

TRANSITION FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO THE WORLD OF WORK

Synthesis report on study visits 2009/10

Overview of the topic on the European agenda

There are 100 million young people in the EU, representing one fifth of the total population (Eurostat, 2009, 15-30 age group). Today, when it comes to accessing the labour market, they face a number of challenges that older people do not, such as lack of work experience and, for some, low levels of qualifications.

In today's knowledge and innovation economy, low levels of education and training do not provide a good starting point for young people who need to meet the demands of the labour market. If we consider the total of newly created jobs and jobs that become vacant as people leave the labour market (e.g. retire), out of the job openings that are expected to arise by 2020, 32 million will require high qualifications, 36.5 million will require medium-level qualifications and 6.7 million will require low qualifications⁽¹⁾. The 2011 Cedefop's skills forecast update for sectors and occupations suggests that the demands for skills, as measured by formal qualifications, will increase, yet many young Europeans leave school without an upper secondary level qualification. To ensure the best match of skills, individuals need a combination of transversal core skills and the specific skills needed for a job ⁽²⁾ (European Commission, 2010a). However, studies such as the Leitch Review of Skills ⁽³⁾ (2006) in the UK shows that employers feel that job applicants are not only lacking in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy but also in key 'soft' skills, such as team-working and customer-handling skills. Cedefop's skills supply and demand forecast 2020 suggests that many younger people chose to stay in education and training in the context of actual uncertainty about job prospects and they need to be better supported and informed about the future labour market needs⁽⁴⁾.

Youth unemployment is worryingly high at around 20% on average, ranging from 8.7% to more than 40%⁽⁵⁾. More than 25% of Europe's population are at risk of poverty, with peak rates of more than 40%. In total, around 80 million people live below the poverty line. Low educational attainment is seen as a main cause. But still too many young people leave school with less than upper secondary education and do not follow any further training.

The transition from education to employment - i.e. the period between leaving education and entering the labour market ⁽⁶⁾ - is particularly challenging for young people and it often takes two years, or even longer, for them to find their first job after finishing education. In 19 out of 27 EU countries the duration of education-to-work transitions is long (63 months on average), but it varies greatly by country,

⁽¹⁾ Source: Cedefop country workbooks 2011.

⁽²⁾ European Commission (Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs), *New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now*. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568&langId=en&eventId=232&furtherEvents=yes>

⁽³⁾ *Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills*. Internet: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/other/0118404792/0118404792.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ Cedefop, 2010, Skills Supply and Demand in Europe, Medium-term forecast up to 2020. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052_en.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ At the time of writing the report, 2010 data were available only for 23 Member States.

⁽⁶⁾ Cedefop defines the transition from school or training to work as "*the move from education or training to employment, covering the period between leaving education and entering the labour market*". See internet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/13125.aspx>

ranging from 28 months in the Netherlands to 103 months in Romania ⁽⁷⁾. This slow transition to the labour market can have a lasting, or 'scarring' effect on the career development and income of the individual over his or her lifetime. Career guidance is an important 'ingredient' in any policy that seeks to speed up the education-to-work transition, particularly for at-risk groups ⁽⁸⁾.

Even after young people have obtained their first job, they often maintain poor links with the labour market as they are more likely to hold temporary contracts, followed by spells of unemployment. These young people who do not successfully manage their transition to the world of work are at high risk of falling into poverty and social exclusion.

At European level, there is strong recognition of the need to support young people to access the world of work. Strategies relating to both education and employment set targets and promote measures to support young people. The Europe 2020 Strategy for instance includes a flagship initiative, 'Youth on the Move', which will launch a youth employment framework outlining policies aimed at reducing youth unemployment rates. The Strategy sets out a target to reduce the school drop-out rate to less than 10 % (which is the same as the target set in the EU's Strategic Framework for Education and Training) and for at least 40 % of the younger generation to have a tertiary degree. The Council Conclusions 'New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward' (2010) ⁽⁹⁾ also emphasise the need to develop links between education and training and the labour market, to improve the transition from education to work and to reduce the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). For instance, partnerships between relevant stakeholders - e.g. the social partners, companies, education and training providers, public and private employment services, public authorities at various levels, research organisations and civil society - could be formed to anticipate skill needs more effectively, promote new learning initiatives, and improve the transfer and use of new and existing knowledge on future skills needs between the stakeholders.

