

SKILLS

Background:

SKILLS - Superior Knowledge by Intensive Labour Learning Schemes, a joint project between the Syrian Enterprise Business Centre (SEBC) and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

SKILLS comes in line with developments in the EU particularly in terms of its focus on entrepreneurship development, entrepreneurial learning, and additional social economic issues. Changing the mindset of young people, providing managerial and entrepreneurial skills, language skills and interpersonal skills is crucial for employability of the new generation

The ETF's input in the programme has entailed providing an introduction to the EU and its cooperation with Syria. This is particularly relevant as Syria already has a comprehensive framework for cooperation with the EU and an association agreement is currently being finalised. The ETF has also contributed with its experience in entrepreneurial learning, on trends and developments in the EU and their relevance for Syria. Syria is member of the EU Euro-med Charter for SMEs.

A sustainable activity - SKILLS Graduates Club (SGC) - has been established. SGC aims to gather and transfer know-how to graduates of SKILLS through different local activities enabling members to take advantage of cooperation opportunities and exchange of experiences with similar international institutions.

SKILLS Concept:

Understanding the Syrian business, education and population social environment, SKILLS was a respond for the challenges that face the Syrian labour market;

- Emerging engagement with global competition following decades of protectionism
- Liberalization of economy
- Ongoing economic, administrative and institutional reform
- Very vulnerable SME sector
- Low quality human resources joining labour market
- Modest managerial skills and practices

Having all the previous in mind, SKILLS introduced three schemes of intervention.

Discover the Talents:

This intervention is targeting a segment of the labour market that has the following characteristics:

- Talented secondary education graduates whom for various reasons failed to join public universities that have tough admission criteria.
- Talented secondary education graduates who cannot afford the expensive tuitions of private universities.
- Talented secondary education graduates who are in a hurry to join the labour market and cannot wait four years to be productive.

For the admission of this segment into the SKILLS programme, the talent needs to be identified. A set of tools are used to discover that and open for fair completion. Thus, the applicant would go through the following tests: IQ, EQ, General Information (GI), English competence (EN) and ITC.

The applicants are interviewed to establish out their communication and intra-personal skills.

Final selection is based on the aggregated scoring of the above evaluated competencies.

The scope of the intervention is further shaping the talents by means of intensive training/education modules that are composed of 28 modules in 2008 raised to 45 modules in 2010 covering the essential elements of the business world. The students skills are enhanced by acquiring ICDL training and Business English learning.

For graduation, ICDL and English pass is crucial. Furthermore, an integrated test is run towards the end of the programme (6 months), the test aim at examining the needed skills. The graduates should also work out a graduation project that reflects the understanding of business life.

The graduates are then trained by means of on-the-job training. This is done with the business community who believe in the importance of youth capacity building.

The graduates have two paths for their life after graduation; which are: joining the market as middle managers who have potentials to be top manager in future or be self employed and start up their own businesses by the support of business incubators.

Second Chance:

Understanding the enrollment process in universities which depends on secondary education scores, it is likely that students are graduated from colleges and institutes that provided with graduation certificates of majors that are not within their passion, and/or they have been involved in other activities related to their "passion", thus lost the chance to join the higher education system.

One more issue, the educational system faces major challenges that are: obsolete curricula and obsolete academic professors not in support of professional skills related to entrepreneurship. These challenges determine the obsolescence of the output of the educational system. Thus, those who are keen to position themselves in the marketplace have the possibilities of bridging the knowledge gap by be part of the SKILLS intervention of second chance.

Thematic Training

The Syrian economy is witnessing a new era of development. The new trends of economic reform, the liberalization of the economy, more freedom and opening for private and civil sectors and integrating in the regional and international market are resulting in a change of the structure of the economic sectoral map. Now, some sectors are considered as sun raising sectors while others are showing a declining existence and viability.

SKILLS, being part of SEBC, the main private sector development actor in the country, is designing new thematic training modules that are devoted to serve the emerging sectors. Insurance, Banking, Consultancy and Tourism are examples of the services sectors that are flourishing in the Syrian market. In respond to current and future demand trends, SKILLS will seize the opportunity to be a key actor in the provision of highly qualified human resources.

SKILLS has already launched the thematic training of the Journalism sector “SKILLS for JOURNALISM”, and will launch “SKILLS for TOURISM” in 2011.

