



Leonardo da Vinci **study visits** programme in 2005

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For more than 20 years, Cedefop has managed the study visits of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, on behalf of and in close collaboration with the European Commission and national liaison officers.

General overview

The programme provides a forum for discussion, exchange and learning on themes of common interest at EU level and serves three main objectives:

- enabling participants to improve their understanding of specific aspects of vocational training policy and themes of common interest in other countries;
- continuing exchange of advice, ideas and information between all those participating in the programme, including both the visitors and the hosts;
- enriching the flow of information between Member States and at Community level.

Number of study visits	66
Participants:	
• total	760
• from new Member States	146
• from acceding and candidate countries	15
Countries:	
• hosting visits	26
• sending participants	32
Number of themes covered	13
Number of visits on specific sectors:	
• agrifood	6
• banking and finance	5

Key data 2005

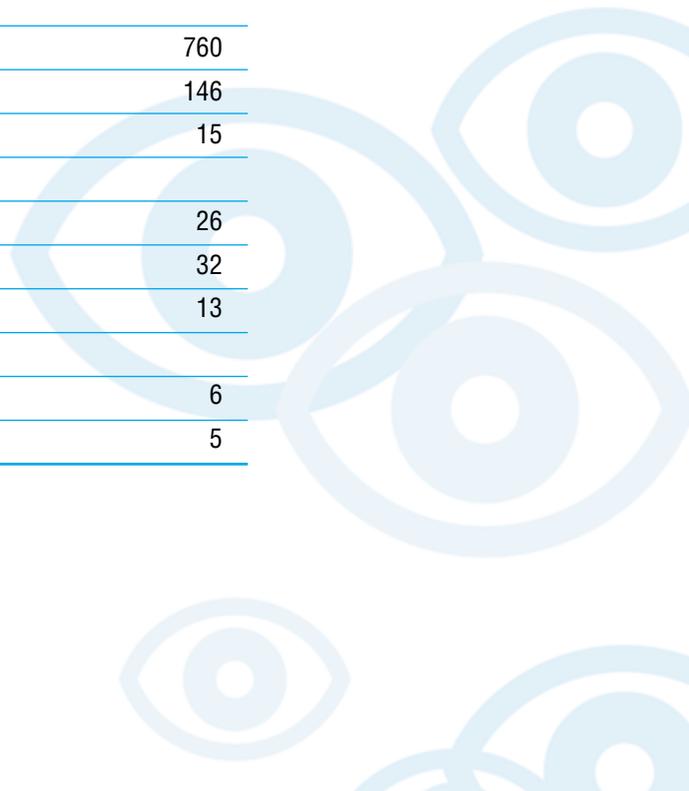
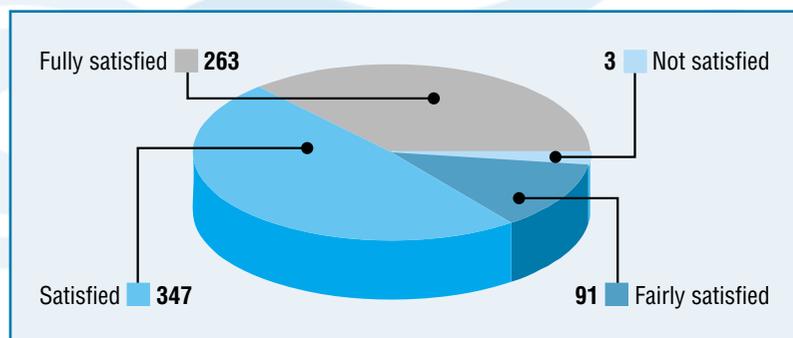


Figure 1.
Participants'
satisfaction



Participants

The study visits programme targets a wide spectrum of vocational training stakeholders, including national, regional and local public authorities, representatives of trade unions, representatives of employers' organisations, managers of small and medium-sized enterprises, representatives of chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, researchers, heads of vocational training institutions, training providers, company training officers and human resource managers.

