

# SUCCESS STORY

## ARCHIPELAGO: an African-European TVET initiative



### EU Trust Fund for Africa - Sahel & Lake Chad



**COUNTRIES:** Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal



**EUTF PARTNER:**  
sequa



**BUDGET:**  
EUR 15.0M



From **01/2019**  
to **12/2023**

ARCHIPELAGO<sup>1</sup> was a regional programme implemented from January 2019 to December 2023 by sequa<sup>2</sup>, CPCCAF<sup>3</sup> and EUROCHAMBRES<sup>4</sup> in nine West African countries. The programme aimed to better match labour supply with demand in the countries of implementation. It supported 20 initiatives focusing on technical and vocational education and training (TVET), which were implemented through partnerships between African and European chambers of commerce and industry, cooperating with business organisations, TVET institutes, and other stakeholders. The initiatives were selected during two calls for proposals and, overall, involved 45 African and 40 European partners. Each initiative supported the implementation of several dual TVET<sup>5</sup> courses designed to yield concrete results in a short period of time. The courses were meant to complement national training offers provided through institutional frameworks.



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In Cameroon, for example, TVET initiatives provided training in agriculture and livestock farming, in food

### Objective of the project

To better match the labour offer (skills available in the labour market) and demand (generated by the local private sector and productive economic growth).

### Key successes

- > 10,550 young people benefitting from dual professional training.
- > 49 new and 35 improved professional training programmes.
- > 1,759 jobs created.

processing, in automotive repair, and in entrepreneurship, developing new economic opportunities for the young participants. A young Cameroonian beneficiary engaged in agri-food production described his learning experience with ARCHIPELAGO in the following words:

*'After successfully completing the course, I was able to improve a number of aspects in terms of the quality assurance of my products and the efficient structuring of business processes and systems as a whole. Thanks to the ARCHIPELAGO programme, I have also been able to come into contact with experts in my field, senior contractors where our work placements have been carried out and fellow apprentices from whom I can continually learn and grow.'*

### How did the EUTF help?

**The 20 initiatives supported by ARCHIPELAGO together trained 10,550 young people through 49 new and 35 improved training programmes.** In a survey of 3,378 trainees, 97% confirmed that the training was useful, mentioning the following reasons: 74% said the training provided new professional perspectives; 48% said the training was more appropriate to labour market needs; and 21% said the training allowed them to start their own business. In addition, 91% of respondents indicated that their situation after the training had improved, because they started their own business (26%), because they had a new job (16%), or because they held a better position in the same company (11%).



**On the demand side of labour, 98% of employers thought that trainees had acquired the skills they needed for their jobs.** Overall, ARCHIPELAGO trained and/or sensitised 1,259 employers on work-based learning. In a survey of 349 participating companies, 93% indicated that, in the future, they would preferably recruit new employees who had completed dual training; 76% showed good knowledge of the functioning and advantages of dual training; and 55% offered an employment contract to trainees. Moreover, mostly larger companies with previous experience investing in human resources were open to taking on trainees and offered employment contracts to graduates.<sup>6</sup>

**ARCHIPELAGO's training programmes directly led to 1,759 jobs, including 1,020 self-employed positions and 739 with wage employment.** These results were achieved even though ARCHIPELAGO focused on TVET rather than post-training support or job creation. Nevertheless, seven of the 20 TVET initiatives also supported graduates with their integration into the labour market and ten of the 20 TVET initiatives also supported business creation. It seems plausible that the number of jobs created could have been even higher if more TVET initiatives had engaged in post-training support.

## Keys to success

**The private sector at the heart of the project design:** The comprehensive engagement of the private sector across all project activities was possible because the main implementing organisations were not ministries or TVET institutes but chambers of commerce and industry and their umbrella organisations. This ensured that training programmes were tailored to business needs. The CPCCAF's and the EUROCHAMBRE's extensive networks were key in mobilising local chambers, business associations, and companies to participate in the 20 TVET initiatives. Private sector actors with hands-on experience of labour needs played a crucial role in developing and adjusting the TVET programmes, collaboratively combining business experience from Africa and Europe. Companies participated in the identification of skills gaps (in 19 out of 20 TVET initiatives), in the development of

curricula (18/20), and in the selection (13/20), placing (17/20) and assessment (12/20) of the apprentices. This private sector-centred approach guaranteed that TVET programmes were geared towards local labour demand needs.

**Systematically linking TVET systems and labour markets:** The bottom-up project design revealed promising paths towards repairing the 'broken link'<sup>7</sup> between TVET systems and labour markets in the targeted countries. 87% of all implemented initiatives confirmed that the dual training programmes would be pursued after the end of the programme, 53% said that the training programme was now integrated into the regular offer of a local TVET institute, and 27% indicated that their initiative had contributed to new TVET legislation or to its preparation. For example, the reference systems<sup>8</sup> for two professions (agri-food processing and automotive repair), which were elaborated by one of the initiatives in Cameroon, were in the process of being formally adopted through the country's Ministry of Employment and Professional Training. Nevertheless, further efforts would be needed in the future to systematically integrate ARCHIPELAGO's results into national TVET systems. In 14 of the 20 initiatives, TVET certificates of the training programmes supported by ARCHIPELAGO were not (yet) recognised by the national TVET system. Systematic partnerships with national TVET funds, providing financial support for companies which support apprenticeships, could also be an important mechanism to perpetuate trainings and support national institutions.

## Building on success

**ARCHIPELAGO provides insightful lessons on how to mobilise chambers of commerce and industry for TVET programmes to increase labour-market orientation.** These experiences and lessons learned can be of great value to other TVET programmes in the region which strive to better align national TVET systems with the demands of the labour market. ARCHIPELAGO offers particularly interesting lessons on (i) potential roles of chambers of commerce and industry across continents in TVET programmes, (ii) approaches to mobilise and leverage private sector engagement, and (iii) ways to institutionalise bottom-up TVET programmes in West Africa.



**EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa**

<sup>1</sup> The project's website with additional information is available [here](#). Further information is also available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> sequa is a German development organisation focusing on the private sector.

<sup>3</sup> The *Conférence Permanente des Chambres Consulaires Africaines et Francophones* represents the African and EU francophone chambers of commerce, industry and handicraft.

<sup>4</sup> EUROCHAMBRES is the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

<sup>5</sup> Dual training involves combining classroom-based learning with practical work experience.

<sup>6</sup> Some smaller employers, in contrast, were mostly interested in cheap workforce or financial benefits.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, ILO, UNESCO, 'Building better formal TVET systems. Principles and practice in low- and middle-income countries', 2023. Retrieved [here](#).

<sup>8</sup> A reference system is a framework that defines the skills, competencies and qualifications required for a given occupation.

### Disclaimer

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