



The study visits programme for education and vocational training specialists, part of the lifelong learning programme (2007-13), is an initiative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Cedefop coordinates the programme at the European level, whereas the national agencies implement the programme in the Member States.

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The participant's companion

Study visits for education
and vocational training specialists

2nd edition



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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

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**The European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's
reference centre for vocational education and training.

We provide information on and analyses of vocational
education and training systems, policies, research and practice.

Cedefop was established in 1975
by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

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Chair of the Governing Board

Name:

Group number and title:

Country and city of visit:

Dates:

From

until

Group organiser's contact details:

Name and address of the hotel:

Your learning objectives for the visit

Defining what you would like to learn during the visit will help you be focused and active:









Dear participant,

Thank you for your interest in the study visits programme!

Study visits are part of the Lifelong learning programme of the European Union. Study visits allow participants to acquire new knowledge on the theme of their visit and the education and training systems of host countries, to become aware of new trends and latest developments and to establish new contacts. Each study visit and the entire programme contribute to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and European cooperation in education and training. The wider policy context in which the programme operates is briefly provided in annex (pp 34).

During the study visit, you will spend three to five days in a group of 10 to 15 colleagues from several European countries who represent different education and training systems and have different backgrounds and professional profiles. You will also meet education and training specialists and decision-makers and visit education and training institutions and centres in the host country.

Organisers put a lot of effort into building an interesting and relevant programme, but the success of the visit depends on your preparation

and active contribution. You should bear in mind that a study visit is not a training course; it is a common learning experience. You do not come to be taught, you come to learn and share your knowledge with European colleagues. To make good use of a study visit depends on you as well as to what extent you and your institution/organisation will benefit in the long term. Two words should guide you – learning and dissemination of results.

Working together in a group, reflecting on various topic-related issues, sharing points of view, discovering other ways of seeing things, solving problems or simply considering solutions make you feel more like members of a common European space.

Applying for a study visit and receiving a grant, you take up certain responsibilities and there are several things that you need to take care of before, during and after the visit. We hope this companion will help you to prepare better for the visit and maximise its effect.

We wish you an interesting and fruitful visit!



Notes _____

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of multiple horizontal blue lines.





Before the visit

Before the visit:

- confirm your participation to the organiser of the study visit and the national agency of your country at least eight weeks before your visit;



In case of cancellation, IMMEDIATELY inform the national agency of your country and the organiser. If you cannot participate in a specific visit, discuss alternatives with the national agency.

- get in contact with the organiser of your visit;
- start communicating with other members of your group to get to know them before you meet;
- read documentation on the country and topic provided by organisers and Cedefop (available on the study visits website – see page 26);
- prepare a presentation on the theme of the visit sharing the experience of your country;



The organiser might provide you with instructions regarding expected focus, format and length of your contribution. If there are any other participants from your country in your group, consider contacting them and making a joint presentation.

- obtain an overview of the education and training system of your country to take with you;



You can use Cedefop's or Eurydice's website or consult the Ministry of Education in your country. Some national agencies provide ready-made presentations to participants.

- prepare materials on your institution or organisation, if available;



Try not to carry too many materials with you, use links to electronic resources and make them available to your group.

Try to obtain materials in the working language of the group.

- brush up your command of the working language of the visit and other foreign languages;
- inform your management and colleagues of the visit, ask if they have any specific expectations or information needs related to it;
- after receiving a draft programme (two to three months before the visit, except for visits in September and March when the time can be shorter), provide your feedback to the organiser.



Your feedback will help the organiser to structure the programme better, ensure quality of discussions and increase the possibilities for networking.

You should also:

- make your travel arrangements (reservation and payment of tickets); do it only after you have been in touch with your organiser and confirmed the place and dates of the visit;
- obtain accident/health insurance cover;
- confirm your hotel reservation;



The organiser will find and arrange accommodation for you, but you are solely responsible for:

- **confirming your reservation by the indicated deadline;**
- **paying for accommodation and extras;**
- **paying cancellation fees in case you do not show up and fail to cancel the reservation;**
- **costs of meals and local travel.**

- plan to be present during the entire visit. Late arrivals and early departures disrupt the smooth running of a visit.