Table 1.
Distribution
of participants
by category
of employment
(2005)

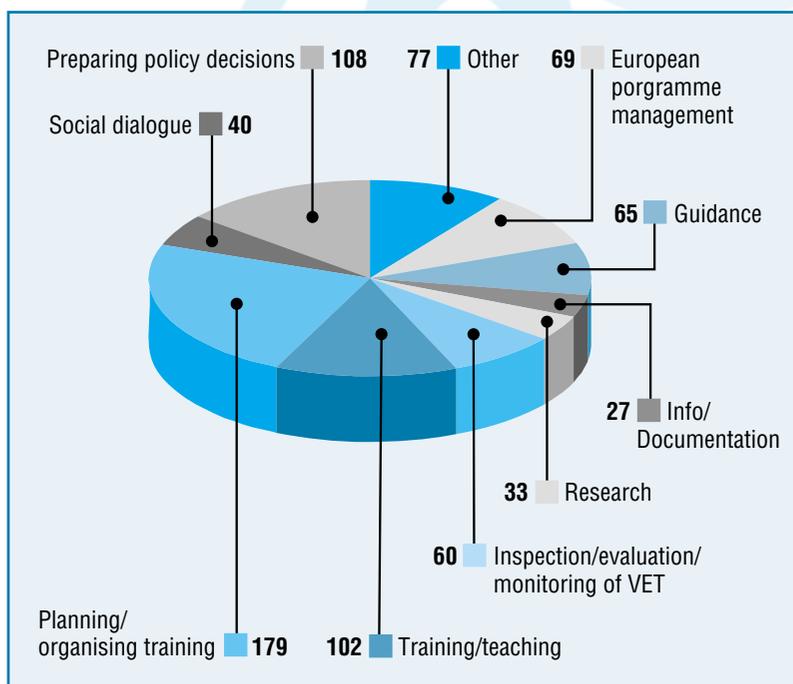
Category of employment	Number of participants	Percent of all participants
Civil service body involved in VET	256	33.7
Trade union organisation	50	6.6
Employers' organisation	50	6.6
Private enterprise	53	7.0
Chamber of commerce/craft,/industry	16	2.1
Technical and vocational training establishments by social partners	38	5.0
Other VET establishments	29	3.8
Non-school VET system	20	2.6
University	46	6.1
Research institute	22	2.9
Documentation centre or library	3	0.4
Association or organisation supported by public funds	25	3.3
NGO	21	2.8
Agency managing European programmes	30	3.9
Local authorities/local agency for territorial development	13	1.7
Other	88	11.6
Total	760	100.0

Table 2.
**Distribution
of participants
by country
(2005)**

Country	Number of participants sent			Number of participants received		Number of cancelled participants
	within quota	outside quota	Total	Total	Number of SV	
AT	21	4	25	19	2	2
BE	24	7	31	33	3	4
BG	3	3	6	12	1	1
CY	8	3	11	9	1	3
CZ	11	5	16	0	0	1
DE	75	4	79	69	6	18
DK	15	1	16	39	3	12
EE	8	4	12	9	1	2
EL	23	5	28	23	2	5
ES	47	5	52	43	4	11
FI	21	1	22	23	2	2
FR	57	3	60	45	4	19
HR	1	0	1			4
HU	13	3	16	8	1	1
IE	21	1	22	43	3	8
IS	6	0	6	12	1	1
IT	60	8	68	64	5	15
LI	2	0	2	0	0	1
LT	11	4	15	13 ⁽¹⁾	1	2
LU	6	1	7	10	1	2
LV	6	2	8	13	1	3
MT	5	5	10	11	1	0
NL	31	4	35	35	3	4
NO	25	0	25	49	4	2
PL	38	5	43	22	2	5
PT	21	5	26	30	3	8
RO	3	3	6			2
SE	28	4	32	47	4	8
SI	7	4	11	22	2	0
SK	4	0	4			0
TR	2	0	2			0
UK	62	1	63	70	6	15
Total	665	95	760	760	66	161

(¹) Lithuania and Latvia organised a joint study visit on guidance and counselling.

Figure 2.
**Distribution
of participants
by occupation
(2005)**



Support for social partners

Being the only European programme of its kind available for representatives of social partners, study visits provide a good opportunity for them to participate in exchanges. The programme team makes a special effort to ensure proportionate representation of social partners in study visits. In 2005, 259 participants [34 % of all participants ⁽²⁾] were able to learn about the state of vocational training in other countries and meet other specialists. Social partners' representatives expressed higher interest in study visits covering issues more directly related to vocational training of employees, such as continuing vocational training and the sectoral approach.

