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**Enhancement of the Business Environment in the  
Southern Mediterranean**

**National Seminar for Jordan**

**“Promoting the Upgrading of Enterprise Skills in  
Jordan”**

**Principle 8.1 of the Small Business Act for Europe**

**Amman, 27 November 2014**



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### **Disclaimer**

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	4
2.	SEMINAR OBJECTIVES .....	4
3.	PARTICIPANTS .....	5
4.	SEMINAR OVERVIEW.....	5
5.	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	9
6.	CONCLUSIONS .....	12

## 1. Introduction

A training seminar entitled “Promoting the upgrading of enterprise skills in Jordan” was delivered to a select group of policy makers, enterprise and innovation stakeholders in Amman, Jordan on 27 November 2014. The seminar was co-organised with Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the “Enhancement of the Business Environment in the Southern Mediterranean” project (henceforth referred to as the EBESM project).

The seminar aimed at supporting the Jordanian authorities in implementing reforms in priority areas identified, in particular in Enterprise skills, in the report “*SME Policy Index: The Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa 2014, Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe*”, which assessed SME policies in Jordan and eight other economies in the Mediterranean region (MED). The assessment, conducted in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean industrial co-operation process, was based on the “Small Business Act” for Europe (SBA), a comprehensive SME policy framework adopted by the EU to promote SMEs.

With a view to improving the implementation of SBA principle 8.1 "Enterprise skills" the seminar program focused on two main themes: (i) availability of training services in Jordan; and (ii) Training needs analysis (TNA).

Drawing on practical experience of selected EU and MED countries in supporting SMEs human capital development, the seminar’s methodology focused on presenting a theoretical background and contextual good practices to propose possible models suitable for Jordan’s situation. Then, the focus was on policy dialogue, discussion and brainstorming in workshops dedicated to identifying Jordan’s specific opportunities and challenges in developing the human capital of their SMEs using the SWOT Analysis and identifying recommendations which would improve Jordan situation with respect to this area

Two participative workshops were organised as well, jointly moderated by project experts, and used the results of topic-specific SWOT analysis to generate actionable recommendations that Jordan could adopt with the objective of encouraging policy reforms stimulating and facilitating the skills promotion for SMEs.

## 2. Seminar Objectives

This activity sought to enhance the capacity of selected government officials and representatives from the private sector and civil society at large (e.g. academia, NGOs, etc.) to fully understand principle 8.1 of the SBA, identify main challenges and constraints encountered in its development and explored actions and policies needed to enhance its implementation.

The specific objectives of this seminar were to:

- Enhance participants’ analytical and decision-making capacity in the selected area to SMEs development;
- Enhance participants’ knowledge on effective policies to implement in the selected area;
- Assess the situation and discuss emerging policy solutions by setting objectives and priorities, integrating actions, involving stakeholders; and

- Promote an interactive dialogue between different players in order to feed policy-making process.

### **3. Participants**

This event brought together over 40 participants, representatives from public authorities, business associations and universities, to discuss ways of improving enterprise skills in Jordan. The organisations included the Higher Council for Science & Technology, the Royal Scientific Society, Jordan Investment Commission, JEDCO, IRADA, the Development and Employment Fund, the Income and Sales Tax Department, Jordan Chamber of Industry, Amman and Irbid Chamber of Commerce, All Jordan Youth Commission, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organisation, the Vocational Training Corporation and several universities such as the Applied Science University, AULE, Jordan, Al Abayat, Al Ahliyya Amman, Just universities.

The grouping was weighted toward the public sector, including universities, but the contributions and observations of the private sector were robust and critically well-received.

### **4. Seminar Overview**

Overall the seminar was highly appreciated with respect to the topics tackled and the creative interactions that occurred at all phases of the seminar. This was evidenced by the high level of satisfaction of participants expressed through formal evaluation questionnaires, completed after the seminar, and other oral feedback.

Another aspect that was praised was the focus that the moderators brought to the importance of finding out ways and means to implement the outcome of the SWOT exercises that addressed the two themes that were treated, e.g. the availability of training services and the TNA, and how to bring those topics at higher levels of concern, such as policies and strategies.

