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## **Social partners increasingly take charge of training in their sectors**

### ***Cedefop workshop reveals the successes and challenges of Sectoral Training Funds***

A Cedefop workshop held in Thessaloniki on 25 - 26 September 2008 showed that the sectoral training funds set up in 15 European countries are increasingly important means of financing and delivering targeted training, and for providing guidance, advice and forecasts on training needs. But so far these funds have been less efficient in providing such services to employees of smaller companies, especially of micro enterprises (>10 employees).

During the workshop, which brought together representatives of social partners and fund managers from several EU countries – Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, and Iceland, **Cedefop presented its new publication, *Sectoral Training Funds in Europe***, which has already received a wide audience in its online version. The publication presents case studies of sectoral training funds in eight countries and discusses the impact of such funds on improving training opportunities in the sectors.

Taking their inspiration from the Copenhagen Declaration's call for closer partnerships in training, sectoral training funds are jointly managed by employers and employees and financed by training levies or taxes. These funds meet the requirements of the industry, ensure the quality of training, and mobilise more resources for training.

The workshop pointed to the need for greater recognition and validation of non-formal knowledge (which is largely acquired through in-company training). **Cedefop is currently involved in monitoring 23 projects which aim to link sectoral training and qualifications with the wider European Qualifications Framework** – which Cedefop was instrumental in setting up - with a view to validating the knowledge acquired through sectoral training and making it more transparent.

In some countries, sectoral training funds have been a resounding success and have encouraged more adults to take up training. In other countries, institutional barriers have made it harder for micro-enterprises to take advantage of this financing and have thus limited the effectiveness of the funds.

Sectoral training funds provide training for every level of attainment. For example, such funds exist in the construction sector in both the UK and Spain. But while the UK fund focuses on the highest educational level – e.g. by funding training for engineers in nuclear plant construction – the Spanish fund concentrates on improving the skills of employees with lower qualification levels, providing, e.g. much of the health and safety training in the sector.

Getting the entire sector involved in financing training also mitigates the risk of “poaching”, i.e. of companies losing staff trained at their expense to competitors. As everyone contributes to training expenses in their sector, the risk is spread and employees gain more opportunities for training. But workshop participants also pointed out that poaching is at any rate not a significant problem: workers tend to stay in companies that offer them the opportunity to add to their skills and knowledge.

Additional information: [www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=3&read=3451&sub=8](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=3&read=3451&sub=8)

### **About Cedefop**

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training: **[www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)**

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