



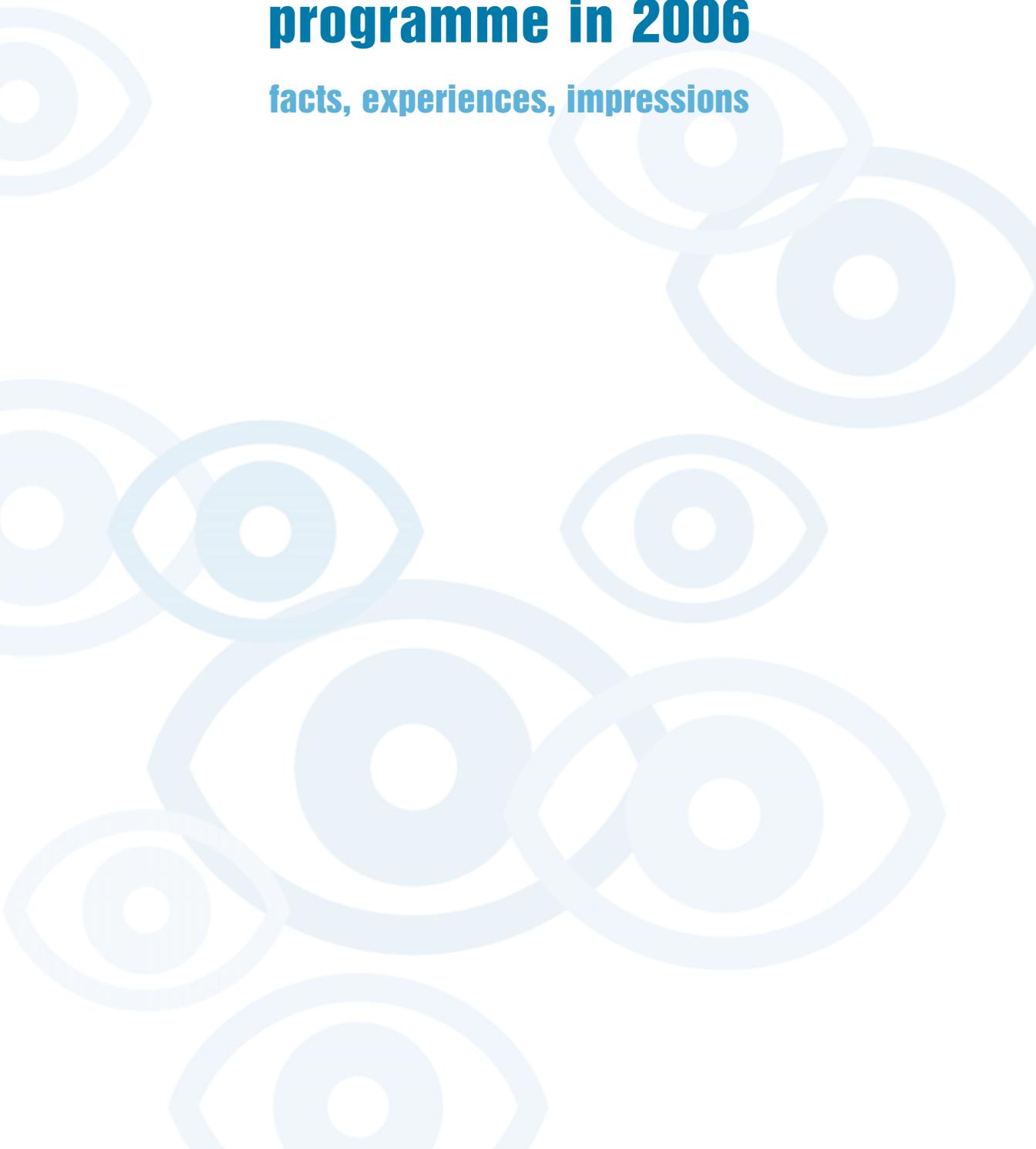
# Leonardo da Vinci II **study visits** programme in 2006

