



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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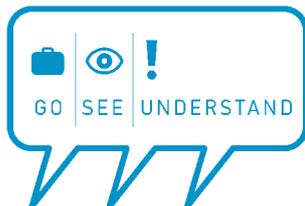




## The participant's companion

Study visits for education  
and vocational training specialists





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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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>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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Name:

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Group number and title:

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Country and city of visit:

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Dates:

From 

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until 

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Group organiser's contact details:

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Name and address of the hotel:

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Your learning objectives for the visit

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



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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 Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs 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!





## 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 October 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:

- 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](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

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/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/> [cited 13.4.2009].



## European mobility alumni network – EMAN

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/](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

### How study visits contribute to policy cooperation and development

In 2000, the European Council of the European Union developed a strategy in response to Europe's main challenges: globalisation, demographic change and the knowledge economy. This became known as the **Lisbon strategy**. It set an ambitious goal for the European Union: to become by 2010 the 'most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' (see Box 1).

To become a knowledge society, Europe needs more economic growth, more and better employment and a society that is socially cohesive. To achieve these aims, Europe needs to improve its performance in education and training. This means that all Europeans need to have the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and competences throughout their lives. This has made education and training an important policy lever.

Therefore, in 2001, education ministers agreed for the first time on a common strategy for education and training. Making learning accessible for all Europeans at all ages and improving the quality and efficiency of education and training were considered top priority. It was

also decided to open education and training systems to the wider world. For this purpose, a work programme until 2010 was developed in 2002 known as the **Education and training 2010 work programme**. Education and training in Europe was to become a quality reference for the whole world (see Box 2).

The Education and training 2010 work programme embraced a process which started in 1999 known as the **Bologna process**. It aimed at restructuring European higher education systems to make them more comparable and compatible. Lifelong learning was made one of the key objectives of the Bologna process in 2001 (see Box 4).

Recognising its value and important role in achieving the Lisbon objectives, the responsible ministers, the European social partners and the European Commission decided to cooperate closely in vocational education and training (VET). In the **Copenhagen declaration** (2002), they agreed to make VET more transparent and open and improve its quality. The Copenhagen process aims to make lifelong learning more easily accessible and promote educational, occupational and geographical mobility (see Box 3).

The policy-related work described under the Education and training 2010 work programme is

complemented by the **Lifelong learning programme**. This single integrated programme supports 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 as well as teachers and trainers to spend some time in an institution or an enterprise abroad (see Box 5).

In conclusion, a coherent framework for cooperation in education and vocational training has been put in place. As progress reports show, this framework has helped to support national reforms and develop several EU reference tools.

Reaching out to all involved is crucial to progress in the areas where a lot remains to be done and to ensure that policy initiatives and tools are implemented across education and training systems. 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. This exchange among those who exercise responsibility for education and training contributes to multi-faceted cooperation of Member States and other participating countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein,

Norway and Turkey) in lifelong learning to achieve Lisbon objectives.

#### BOX 1

### Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs

Adopted in 2000 by Heads of State or Government, the Lisbon strategy set an ambitious objective. By 2010, the European Union was 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. To achieve this goal three main areas for action were identified:

- making Europe a more attractive place to invest and work,
- fostering knowledge and innovation,
- creating more and better jobs.

The underlying concept was that a stronger economy would create employment. Innovation was considered the motor for economic change. Inclusive social and environmental policies would drive economic growth even further. To achieve the goals, a range of measures and reforms were agreed for economic, social, and environmental renewal and sustainability.

Apart from sound macroeconomic conditions, knowledge was regarded as a crucial factor to guarantee Europe's competitiveness ('learning

economy'). Education and training also help to ensure that people have equal opportunities and can engage actively in society. Hence, education and training was identified as one of the policy levers to address Europe's challenges. Investing more in people through better education and skills and improving the adaptability of workers' has become one of its priorities.

Since its review in 2005, the strategy has focused on growth and jobs. The European Commission and Member States work in close partnership. Member States established national programmes to carry out reforms based on collectively agreed policy guidelines. They report annually on progress. Exchange of experience and common learning is central to the work.

From 2008 to 2010, more emphasis is placed on Europe's social objectives. These goals require inclusive education and training policies and coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. In the framework of the strategy, the European Commission also prepared a renewed social agenda. It includes initiatives in employment and social affairs, education and youth, health, information society and economic affairs.

More information can be found at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/faqs/background/index\\_en.htm#bg01](http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/faqs/background/index_en.htm#bg01)  
 [cited 28.1.2009].

#### BOX 2

### Education and training 2010 work programme

Education and training 2010 work programme of the European Commission is a policy framework of cooperation between Member States in education and training towards achieving the Lisbon goals.

In 2001, Member States agreed, while respecting national diversity, three common goals for education and training systems:

- improve the quality and effectiveness of systems;
- ease access to education and training;
- open EU education and training systems to the wider world.

Modernisation and reform of education and training systems is the responsibility and domain of Member States. However, several policy initiatives and common reference tools have been developed at European level to support national reforms. These include a framework of key competences needed for the knowledge society, the European qualifications framework, Europass, the European credit transfer system, the Lifelong learning programme (of which the study visits is part), and others.

To monitor progress of the Union and Member States towards the objectives, a system of European education quality indicators and benchmarks is used. Member States produce national progress reports every two years which form the basis of a joint report by the Council and the Commission.

By 2006, countries should have developed 'cradle to grave' lifelong learning strategies covering all sectors and levels of education and training. Education and training in Europe was to become a quality reference for the whole world. Learning from one another and exchanges of good practice is one of the main tools of cooperation and moving towards high quality education and training in Europe.

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 28.1.2009].

### BOX 3

#### Bologna process

Started in 1999, before the Lisbon strategy, the Bologna process is closely linked and contributes to the Lisbon process but covers more participating countries (45 are involved).

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 – adopted in almost all countries,
- 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](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html) [cited 28.1.2009].

**BOX 4****Copenhagen process**

Signed in 2002 in the wake of the Lisbon strategy and cooperation in education, the Copenhagen declaration was the starting point for closer cooperation between the Commission, Member States and European social partners in vocational education and training (VET). VET plays a key role in ensuring lifelong learning and supplying a skilled workforce necessary for a competitive and dynamic economy.

With the goal to improve the quality and attractiveness of VET and raise its profile among other fields of education, the following priorities were defined:

- give VET a European dimension (improve cooperation between institutions and promote mobility);
- make VET more transparent and improve information and guidance (develop a credit system to make learning outcomes of VET portable, strengthen policies, systems and practices for lifelong guidance);
- promote recognition of qualifications and competences (develop a single framework to help translate qualifications and competences and make them more transparent, support development of qualifications and competences in economic sectors; develop common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning);

- develop quality assurance in VET (including attention to learning needs of teachers and trainers).

As VET is the responsibility of Member States, work on common tools and reference levels, which help to implement reform and increase common trust between key players, is voluntary.

The role of the social partners in implementing the priorities has been stressed in policy documents.

The process has manifested VET's importance and triggered off significant developments. Recommendations and common principles have been developed in the areas of key competences, quality assurance in higher education and in VET, quality of mobility, lifelong guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Development of the European qualifications framework has had important effects, as work on national qualification frameworks affects all education and training sectors and levels. A wide range of actors were involved in the process. They have become more familiar with and interested in joint work at European level.

More information can be found at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm) [cited 28.1.2009].





