



CONCEPT NOTE

A skills partnership for Employment and Growth: from current engagement to future action

Date: Tuesday 10th November 2020

Venue: Webinar

Time: 10.00 – 12.00

A skills partnership for Employment and Growth

This document outlines a brief motivation for a high-level, EU webinar on **A Skills Partnership for Employment and Growth**, and a proposed approach.

The webinar will serve both an immediate and medium-term objective:

- it will make an immediate contribution to the **Investment Month** programme and agenda, highlighting the EU's investment in the people of South Africa and in skills development.
- it will also help set the stage, at an appropriately senior and strategic level, for a **planned webinar series with the Presidency, National Treasury, the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Team Europe at Ambassadorial level, the South African and international business sectors and the TVET college sector**, to promote a collective commitment and programme of action to improve the alignment between TVET provision and the needs of the labour market.

The webinar will provide an important opportunity to showcase the support that the EU has provided to the **Presidency**, through the **Capacity Building Programme for Employment Promotion (CBPEP)** and to introduce the **Education for Employability (E4E)** programme.

This should help *inter alia* to set the scene for future discussion on the linkages that should be made between current EU programmes and investments in youth development and the sustainability and impact of key EU interventions, including **CBPEP – E4E linkages**.

Context & background

The immediate context for the webinar is the November Investment Summit and associated events and activities.

The webinar, from this perspective, will provide a high-level strategic platform for **#TeamEurope** (the EU, its Member States and business) to draw attention to the EU and European firms as responsible and caring investors in South Africa and its people, and to the investments being made by the EU and Member States in education and skills.

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At least eight EU Member States (and Switzerland) as well as the EU Delegation are currently active in the education/TVET/Skills, SMME, labour policies sectors, with a solid portfolio of interventions, lessons learned and established or nascent partnerships. Moreover around 2000 European companies are active in South Africa together with the EU Chamber of Commerce and the EU Member State bilateral Chambers of Commerce that are committed to enhance and coordinate their engagement, critically involving the private sector.

The ongoing Senior Officials Meetings between the European Commission (led by DG EAC) and SA Departments of Higher Education and experts workshops can continue to provide one of the platforms for policy dialogue. Twinning and exchanges, and focusing on entrepreneurial skills as well as European companies' skills, training and apprenticeship programs can harness the contribution of the private sector to contribute to this agenda.

The EU webinar will take place against the backdrop of a broad-based effort, led by the Presidency, to address the ongoing challenges of youth unemployment in South Africa, and to set South Africa on a path to economic recovery and employment growth, following the devastating impacts of the Covid-19 crisis.

Through the Capacity Building Programme for Employment Promotion, the EU has provided technical assistance to the Presidency to support the development of an Employment Stimulus Package and Social Employment Programme, targeting the creation of 971,305 jobs for the financial year ending 31 March 2021.

The **Basic Package of Support for Youth** initiative, supported by CBPEP, is an important element within the **Presidential Youth Employment Intervention** and **Pathway Management Network**, creating a collaborative, partnership-based framework of services and support to facilitate the transitions of young people into work.

Skills, and the persistent gap and mismatch between skills supply and labour market demand, remain however a 'binding constraint' on the economy and on the employment of young people in particular, especially Africans and women.

A number of business- and donor-supported initiatives, over the past decade and more, have sought to improve collaboration and create a sense of shared responsibility and partnership between employers and the TVET colleges sector. Despite localised successes, there have been limited systemic impacts and the sustainability of the interventions has been uncertain.

The youth employment crisis, and the impacts on the economy and employment of the Covid pandemic, make it both urgent and necessary to elevate the idea of **A Skills Partnership for Employment and Growth** to a higher and more strategic level.

The Presidency's economic recovery agenda, and the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, provide an opportunity to do just that. **The support of the EU Delegation and Member States, at a senior level, will further elevate and add weight to the discussion.**

With the support of the Presidency and National Treasury, and of the Department of Higher Education and Training, **the CBPEP has proposed a *webinar and social dialogue series* to seek agreement on a set of concrete, collaborative measures** that could be taken by DHET, the TVET colleges sector, SETAS and employers to build effective pathways and support for youth transitions into work-based learning, work experience and employment.

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The possibility of formalising these agreements in a **Skills Partnership for Employment and Growth Memorandum of Understanding** will be actively explored.

A starting point for the discussion will be the findings and recommendations of the **TVET graduate destination survey**, completed in January this year in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training, with CBPEP technical assistance. The results of the survey show that the employment outcomes of TVET college graduates vary significantly by programme, and are more positive than expected, but still far from acceptable.

As international, including EU experience has shown, the TVET sector cannot address these shortcomings alone. Nor is the problem simply one of TVET quality and responsiveness. Rather, the skills development system is deeply embedded within wider labour market relationships and the wider economic context: successfully addressing these challenges, as international experience has shown, requires close collaboration, context-specific interventions, partnerships and trust, between the TVET sector, the Sector Education and Training Authorities, employers/industry and government.

The webinar series will address issues pertaining to the systemic challenges, improved collaboration, policy alignment and financing incentives to support the TVET sector, creating a shared vision and commitment on the part of both employers and training providers to meet current and anticipated skills demands, with the aim of bringing about an improved alignment between the demand and supply sides of the labour market.

Webinar programme

Time	Topic and Speaker
10:00 -10:05	Welcome <i>Mr Daniel Chiwandamira, Facilitator</i>
10.05 – 10.15	Introductory remarks: the EU investment in education and skills in SA <i>Ms Riina Kionka, EU Ambassador to South Africa</i>
10:15 – 10:30	Transforming the skills development system in South Africa in light of the priorities of the post-COVID economic recovery strategy <i>Mr Rudi Dicks, Presidency</i> The links between investment in SA, TVET and the labour market, and transformation and modernisation of the skills development system in light of the South African Economic Recovery Strategy.
10:30 – 10:50	TVET colleges and youth employment: results of a CBPEP-funded graduate destination survey <i>Prof Mike Rogan, Rhodes University</i> Presentation on the DHET TVET graduate destination survey: key findings and their implications.
10.50 – 10.55	Questions of clarification
10.55– 11:10	EU and international perspectives on the role of employers and skills development and the labour market <i>Steven Bainbridge, CEDEFOP</i> An EU and international perspective on the role of employers and the labour market in skills development.
11.10 – 11.20	Questions and discussion Open discussion on the TVET and CEDEFOP presentations

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11.20 – 11.30	What lessons can SA draw from Germany’s experience to strengthen the linkages between TVET and the labour market? How could the investment of EU Member States and European firms better contribute to skills development in SA? <i>Martin Schäfer, Ambassador of Germany to South Africa</i>
11:30 – 11:40	A Business Perspective: the contribution of education and training to building competitiveness , <i>Dr Markus Thill, President: Africa Region, Robert Bosch</i> An employer perspective on the role of European firms in building the skills pool in SA, to meet their own skills needs and to help transform and modernise the skills development system
11:40 – 11:50	Open discussion
11:50 – 11:55	Introducing the TVET Skills Partnership social dialogue series <i>DHET representative/Glen Fisher</i> Outline webinar series and invite participation
11.55 - 12:00	Closing remarks Member State Ambassador