The participants came up with a significant amount of suggestions related to the implementation of the recommendations that they made. One of their concerns was to identify the authorities that would and should take the lead to materialise the action plan elaborated by the groups. This issue was still to be consolidated at the end of the seminar and this underlines that the main issue is not to come up with new insights but to transform those insights into actions driven by a decision maker. However, the group was fully aware of that reality and a consensus was created on the urgency to consider that aspect as a priority, so that the recommendations would not vanish.

#### **4.1 Topics discussed**

##### **4.1.1: Overview of SBA Principle 8.1 “Enterprise skills”**

The first session provided an overview of the SMEs skills dimension of the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), including the logic and structure of the indicators (none of the participants had been involved in any of the two previous SBA assessments). Key outcomes of the 2012/2013 assessments were presented, in particular the need for a more joined-up intelligence framework on SME skills as a pre-condition for progress on all SBA skills

indicators. The session emphasised the value of the SBA's evidence-based policy objectives particularly for domestic agenda and the importance of multi-constituency engagement for more developed intelligence to meet the demands of the indicators.

#### **4.1.2 Availability of training services**

The main objectives of this session was to highlight good practices related to the "Availability of Training" as part of principle 8.1 "Promote the upgrading of skills".

Four main elements are needed to ensure the improvement of Jordan's rank to reach levels 4 and 5. These include: (i) availability of online training provider network developed across the country actively communicating information through the website's online database; (ii) provision of online training for enterprises; (iii) availability of quality assurance mechanism; and (iv) availability of data on online training acquired by enterprises is regularly updated and evaluated as part of national enterprise development policy.

Good practices were presented that can be examined further by policy makers in Jordan for adaption and implementation, such as the UK's Skills Funding Agency that supports enterprises training in line with the requirements of sector skill councils.

Also, the national platform that coordinates training options for enterprises in Israel was presented and discussed. Israel Small and Medium Business Agency (SMBA) supports small business development centres (MATI) in several Israeli cities. MATI is a one stop shop that offers a package of offline and online services.

In Ireland, Skillnets.ie provides subsidised staff training and valuable networking opportunities with similar companies.

Furthermore, Egypt, through its Foreign Trade Training Centre, provides online training related to international trade. On the same issue, the International Training Centre in Geneva has a worldwide portal that provides up to date business-related training topics through its E-Learning SME Trade Academy.

The interactive approach with the participants prepared the group to have a better framework for analysing the strength, weaknesses, threats and challenges facing Jordan in realizing its full potential in reaching Level 5 in that principle.

#### **4.1.3 Training needs analysis**

Presentations focused on a) the role of skills' intelligence in policy and support for improved manpower for SMEs set against a competitiveness and employment agenda; and b) a step-by-step approach, covering all the practical steps that participants should follow to conduct a TNA, as follows:

1. Identify the customer
2. Clarify the expectations
3. Design the training needs program
4. Arrange access to data
5. Collect the data
6. Make sense of the findings
7. Write a draft report
8. Produce and distribute a final report and recommendations

This practical approach was highly appreciated by the participants as they agreed that they were now able to conduct a TNA just by following the aforementioned eight steps.

## 4.2 Workshops

Two interactive and participatory workshops on (i) training needs' assessment and wider SME skill intelligence; and (ii) availability of training services were held where, in parallel, representative groups of the participants' addressed these specific topics to build a SWOT of the situation relative and to propose a set of recommendations and actions.

The working methods of the breakout group involved a) brain-storm, b) individual reflection and c) group discussion. Each breakout group was facilitated by the experts.