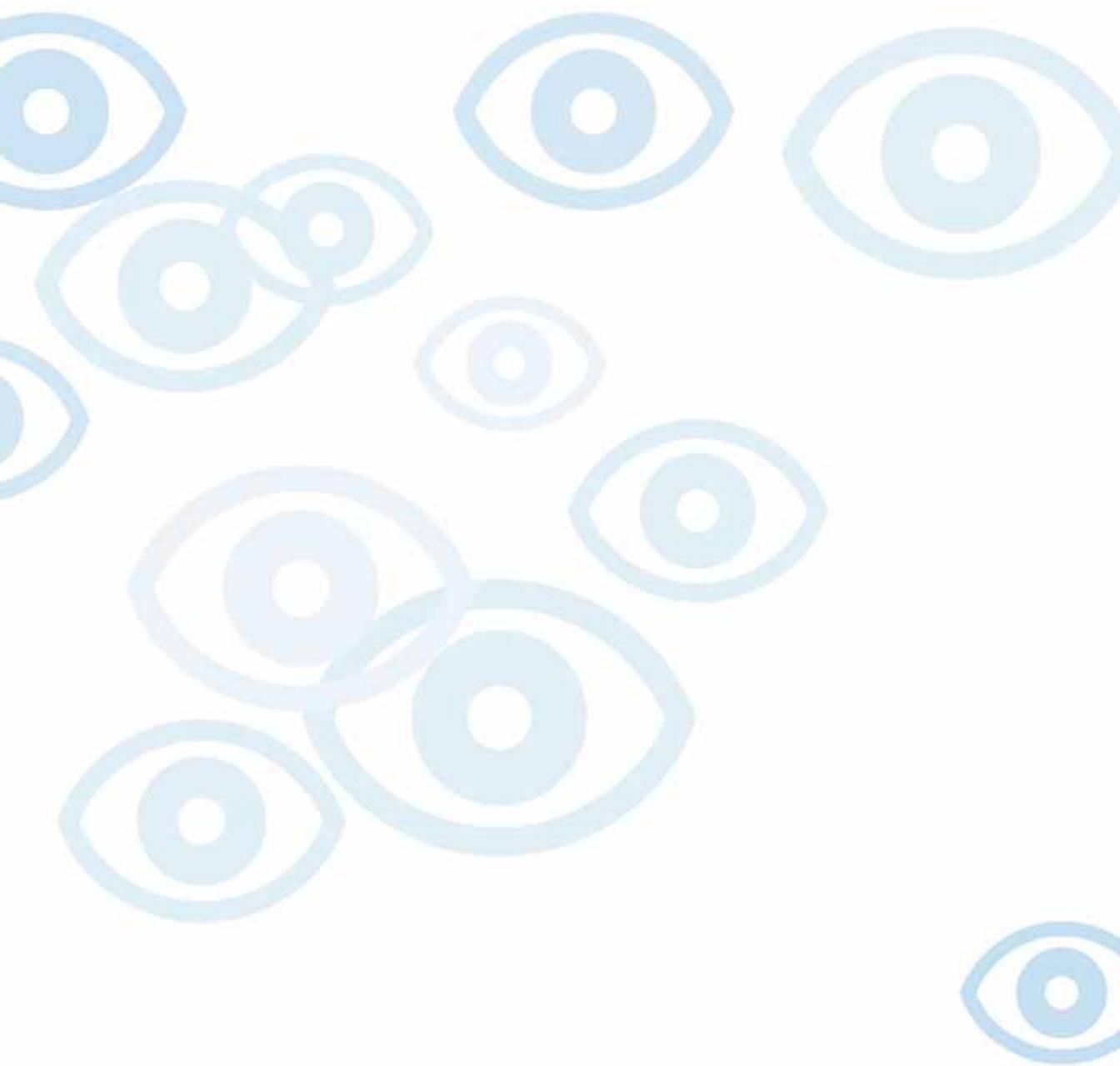
facts, experiences, impressions



**Leonardo da Vinci II**  
**study visits**  
**programme in 2006**

**facts, experiences, impressions**





# Leonardo da Vinci II study visits programme in 2006

## facts, experiences, impressions

Study visits is an effective policy tool. It encourages discussion, exchange and mutual learning at EU level among those responsible for developing and implementing vocational education and training, in particular policy-makers and social partners.

