

# SUMMARY

## ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts Regional Webinar

### PERCEPTION AND IMAGE OF VET IN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION: AN OPPORTUNITY OR AN OBSTACLE TO EXCELLENCE IN TRAINING?

9 June 2026, 10.00 – 12.00 CET

This regional webinar of the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts explored the perception and image of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region. It examined the factors influencing the attractiveness of TVET, the underlying reasons for persistent negative perceptions and the relationship between social image, quality and excellence in training. Through regional perspectives and national experiences, the webinar also discussed initiatives aimed at improving the attractiveness of TVET and strengthening its role in supporting employability and lifelong learning.

**Cristiana Burzio (ETF)** welcomed participants to the webinar and provided an overview of recent developments within the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts, highlighting its continued growth to nearly 900 members from ETF partner countries, European Union (EU) Member States and beyond. Before introducing the theme of the session, she briefly recalled recent Network activities, including webinars on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI), on evidence-informed policymaking and on algorithmically managed work, as well as the live event held in Florence in March 2026. Burzio also took the opportunity to share the recent achievements of the Skills Lab Network's sub-thematic community on skills and migration, with the two publications resulting from the call of papers just been released, namely '[Skills and Migration in Changing Labour Markets. Research evidence for new policies and actions](#)' and '[Skills for fair, efficient labour migration. Research evidence for new policies and actions](#)'.

Burzio emphasised that improving the image of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is not simply a matter of communication but is closely linked to quality, labour market relevance and inclusiveness. She underlined that vocational excellence requires learner centred approaches, clear progression pathways and strong connections with the world of work, expressing the expectation that the webinar would stimulate reflection on what makes TVET a valuable and trusted educational choice for learners, employers and society.

The first speaker, **Mihaylo Milovanovitch (ETF)**, framed the webinar topic, by presenting key findings from the ETF's Torino Process monitoring on lifelong learning (LLL) systems in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region. He explained that one of the main reasons why TVET is often perceived as unattractive is that it is seen as an isolated or "dead end" pathway rather than as part of a wider system of opportunities. Drawing on evidence collected through the Torino Process, including quantitative indicators, expert surveys and system performance indices, he stressed that countries should be assessed not only on the policies they have adopted but also on whether these policies effectively deliver their intended outcomes. Milovanovitch argued that a genuine LLL system should enable individuals to enter, leave, return to and progress through education and training at different stages of life, requiring formal education, initial TVET, adult learning, employment services, qualification recognition and validation mechanisms to function as an interconnected system rather than as separate components.

Presenting the main findings for the SEMED region, Milovanovitch observed that while many countries have established the building blocks of lifelong learning systems, these elements still remain weakly connected. Formal education and initial TVET are generally the strongest and most visible components, whereas adult learning is often fragmented, project based or donor supported, with weak links to employment services and recognition systems. Referring to ETF monitoring evidence, he highlighted persistent challenges related to access, quality and governance. Although access to learning opportunities is generally guaranteed by law, practical barriers such as cost, geography, gender norms and crisis conditions continue to limit participation, particularly among adults. He also noted that weak foundational skills, limited practical learning opportunities and uneven employer engagement continue to affect learning quality, while fragmented governance structures and insufficient follow up on policy outcomes constrain overall system performance. Concluding his presentation, Milovanovitch argued that countries in the region would need less new initiatives and greater efforts to strengthen connections between existing measures, expand effective adult learning opportunities, reinforce links with employers and improve monitoring of reforms.

During the Q&A session, Mihaylo Milovanovitch confirmed that data underpinning the ETF Torino Process monitoring are available through the [ETF Data Portal](#), noting that some functionalities, such as exporting datasets, are still under development. The discussion then turned to practical measures for improving the attractiveness of TVET across the SEMED region. Milovanovitch emphasised that countries face diverse challenges and that there is no single solution applicable to all contexts. Rather than launching additional initiatives, he argued for more proactive outreach to potential learners, better support for disadvantaged groups and stronger links between education and employment opportunities. He also stressed that improving the image of TVET is a long term process that depends not only on communication efforts but on delivering high quality learning and successful labour market outcomes capable of gradually changing public perceptions and social attitudes.

The second speaker, **Prof. Mohammed Bouguidou (Mohammed V University, Morocco)**, presented an overview of Morocco's efforts to improve the image and attractiveness of TVET, positioning the issue within the broader context of education reform, labour market needs and socio economic development. Referring to international comparisons, he noted that participation in vocational pathways in Morocco remains significantly lower than in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, reflecting persistent challenges related to the perceived status of TVET. Bouguidou argued that the sector has gradually evolved from being viewed as a second choice for academically unsuccessful students towards a pathway associated with professional opportunities, practical learning and emerging occupations. He explained that this shift has been supported by national policies recognising human capital and vocational competences as strategic drivers of economic competitiveness, social inclusion and sustainable development, with reforms designed to strengthen the links between education, employment and national development priorities.

Bouguidou then outlined several initiatives introduced to enhance the attractiveness of TVET in Morocco. These include the establishment of the Cities of Trades and Skills, the adoption of competence-based approaches to learning, the expansion of work-based learning and work-based learning models, the introduction of programmes linked to digital technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, renewable energy and the green economy, and the modernisation of training facilities and equipment. At the same time, he stressed that important structural challenges continue to affect public perceptions of TVET, including high levels of early school leaving, youth unemployment, weak foundational skills among learners and limited LLL opportunities. He argued that these factors reinforce the perception of vocational education as a fallback option rather than a first choice. Concluding his presentation, Bouguidou emphasised that improving the image of TVET requires not only communication efforts but also sustained investment in quality, governance, teacher development, funding and stronger alignment between training provision and labour market needs in order to establish vocational education as a pathway of excellence.