### 4.2.1 SWOT Analysis: Availability of training services

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jordan has a young educated population that can take the lead in moving Jordan to a new paradigm in relation to "Availability of Training".</li> <li>• Jordan has a strong ICT sector that can design and implement technologies that evolve around interactive platforms.</li> <li>• Jordan has several success stories of individual companies who have designed and implemented online training solutions.</li> <li>• Availability of databases of various trainers and business service providers.</li> <li>• Availability of E-TEVET Council as a platform for further development in issues related to supporting enterprise skills and quality assurance of training service providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain drain for experts in this domain.</li> <li>• Lack of a one-stop-shop (OSS) that compiles the information of all training and business service providers.</li> <li>• Weak networking among training and business service providers to share experiences and leverage resources.</li> <li>• Lack of national framework to assess quality of training and business providers and impact assessment.</li> <li>• Not enough number of internationally certified trainers.</li> <li>• Lack of cost/benefit analysis for training programs that can be informative for enterprises, as well as training and business service providers.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political stability in Jordan supports government efforts to set policies for enterprise development.</li> <li>• Availability of funds and technical assistance programs by international donors.</li> <li>• Jordan's national vision supports the upgrading of enterprises skills across all Jordanian governorates.</li> <li>• New ICT solutions support an affordable approach to upgrade enterprise skills using technology.</li> <li>• National programs that support women integration in the workforce, provide an incentive for training and business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of national and sector-specific qualification frameworks.</li> <li>• Funds allocation is not widely spread among all governorates.</li> <li>• Lack of accurate statistics on available training for enterprise and accurate enterprise needs.</li> <li>• Most enterprises in Jordan do not put training among its urgent priorities for development.</li> </ul>

providers to design new programs and expand in new regions.	
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The group expressed clearly that there are several opportunities that Jordan can seize to improve SMEs access to training. These opportunities are attainable especially with the current royal direction to support SMEs in governorates and the availability of resources through local and donor funds.

By capitalizing on existing Jordanian specialized training service providers as well as an advanced ICT sector, challenges can be overcome if this is coupled with better networking among service providers and introducing internationally accredited train of trainers programs.

The quality of training is yet another concern that requires attention. Empowering E-TEVET Council and expanding their scope will help in setting standards for available training programs and ensure further development through collaboration with sector specific associations and chambers of industry and trade.

#### 4.2.2 SWOT Analysis: Training Needs Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies are collecting data</li> <li>• Key sectors identified (mining, tourism)</li> <li>• Competent training institutions</li> <li>• Young population</li> <li>• Core skills development</li> <li>• High public interest and support for training as a starting point to work on SME training strategy and policy</li> <li>• Security for business</li> <li>• Well developed ICT infrastructure and skills</li> <li>• Geographical location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data scatter across many organisations with no coordination to reach a common data management system</li> <li>• Weak confidence in data</li> <li>• Poor reliability of data</li> <li>• No details in information</li> <li>• Data outdated</li> <li>• Quality of data</li> <li>• Skills intelligence for key sectors</li> <li>• Training capacity (availability and quality) is not the same in all regions</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A joined-up national data framework</li> <li>• Growing awareness of importance of data for strategic manpower development</li> <li>• Using existing technologies</li> <li>• Donors coordination</li> <li>• Reinforced private-public partnership on SME skills</li> <li>• Enhanced legal framework for SME manpower development policies</li> </ul>	<p>The development of SME manpower intelligence and skills intelligence are constrained by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict between key agencies over responsibilities for data</li> <li>• Lack of ownership</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Weak leadership on national approach</li> <li>• No stability to policy</li> <li>• Financing of reforms</li> <li>• Interface training providers / Policy makers</li> <li>• Brain drain</li> <li>• Cultural sensitivities to data acquisition</li> </ul>



In terms of TNA intelligence, the group underlined the problem of data scatter across different organisations with no attempts to coordinate or provide a country-based analytical approach. Secondly, questions were raised as to both the reliability and quality of data. Finally, the issue of a concentration of training capacity in the Amman region prompted suggestions of regional disparities in data quality and availability.

In terms of moving forward on the TNA indicator, the group underlined the value of a professional training provider market, a competent institutional support framework, and well-developed ICT infrastructure as core strengths to build upon. Participants also underlined that public interest and support for training was an important building block for taking forward more strategic developments in SME training policy in Jordan. Further, assuming commitment for a more coherent SME skills drive in Jordan, participants pointed to a range of new opportunities including a more enhanced legal framework for SME manpower development policies and reinforced public-private partnership on SME skills.