Study visits often begin with an informal meeting/dinner the evening before the first day of the visit.



During the visit

During the visit:

- be active in all activities at the times scheduled in the programme; use the entire period of time for learning activities;



The daily pattern of the programme is generally a half-day devoted to theoretical sessions and a field visit or maximum of two field visits. Tourism and shopping are not part of the programme.

- share your knowledge, experience, views and good practice with your hosts and the group;



Participants may have similar or completely divergent professional profiles. In the former case, this can lead to in-depth discussions on a well-defined and specific topic. In the latter case, most general aspects of the topic can be discussed. Nevertheless, participants have a lot in common: they usually have considerable experience and are interested in the education and training systems of the host country and, more specifically, in the theme of the study visit.

- use the opportunity to present your institution/organisation's activities and achievements;
- be ready to discuss challenges and look for solutions from other countries;
- try to establish professional contacts that might be useful for you and your institution/organisation to develop new projects and create networks;
- collect ideas and materials of interest to your management and colleagues;



You may ask the organiser to help you arrange a visit to an institution of specific interest to you. However, the organiser is not obliged to accommodate all individual professional interests as the visit is focused on common learning.

- take notes during presentations and field visits;
- volunteer to be a group reporter and contribute to preparing a group report;
- start work on the report from the first day of the visit;



A group report is a summary of the group's experience and individual contributions. It is not a travel diary, describing every day and every session or visit. Cedefop will publish reports on its website and make them available to experts in education and vocational training. When writing the report, please keep this readership in mind: make it clear, interesting, and detailed enough to be useful to colleagues throughout Europe.

- be flexible, adaptable (to tight timetables, long days);
- be open to meeting new people of different countries and cultures, learn about other cultures and promote yours;
- if you know other foreign languages, help participants who experience language difficulties;
- collect your attendance certificate at the end of the visit.



You are kindly requested not to bring members of your family or other persons unconnected with the programme with you.



After the visit

After the visit, you should:

- summarise your findings and experience;



If you are a group reporter, send the report to Cedefop as well as the organiser of your study visit.

- inform your management of the information gained and potential cooperation ideas;
- disseminate the knowledge, information and materials to your colleagues, students and professional networks;



You may consider participating in local/national seminars and conferences, information days organised by the national agency. You might also write an article to local/regional press, professional journal or your institution's website.

- explore possibilities to inform policy-makers at local, regional or national levels of your findings;
- keep in touch with participants of your group and host;
- involve your colleagues in developing a cooperation project idea;
- encourage your colleagues to participate in study visits or consider hosting a study visit in your institution (organisation);



Hosting a visit is a good opportunity to bring a group of specialists from several European countries together and give an opportunity to more of your colleagues to learn about other countries.

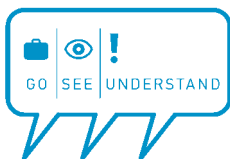
Many organisers decide to host a visit at their institutions after participating in a study visit.

- encourage your colleagues and students to participate in European programmes and projects;
- introduce your new experience to your everyday work and professional activities.



Experience shows that participants usually disseminate the knowledge and experience they gain from the study visit to others who work on related issues. Most frequently participants make a presentation, lecture or information session to management, colleagues or students as well as integrate the knowledge they gained into their work. Participants' organisations can use the new ideas they acquired to introduce or develop new ideas and/or reforms for education and training systems, introduce new methods and tools and establish more international cooperation as well as introduce new approaches to services, new ways of learning, wider training or service offers and new policies. Contacts and networks established during a visit are used for projects in other actions of the Lifelong learning programme.





Study visits website

Cedefop provides an interactive management information system that is commonly referred to as 'Olive' at

<http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/>

You are invited to visit this website to get a lot of useful information, such as:

- find contact details of the organiser of your visit;
- get background documentation on the topic of the visit and information and links on national systems and terminology of education and training (Documentation Tab);
- using the username and password you receive with your application, access information on the participants in your group, their background and contact details (you need to log in from the home page to access this information);
- obtain a group report template.

