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TTnet Workshop:
The Community Dimension to the Training of Trainers -
concept and initiatives

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The rapid transformation in the nature of our economic system (innovation and spread of technology in production processes, rapid obsolescence of organisational models and of the necessary occupational skills) and the growth in pockets of social exclusion necessitate a radical adaptation of our education and training systems.

We must equip ourselves to meet the demands of constantly changing knowledge and skills requirements: this calls, first and foremost, for major changes in the professional role of trainers.

These issues have already been aired in institutional debate, for example: Agenda 2000, European Commission, Bulletin of the European Union 5/97; Accomplishing Europe through education and training, Study Group on Education and Training, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997; Treaty of Amsterdam.

Trainers must take on board the need for flexibility arising from the wide range of training needs, and consequently engage in the updating of skills by offering training courses which combine the specialisation typical of the production system with the general knowledge typical of schools.

Some time ago, CEDEFOP launched a process of analysis and research into the changing roles and functions of the professional family of trainers and teachers in European education and training systems.

The TTnet network forms part of this process, with the specific aim of identifying areas where joint work can be done within the European Union towards a truly professional approach to human resources in the field of training.

Our task is not an easy one.

The experts seated around our table operate in different circumstances; there are differences in culture and in the players concerned, and the role of vocational training in the completion of an individual's education differs from country to country.

Similarly, technical/vocational skills are managed differently, and trainers use different jargon.

We have already had occasion to identify these differences at workshops prior to this one in Venice.

Nevertheless, a desire was clearly expressed at our previous encounters to identify common ground in the training of trainers, with a view to pooling our efforts.

The underlying assumption for this third meeting, therefore, is that it is both possible and desirable to work together.

So we must now ask ourselves the following questions:

- ◆ What common ground is there in our work, with all due respect for specific national circumstances?
- ◆ How should we go about it?
- ◆ Under what conditions?

The ultimate aim will be to find coordinated answers and solutions at European level, once we have examined established practice and picked up on common trends which lay the foundations for devising a joint policy on the training of human resources within Europe.

The redefinition of training models in the European Union follows certain common guidelines:

- ◆ the creation of an integrated education system: school, vocational training, work;
- ◆ the consolidation of a process of certifying quality in training provision;
- ◆ the global spread of new technology;
- ◆ a widening of access to training, in terms of both new citizenship rights and policies of cohesion.

Furthermore, whereas the new social and economic relevance of vocational training is helping to boost the total number of players in the system, including *trainers*, the cross-cutting nature of training and its "contamination" by other types of measures have called into question the specific function and role of training.

The single term "trainer" appears entirely inadequate, particularly as it designates completely different professional qualifications and positions, many of them poorly established and without a strong identity. A professional body of trainers would seem to be a long way off in many European countries.

This impression is borne out by actual initiatives under way in many countries to upskill professionals. These have in fact brought to light:

- ◆ a lack of stability in training occupations;
- ◆ a growing overlap between training skills in the narrow sense of the term and non-training skills upstream and downstream of the training process (guidance, reception, selection, mentoring, etc.);
- ◆ a great diversity in ways of accessing positions.

Thus we are witnessing an increasing compartmentalisation of training duties and occupations.

The role of trainer has altered from the traditional one of teaching or instruction alone, to become one of mediation and mentoring.

According to the traditional image, teachers were the source of knowledge: their function was to transmit this to those who lacked it, and their job ended as soon as the student had learnt everything the lecturer knew. That model regarded knowledge as something fixed, finite and measurable, and learning as the accumulation of chunks of knowledge.

Under the new model, the transmission of knowledge is tending to lose its priority, whilst the trainer is expected to play a mediating role between the learner and elements of knowledge. Trainers are tending to become part of an all-round process, covering the entire cycle of activity from training needs analysis, to final assessment, to advice, and to providing a link with organisational change.

Trainers are no longer people who transmit knowledge, but are turning into organisers of the learning environment, whose task is to offer the most favourable learning conditions possible. Their tasks are also to advise, facilitate, compare, intervene, design and carry through.

Since one of the aims of this seminar is to define the scope of the Community dimension to the training of trainers, the starting point could be to identify and define the content of the professional role of trainers in the *knowledge society*.

Furthermore, the need to constantly update skills means that we should discuss ways of creating provision for continuing open learning, based on a modular approach and on the recognition of training credits.

This means seizing the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies (ICT)¹ in designing training methods (distance learning), thus confirming the need to concentrate on the dual concept of innovation/training.²

Joint work could usefully be done on the tasks of reception, assessment and the facilitation of learning processes, rather than guidance and tutoring. These are cross-cutting tasks, common to the family/families of trainers, which - irrespective of national circumstances - seem to be connected with new-style training provision, devised as an instrument of socio-economic development in the new Europe.

The common features emerging in this context enable us to break away from national considerations, given that phenomena such as the globalisation of the economy, the dissemination of knowledge and the mobility of individuals within the Union cause us to rethink and redetermine, at transnational level, ways of educating individuals and the tasks/skills of the main players in this undertaking.

TTnet constitutes a major opportunity to seek out and build an appropriate consensus among the most influential players at national level, as well as to pool ideas and cooperate at European level in pursuit of a common human resources policy.

This document is intended as a working paper for discussion by experts.

¹ Council Resolution of 6 May 1996 relating to educational multimedia software in the fields of education and training.

² CEDEFOP/TTnet workshop, 3-5 June 1998, Vilamoura, Portugal: The European Dimension to the Training of Trainers.

It is no accident that the proposed starting point for the workshop has to do with the professional role of trainers: this is a particularly pressing problem in the Italian system of vocational training, which is noteworthy for an operational and organisational fragmentation of training provision.

Our professional community must be properly organised and regulated in order for this sector to achieve operational and social legitimacy.

On the basis of these pointers, work done at previous workshops and Community-wide good practice, and with the help of individual and group contributions, this workshop sets out to explore common fields of activity and to promote initiatives for the establishment of a Community dimension to the training of trainers wherever and whenever possible.