The group identified a number of possible frustrations to the strategic development of SME manpower intelligence that would need to be addressed in a cross-stakeholder dialogue and concept development phase for development of SME skills intelligence. These included policy questions (e.g. policy stability, financing of reforms) and institutional matters (e.g. possible conflict between key agencies as to responsibilities for data, leadership for the reform drive, agency ownership) as well as issues of socio-cultural concern (e.g. public sensitivity to data acquisition).

## 5. Recommendations

Based on the examples of good practices and the SWOT analysis, and to move forward on both indicators (i.e. availability of training services and TNA), and in particular to meet the requirements of Level 3, the participants elaborated recommendations and an action plan to improve the implementation of this SBA principle.

### 5.1 Proposals and recommendations and next steps for Availability of training services

Action	Owner of Action	Resources provided by	When
Mapping of all stakeholders responsible for enterprise skills development including private and public institutions.	JEDCO	JEDCO	Short-term
Build a portal of all training and business providers that have the following basic functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Name of provider</li> <li>b. Location</li> <li>c. Type of training courses</li> <li>d. Type of targeted sectors</li> <li>e. List of freelance trainers</li> </ul>	JEDCO	MOPIC	Short-term
Conduct a workshop among stakeholders to validate information and gain commitment to	JEDCO	MOPIC	Short-term

be part of this initiative.			
Sign MoUs with training and business service providers (introducing annual fees in coming years) to benefit from the portal.	JEDCO	N.A	Short-term
Provide a section in the portal that show training opportunities and tenders for training providers.	JEDCO	TBD	Medium-term
Allocate a marketplace within the portal that can facilitate dialogue among training providers and enterprises.	JEDCO	TBD	Medium-term
Develop a strategic plan for managing the network, and linking the portal to social media networks, in addition to a targeted awareness campaign.	JEDCO	TBD	Medium-term
The Royal Scientific Society (RSS) shall set a quality manual for training utilizing local training firms or individuals.	RSS	Approach donors through MOPIC	Short-term
Introduce the concept of Sector Skills councils are established to adopt and adapt the manual and control the quality in its sectors.	E-TEVET Council	Private sector and donors approached through MOPIC	Medium-term
Training needs assessment is conducted by each council for its sector.	Sector Skills councils	Private sector and donors approached through MOPIC	Medium-term
Provide incentives for training and business providers to introduce online training for enterprises.	JEDCO	E-TEVET Fund	Short-term
Design and implement an awareness campaign around online training for all types of enterprises.	JEDCO	E-TEVET Fund	Medium-term
Build on <a href="http://www.edraak.org">www.edraak.org</a> to design specialized business training in Arabic.	Private-sector Led	TBD	Medium-term
Translating available business training online into Arabic.	Private-sector Led	TBD	Medium-term
Arrange peer reviews among Sector councils to exchange good practices among local and international councils.	Private-sector Led	TBD	Long-term

## 5.2 Proposals and recommendations and next steps for TNA

Action	Owner of Action	Resources provided by	When
<p>Establish a <b>cross-agency steering committee</b> - with delegated leadership and secretariat functions - for dialogue, planning and oversight of a national intelligence system on SME skills with leadership. Committee membership could include inter alia the following institutions (and their respective competent agencies):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Planning (ERADA)</li> <li>• Ministries of Education and Higher Education</li> <li>• Ministry of Labour</li> <li>• Ministry of Economy (JEDCO)</li> <li>• Department of Statistics</li> <li>• National Information Centre</li> <li>• Industrial Zone Institute</li> <li>• Associations representing enterprises for key economic sectors</li> <li>• SME support institutions e.g. Chambers of Economy</li> <li>• KAFD</li> <li>• KADDB</li> <li>• Civic interest groups.</li> </ul>	Prime Minister's Office	MOPIC	<i>Short to Medium-term</i>
The steering committee's immediate tasks would be to agree its final composition and governance arrangements, operational plan, financial support, as well as reporting and accountability requirements.	Prime Minister's Office	MOPIC	Short-term
<p>The break-out groups proposed four priority development lines to be considered by the Committee and to be taken forward by expert Working Groups to be mobilised and reporting to the Steering Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Working Group 1: Data Interfaces and Quality Assurance</li> <li>b) Working Group 2: Data Infrastructure Requirements and Developments</li> <li>c) Working Group 3: Institutional Data Capacity and Improvement</li> <li>d) Working Group 4: Data Assembly, Analysis and Reporting</li> </ol> <p>All Working Groups would be required to submit time-bound action plans and budgetary requirements.</p>	Steering Committee	MOPIC	Medium-term  Medium-term

