

Study visits act as a POWERFUL TOOL

to stimulate discussions and inform/improve education and training policies at local, regional and national level

A large number of participants brought the outcomes of their visits to the attention of policy- and decision-makers at local (57%), regional (33%) and national (15%) level, including ministries of education.

The study visits programme bridges EU level policy developments and local and regional education and training practice. 39% of respondents initiated discussions on European education and training policies in their organisations. One third of respondents used what they learned in study visits to make suggestions concerning education and training policies in their countries; about 70% of these were reported as taken into consideration.

I proposed during the debates on the new Education Law that took place locally and nationally, the use of ICT starting at an early stage: pre-primary school as a part of our national curriculum (participant from Romania).

to spread information about education and training systems, good/effective practices, policies to wide audiences in Europe

Almost all participants (98% of respondents) undertook dissemination activities: they shared information about what they learned during the visit with their colleagues (94%) and management (62%), with students (42%) and their parents (25%). They also made presentations (60%), organised information (46%) or training sessions for colleagues (31%) and shared reports on study visits outcomes (58%). Many wrote articles to professional journals and local media (24%). Some mentioned that they gave interviews to local newspapers, radio and TV or shared information through the social media (blogs, Facebook, personal websites). Participants also spread information in more informal ways.

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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 participating countries.



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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MAJOR BENEFITS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOLLOW STUDY VISITS

IMPACT ON 2008/09 STUDY VISIT PARTICIPANTS

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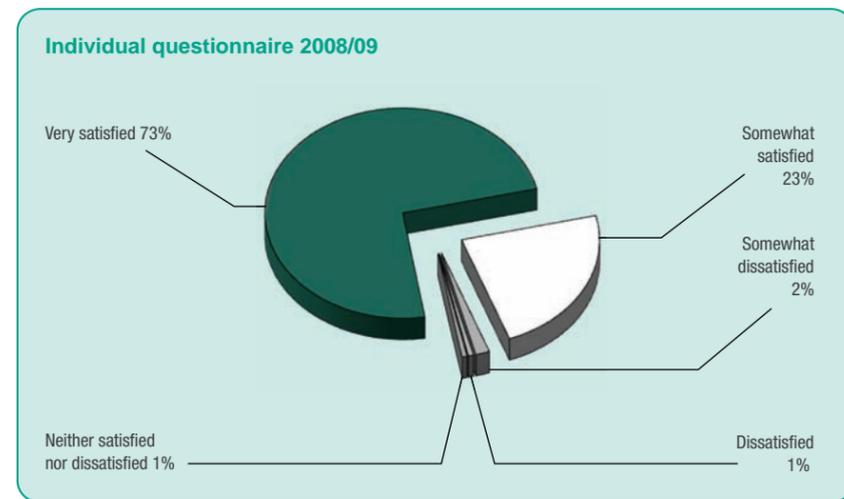
The programme of study visits is part of the lifelong learning programme 2007-13 (1), supporting cooperation among European education and vocational training specialists and decision-makers. During the three-to-five day intensive exchange, participants from different European countries examine and discuss education and training policies and practices, share experiences and expertise, look for common approaches and effective solutions to challenges, and network for future cooperation.

In 2008/09, 2 532 decision-makers and practitioners from 30 countries took part in 246 study visits hosted by 29 countries. The largest participant groups were head teachers and teacher trainers (25%), directors of education and vocational training institutions, guidance and validation centres (18%) and representatives of local, regional and national authorities responsible for education and training (10%).

During April–May 2010, Cedefop conducted a survey of participants of 2008/09 study visits to learn what they had gained from their participation. Replies were received from 983 participants representing various education and vocational training sectors.

The results confirmed both the considerable success and high relevance of the visits, with 96% of participants either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience (see Figure 1). 81% of respondents found the knowledge and information they gained relevant or very relevant to their professional activities.

Figure 1. Participant satisfaction with the study visits (N=983)



(1) European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2006). Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Official Journal of the European Union, L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 45-68.