**A study visit is a short-term visit by a group of 10-15 experts to a host country to explore a specific theme.**

The Leonardo da Vinci II programme ended in 2006. It was replaced by the new Lifelong learning programme 2007-13. Study visits is part of the new programme and 2007 is a transitional year as Cedefop prepares to implement the new larger consolidated study visits from 1 January 2008.

In 2006, 842 participants from 30 countries took part in 68 study visits hosted by 29 countries, a significant increase compared to the previous years (see Tables 1 and 2). As usual, participants represented various organisations and institutions related to or involved in vocational education and training (see Table 3). Some 32 % of all participants represented the social partners <sup>(1)</sup>.

### Key data 2006

	2004	2005	2006
<b>Total number of participants</b>	731	760	842
Including participants:			
• from new Member States	119	146	187
• from candidate and acceding countries	13	15	22

Table 1.  
**Number of study visits  
participants, by year**

<sup>(1)</sup> 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.

Table 2.  
**Distribution  
 by country, 2006**

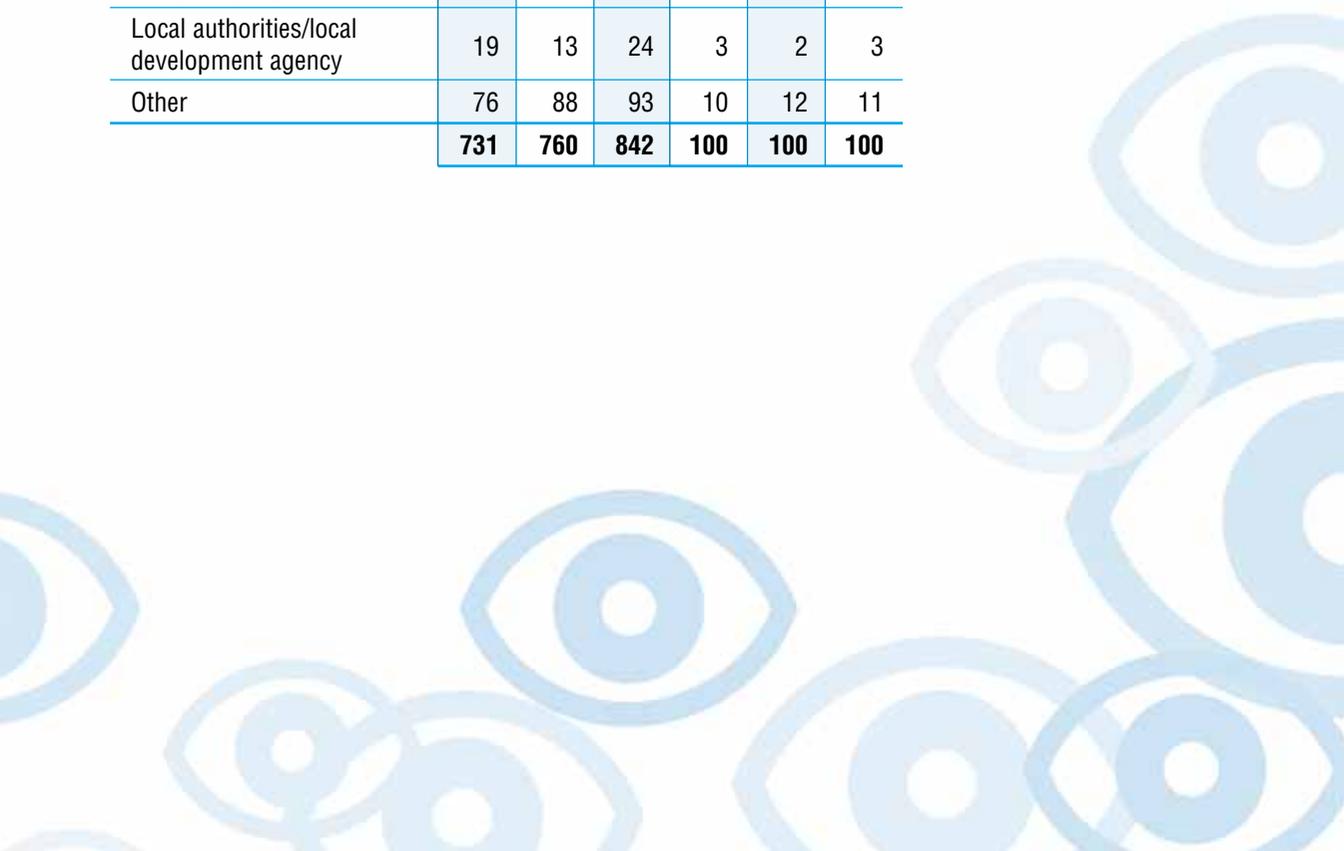
Country	Number of participants sent	Number of participants received	Number of study visits organised
Austria (a)	18	8	1(b)
Belgium	34	35	3
Cyprus	13	13	1
Czech Republic	21	13	1
Denmark	23	35	3
Estonia	14	13	1
Finland	17	25	2
France	67	45	4
Germany	76	65	6
Greece	30	26	2
Hungary	25	9	1
Ireland	22	43	3
Italy	75	60	5
Latvia	20	16	1
Lithuania	21	15	1
Luxembourg	5	13	1
Malta	9	11	1
Netherlands	31	38	3
Poland	43	27	2
Portugal	32	40	3
Slovenia	12	26	2
Slovakia	9	0	0
Spain	55	58	5
Sweden	30	53	4
United Kingdom	86	68	5
Bulgaria	10	9	1
Romania	7	0	0
Turkey	5	13	1
Iceland	7	14	1
Liechtenstein (b)	0	10	1
Norway	25	41	3
	<b>842</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>68</b>