⁽²⁾ These data are based on the information contained in the application form. A 'social partner representative' is defined as a person who:

- either works for a trade union organisation; an employers' organisation; a private enterprise producing goods or services; a chamber of commerce, industry or craft; a technical or vocational training establishment managed by social partners,
- or is involved in social dialogue,
- or has been proposed for participation by a trade union organisation or an employers' organisation.

As currently there is no other way of knowing whether other participants could be classified as representatives of social partners, this figure should be treated with a certain degree of caution.

Theme	Total number of participants	Number of social partners' representatives	Percent of social partners' representatives
Helping older workers find and keep jobs	20	12	60
Increasing adult participation in training	46	25	54
Role of higher education in vocational training	106	36	34
Developing entrepreneurship among young people	36	6	17
Combating social exclusion	53	15	28
Quality Assurance mechanisms for training	25	9	36
Making vocational training more attractive to young people	23	8	35
Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning, recognition of qualifications	79	22	28
Presentations of national systems	115	34	30
Guidance and counselling	116	24	21
The European Year of Citizenship through education	22	4	18
Sectoral approach:			
• agri-food sector	65	24	36
• banking and finance sector	54	40	74

Table 3.
Participation of social partners in study visits by theme (2005)

Quality of study visits

Preparation work

To support national coordinators and organisers, three training seminars were organised by Cedefop in cooperation with host countries for national liaison officers and coordinators of study visits, on guidance and counselling (Krakow, February–March, 2005), on VET in the agri-food sector (Prague, January 2005) and the banking and finance sector (Frankfurt, October 2005). The purpose of the seminars was to help prepare effective sector-related study visits by providing a review of the sectors, VET developments and challenges, and by sharing knowledge and information among experts and organisers.

Evaluation of results

Each year the study visits team and national organisers examine the results of the previous year to see how effectively the programme has achieved its objectives. They also use the experience for further developing and improving organisation and outcomes of visits. The overall evaluation of study visits by participants is generally very positive.

Based on the feedback provided by participants in their end-of-visit reports, study visits in 2005 were effective and highly positive:

- national liaison officers and hosts ensured a high level of support and high quality organisation for participants; more than half the groups stated the support they received was excellent or very good;
- visits were relevant to the announced theme and topic;
- most programmes included theoretical presentations and site visits which were relevant to the interests of groups and provided a clearer picture of the theme or issue under study;
- most presentations were of good quality, informative and well-prepared; participants highly appreciated presentations supported by visual aids and handouts;
- most groups were described as proportionate, representing both genders, various countries and occupations;
- most groups acquired an overview of the education and vocational education and training systems in host countries and learned briefly about other participants' countries' systems;
- most visits considered partnerships in providing vocational education and training and the involvement of the social partners in vocational training policy development and implementation;
- in most groups, participants had an opportunity to learn about good practices in providing vocational education and training; however, only one third mentioned concrete examples;
- regardless of the theme of the visit, recognition of qualifications and prior, non-formal and informal learning was discussed in different contexts; participants expressed interest in the European qualifications framework and its implementation in countries;

- to a certain extent, most groups learned about and discussed approaches to combining individual learning needs and types of training and organisations' or companies' needs. The content and different types of training as well as organisation of learning, such as apprenticeships, e-learning, modular learning, mobile laboratories, etc., were presented and discussed;
- equality of opportunity was a hot topic of discussion. Regardless of the theme, participants were interested and were given the opportunity to learn about how vocational training was provided to disadvantaged groups (immigrants, certain groups of women, dropouts, low-skilled workers);
- most groups noted they had a chance to establish contacts for future cooperation; nine reports identified ideas for future projects.

The constructive suggestions from participants are highly valued by the team who strive to improve the quality of the programme. They help to exploit the full potential of study visits as learning experiences.

Suggestions

Among the most commonly mentioned were:

- The preparation stage is extremely important for running a successful visit. Participants would like to provide organisers with more input during preparation of the visit and get their learning needs satisfied to the maximum.
- It is also important to hear the views of various stakeholders of vocational training systems. The possibility to meet and talk to students or other end-users of services, especially those who have already benefited from participation, is highly appreciated by participants.
- Representatives of employers and trade unions of the host country should participate more often in panel discussions or presentations of VET systems to provide their views and speak about the involvement of social partners in VET policy-making.
- Although the theme should be presented within the national economic and social context, its relevance to European developments should also be discussed.
- The programme should include not only presentations of policies, measures, activities, but also evaluation of their effectiveness, quality assurance mechanisms and other monitoring tools.
- Group interaction and discussion is one of the most valuable elements of the visit and should be more structured, with enough time allocated during the programme.