Other useful links



European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Official website of the European Commission covering policies, developments and programmes related to education and training, culture, youth, multilingualism, citizenship and sports.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm [cited 13.4.2009].



Cedefop – the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Cedefop is a European agency that helps promote and develop vocational education and training in the European Union. It is the EU's reference centre for vocational education and training. Cedefop's website provides up-to-date information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems in Europe, policies, research and practice.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu> [cited 13.4.2009].



Eurydice is a European information network on education and training systems. Since 2007, Eurydice is part of the transversal programme of the Lifelong learning programme to support development of policies and cooperation at European level. It is managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Eurydice provides a vast source of information, including detailed descriptions of how European education systems are organised and how they function.

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php [cited 13.4.2009].



A result of a cooperation project between four national agencies of Sweden, Hungary, Italy and Norway and based on the experience of previous mobility programmes, this website provides useful information to study visits participants on how to prepare for visits, how to increase impact and build networks for future cooperation.

<http://eman.programkontoret.se/> [cited 13.4.2009].



Knowledge system on lifelong learning

The knowledge system on lifelong learning (KSLLL) website offers up-to-date information on common learning activities in education and training for developing lifelong learning in Europe. It is developed by the European Commission to improve visibility of output of the Education and training 2010 work programme.

<http://www.kslll.net/> [cited 4.5.2009].



EVE – electronic platform for the dissemination and exploitation of results

EVE is a multilingual electronic platform containing results of projects financed through programmes and initiatives on education, training, culture, youth and citizenship. It is managed by DG Education and Culture in the framework of dissemination and exploitation of project results.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/eve/
[cited 4.5.2009].

How does the study visits programme work?

The **European Commission** assisted by national agencies ensures effective and efficient implementation of all actions of the Lifelong learning programme.

Cedefop coordinates the study visits programme at EU level on behalf of the European Commission. Cedefop coordinates calls for proposals, prepares and publishes annual catalogues; coordinates calls for applications, constitutes and monitors the composition of groups; supports the quality of the visits; conducts assessment and evaluation of implementation and results; and disseminates results of the programme.

National agencies promote the study visits programme to potential applicants and other target groups at national level; launch and conduct national calls for catalogue proposals; run calls for applications, announce grant award criteria and national priorities; organise evaluation and selection of applications, distribute grants to beneficiaries; monitor and support beneficiaries; disseminate and exploit results as well as provide information and support to organisers and monitor implementation of study visits in their countries.

Contact your national agency to:

- learn about grant arrangements and reporting obligations;
- submit individual reports according to grant agreement;
- ask questions or express concerns about your participation;
- participate in dissemination activities organised by them.



Contact person in the national agency
of your country:



Annex

Annex

Policy context of lifelong learning

In 2010, the Council of the European Union reviewed the progress towards the objectives of the Lisbon strategy (2000) of making the European Union the ‘most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world’. Building on the lessons learned, the **Europe 2020 strategy** (see Box 1) set out a vision for Europe to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy with high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The strategy recognises the strengths of the Lisbon process, in terms of aiming for growth and job creation, and its weaknesses in implementation and the differences among countries in the scale of reform. Looking to the future, the strategy places immediate focus on recovering from the economic crisis that has accelerated the need for reform and stronger cooperation.

The goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth can be achieved through raising skills levels and reinforcing education and, more specifically, lifelong learning. All Europeans should have the opportunity to acquire, upgrade and broaden their knowledge, skills and competences throughout their lives; to perform well in jobs that are likely to become more demanding at all levels. To ensure ‘smart

growth' driven by knowledge and innovation, it is important to improve the quality of education and training, ensure access to them for all citizens, strengthen research and business performance, and promote innovation transfer throughout the European Union.

Adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2009, an updated **framework of European cooperation in education and training, ET 2020** (see Box 2) reflects priorities defined in the Europe 2020 strategy. The framework builds on the achievements of the Education and training 2010 work programme that brought about a tangible shift in most countries from input-oriented learning processes to learning outcomes. It addresses the remaining challenges in creating a knowledge-based Europe and making lifelong learning a reality for all. The framework focuses on lifelong learning and mobility; quality and efficiency of education and training; equity and social cohesion; and creativity and innovation. National education and training systems should better provide the means for all citizens to realise their potential as well as contribute to ensuring sustainable economic growth and employability.