SKILLS FOR JOURNALISM

SKILLS’, being a successful model of EU Syria cooperation, is designing new thematic training modules that aim to build skills and capacity in Syrian economic and business journalists to equip them to report on economic development and business issues accurately, consistently and in a newsworthy manner. The target participants are a group of pre-selected 20 active economic journalists.

After completion of the course participants will have:

- A deeper and broader understanding of the basics of economics, such as the different schools of economic thought and the implications arising for national economic policies.
- A better comprehension of the benefits, risks and challenges of globalization and regionalization from the Syrian perspective.
- A larger and more accurate trade-related vocabulary in English and Arabic

- Improved understanding of technical business concepts and methodologies
- Improved skills in writing and editing accurate, comprehensible, factual and appealing articles on economic and financial issues.
- Skills to assess readership and impact
- Improved inter-personal and communication skills

COURSE CONTENTS:

The course consists of three parts:

1. Business Skills:

- International Commercial terms. (Competition, competitiveness, dumping, monopoly, etc.)
- Concept of Public Private Partnerships (PPP).
- Concept and International experience of consumer and intellectual property protection.
- Entrepreneurship learning.
- Access to finance.
- Marketing and International marketing.
- E-Commerce.
- Essentials of the stock market exchange
- Introduction to the EU Association Agreement, the WTO and free trade agreements
- Business start-up and management

2. Communication Skills:

- Negotiations Skills.
- Body Language.
- Emotional Intelligence.
- Speed reading.
- Presentation Skills.
- Internet Skills (using emails, search engines, blogs, social networks etc).

3. Technical Skills (Writing Skills for Journalists):

- Writing business news articles.
- Writing financial news articles.
- The role and methodology of editing
- Interview Tools and techniques.

- Dealing with figures: How to understand and interpret and translate them into attention-grabbing news stories
- Introduction to new information recourses (Search tools, blogs, social networks).
- Writing for new media (websites, blogs).
- How to find interesting topics for articles.
- The ethics of journalism.
- Creative thinking.
- Assessing readership and impact

4. *English & ICDL Courses*

REQUIRED FIELDS OF EXPERTISE:

- International Public Relations Specialists
- Press Communication and Media Research Specialists
- Journalist Training Specialists
- Personal and Business Skills Training Specialists
- English Language Training Specialists

SKILLS for Finance

Now, as Financials play a vital role in the economic development and the growth of the financial sector in Syria, it is also crucial to provide these financials with the best professional training practices. Therefore, SKILLS in cooperation with the Institute for Financial Analysts (IFA), are launching **“SKILLS for Finance”**, as the second thematic module of the thematic SKILLS training.

After completion of the course participants will have:

- Best ethical practices followed among professionals in the financial sector.
- Enhanced capabilities of the financial sector employees at different levels in several areas of finance.
- Financial skills of relevance to the job market.

- Upgraded education and professional standards of the financial and business sector, by bringing in top international qualifications and standards.

In addition, this initiative will contribute to the update and introduction of new training courses to ensure new developments in the targeted finance labor market, and to the growth of the financial sector in Syria. Moreover, customized training courses will be organized to cater for institutional clients.

CERTIFICATION:

The following certificates will be introduced to the market along the three phases of the initiative, to provide professionals with the skills needed to prosper in their sectors;

- 5. CFA: Chartered Financial Analysis**
- 6. CMA: Certified Management Accountant**
- 7. CVA: Certified Valuation Advisor**
- 8. IFRS: International Financial Reporting Standards**
- 9. JFA: Junior Financial Analyst**
- 10. FRM: Financial Risk Management**

SKILLS at glance:

- 24 graduates were the output of the prototype in year 2008
- 64 graduates were the output of year 2009
- Damascus was the starting point. Aleppo was added in 2009.
- The year 2010 showed another doubling of the number of enrolled students compared to 2009
- “SKILLS” as a model was chosen to build capacities of Iraqi and Palestinian refugees in Syria.
- “SKILLS” was highly appreciated by government figures, few students were the Springsteen of top Syrian officials.
- SKILLS graduates were absorbed by the business community with great enthusiasm.
- The business community showed great aspiration to recruit the graduates even within the on-the-job training period.
- Several of the graduates started their own businesses.
- The impact is highly evolving, more than 960 applicants was the result of 2010 opening.
- Sustainability of the model depends, for a great deal, on the availability of financial resources flowing from donor agencies, sponsors and NGO funding.
- SKILLS is becoming more important with the slow change movement in the country, the increasing number of labour market entrants and the increasing demand on labours who have hands on the topic they work at.