Future of study visits

Starting in 2007, the Leonardo da Vinci activities will be part of the transversal programme within the integrated lifelong learning programme (2007–13). The programme will comprise four specific programmes: Comenius, for general education activities for schools up to and including upper secondary level; Erasmus, for education and advanced training activities at higher education level; Leonardo da Vinci, for all other aspects of vocational education and training; and Grundtvig for adult education. In addition, the proposal incorporates a 'transversal' programme incorporating four key activities: language learning and ICT-related activity, dissemination activity and a Jean Monnet programme.

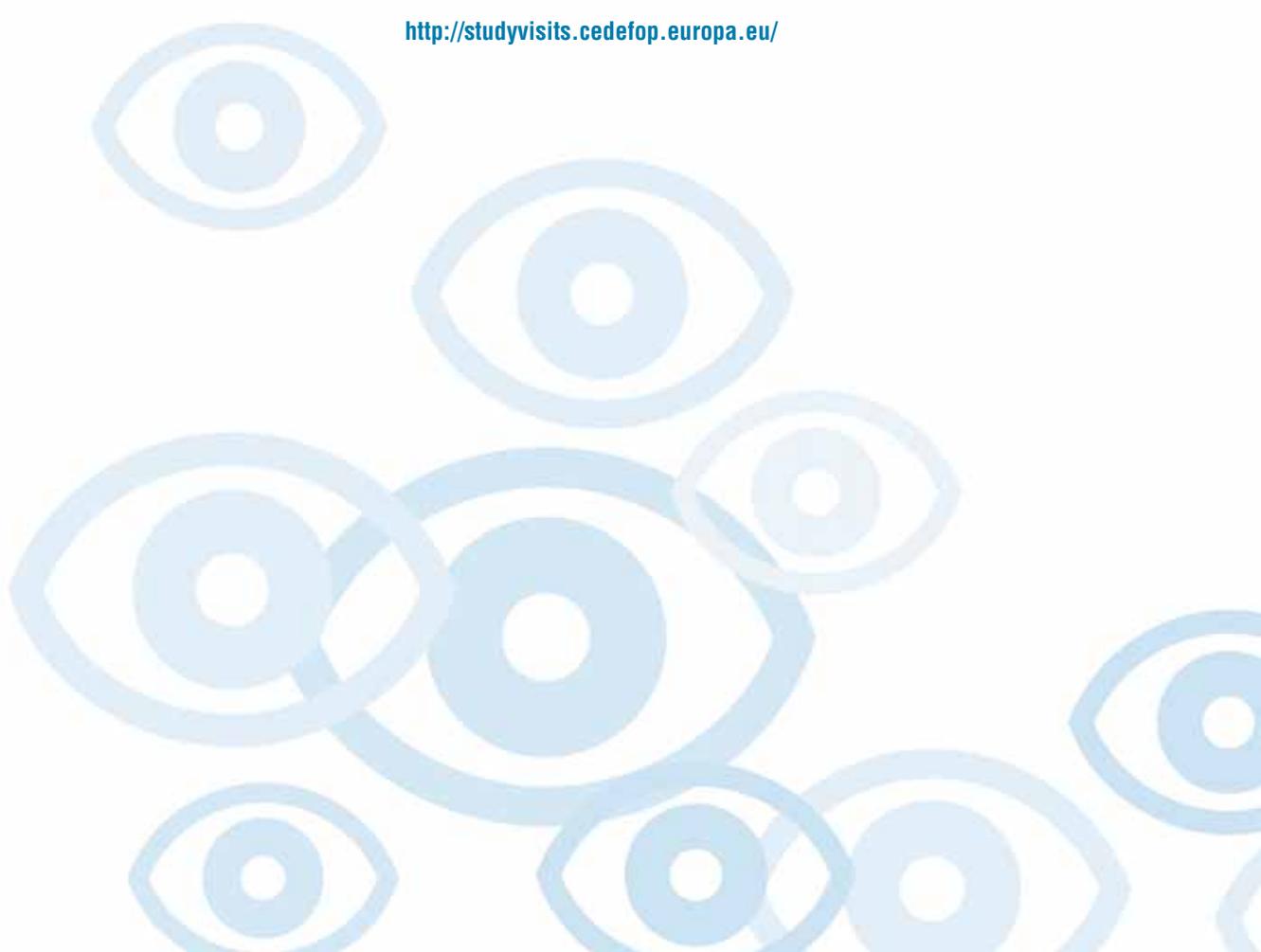
More information on the programme and recent developments are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