High quality vocational education and training (VET) is one of the prerequisites to empowering people and promoting labour market participation. The cooperation in VET known as the **Copenhagen process** (see Box 3) will also

continue with making VET a more attractive learning option as a main priority. During 2002-10, the Copenhagen process has supported the Member States in modernising their VET systems: it has promoted the lifelong learning perspective and the development of common tools, such as the European qualifications framework and the European credit system for VET. From now on, the cooperation will focus on putting the common European instruments and principles into practice and using them to support mobility for VET learners, encourage more adults to take up continuing training and to recognise the skills and competences people acquire at work or in their lives.

Cooperation among the Member States in education and training includes higher education and the initiatives under the **Bologna process** (see Box 4) that is aimed at making European higher education systems more comparable and compatible. It has led to a common qualifications framework for higher education and the key challenge now is to develop further the learning outcomes linked to the qualifications and study programmes. The process will also focus on increasing opportunities for and quality of mobility of students and staff, providing equal access to quality education and lifelong learning, closer linking education, research and innovation.

The policy-related work covered by the cooperation of the Member States in lifelong learning is complemented by the **Lifelong learning programme** (2007-13) (see Box 5) supporting cooperation in all education and training sectors at grass root level. It provides financial support to individuals and institutions to participate in thousands of cooperation projects each year. These projects also enable learners, teachers and trainers and educational leaders to spend some time in an institution or an enterprise abroad.

The updated priorities and cooperation framework for further developing and improving education and training in Member States emphasise the need for countries to work together. While each Member State is responsible for the organisation and content of its education and training systems, there are advantages in sharing good practice and learning together on common issues. Dissemination of the outcomes of cooperation among stakeholders will play an important role in its impact at national and European levels. The study visits programme brings together a wide spectrum of education and training specialists and policy-makers to discuss, learn from one another and share experiences in implementing lifelong learning policies in their countries, thus contributing to European cooperation.

BOX 1**Europe 2020 strategy**

Adopted by the European Council in June 2010, Europe's strategy for 2020 aims at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Asserting that the route to lasting economic recovery and social cohesion is knowledge and innovation, it argues for giving priority to investment in education and training.

The strategy includes ten guidelines that will remain largely stable until 2014, allowing the Member States to focus on implementation. Four guidelines are of specific importance to education and training: promoting lifelong learning, developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs, promoting social inclusion, and optimising support to research and development and innovation. Improving the performance of education and training systems at all levels and increasing participation in tertiary education are of key importance. According to the guidelines, school curricula should strive to support creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Among its seven flagship initiatives, two are most closely associated with education and training. 'Youth on the move' is aimed at supporting the entry of young people into the labour market, while 'An agenda for new skills and jobs' was launched to bridge employment and education and training

policies through a reinforced lifelong component and a new approach to adult learning.

The European Commission and the Member States will work in partnership on the agreed goals: Member States will develop their national strategies and will report annually on progress. National strategies should be implemented in a partnership of national, regional and local authorities as well as social partners and civil society.

Five targets have been agreed to measure progress: three of these are linked to education and training:

- less than 10% early school leavers;
- at least 40% of 30 to 34-year-olds completing tertiary education;
- 75% of the 20-64-year-olds employed through greater participation of youth, older workers and low skilled workers and better integration of legal migrants.

More information can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm

[cited 15.02.2011].

BOX 2

Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)

Agreed by the Council of the European Union in 2009, ET 2020 is a framework of cooperation between the Member States and the European Commission in education and training till 2020.

The primary goal is to support the further development of education and training systems in the Member States. This aims to ensure personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens, contribute to sustainable economic prosperity and employability and promote democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

Lifelong learning is a fundamental principle of the cooperation framework. It covers learning in all contexts (formal, non-formal and informal), at all levels of education and training (from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational training and adult training) and at all ages (from pre-primary to post-retirement). Partnerships between education and training institutions and enterprises and wider communities are also important.