(a) Liechtenstein and Austria organised a joint study visit.

(b) See comment on Austria.

Employer	Number of participants			Percent of all participants		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Civil service body involved in VET	241	256	298	33	34	35
Trade union organisation	56	50	50	8	7	6
Employers' organisation	45	50	45	6	7	5
Private enterprise	38	53	47	5	7	6
Chamber of commerce, craft, industry	15	16	20	2	2	2
Technical and vocational training institution managed by social partners	50	38	41	7	5	5
VET institution	38	29	42	5	4	5
Non-school VET system	28	20	17	4	3	2
University	27	46	65	4	6	8
Research institute	20	22	18	3	3	2
Documentation centre or library	1	3	0	0	0	0
Association or organisation mainly subsidised by public funds	32	25	26	4	3	3
NGO	14	21	26	2	3	3
Agency managing European programmes	31	30	30	4	4	4
Local authorities/local development agency	19	13	24	3	2	3
Other	76	88	93	10	12	11
	<b>731</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3.  
**Distribution of participants by category of employment, 2004-06**



The study visits covered several themes of common interest at EU level. Some 17 focused on VET in specific sectors: tourism, sports, agriculture and food, banking and finance, information technology and metallurgical/chemical industry (see Table 4).

Table 4.  
**Distribution of visits  
per theme, by year**

Themes	Number of visits		
	2004	2005	2006
Making vocational training more attractive	6	2	12
Increasing adult participation in training	7	4	
Guidance and counselling	7	10	7
Quality assurance mechanisms for training	3	2	1
Role of higher education in vocational training	5	9	4
Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning, recognition of qualifications	9	6	9
Helping older workers find and keep jobs	2	2	3
Combating social exclusion	6	5	6
Developing entrepreneurship among young people	6	3	5
Challenges to teachers and trainers	6		5
Role of social partners			4
Presentation of national systems		10	8
2006 European year of workers' mobility			4
2005 European year of citizenship through education		2	
2004 European year of education through sport	1		
<b>Sectoral approach:</b>			
• agri-food sector	1	6	6
• media			
• banking	1	5	3
• IT			1
• metallurgical			1
• sports and tourism			6
• transport	2		
<b>Total (a):</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>68</b>

(a) In 2004 and 2005, sectoral approach was considered a separate theme. In 2006, sectoral approaches were examined within all other themes.

To support the Copenhagen/Maastricht process, Cedefop in cooperation with the Directorate General of Education and Culture (DG EAC) and national authorities, organised three peer learning study visits:

- Training for groups at risk (Germany, 5-9 March 2006);
- Recognition of qualifications of the low-skilled (Portugal, 9-13 October 2006);
- Enhancing discourse between teachers and worklife (Finland, 15-20 October 2006).

To take part in these visits, 36 participants from 20 countries were nominated by Directors-General for vocational training, along with others from DG EAC's working groups on these themes.

Further, in cooperation with DG EAC, Cedefop organised a seminar 'Financing and investment in VET' in Budapest in March. Presentations by participating countries showed that each had its own approach and solutions for financing education in general and VET in particular. The different approaches derive from different cultural and political traditions and political will. However there is general agreement that investment in and financing of VET is a responsibility shared between governments, individuals, employers, and social partners.

### Participants' satisfaction

Participants are very positive about the quality of study visits, demonstrating high levels of satisfaction both immediately and some time after the visit. According to the 2006 end-of-visit reports, 38 % of participants were highly satisfied, 45 % were satisfied, and 16 % were fairly satisfied with their participation in the study visits. Individual questionnaires, sent to participants in 2005 within a year after their visit, showed a similar trend: 71 % being very satisfied, 26 % satisfied and only seven participants expressing certain degree of dissatisfaction (Figure 1).

### Participants' views

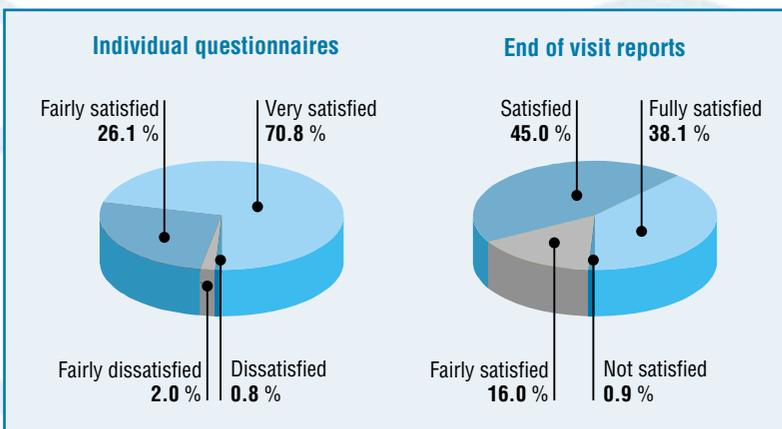


Figure 1.  
Participants' satisfaction

## Impact assessment

In 2006, the study visits team analysed the questionnaires of the 2005 participants, sent out within a year after their study visit. Some 96 % of participants said they acquired new knowledge during the study visit. A vast majority of participants established new contacts for their organisations (79 %) and their professional activity (86 %) (see Figure 2).

The acquired knowledge and experience gained from the study visit was shared by 94 % of participants with others working on related issues. The most common way of information sharing is through a presentation, lecture or talk (58 %) to management (68 %) and colleagues (92 %). The knowledge gained was used in their work by 56 % of participants (see Figure 3).