Study visits website

The study visits programme website provides a lot of useful information for the general public and also serves as an interactive online management and communication tool for study visit organisers and participants.

<http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/>



Some good practices

The visit was very interesting not only because of its relevance to the theme of the study visit but also because it presented best practice of an effective structured action aimed at a problem common to most participants' countries.

Produktion Hojskole
Denmark

The other part of the group was introduced to vocational training opportunities schemes at the Adult Education Centre. The emphasis was on English as second language for foreigners. Their approach was very innovative. Cooperation between study visit participants and a VTOS centre was suggested.

Tallaght Adult Education Centre
Ireland

This was excellent – very clearly explained with the results easy to see, and a model we could all envisage being transferred to our own countries. Again, it would be helpful to have some input from participants to talk about the challenges they face and the ways in which the project helps them overcome these difficulties. One member of the group has already started developing this contact for future networking, and a possible exchange. We were very impressed by the clear involvement of the local community in this project.

Local business centre
Slovenia

The Infoteket office was seen by participants as one of the major best practices seen during the whole study visit. The office has plenty of material and facilities. It actually is for everybody (not only students or unemployed people). People looked very happy and satisfied to be at the Infoteket Office. It's independent, it's free. If we talk about 'lifelong learning', probably this is the place to go.

Malmö Infoteket office
Sweden

We received an excellent, in-depth presentation of the guidance and counselling system applied in this centre. After an extensive, informative morning we had the opportunity to visit various workplaces. This centre can be considered a modern, progressing institution combining knowledge, technology and enthusiastic attitudes of all staff.

Vocational Rehabilitation Center of Gaia
Portugal

PARTICIPANTS SAY

Not only did I learn about the Flemish system but I also learned something about each of the participants' national educational systems and policies on lifelong learning.

Tusen takk [thank you] for providing us with such an interesting guidance and counselling programme and your (personal) guidance and support during our whole stay. We are privileged for having had the opportunity to visit your beautiful country! We will always remember our motto 'Always look at the bright side of life ...'!

The fact that so many people were willing to spend time to inform and educate us is very much appreciated by the whole group.

The international contacts we made amongst each other as a group and with the Portuguese people we met during the week will lead to more international contacts in the future. We all felt like European colleagues.

The quantity and quality of the information we received were of a high standard. We need time to assimilate the information, to identify best practices and, wherever possible, integrate them into our own practices.

A big salute must be given to Ms C. who seems very much like a Mother Theresa in this less favoured area. But as Dr S. remarked – a system cannot be built on heroes – there simply are not enough of them.

The visits and presentations to vocational educational training institutions and professional bodies were excellent and provided absolutely new knowledge and experience for the group members.

We got mostly success stories; do we get the real picture?

The people that we were introduced to were knowledgeable, informative and always willing to engage in frank and open discussion.

As a group we achieved far more than we would ever have been able to as individuals so opportunities for group discussion were most important to enable us to reflect and evaluate.

