# Exploiting the potential of VET to combat early leaving in ETF Partner Countries

## Elizabeth Watters, *European Training Foundation*

### A brief introduction to ETF partner countries and the ETF role in supporting them to develop effective VET

ETF works with 29 countries that have special relationships with the EU.

Challenging features shared by some/many partner countries, include:

- GDP per capita less than the EU average (up to 10 times less).
- Economies classified as in transition from a planned to a market economy or 'developing'/industrialising.
- Challenged labour markets: rigid, informal, low skills, mismatch, high unemployment, gender differences, etc.
- States defined as fragile (World Bank), fragile societies, conflict and displacement e.g.: Kosovo, B-H, West Bank & Gaza, Libya, Syria.
- Demographic challenges: young populations in SEMED and Central Asia – aging in most countries of SEE and East Europe.
- Large outward and inward migration flows. Some host large numbers of refugees e.g. Syrian refugees 1m in Lebanon (25% of 4m), 650,000 in Jordan (+ 2.1m PL=30% of 9.5m), Turkey 2.8m.

ETF's work is dedicated to supporting the improvement of VET systems and their links with labour markets in partner countries, thereby contributing to human resources' development. Support is given through provision of policy analysis and advice; capacity building; knowledge dissemination; networking and reinforcing EU assistance (context of EU external policies).

### ELET in ETF Partner Countries – the data we have and what they can tell us

- The definition of 'early leaving' is relative to the context.
- The NEET indicator is more widely applied than the ELET indicator – together they give insight into the issue and its impact.
- There are exogenous – economical, societal – reasons/factors for early leaving; other variables/indicators should be taken into consideration for interpretation.

Summary information: ELET data, NEET data, correlations and analysis.

### Exploiting the potential of VET to combat ELET

- 'Upper-secondary for all!' is not a policy goal in every country. Non-formal VET can help alleviate having a low educated workforce. Non-formal VET does not appear in the statistics.
- High quality, relevant VET with a good social image and status can attract learners to remain in the system. Poor quality VET is likely to result in more ELET.
- Overview of issues regarding prevention, compensation, reintegration. Even under optimum conditions, unless learners are forced to remain, early leaving will not disappear completely.

### Actions underway – What ETF offers and what partner countries are doing

ETF actions underway to enhance VET's responsiveness to ELET

- Improving the evidence base – with caution!
- Policy guidance and policy interventions.
- Promoting ELET as a policy issue and advocating high quality VET to combat ELET.

Partner countries actions with ETF support underway

- Improving VET in a lifelong learning context- slowly!
- Improving the system quality: governance, relevance, quality assurance, etc.
- Making VET a first choice, valued and attractive learning pathway.

## Considerations for the Forum discussion
- Taking account of country specific significance and definition of ELET.
- Effective VET as a necessary though not sufficient means to combat ELET.