Key findings

This report aims to provide an overview of the key messages emerging from the study visit reports (See the list in the Annex) and in particular to identify some examples of good practice related to supporting the transition of young people from education and training to the labour market.

It is, however, important to note that findings, messages and examples presented in this paper are solely based on the experience shared in the framework of the study visits. Several countries have a long tradition in or are (re)introducing programmes that combine 'classroom' and workplace learning or involve social partners in decision-making, delivery and assessment of education and training, for instance. Cedefop's electronic data base on VET and its reports on European VET policies⁽¹⁰⁾ inform on the state-of-play and developments on the issues raised here across the EU: on apprenticeships and other forms of alternate learning, stakeholder cooperation, incentives to invest in training, measures to improve guidance and counselling, initiatives to anticipate skill needs and to make learning more relevant to labour

⁽⁷⁾ *Youth: Young in occupations and unemployment: thinking of their better integration in the labour market* (EU-wide final report 2008):

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=fi&catId=89&newsId=448&furtherNews=yes>

⁽⁸⁾ Cedefop (2010), *Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work, Lessons from across Europe*.

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5503_en.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ Council of the European Union. *Council conclusions on 'New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward'*. 3019th Employment, Social policy, Health and Consumer affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 7 June 2010.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/114962.pdf application/pdf (.pdf) Downloadable document (EN)

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>

market needs. Information on related initiatives within general education are available from Eurydice's database⁽¹⁾.

Study visit participants felt that the image of vocational training/apprenticeships needs to be improved, so that it has parity of esteem with academic options and is seen by young people as a viable and valued learning pathway. Another key ingredient in policies that aim to support education-to-work transitions is work-based learning. The provision of information, advice and career guidance, in order to ensure that young people are able to make informed choices and decisions is also crucial. It is clear that collaboration among the various stakeholders – including employers and the social partners – is important to ensure that the provision of education and training is responsive to the needs of employers.

The most prominent findings from these study visits can be clustered as follows:

Improving the image of vocational studies

A number of the study visit groups felt that vocational education and training is often seen as a 'second-choice' (e.g. SV 187) and as a result, not enough young people opt for this route (SV 191). This is not the case in all countries, but for those where the dual training pathway is seen as a last resort, the challenge is to create a new image for this training route, as a 'pathway of excellence' and part of a lifelong learning pathway (SV 195). By improving the image of vocational training, it should also be possible to encourage more teachers to be trained to work in this sector (SV 191).

Information, advice and career guidance

It is recognised across all the visits, that the quality of the information and guidance provided to learners and potential learners, is instrumental to their success. The term 'career guidance' refers to *'services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services'*⁽²⁾. High-quality career guidance and counselling services play a key role in supporting individual lifelong learning, career management and the achievement of personal goals. The provision of information, advice and guidance is key to the process of facilitating young people's transitions from education/training to employment. It seems from some of the study visit reports however that there is more work to be done to improve the quality of career guidance provision in some countries (e.g. SV 187, SV 190). For instance, the report of study visit 187, which focused on low-skilled groups and their socio-economic participation, highlighted that, to be able to ensure the quality of guidance service delivery and development, guidance counsellors must have the appropriate competences for giving advice to and motivating their clients. Participants in this study visit all agreed that higher qualifications specifically for guidance counsellors are required, as well as greater recognition of the importance of their role. In line with the point identified above about collaboration, participants in study visit 195 suggested that education and training providers need to develop multi-professional networks to be able to provide quality guidance to young people. The study visit focusing on

⁽¹⁾ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

⁽²⁾ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission, *Career Guidance A Handbook for Policy Makers*. Internet: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/53/34060761.pdf>

information, advice and guidance (SV 204) identified a common priority for activity, in supporting marginalised groups or groups at risk of exclusion, such as unemployed people, people who have been made redundant and are trying to re-enter the labour market, people who have a learning difficulty and/or disability, young people who have dropped out of education or training.