Participating in study visits offers a REAL OPPORTUNITY

to learn about education and training policy and practice in Europe

93% of respondents said that they became more aware of the common aims of, and differences among, education and training systems in other European countries, as well as of similar challenges that can be addressed by applying successful solutions learned about during the visits.

The most beneficial part of the study visit was active demonstration of education policies implemented across the system. [...] the visits to education institutions [...] were really important. Plus, the exchange of views among the study visit participants and with experts or school staff provided greater insight into the innovations / practices we saw (participant from Greece).

Participants also became more aware of European cooperation in education and training (70%), lifelong learning strategies of the EU and Member States (50%), benchmarks for education and training in Europe (41%), and European tools and principles such as EQF, ECVET and Europass (24%). Following the visits, 80% continued to explore the themes and issues they learned about through discussions with colleagues or cooperation projects.

Now I have contacts with education professionals around Europe [...]. I think that these visits improve links among Europeans as members of the same continent (participant from Spain).

to get new ideas and inspiration for initiating change to improve existing practice

91% learned about examples of effective policies and practices from other countries.

We learned about good practice in the schools we visited, ranging from equal opportunity for slow learners and pupils with special needs, to the use of ICT, cooperation among schools, and career planning (participant from Germany).

Based on the information they gained during the study visits, 55% of respondents proposed changes to the work of their institutions, about half of which have been taken on board. Among difficulties in implementing changes, participants emphasised the need for education and training systems and management to become more open to the world and new ideas.

The visit provided 52% of participants with solutions to the problems they had been working on.

I met a lot of people with the same interests working in other situations and in other countries, but our vision of good education is the same and that supports me in my work. I saw a lot of practical examples (participant from Belgium).

to establish contacts and build cooperation among education and training institutions in Europe

Participating in study visits is, in most cases, a door to increased involvement in European cooperation and programmes; 84% of participants stayed in contact with people they met during the visit. Within a year of the visit, about one third of respondents managed to develop and submit a proposal for a cooperation project. A quarter of them helped their institution to host a study visit, while 91% encouraged others to participate in the study visits programme.

During my visit, I found hard-working, serious and really motivated partners to improve teaching and learning in Europe (participant from Portugal).

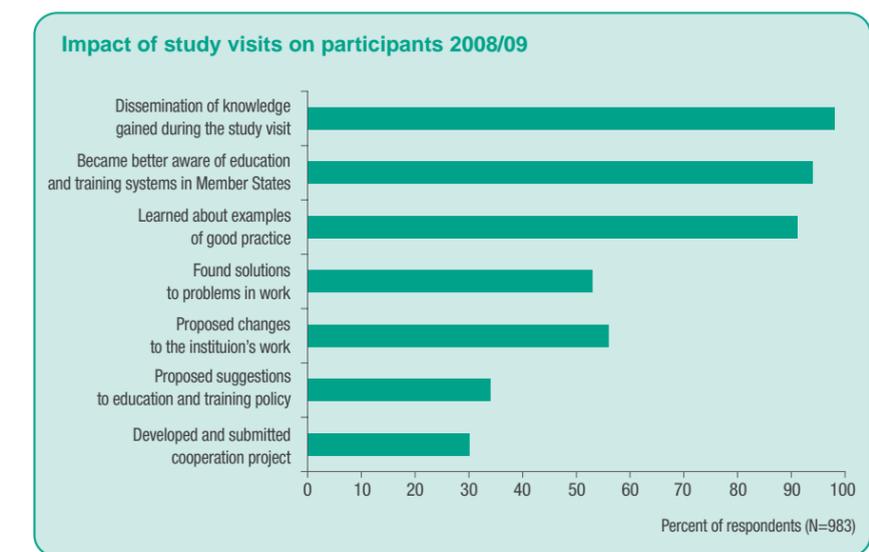
The study visit was a chance for me to find partners for European cooperation: I found partners for my school and also for two other schools to apply for a Comenius school project (participant from Turkey).

to improve participants' key competences such as communication skills

92% of respondents found that participation was beneficial for their personal skills, making them more confident in communicating in a foreign language on issues related to their professional activities (81 %) and in communicating with people from other cultures (87 %).