<p><i>Scientific Committee</i> Further consideration could be given to the creation of a Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee would comprise interdisciplinary academic excellence to support the data development drive and analytical capacity of the Steering Committee and its Working Groups.</p>	Steering Committee (to be established)	MOPIC	Medium-term
<p><i>Addressing TNA Indicator Levels 4 &amp; 5</i> Given the quantitative data requirements of Levels 4 and 5 of the TNA indicator, a primary deliverable from Working Group 4 would be data to support the demands of the indicator. Given the inter-dependencies between all 4 Working Groups, it will be important that the outputs of Working Groups 1-3 are not compromised in the interest of generating data simply to meet the data requirements for International reporting i.e. a next EU's SBA assessment drive. The SBA indicators therefore should be considered as domestic tools to guide national reforms and improvement. A primary objective and function therefore of the Scientific Committee is ensuring objectivity to the country's SME data development efforts and the potential of good data to sustainable evidence-based policy progress.</p>	Steering Committee	MOPIC	Medium to long-term

## 6. Conclusions

The participants, thanks to the multidisciplinary aspect of the group, achieved all seminars' objectives. Each representative of a body brought up new insights by putting light on a particular aspect of the issues at work. Discussions and exchanges during the SWOT and action plan exercises were very rich and participants showed a high commitment.

The most important outcome of the seminar was a relevant action plan, encompassing all critical aspects to bring the selected areas to policy and strategic levels. The main issue is related to the ability and willingness of the various stakeholders to transform the action plan into effective actions.

The participants stressed on the fact that JEDCO should be a driving agent to implement the action plan. Therefore, it is highly recommended to have JEDCO's input on the action plan and keep the participants engaged to maintain the momentum.

Finally, more representatives from business associations and small enterprises should be engaged in future dialogue.

## **Annexes**

### **Annex A : List of Presentations**

1. Promoting the upgrading of enterprise skills in Jordan; Results and recommendations from the SBA assessment, by Anthony Gribben, ETF.
2. Availability of training services – Examples of good practices, by Rashad Bibars.
3. Training needs analysis – A practical approach, by Arthur Delabie.

### **Annex B : Bibliography**

#### **Bibliography for TNA**

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- Geri E. H. MacArdle, Conducting a needs Analysis, Crisp Publications Inc., 1998, ISBN 1560524235
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264169425-en>
- New Entrepreneurs and High Performance Enterprises in the Middle East and North Africa (OECD, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada) – 2013 - ISBN 9789264179196
- Lurking, and the Zone of Proximal Development, e-learning in small and medium enterprises in Europe (Graham Attwell (ed.)) - ICT SME project/Pontydysgu Series, navreme| publications No. 5, ISBN 9989-50-052-5. Pontypridd/Bremen, March 2007
- Lasku, G., & Gribben, A.A. (2013). Creating Competitive Edge: promoting SME skills. INFORM, Issue 17, European Training Foundation, December 2013.
- Markowitsch, Jörg and Hefler, Günter (Eds.) (2008): Enterprise Training in Europe – Comparative Studies on Cultures, Markets and Public Support Initiatives, Vienna, LIT. ISBN 978-3825808532

## **Annex C : Useful links**

- Small Business Act for Europe  
[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/index_en.htm)
- Small Business Act - Database of good practices  
<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/database/SBA/index.cfm?fuseaction=welcome.detail>
- EuroMed - Database of Good Practice  
<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/database/euomed/index.cfm?fuseaction=welcome.detail&language=EN>
- European Centre for the development of Vocational Training  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Projects\\_Networks/Skillsnet/Work/pubwork.asp](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Projects_Networks/Skillsnet/Work/pubwork.asp)
- <http://marketplace.smednc.am/en>
- <http://skillstowork.ie/>
- <http://learning.intracen.org/?lang=en>