Figure 2.  
**Summary of participants' responses in percent (N=253), 2005**

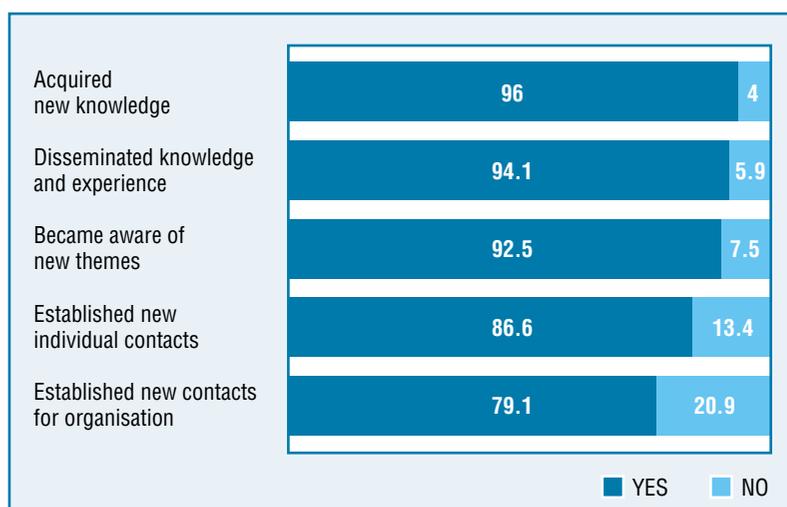
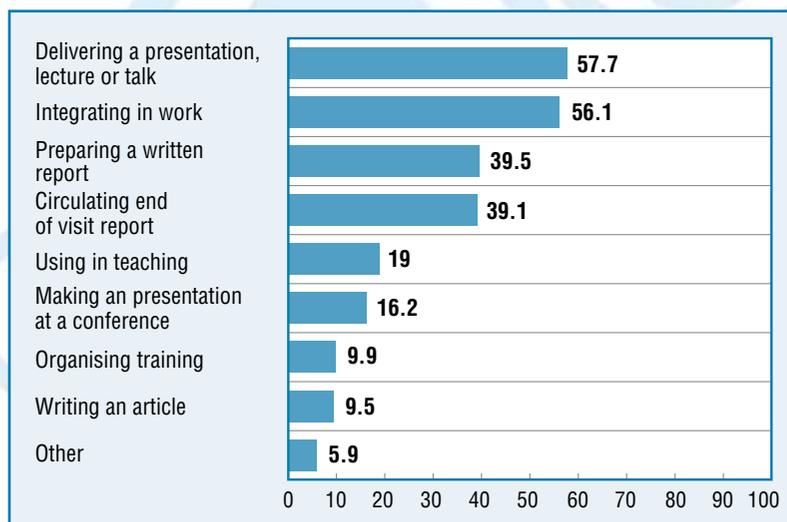


Figure 3.  
**Dissemination of information and experience by participants in percent (N=253), 2005**



The end-of-visit reports written by participants during and immediately after the visits provide valuable information on their reactions to the study visit. Apart from the overall satisfaction of participants with the programme, study visits were regarded as effective, coherent to the visit themes, relevant to participants' professional interests, and cover several important themes. Participants greatly appreciated the support of hosts and organisers.

## Quality of visits

**The group unanimously applauds the high quality of the reception we were given. The various speakers showed, regardless of their social or hierarchical position, a very open manner towards the group and were able through a simple approach to give optimal support to the group in the limited time available.**

**Concerning support offered, all participants agree that they wish to stress the outstanding assistance from our two companions, always in the best of humour and ready to take care of our individual and collective needs. Their deep knowledge of the Belgian educational world allowed for in-depth discussion in informal meetings.**

**The hospitality of our hosts throughout the visit was exceptional in terms of its friendliness, courtesy and informality. There was willingness by all to engage in conversation and enquiry about comparisons of how similar issues are tackled in other countries.**

## Achievements of the study visits

The majority of the study visits 2006:

- had balanced programmes of theoretical sessions, on-site visits and meetings with practitioners. Most presentations were relevant to the interests of the groups.

