



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

The study visits programme for education and vocational training  
specialists and decision-makers

## Outcomes of the knowledge-sharing seminar for study visit organisers

Thessaloniki, 24 and 25 June 2010

Cedefop organised a knowledge-sharing seminar for organisers of study visits that will take place in the academic year 2010-11. The seminar aimed to provide the study visits organisers with information, guidance and support on how to organise good quality study visits in terms of content and practical organisational issues. The seminar took place on 24-25 June 2010 in Thessaloniki.

The theme of the seminar was 'Promoting active inclusion' and focused on important challenges that need to be addressed to promote social inclusion and to ease the integration of vulnerable groups such as early school leavers, learners with special educational needs, unemployed, immigrants and ethnic minorities into education, training and the labour market.

The seminar brought together 117 experienced and new study visits organisers, former study visit participants, representatives of the national agencies and experts on the selected themes. They were informed on recent developments in education and training in Europe, learned from each other and discussed examples of good practices on different ways to approach the theme of their visit. The seminar included formal presentations, open discussions, presentations of successful study visits and knowledge sharing workshops. All the seminar documents, including participants' presentations can be consulted at:

[http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?cid=5&artid=7443&scid=80&artlang=EN&per\\_id=2540](http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?cid=5&artid=7443&scid=80&artlang=EN&per_id=2540)

On the first day, representatives from the European Commission and Cedefop gave an overview of: (1) latest European policy developments on social inclusion and on Cedefop's work on the theme; (2) the policy context of the study visits programme as part of Lifelong Learning programme (LLP); (3) the contribution of the study visits programme to promoting social inclusion.

## **Workshops on policies and practices that promote active inclusion**

The participants shared their experience on policies and practices that promote active inclusion in their countries and exchanged ideas on how to approach the issues of social inclusion during their visits. A summary of the workshop discussions is presented below.

### **(1) Ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged students**

Two experienced organisers presented initiatives to address the needs of disadvantaged students that were discussed during their study visits. Ms Efstathia Christopoulou<sup>(1)</sup> spoke about how the Greek education system provides for students with special needs and how she illustrated it during the study visit. Mr Chris Williams<sup>(2)</sup> described the Every Child Matters (ECM) initiative in the UK and spoke about a multi-disciplinary Team around the child (TAC) approach that raised a lot of interest among study visit participants. Ms Alessandra Molz (Cedefop) briefly presented selected findings of the Cedefop's policy report in relation to equity and social inclusion in vocational education and training.

During further discussion, the participants stressed the importance of education and training in promoting active inclusion and agreed that learning must be accessible to all citizens independent of age, educational attainment, employment or social status. Examples of activities that will be included in the programme of the future study visits on ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged students were also mentioned, e.g. special provision for students with special needs in a rural island area (Greece), the practice of referral specialists (France), etc.

### **(2) Education for active citizenship and social integration of migrants and minorities**

Two experienced organisers of study visits focused on how education contributes to developing active citizenship and on social integration of migrants and minorities. Mr Gergely Guszmán<sup>(3)</sup> highlighted the importance of involving young people in democratic practices and shared the valuable experience of two study visits that took place in Hungary. Mr Silver Pramann<sup>(4)</sup> presented examples of policies and practices of successful integration of minorities in Estonia: the 'Let's do it' campaign and the 'Civil society handbook'. Mr György Ispanki, a Cedefop expert,

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<sup>(1)</sup> Ms Efstathia Christopoulou was the scientific coordinator of the study visit 'Legislation and institutions for pupils with special needs in Greece' (Group 121, November 2009).

<sup>(2)</sup> Mr Chris Williams organised two study visits on 'Every child matters' in the UK (Group 339, March 2009 and Group 122, February 2010).

<sup>(3)</sup> Mr Gergely Guszmán was the organiser of two study visits in Hungary on 'Active participation of young people in public life' (Group 467, October 2008) and 'Mobilizing civic competences through education' (Group 63, October 2009).

<sup>(4)</sup> Mr Silver Pramann was the organiser of the study visit 'Integration of minorities into civil society' (Group 56, October 2009) in Estonia.

presented key findings of the Cedefop policy report on active citizenship education.

In small groups, participants explored examples of practices on active citizenship education and ways to develop civic skills not only through 'classic' teaching, but through various projects and voluntary activities. They exchanged ideas on efficient ways to integrate migrants and minorities into education and training institutions and society. The participants concluded that:

- education is a key for integration as role models for young people provided in school can help them feel part of the community;
- migrants can be trained to be teacher assistants and help to communicate with their communities;
- NGOs can significantly contribute to language training, newcomers' support and maintaining contact with communities to better understand their needs;
- local authorities can play an important role in both citizenship and social inclusion issues;
- local authorities should encourage and facilitate community involvement and motivate teachers to create learning environments.

