved even with less money

9. Do you think that a stable presence of ETF experts in Syria would have increased the effectiveness of the activities it carried out during the period 2001-2004? Please, explain:

10. ETF assistance has focused mainly on procedural and managerial aspects: do you think that it should have addressed also technical issues (i.e., production engineering, website designing, data warehouse etc.)?

- Yes, it should have covered also all of the technical aspects
- Yes, it should have covered also some of the technical aspects
- No, but for future interventions ETF could take it into consideration
- No, technical aspects did not compete to ETF

Comments

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11. If more financial resources were available to ETF for Syria, to which of the following would you think that they should have been devoted?

- Pilot apprenticeship scheme
- Observatory function
- Support to MEDA training project
- Other (specify)

12. How do you assess the support of ETF to the implementation of the MEDA training project in Syria?

<b>Opinion</b> <b>Indicator</b>	<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>Capacity of respecting the deadlines</b>	<b>Correspondence with the expected results</b>	<b>Capacity of producing documents (tenders, financial proposals) consistent with those used by EC</b>
Excellent, more than expected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good, as expected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair, but slightly less than expected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor, definitely less than expected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Did the documents produced by ETF require time in order to be adapted to the EC needs?

- No, the documents were totally in accordance with EC requirements
- Not very much, although it has been necessary to spend a bit of time in adapting them
- Yes, EC had to spend some time in adapting the documents to its requirements
- Yes, a lot of time has been spent in order to adapt them to EC requirements

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14. Do you think that the dialogue and the cooperation between public and private sector in Syria has increased over the past 5 years? If so, has ETF contributed to this achievement? Please, explain:

15. Do you believe that the Pilot apprenticeship scheme has actually facilitated the future implementation of the more comprehensive MEDA training project?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, slightly
- No, it did not affect the future implementation of the MEDA training project
- No, it has negatively affected the future implementation of the MEDA training project
- Difficult to say

Comments (if any)

16. Do you think that the MEDA Training project will benefit from the establishment of the Observatory function? Please, explain:

17. How do you assess the role of ETF as a facilitator of the European Commission projects and policies in Syria?

18. Overall, which of the following could be regarded as an impact of the activities carried out by ETF in Syria? (You can mark more than one)

- The spreading up of a reform process in the VET sector
- A higher confidence, among Syrians stakeholders, towards EU intervention in the VET
- An improved technical know how among Syrians trainers in the VET sector
- An improvement in the social acceptance of the VET
- None of the above
- Difficult to say
- Other (please, specify)

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19. Do you think that the following projects will keep the track once ETF support will come to an end?

<b>Sustainability</b> <b>Project</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme in Damascus</b>	<b>Pilot apprenticeship scheme in Aleppo</b>	<b>Observatory function</b>	<b>MEDA training project</b>
Yes, and further improvements are foreseen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, if major stakeholders will keep the same commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, although further support by ETF would help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, without further support by ETF it will not	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. If the MEDA training project was not to be implemented, do you think that, in general, the Syrian environment would have been able to sustain the reform process in the VET/LM system once ETF support came to an end?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, probably
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Difficult to say

Please, explain

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Additional notes and comments

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### QUANTITATIVE CHECK LIST

<b>RELEVANCE</b>	What's the budget allocated by EC in the Mashrek region for VET/LM projects between 2001-2004?
<b>VALUE ADDED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ What's the number of training projects EC has implemented in the Mashrek region between 2001-2004?</li> <li>➤ And overall?</li></ul>



**ANNEX 5.**  
**NOTE AFTER THE FINAL PRESENTATION**

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## TURIN, MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2006

On Monday March the 27<sup>th</sup>, the Evaluation Team carried out a final feedback seminar of the Evaluation. The meeting took place at ETF premises in the “Sala Europa” and it ran from 2 pm to 4.30 pm. The presentation was coordinated by the Team Leader Mr. Mario Martelli, the Evaluation Expert Mr. Giuliano Rosciglione and with the support of Mr. Pierpaolo Proto. The meeting has been attended also by Mr. Alberto Bolognini of Economisti Associati.

The final presentation has seen the participation of the following ETF internal staff:

- Karl-Axel Skjolstrup
- Eva Jimeno Sicilia
- Bianca Baumler
- Francesca Gandini
- Peter Greenwood
- Outi Karkkainen

The main results of the evaluation exercise have been reported with the support of a power point presentation. The first part of the presentation was focused on i) the methodology used for the evaluation exercise, ii) the description of the ETF logic of intervention in Syria and iii) the 5 evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability) assessed. The second section of the presentation was dedicated to an open discussion on the recommendations provided by the ET in the final report. In particular, the following issues have been raised:

With regards to the “**Recommendations for future ETF interventions**”

*1. Set up a **PMU** able of acting as a bridge between ETF and EU*

ETF staff outlined how a PMU would, somehow, overlap the work and competences of the EC Delegation in Syria. In addition, the setting up of a PMU would have given up part of the ownership left to the local beneficiaries, a issue of utmost importance for a centre of expertise such as the ETF. Yet, ETF staff considered it a useful exercise that of estimating the costs of a PMU.

*2. Promote a **higher involvement of local EC Delegation** in following up projects activities*

One of the central issues recorded during the evaluation exercise was a non complete collaboration among ETF, the EC Delegation and the Commission in Brussels. This has substantiated in i) a non thorough collaboration on the field and ii) not utterly prompt and punctual feedbacks to the EC. To this regard, ETF staff outlined how i) the partial lack of communication was, mainly, due to the high number of projects followed by each officer at the EU Delegation, associated with a significant level of turn over of its staff; ii) ETF has organized a number of meetings and workshops which, many times, EC representatives have failed to attend.

*3. Promote a clearer distinction between the **roles of ETF and the EC** in the country.*

This point was deeply discussed, mainly in order to understand which difficulties this eventual confusion could generate to external interlocutors. In any case, it was underlined that some of the confusion on the ETF role, mainly derived by specific project logical framework, was depending on the fact that ETF could not anticipate, in its documents, the eventual existence of the future MoVET project.

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With regards to the “**Recommendations for future evaluation at country level**”

- The proposal to **preliminarily select the set of information** and documentation to be sent to the evaluation team has been approved. While the idea of using an additional code in order to identify the main project each intervention is contributing to is already included in the 2005-2006 country plan.
- The possibility to **use a more detailed level of information on budgetary** issues faces the difficulties and the costs needed to collect and re-organise those figures. It came clear that, or a monitoring system is set up in order to collect and organise information on typology of activity level, or it is more efficient to assign this duty to external evaluators instead of doing it internally.
- The proposed revision of future work plan, with two visits at ETF before drafting the final report was positively considered.
- Although the idea of assign **evaluation in group** of 3-4 comparable (geographically, culturally, economically) countries, could actually facilitate the evaluation exercises in the future, yet ETF staff outlined that there is a precise will, from both EC and ETF side, in keeping the interventions focus at single country rather than at regional level.
- The discussion on **how to assess effectiveness** of ETF activities taking into consideration the role “in support” of further intervention was raised. In particular, the ETF staff and the Evaluation Team agreed on the fact that, in some cases, ETF activities in support of EC future interventions should be evaluated taking also into consideration the implementation of the EC project. This approach, on the other side, has the disadvantage of linking the ETF effectiveness to something outside its control.

During the presentation, the Evaluation Team and the ETF staff agreed on the fact that a further presentation to Syrian stakeholders, mainly concentrated on past ETF results, would have not been particularly effective. In any case, the Evaluation Team declared to be available for any future presentation, to be, for instance, linked to a different ETF workshop or meeting in the country.