Stakeholder collaboration and a clear/ balanced allocation of responsibilities

A number of the study visit group reports identified the need for all stakeholders involved to develop a shared vision of the skills a young person needs to enhance his or her employability and to collaborate in enabling young people to achieve these skills. Participants in study visit 185, which focused on the role of counselling and training for employability, suggested that it is the role of both central and local government to take the lead in establishing a vision and direction through dialogue with partners. Several group reports suggested that local organisations should work closely with schools and employers, and in particular that vocational schools should collaborate with companies (SV 187 and SV 197 for example), although in some instances it was acknowledged that this already takes place. The social partners were also felt to have a key role to play in providing training and guidance to young people and employees (SV 185) and in supporting lifelong learning (SV 196). Public-private partnership arrangements for apprenticeships were also suggested as a means of improving the quality of training, both to ensure that the competences that young people acquire are linked to the labour market and also in the provision of technical material (SV 195).

Learning provision responsive to employers' needs

To ensure that young people can make a successful transition from education or training to employment, it is vital that they are equipped with the skills and competences required by employers. Thus, participants in the study visits stressed the importance of understanding what skills, including basic and transversal skills, are required on the labour market (SV 185). Placements are also considered to be important (SV 185) and social dialogue was suggested as a way of ensuring that vocational education and training meets the needs of the labour market (SV 185). In Turkey, the UMEM project (SV 199) aims at strengthening the technological infrastructure of a number of 111 secondary-level technical and vocational schools by providing them with machinery, tools and equipment and at providing in-service training to the teachers at these schools responding to technological changes and to the demands of the labour market.

Common approaches

A number of the common approaches identified from the study visit reports can be directly aligned with the key findings listed above. For example, participants gave examples of their collaboration or joint investment models and of the delivery of employer-responsive provision. Other common approaches identified related to the need for flexible learning pathways and alternative models of learning or achieving qualifications, such as validation of competences (see the synthesis paper on Flexible learning approaches for further details on these issues). Broadly, the approaches described in the study visit reports can be clustered around the following priorities:

Collaboration between stakeholders/Joint investment models

Study visit participants gave examples from their countries of collaboration between stakeholders and/or joint investment models, i.e. bringing together financial contributions from different stakeholders such as government, education and training institutions and the private sector. For example, participants in study visit 190, which focused on Regional cooperation of IVET and CVET and the labour market, all said that there was some form of joint investment model in place in their countries (Netherlands, Malta, Italy, Turkey and the UK), although these models were based on different approaches. An example of such an approach, which was felt to be

transferable to other countries, was a joint investment partnership between a college and the private sector to fill skills shortages and to arrange apprenticeships and work placements. In Kent, a pioneering vocational programme for young people 14-16 has supported collaboration between schools and colleges in the area and has significantly reduced the number of NEETs (SV 190). Public-private finance models for apprenticeships were also felt by participants in study visit 195 to facilitate the integration of the apprentice into the world of work.

An example highlighted as being potentially transferable to other countries, and a means of easing government funding difficulties, was Northern Ireland's approach to capital funding of colleges by private finance (SV 193).

Participants in study visit 197 learned that there is a central organisation in Germany where agencies, providers, chambers of commerce and schools work together.

This example from the Netherlands showed the importance of taking a pro-active approach to working with private sector actors:

Roc de Leigraaf, which offers work experience in the real workplace, via joint ventures between the institution and the private sector, takes a pro-active approach in working with private-sector partners and in involving a network of partners such as the local government and local businesses to set up commercial activities that add value to the college activity and are commercially viable, thus alleviating the need for reliance on government funding. This is of interest to all of those working in further education institutions and to those working for local, regional or national government policy organisations (SV 190).

Employer-responsive provision

It seems there is an awareness of the need to anticipate future skills needs and to ensure that current delivery meets these needs but that across Europe countries are at different stages of development and have different approaches to this issue (SV 190). In Denmark for example, both initial and ongoing vocational training are said to be linked to the world of work through influence from the social partners (SV 196).

Participants in study visit 185 referred to the importance of ensuring that both vocational and academic learning providers understand that learners need to develop transversal competences in vocational and academic training because it is one of the most important demands of companies, not only for graduates but also for professionals. It is clear that 'employability' is not simply about vocational skills, but also about basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, as well 'soft' skills and competences such as inter-personal communication and team-working.

The importance of setting clear goals was also highlighted in the group reports, for example through the use of training contracts between the company and trainee, which outline the goals of the learner within the specified training period (SV 197).