The cooperation addresses four strategic objectives:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;

- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- supporting creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

The objectives are accompanied by European benchmarks and reference levels of European average performance, so that by 2020 (see also Box 1):

- at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education participate in early childhood education;
- less than 15% of 15-year-olds have insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science;
- at least 15% of adults participate in lifelong learning.

The work continues on developing European benchmarks for mobility, employability and language learning.

To monitor progress, the Member States will produce national reports at the end of each three-year cycle.

More information can be found at:
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/
lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm)
[cited 15.02.2011].

BOX 3**Copenhagen process**

The Copenhagen process refers to the cooperation of the Member States, the European Commission and the social partners in vocational education and training (VET). It contributes to achieving the objectives set in the strategic framework of cooperation ET 2020, of which it is an integral part. Started in 2002, this cooperation played an important role in raising awareness of the importance of VET both at European and national level and brought about significant developments in national policies and modernisation of VET systems.

The cooperation also led to the creation of important European instruments for transparency, the recognition of qualifications and competences, and quality assurance: Europass, the European qualifications framework (EQF), the European credit system for VET (ECVET) and the European quality assurance reference framework for VET (EQAVET). Implementation – which is at different stages in different countries – will be the focus of the Copenhagen process in the coming years.

To review the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-20, the Bruges Communiqué was adopted in December 2010 by the European Ministers for vocational education and training, the European social partners and the European Commission. They agreed that, by 2020,

VET systems in Europe should be more attractive, relevant, career-oriented, innovative, accessible and flexible and should contribute to excellence and equity in lifelong learning. Based on the four strategic objectives of the ET 2020, the priorities for VET will be:

- making initial VET an attractive learning option with high relevance to labour market needs and pathways to higher education;
- enabling flexible and open access to training and qualifications, including flexible systems for recognition of learning outcomes at all stages of life and cross-border mobility;
- promoting more opportunities for disadvantaged groups and inclusive VET for inclusive growth;
- nurturing creative, innovative and entrepreneurial thinking for all VET students within international cooperation.

Social partners at European level should develop their own initiatives to contribute to the attractiveness of VET. They should continue to play an active role in the governance of the Copenhagen process and contribute to the realisation of its priorities.

More information can be found at:
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/
lifelong-learning-policy/doc60_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc60_en.html)
[cited 15.02.2011].

BOX 4

Bologna process

Started in 1999, the Bologna process contributes to European cooperation in education and training and includes countries outside Europe.

The aim of the Bologna process is to create a European higher education area in which students can choose from a wide range of high quality courses throughout the European Union. The Bologna process has three main priorities:

- introduction of three cycle system in higher education – bachelor/master/doctorate – fully in place in almost all countries in most institutions and programmes;
- quality assurance – in most countries there is an independent body for quality assurance,
- recognition of qualifications and periods of studies – the European credit transfer and accumulation system, ECTS, is obligatory in most countries.

The European Union supports modernisation of universities in curricula, governance and funding so they are able to meet the challenges of globalisation and competition and stimulate innovation and research.

More information can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html [cited 15.2.2011].

BOX 5**Lifelong learning programme (2007-13)**

The Lifelong learning programme is a funding programme to complement policy related work; it provides support to individuals and institutions to participate in thousands of cooperation projects each year. The programme covers a broad range of activities related to learning from early childhood to old age that support exchange and mobility across the EU and other participating countries. It gathered under one framework almost all education and training programmes. It consists of four sectoral programmes:

- **Comenius** (school education);
- **Leonardo da Vinci** (vocational education and training);
- **Erasmus** (higher education);
- **Grundtvig** (adult education).

It also includes a transversal programme of which study visits is part, supporting policy cooperation and policy learning alongside parts devoted to language learning, ICT and valorisation activities. The Jean Monnet programme supports European institutions and associations.

More information can be found at:
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/
lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm)
[cited 28.1.2009].

Notes _____





CEDEFOP

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