



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



Education and Culture DG  
Lifelong Learning Programme

## Study visits programme Synthesis seminar

# Preparing young people for a successful integration into the labour market: a challenge for Europe

Thessaloniki, 28 February - 1 March 2011

## Provisional conclusions

Europe puts its hopes on young people, which is clearly reflected in the fact that two of five targets of the Europe 2020 strategy are addressed at young people and that one of its flagship initiatives, Youth on the move, aims to improve the quality of education and training systems and to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market.

Young people face a lot of challenges nowadays in terms of employment and quality of life. Very often they do not know precisely what they want, but surely, they want to become independent. On their way to independence, they have to make several important steps:

- choose a right learning path;
- find and stay in a job;
- constantly keep abreast of the rapidly changing world through lifelong learning.

Some take very straightforward paths; some need for different reasons combine schooling with part-time work, alternate periods of inactivity, work and/or unemployment. Young people need to be prepared and able to take charge of their learning and careers during their entire lives. The role of education and training and high quality guidance and career counselling cannot be overestimated.

Education and training systems should look for ways to provide all young people, but especially those who encounter barriers, from as earlier as possible stage with **flexible pathways** to acquiring higher level skills and competences, learning to learn competence, career management skills and entrepreneurial thinking: pathways that are more traditional, *study programme-based* and pathways that allow the acquisition of skills and competence through *personal activities, community activities and work* and their consequent recognition.

Based on the discussions that took place during the seminar, the need for high quality, easily available and accessible information is very strong to ensure commitment of young people and all stakeholders who shape education and training pathways, especially, employers: information about available learning options, existing qualifications and labour market needs

and requirements, information about available support, information exchange among education and training and qualifications systems of the Member States, information about benefits of investing in vocational training for employers.

High quality and pro-active information exchange should contribute to stimulating and improving the cooperation and collaboration of stakeholders, to reaching a better understanding and better match between the needs and interests of learners, the worlds of education and training and work as well as of the society at large. There is a need for multi-professional networks for guidance, public-private partnerships to ensure more and better work-based experience and apprenticeships for young people, cooperation of schools and businesses for supporting entrepreneurship education and for providing teachers and trainers with opportunities to upgrade and update their competences. The latter is especially true taking into account that support to young people is most effective when it is provided by highly dedicated and motivated professionals who are also equipped to address the diversity of challenges and adapt to the changing circumstances.

More young people should have a chance to experience learning mobility that contributes to increasing their employability in the future. The European qualifications framework (EQF) and relevant national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) have been developed at European level to facilitate transparency of learning and mobility of learners and workers.

The study visits programme will continue to explore the issues discussed during the seminar in the future study visits on encouraging cooperation between the worlds of education, training and work, developing strategies for lifelong learning and mobility and acquisition of key competences.