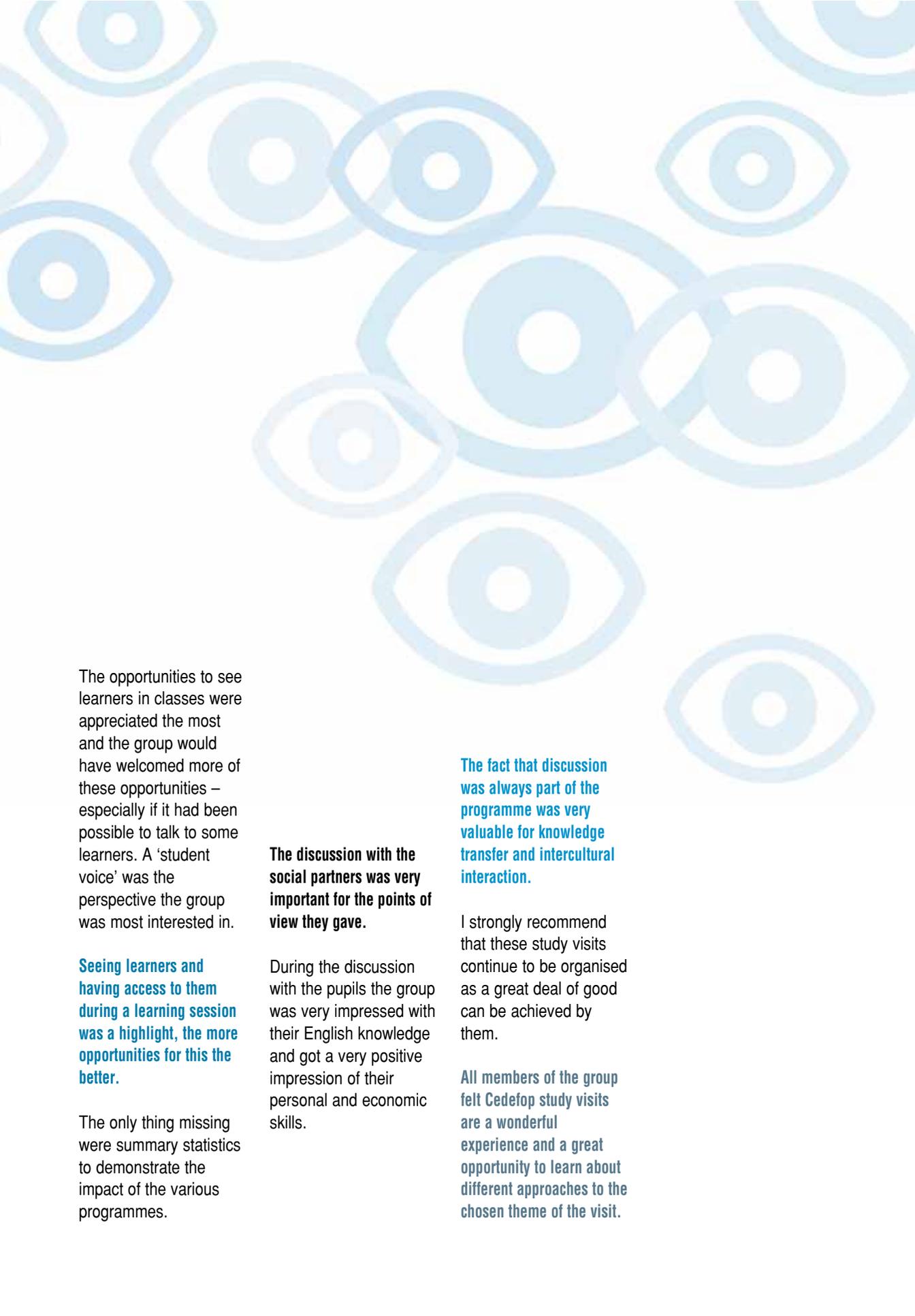
We all felt very positively that we had benefited from the visit and that we went away wiser, better informed and with renewed energy and commitment to promote the values and objectives of the European Union. As the English member said, 'for the first time I really feel a European'.

The host city was a very good choice for the study visit as it seems to be leading the rest of the country in its application of the law.

It was pleasing to hear private and public partnerships working with practitioners in promoting innovative and enlightened vocational programmes.

The intercultural exchange was great.

It is very rare that so many people from so many different countries are together at the same time, so future study visits in general could make better use of that diversity of experience.



The opportunities to see learners in classes were appreciated the most and the group would have welcomed more of these opportunities – especially if it had been possible to talk to some learners. A ‘student voice’ was the perspective the group was most interested in.

Seeing learners and having access to them during a learning session was a highlight, the more opportunities for this the better.

The only thing missing were summary statistics to demonstrate the impact of the various programmes.

The discussion with the social partners was very important for the points of view they gave.

During the discussion with the pupils the group was very impressed with their English knowledge and got a very positive impression of their personal and economic skills.