I have learned a lot about special education system in other countries, collected many new ideas and developed my English knowledge (participant from Hungary).

Figure 2. Summary of responses



Source: Cedefop (2010), Impact assessment of 2008/09 study visits





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Lifelong Learning Programme

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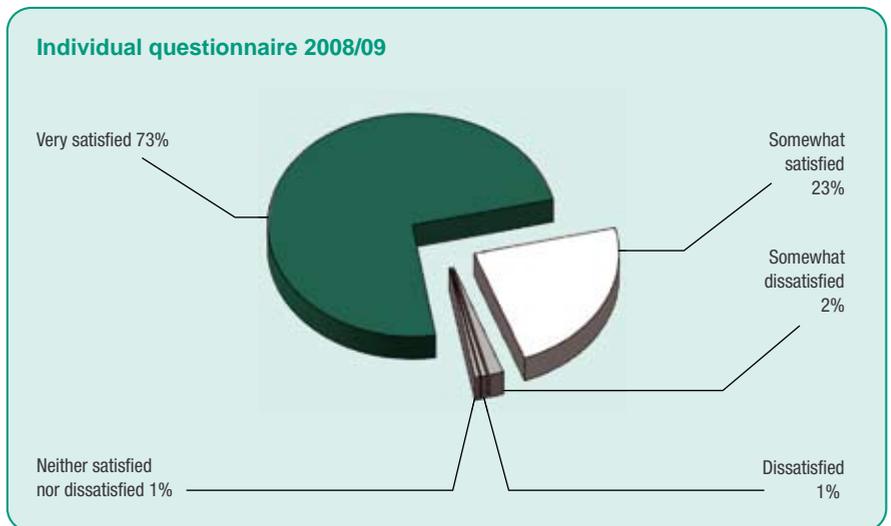
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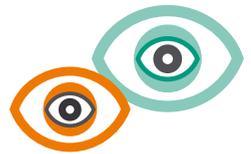
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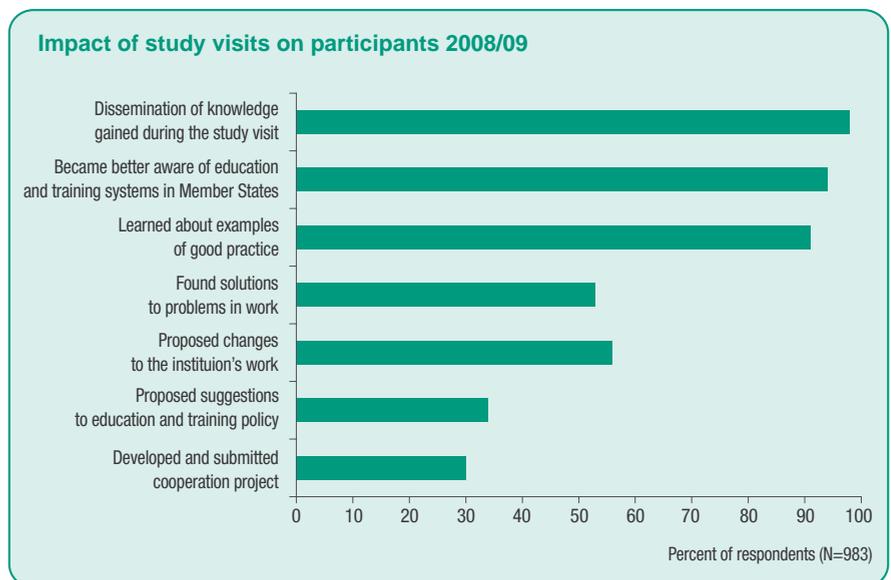
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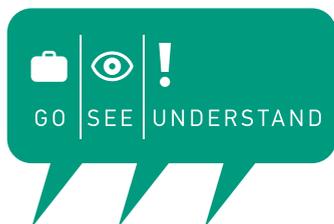
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