Common challenges and solutions identified

Common challenges faced by participating countries were identified through the review of the synthesis reports. These include:

Lack of funds to invest in training. The recession has not only led to a lack of public funds but also to a lack of employer funds to invest in training (SV 190). It has had a negative impact on vocational training in particular, since it has led to a lack of opportunity for young people to practise their skills in the world of work through work placements/experience apprenticeships (SV 190, SV 191). Furthermore, many companies are reducing their workforce or do not have sufficient staff, so there is no capacity for mentors to spend time managing and training those students who do have placements (SV 191). The Jobstarter programme (SV 197) is a funding programme aiming to increase the number of training places available for young people.

Lack of opportunities for combined school and workplace training. Vocational/dual training and apprenticeship schemes were clearly recognised by study visit participants as an important means of ensuring learning provision meets the needs of employers, and therefore of enhancing the employability of the young people who take up these training options. For example, in Poland (SV 220) disadvantaged and unemployed adults are offered training alternated between theoretical courses and practice at the workplace in order to enable them to return to the labour market sooner. Vocational training was also suggested in one study visit report (SV 190) as having the potential to 'pick up' young people who have become disaffected - i.e. lacking in motivation to participate - with formal education and training (as opposed to non-formal or informal learning, or work), to encourage them back into employment in sectors where there are vacancies. In Germany, the dual system is well developed (SV 191) and is a combination of in-company training and vocational school. The training is mainly provided in the workplace (3 to 4 days per week) and supported by teaching in part-time vocational school (1 to 2 days per week). There is an apprenticeship contract between the company and the trainee and the company pays a training allowance to the apprentice. Yet some countries have still not developed in full a system of dual, or alternance, training (i.e. combining periods in an educational institution or training centre and in the workplace), which enables the young person to participate in training both at a learning provider and with an enterprise. The status of an apprenticeship differs from one country to another and the remuneration of young apprentices (i.e. paid or unpaid) varies (in the UK for instance, it is not compulsory for the employer to train and pay for the trainee whilst studying and working (SV 197). It seems that the development of such a system is a matter of political will (SV 195). It was also highlighted that there is room for improvement in terms of the quality of placements, for instance in the case of small companies which do not have the capacity, i.e. enough staff, or do not take the time to support their students (SV 191).

Engaging employers

The difficulties associated with engaging employers and encouraging them to upskill and qualify their staff were also highlighted as a challenge faced by learning providers. Participants in study visit 184, for example, observed that there are not enough opportunities for work-based learning, yet employers' want to recruit people who are 'work-ready' and experienced (SV 184). It was also noted that it can be difficult to engage employers in a dialogue to identify their needs (SV 185).

The solutions identified in relation to these challenges can be clustered as follows:

Apprenticeships and opportunities for learning based in the workplace or related to the world of work. The value of providing learning opportunities which are intrinsically linked to the world of work was recognised in the study visit reports. For instance, it was suggested that the dual system in Germany is the reason for the country's lower unemployment rates (SV 197). Other proposed solutions to enable young people to participate in work-oriented learning included: simulation in colleges to facilitate working-life familiarisation (e.g. motor mechanics practicing on staff cars, SV 191); more guidance/vocational taster courses at early secondary school level (SV 187); and for businesses and universities to work together (SV 185). In order to raise the quality of placements, it was suggested that more financial investment is required in school-based training and school workshops (SV 191).

A number of good practice examples can be put forward in relation to this heading:

1) the Haugalandet school in Norway has an interactive, online database⁽¹³⁾ to arrange work experience, school and course orientation placements, which schools, students and coordinators have access to and can use to modify and view their chosen programmes (SV 192);

⁽¹³⁾ <http://www.skoleogarbeidsliv.com/>

- 2) the aforementioned Roc de Leigraaf in the Netherlands offers work experience in the real workplace, via joint ventures between the institution and the private sector (SV 190);
- 3) in France, there is a compulsory one-week placement for all students in lower secondary education, to support the preparation for their profession (SV 191);
- 4) also in France, apprentices in the construction sector undertake their training in close cooperation with local companies, while the VET schools place great emphasis on accompanying the apprentices in finding their first job after their training (SV 195);
- 5) in Italy, the 'Alternanza Scuola Lavoro' project also focuses on the transition from school to work (SV 54);
- 6) in Belgium, **CEFORA, the vocational training center of CPNAE**, has promoted training programmes in **construction industry sector in a number of ways, including a pilot project of mentorship with the winner of a reality TV show 'The Block'** - the restoration of a house in a competitive contest voted on by the public. The school is also currently negotiating with Standard Liege football club to act as a sponsor in order to help improve the image of construction careers, by drawing an analogy with the need for footballers to train (SV 193).