The third speaker, **Nezha Rhazouani (Office of Vocational Training and Labour Promotion – OFPPT, Morocco)** presented Morocco's flagship programme of Cities of Trades and Skills (Cités des Métiers et des Compétences – CMCs), highlighting their role in enhancing the attractiveness and quality of TVET. She introduced the OFPPT as the country's leading public provider of vocational education

and training, responsible for the majority of public TVET provision across Morocco. Rhazouani explained that the CMC initiative is part of the national roadmap for the development of vocational training launched in 2019 and is intended to modernise training provision while strengthening its links with regional economic ecosystems and labour market needs. She outlined the five pillars of the reform, including the upgrading of training provision, the creation of a new generation of training centres, the modernisation of pedagogical approaches, the professionalisation of young jobseekers and workers in the informal economy, and measures to improve career guidance and the attractiveness of TVET. Particular emphasis was placed on the adoption of a competency-based approach, increased practical learning, strengthened soft skills, digitalisation and more flexible learning pathways designed to support lifelong learning.

Rhazouani then focused on the CMC model, describing it as a new generation of multidisciplinary institutions designed to promote excellence in vocational education while increasing young people's employability and supporting regional development. She explained that the centres combine modern learning environments, innovative pedagogical methods and close cooperation with employers, offering dedicated facilities such as digital factories, pedagogical hotels and restaurants, training enterprises, innovation spaces and application platforms that simulate real working environments. Using the Rabat Salé Kénitra CMC as an example, she illustrated how the institution integrates multiple sectors, including digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI), industry, tourism, agriculture and health, while also providing accommodation and student support services. Rhazouani concluded that the CMC programme has significantly improved the public perception of TVET in Morocco by offering high quality infrastructure, updated curricula and learning experiences that better reflect labour market expectations, contributing to growing demand for vocational education among young people and their families.

The fourth speaker, **Abdelaziz Jaouani (ETF)** presented the case of Egypt to illustrate how Centres of VET Excellence can contribute to improving the perception and attractiveness of TVET. He argued that attractiveness should not be measured solely through participation rates, as enrolment figures alone do not explain why learners choose vocational pathways or whether families and employers genuinely trust them. Instead, he described attractiveness as a broader value proposition based on quality, opportunity and trust, influenced by learners' aspirations, parental expectations, employer confidence and labour market outcomes. Jaouani stressed that participation data should therefore be complemented by evidence on motivation, perception, employment outcomes and equity, proposing a framework that combines administrative data, perception surveys and labour market indicators. He also highlighted the importance of measuring progression to higher education, access to decent employment and international mobility, particularly in the SEMED region, where these opportunities strongly influence young people's educational choices.

Jaouani then examined Egypt's Applied Technology Schools (ATs) as an example of how high quality vocational education can positively transform the public perception of TVET. A recent [ETF's Torino Process policy review](#) has been produced with a focus on the internationalisation of ATs in Egypt. He explained that these employer-partnered Centres of Excellence combine strong industry involvement, recognised qualifications, specialised programmes and clear progression routes to technological universities, creating a virtuous cycle in which high demand enables selective admission, strengthens employer trust and reinforces the positive image of technical education. However, he cautioned that excellence should not remain confined to a small number of elite institutions and argued that successful pilot initiatives must be systematically integrated into wider education reforms. Rather than treating attractiveness as a communication exercise, he emphasised that it should become a strategic pillar of TVET policy, supported by quality assurance, inclusive access, LLL pathways and regular monitoring of public perceptions. Concluding his presentation, Jaouani stressed that the true value of Centres of Excellence lies not only in their own performance but in their capacity to raise the quality, credibility and attractiveness of the vocational education system as a whole.

During the final Q&A session, participants discussed the sustainability and scalability of Applied Technology Schools (ATs) and the broader role of Centres of Excellence within the national TVET system. Jaouani stressed that public-private partnerships (PPPs) are fundamental to ensuring both quality and long term sustainability, arguing that governments alone cannot finance vocational education at the scale required and that stronger employer involvement contributes not only to diversified funding

but also to improved relevance and quality of provision. The discussion also highlighted the need to move beyond isolated examples of excellence and focus on strengthening the wider TVET system. Drawing on Egypt's experience, participants noted that while ATs have successfully enhanced the image of vocational education through close industry cooperation, reform efforts should also prioritise upgrading mainstream technical schools and reducing the gap between education and labour market needs. Jaouani reiterated that the objective should be to use successful pilot initiatives as catalysts for systemic improvement rather than as standalone models of excellence.

In her closing remarks, **Cristiana Burzio (ETF)** thanked the speakers and participants for their valuable contributions. She encouraged participants to continue exchanging ideas and insights through the ETF Skills Lab Network [LinkedIn group](#) and informed them that all presentations and materials referred to, together with the webinar summary, would be made available on the [ETF Open Space](#) platform. She concluded by thanking the interpreters and the organising team for their support in delivering the webinar and expressed her appreciation for everyone's active participation.

## Resources

All presentations and materials presented at the event can be found at:

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/perception-and-image-vet-southern-and-eastern-mediterranean-region-opportunity-or-obstacle>