**Paper 1.**

**Abstract**

Centralised approaches and traditions to VET governance are still dominant trends in the European Neighbourhood. The countries of EU neighbourhood mainly belong to two types of political, administrative and public management background. On the one hand, ex-soviet countries (Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia regions) which were characterised as centrally planned economies with strong state roles as the key policy initiator, public company networks and a lack of private enterprise, as well as government-driven workers’ unions. On the other hand, Arab countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (Maghreb and Mashreq) are traditionally characterised by highly centralized systems and autocratic governance practices in public affairs with extensive informal economies and weak civil society organisations (CSOs).

Such features impact on the pace of change in public policies in European partner countries, including education and vocational training, where systems and providers are still mostly managed centrally by the national authorities. However, according to current European and international experience, relevant VET models and systems are demand-driven. This involves strong social partnerships in VET and public incentives for engaging employers to invest in skills development (public-private cooperation models). In addition, modern VET systems are opening up to the participation of regional and local VET actors and partners whilst setting conditions for self-governed VET provider institutions. The state facilitates these processes.

This approach to good multilevel governance has been implemented in public policies in VET in the EU neighbourhood. It could be defined as a model for VET policy making based on coordinated action to effectively involve VET public and private stakeholders at all possible levels (international, national, sectoral, regional/local, provider) for objective setting, implementation, monitoring and review. Good multilevel governance in VET aims to reinforce interaction and participation of such stakeholders while improving relevance, accountability, transparency, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of VET policies (’[[1]](#footnote-1)). In order to implement such conceptual frameworks, coordination mechanisms for VET policy making are crucial.

The current socioeconomic characteristics of the South Mediterranean region have a major impact on education and training systems, in particular in view of the rapid growth of the number of young people who face high unemployment rates and gender imbalances in terms of access to education and training and participation in the labour force. At the same time, the relevance and attractiveness of VET systems are both at stake. The reform and development of institutional frameworks can help on improving multilevel governance in VET and vocational skills for employability prospects in the region.

Thus, to respond to these challenges, good multi-level governance and the effective development of vocational education and training (VET) in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region seem to be more widely recognised as having significant economic and labour market potential as well as an important social role. The working methodology for mapping, analysing and self-assessing VET governance within the EU project ‘Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean region (GEMM)’ coordinated by the ETF[[2]](#footnote-2) contributes to gathering evidence and examples of practice to support policy dialogue on such aspects as well as on building capacities among national and sub-national policy makers on good multilevel governance in VET.

1. () ETF based on Cedefop (2011) and EU Committee of the Regions (2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ()The ETF is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy. It is based in Turin, Italy, and has been operational since 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)