**Theoretical information was followed by visits to institutions representative of the training system in Belgium. The bridges between the theoretical aspects and the practical practice were linked perfectly.**

**Sessions were not particularly separated into theory or practice. Each visit involved several activities such as a presentation followed by questions/answers and then an accompanied tour of the facilities and/or site.**

**The approach to the theme was holistic. The programme agenda and contents were highly appropriate and well balanced.**

- had well-composed groups with a balanced representation of genders, countries, backgrounds, occupations that added real value to the visits.

**It was a lively and open-minded group. Everyone was respectful of each other's background and experience, making discussion easy.**

**All members of the group were professional and open-minded, made up of eight people from seven countries. The group became very close and friendly, making the possibility of future projects and cooperation very likely.**

**Participants from the group represented 11 different EU Member States. This allowed us to discuss frequently what is going on in the different countries on such topics as employment/unemployment, education and career guidance, vocational training, social change, etc. This encouraged participants to adopt a pan-European view.**

- examined challenges of the changing world, new emerging labour markets needs and the ability of training systems to meet them.

**The labour market has a key role in solving the problems of young people at risk.**

**The range of organisations visited provided an overall picture of how the vocational training provision was planned and implemented in Murcia and how this supported employment needs.**

**As the over-50s in many countries become a major factor in the economy, further cross-border research should be undertaken as to how we help older workers with skill and learning needs.**

- highlighted the participation of various stakeholders in providing vocational education and training (including partnerships, involvement and contribution of social partners, etc).

**In the afternoon the group visited the high school connected with the Istanbul Commercial University, sponsored by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce. This was a good illustration of the theory presented in the morning and the combination of these two activities worked well. The school provides a range of commercial lifelong learning courses for adults (6 000 since 2001). There appear to be strong links to industry and commerce.**

**Social partners are very much involved in the development of qualification, by defining the occupational profiles (core tasks, core issues and competences).**

The group was surprised at the lack of participation of industry in financing training in comparison with other European education systems, all the more so as training aims to enhance the technical competence of workers.

The federation, in agreement with the social partners and the ministry, proposes training courses where competences are defined in detail (this allows for an easy comparison with other countries).

- provided with the overview of VET systems in the host countries and an opportunity for participants to present their national systems or policy approaches.

A good general description of the Spanish employment system was provided including the relationship between national and autonomous regional levels. The structure and priorities of vocational training focused on three areas: regulated vocational training, occupational training and continuing vocational training.

During discussions and peer learning activities, the group developed a presentation on key points in guidance systems of participants' countries, which is attached to this report. This possibility to learn not only about host country's system but also the systems of participants' countries is very important.

The visit's focus on understanding the Danish education system encouraged participants to compare it with their own systems. This, in turn, encouraged thinking about features in each country which might be good and resulted in the chart. The discovery of special features from each which might be transferable to other places was left mainly to informal discussion.

- offered potential for future networking.

On the whole the group communicated well and worked comfortably together, we gained a good understanding of each other's situation and areas of work and interest. We hope to work together on future opportunities and joint projects in the future.

Areas participants identified for future cooperation, networking and further development were: use of funds managed by social partners, use of vouchers systems for individuals, preparation and support for social partners to enable effective use of funds, evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of training supported by funds. The different levels of engagement of social partners in VET were also discussed and it is evident that promoting the importance of training and skills to both employers and trade unions is a key issue.

**We hope the visit is the beginning of an informal network. We especially like the idea of preparing and applying for common projects with the host institution and the participants.**

- provided a possibility for good discussions among participants, with many of them taking place in informal settings.

