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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cedefop celebrates study visits success, looks forward to Erasmus+

Study visits programme for education and training specialists, the first peer-learning programme in the European Union (1978) is coming to an end, with the last of the visits to be held in June 2014 (applications accepted to October 15). In its last phase, under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, the study visits involved over 15 000 people in positions of authority in education and training. Beneficiaries used the visits to set up networks, review their own practices and influence policy change.

The successor to the lifelong learning programme (LLP), Erasmus+, will bring together various programmes under three Key Actions: learning mobility, cooperation for innovation and good practices, and support for policy reform.

What these changes mean for the people who have found value in the study visits, and **how the advantages of the study visits can be integrated in Erasmus+**, was the focus of Cedefop's conference [Promoting change in education and training policy and practice – The value of peer learning](#). The event involved visits organisers and participants, national agency representatives, social partners, members of the Lifelong Learning Committee and European Commission officials.

The core of the conference was 13 groups structured like 'mini study visits', with former organisers/participants detailing what had been of value to them in the programme and drawing suggestions for Erasmus+.



Irina Jemeljanova of Cedefop introducing the working groups (Photos: M. Pappous)

Opening the conference, Cedefop Acting Director Christian Lettmayr said: 'Participation of civil society in the implementation of any policy change is of paramount importance. We should find an alternative way to retain the benefits of peer learning, which helps to build a European identity.'

Anna-Maria Giannopoulou of the European Commission said that Erasmus+ continues the study visits 'in spirit and impact'. But because both EU and national contexts have changed – with greater 'streamlining' of education policies thanks to the open method of coordination – the new programme needs to focus on the systemic level, where the policy impact is expected to be stronger; and on the EU targets of Europe 2020.

Participants made a strong case for the study visits format, pointing out that the impact of the visits, though not easy to measure, was widespread and significant: it could be seen not only in the long-term benefits of networking with peers across Europe, but also in the increased confidence and drive that came from finding new solutions to common challenges.

Social partner and local authority representatives expressed their eagerness to assume a significant role in Erasmus+, considering their importance in bridging education, training and employment.



Anna-Maria Giannopoulou (DG EAC, European Commission), Michaela Feuerstein (Study Visits coordinator, Cedefop), Christian Lettmayr (Acting Director), Roxana Calfa (DG EAC), George Kostakis (Cedefop)

The European Commission representative said the new programme would not be adopting a 'top-down' approach, and that social partners would retain an observer role in Erasmus and have many opportunities to participate in the various actions of the programme.

For more on study visits: <http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/>

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About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training.

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