The fact that discussion was always part of the programme was very valuable for knowledge transfer and intercultural interaction.

I strongly recommend that these study visits continue to be organised as a great deal of good can be achieved by them.

All members of the group felt Cedefop study visits are a wonderful experience and a great opportunity to learn about different approaches to the chosen theme of the visit.

Cedefop

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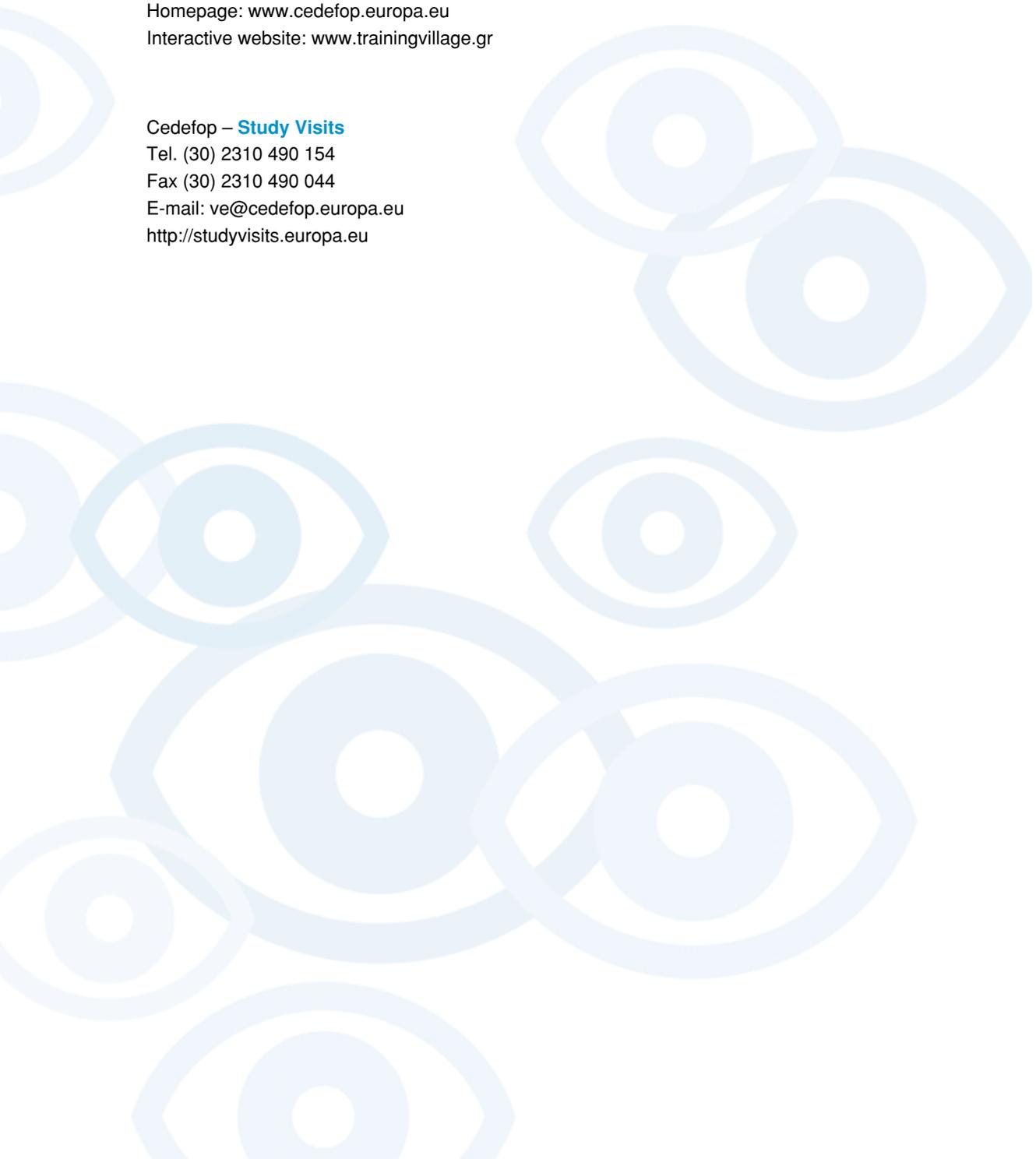
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