**Reflections on 2019 and looking ahead**

20 DEC 2019

The ETF [**celebrated its 25th birthday**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/european-training-foundation-celebrates-its-25th-anniversary) this year supporting activities in our partner countries, undertaking pertinent thematic studies and hosting topical events, not least our conference of the year ‘[**Skills and Qualifications: Benefits for People**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/conclusions-etfs-conference-year)’ in November showcasing excellence from our partner countries. It has been a critical year too, in preparing for our future work and the new ETF Strategy 2027.

The European Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki in October gave recognition to two [**outstanding practices from Egypt and Azerbaijan**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/great-practices-feature-european-vocational-skills-week) conferring the ETF Entrepreneurship Award, and provided a perfect venue to bring together the ETF’s friends and partners to [**toast our achievements**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/celebrating-25-years-etf-european-vocational-skills-week).  And a later high-level panel organised by the ETF in Brussels in November examined the [**power of skills in European external relations**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/high-level-panel-power-skills-eu-external-relations).

This year also marked the tenth anniversary of the Eastern Partnership throughout which the ETF has increased its [**support to the European Commission**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/etfs-growing-support-eu-external-assistance)and External Action Service, as in all ETF partner regions, enhancing human capital development. In 2019, dissemination of the findings of the [**fifth round of the Torino Process**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/practice-areas/policy-analysis-and-progress-monitoring), assessing progress of vocational education systems and future planning at national level, got underway. We also actively supported partner countries entries from different regions to the [**World Skills event**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/eu-neighbours-taking-centre-stage-worldskills) in Russia in August.

Cooperation was ongoing at all levels, with stakeholders at local and national levels and engagement with bilateral and international donors such as the International Labour Organisation, the Asian Development Bank and [**our host city, Turin**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/torino-skills-city-0), to enhance our networks and ensure knowledge dissemination and exchange. Moreover, new agreements were signed with the [**Belgian Development Agency**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/joining-efforts-field-human-capital-development) and the [**Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/business-foster-skills-development-western-balkans).

[**Promoting public private partnerships**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/public-private-partnerships-success-factor-skills-development) for skills development has been high on the ETF agenda. Success factors were explored in a Brussels workshop in December. Regional gatherings at the [**European Alliance for Apprenticeships fourth regional seminar**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/european-alliance-apprenticeships-4th-regional-seminar-candidate-countries) for candidate countries in Skopje, North Macedonia in September, and the second [**Eastern Partnership Forum**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/quality-assurance-key-work-based-learning) on work-based learning in Lviv, Ukraine in October focused on work-based learning, and getting small and medium-sized enterprises on board. In addition, the ETF supported the [**Union for the Mediterranean**](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/skills-future-jobs-mediterranean) at a workshop in Turin bringing together a wide range of of stakeholders to examine the challenges of future work and skills needs.

Our social media, the launch of the ETF’s new virtual platform, [**OpenSpace**](https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/etf-open-space), and Facebook live interviews, brought real-time coverage to our audiences on the breadth and depth of human capital development and perspectives from various stakeholders from the public, private and civic spheres at both national and international level.

Preparation for the new ETF strategic era has been intensifying throughout the year and will continue in 2020. Our focus is delivering on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the EU’s external relations priorities to foster skilled and inclusive societies to promote stability, prosperity and social cohesion in our partner countries.

Thank you for making this journey with us and we look forward to your continued cooperation in 2020!