Mobility programmes/Support for mobility

Cross-border mobility for learning is at the core of the European Commission's Youth on the Move flagship initiative, which aims to increase young Europeans' chances of finding a job by enhancing student and trainee mobility and improving the quality and attractiveness of education and training in Europe. Mobility was only touched upon in two group reports - firstly it was stressed that language training is essential to facilitate learning mobility (SV191) and secondly mobility was recognised as an essential way of enabling learners to develop transversal competences (SV 195). It was suggested by study visit group 195 that mobility could become a compulsory part of training courses.

Importance of career guidance

A number of solutions proposed in the study visit reports related to the provision of guidance to young people. The group report of study visit 187, for example, suggests that a more focused approach at age 14 for those who show an interest and aptitude seems an achievable goal for all countries but that this would have to be underpinned by competent, impartial advice and guidance. It was also suggested (SV 197) that more projects should be funded in this area by the European funding programmes (i.e. ESF).

Some examples of practice in this area were highlighted:

- o Focus West, in Scotland, works with students and helps them to decide what kind of studies are appropriate for them (SV 196);
- o the Polytechnische Schule Weiz is a vocational guidance and preparation school in Austria which provides personal coaching, guidance and consultation to pupils in the ninth grade (SV 197);
- o the 'Orientation' project in Spain (SV 102) provides a good example of this, as every lower and upper secondary school has a school counsellor. School counsellors work as part of the teaching faculty to provide guidance to students on their learning choices, and the help students to identify their next steps and to use their potential;
- o the Southside local employment services project in Ireland (SV 200) provides mentoring and support for long-term unemployed young people;
- o the Guidance for young people on parallel pathways (GYPPP) project was developed in Slovenia to help the increasing number of disadvantaged young people to continue education or join the labour market (SV 107);

- o the BIC project in Austria (SV 231) uses online resources to offer national and international information on careers and professions to young people;
- o the National development initiative of guidance counselling (2003-2010), in Finland (SV 107), has developed action models for the transition point between basic education and secondary education.

Conclusions

Compared with older people, young people face a number of challenges in both getting and keeping a job, in. This is recognised not only at policy level but also by practitioners 'on the ground', as evidenced by the group reports from the study visits relating to this theme. To ensure that the supply of skills meets the needs of employers, it is also important to ensure that education and training provision is responsive to employers and that vocational training pathways are given equal value as academic options. A lot of work is taking place at the national, regional and local levels - as shown in the study visit reports - to engage employers, introduce more learner-centred provision, and ensure adequate guidance and counselling services, and it is clear that countries can learn from each other in this area. In the context of an economic downturn, which has exacerbated a number of the problems faced by young people as regards employability, it is clear that innovative solutions will be required alongside the transfer of tried-and-tested models of good practice.

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ANNEX

LIST OF VISITS CITED IN THE TEXT

Visit Number	Visit Title	Country
54	Simulated training company to develop new entrepreneurship competences	Italy
102	Innovative personalised learning at the secondary vocational level for young and adults	Finland
107	Prevention of early school-leaving	Netherlands
184	Cultural heritage and media: a key to employability	Italy
185	Counselling, training and job: integration between systems for a better employability	Italy
187	Low-skilled groups and socio-economic participation	Belgium (NL)
190	Regional cooperation of IVET and CVET and the labour market	Netherlands
191	(Trans) national professional training and placement	Portugal
192	Collaboration between schools and enterprises to enhance well-founded choices of education and vocation	Norway
193	Comparing initiatives with heads of training and vocational centres	Italy
194	Allgemeine und berufliche Bildung für Beschäftigungsfähigkeit	Hungary
195	Faciliter l'intégration professionnelle des apprentis	France
196	Creating flexibility in access to and progression through lifelong learning	United Kingdom
197	Jobstarter - Funding programme for more training places	Germany
199	Challenges and opportunities for training in the workplace	Spain
200	Supporting skills development of adults in the labour market	Ireland
204	Preparing for the labour market - information, advice and guidance	United Kingdom
220	Links between vocational education and lifelong learning	Turkey
222	The dual vocational training system in Germany - Shared responsibility of company and vocational school	Germany
231	Die Rolle der Sozialpartner in der Berufsbildung	Austria