### **(3) Integration of young people and adults at risk of social exclusion into the labour market**

Two experienced organisers spoke on how they presented the issue of integration of young people and adults at risk into the labour market during their study visits. Ms Judith Peters<sup>(5)</sup> introduced part-time vocational training in Germany that supports integration of young people at risk into the labour market. Mr Patrick Masera<sup>(6)</sup> presented examples of innovative training methods, measures to prevent school failure and second chance schools for the integration of disadvantaged groups in France. Mr Jasper van Loo (Cedefop) presented key developments in vocational education and training (VET) to supporting social inclusion at European level.

Further discussion showed that young people and adults at risk are a very heterogeneous group with diverse backgrounds and needs and require personalised support. Social inclusion can be achieved only if all the stakeholders cooperate and pay attention not only to the needs but also to the potential of the groups at risk. Participants concluded that study visits, apart from the exchange of good practices and ideas, can also contribute to the improvement of the communication between different actors and raise the awareness of the community at local, regional or national level.

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<sup>(5)</sup> Ms Judith Peters was the organiser of the study visit 'Compatibility of job and family - young women in vocational training' (Group 249, March 2009) in Germany.

<sup>(6)</sup> Mr Patrick Masera was the organiser of the study visit 'Innovative training systems for disadvantaged groups' (Group 129, March 2009) in France.

## Preparing and running successful study visits

On the second day, the tools developed by Cedefop to support organisers in preparing and running study visits were presented: the Handbook for organisers and the online management information system.

The seminar continued with three parallel workshops on preparing and running successful study visits where participants shared experience and ideas and received guidance on practical issues related to the organisation of good quality visits: preparing a good programme, smooth running of a visit and disseminating information about the visits. A summary of discussions was as follows:

### (1) Preparing a programme

Ms Ivanna D'Arcy<sup>(7)</sup>, a representative of the national agency from Ireland, who organises all visits in their country, provided suggestions on how to prepare an interesting and effective programme of the visit. Then participants explored in small groups adequate ways of preparing a programme for the visit, drafted and discussed a sample programme.

The participants agreed that the programme should be consistent with the announced theme and description provided in the catalogue and include formal presentations, discussion, reflection and on-site visits. In order to establish good communication with participants before the visit, organisers can create a mailing list or a website of the visit, use social networks or send a postcard to all participants before the visit.

Participants agreed that identifying, contacting and motivating speakers is often a challenge. Several ideas were discussed: approaching organisations or potential contributors already familiar with the European programmes, giving relevant information about the study visits programme, underlining the value of the programme as an opportunity to meet experts and decision-makers from different European countries and issuing certificates of attendance to the contributors.

It is also important to prepare and distribute materials on practical issues, background information on the theme of the visit and guidelines for presentations well in advance. The representatives of the national agency (NA) can be contacted to provide support, participate and monitor the visit.

The participants referred to the benefits of organising a study visit: it is rewarding and beneficial for organisations as it is a rich learning experience, it is a chance for organisers to present their work and achievements to participants and local

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<sup>(7)</sup> Ms Ivanna D'Arcy organised the study visits 'Inclusion in Education' (Group 234, November 2008) and 'Skills development of adults in the labour market' (Group 200, November 2009) in Ireland.

community, get new stimulus for development, raise European visibility, find partners for further cooperation and boost staff motivation.

## (2) Practical running of a study visit

The workshop started with identifying a list of questions that new organisers have about practical running of a visit which were further discussed in small groups. Ms Nina Mares<sup>(8)</sup>, an experienced organiser from Belgium, shared her valuable experience and gave practical hints and recommendations on how to deal with issues that arise when the group have already arrived, for example, too long presentations, dress code, different cultural habits. The key messages of the discussion are as follows:

- it is important to create a good atmosphere in the group and keep participants active throughout the entire visit;
- organising a study visit requires a lot of effort, time and energy, but it is a rewarding and rich learning experience;
- there should not be too many field visits per day and field visits should cover various types of institutions;
- allocating enough time for discussion and reflection as well as for networking of the participants with the hosts is essential;
- presentations should be short and stimulate exchange of opinions;
- organisers should try to take into account the individual professional needs of participants, but the interest of the group should come first.

## (3) Promoting the visit and disseminating its results

Promoting the visit and disseminating its results to various groups of individuals and organisations is very important. Ms Lina Trebiene<sup>(9)</sup> gave an impressive presentation on how she achieved media contact at different levels (local, regional, national and international) for a study visit she organised in Lithuania. Participants discussed the content of a press release that could attract the interest of journalists, e.g. topic, aim and benefits of the visit, participants and speakers involved, etc. It was also pointed out that journalists can be invited to make an interview with a participant or to write about an interesting success story. The participants explored how to promote the visit before it takes place and how to disseminate its results.

**To sum up**, the seminar was highly appreciated by the organisers as an opportunity to get information on European policy developments on the theme, to get acquainted with Cedefop's developed tools and guidelines, to share experience, good practices and generate ideas on how to organise successful study visits and to create networks.

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<sup>(8)</sup> Ms Nina Mares was the organiser of the study visit 'Access to pre- primary education' (Group 96, March 2010) in Belgium.

<sup>(9)</sup> Ms Lina Trebiene organised the study visit 'Lifelong learning opportunities for learners with special needs' (Group 125, March 2010) in Lithuania.