**The group is very pleased with excellent balance between theoretical and practical sessions, having the possibility to hear presentations and have a reasonable amount of time to ask questions and carry out discussions within the whole group.**

**The opportunity to prepare and distribute a short summary of the system in each of the countries represented and the presentation by each delegate of a practical example from their own country provided an opportunity to compare the German system with others elsewhere.**

**There was ample opportunity for group discussion and questioning of presenters throughout the study visit. Further discussions, networking and sharing of best practice also took place during the social events and recreational time allowed for the group during the visit.**

- presented participants with examples of good practice in the host country.

**The group saw best practice this week at Migros where they had developed their own vocational training programme, accredited by the Ministry of Education. This is a unique programme in Turkey, and is the only formal butcher vocational training programme for butchers in the country. This gave a very good example of how a company takes over certain vocational training tasks that have arisen due to changing conditions in the food sector resulting from demographic change and globalisation, such as new eating habits, hygiene standards, less demand for traditional foods. It also showed how a company had customised and added to their training programme, by adopting best practice from Spain. In effect they added another spoke to the wheel of training to meet their needs, rather than re-inventing the wheel.**

- gave a chance for participants to learn about other cultures.

**Our bus driver was very friendly and full of interesting information regarding Rostock and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. His input during the visit to the campsite was relevant to the discussion and of interest to the group.**

**The cultural visit to Sintra was an extremely enjoyable break from the activities. The only downside was the rain – and we couldn't do anything about that.**

**Visits to museums of Hans Christian Anderson, and Rural and agricultural life reminded us of aspects of our common heritage. It gave the group the opportunity to talk about all we had seen and heard.**

### **Suggestions for the future**

Based on the participants' impressions and comments, future study visits can benefit if:

- participants receive good quality support and information prior to their visits.

**The group believes that if the participants had prepared precise questions prior to the visit, everyone would have been in a better position.**

**Some countries organise pre-departure meetings for selected participants (e.g. Germany). The group believed this to be ideal preparation for the visit and suggests this as an example of good practice for all national liaison officers.**

- participants can introduce themselves to all institutions they visit. A study visit is a learning opportunity for host and visitors. There should be enough time for interaction between the two parties.

**The hosts knew how to make the material more understandable, making the Belgium training system clear in comparison to those of other nationalities represented (France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Scotland and Spain).**

**Most of the places visited gave us website addresses and contacts for further information. Group members shared information and website addresses with staff and will forward further information.**

**Many of the group felt that it would have welcomed an opportunity to share their own experience with some of the organisations visited.**

- meeting and talking with beneficiaries of education and training systems, be it students or users of services, is an indispensable part of the visits' programme.

**It was interesting to meet students and hear their first hand experience of the dual system. They provided supplementary documentation which was very helpful.**

**We regret the lack of contact with the companies using the services provided by the university. This would have enabled us to judge how the university is satisfying business needs.**

**Beneficial, balanced and a good range of methods used to communicate the system to participants. These included detailed discussions and presentations from current and past students. The group witnessed a highly motivated group of young people indulging in a large simulated banking situation.**

**We valued discussion with individual students.**

**Good to meet students proud of what they were doing. Feeling that the work really matters.**

- the theme of the visit is presented from the perspectives of various actors of the host country (the views of employers and trade unions are highly appreciated by participants).

**The programme had an appropriate mix of visits to agencies such as schools, trade centres, trade unions, factories, enterprises, employment offices and a private training provider. We were able to see learners in action and spoke to tutors and other practitioners. Participants were able to take evidence from several people who directly help the client groups.**

**Short meetings with the national authorities (training departments of relevant ministries and trade associations) could be included in future visits to maximise benefit from the programme.**

**In the afternoon we met representatives from trade unions and employers organisations. The discussion was very informative and gave a more realistic image of the Spanish system and the efforts to make it better. Trade unionists and employers were all very frank and honest and admitted that the system is not finalised, negotiations are being held. We had a very useful feedback session.**



- ICT should be used to enhance the value of exchange between the participants. For example, to have a forum before and after the visit to start, maintain and further develop contacts; sharing presentations beforehand in order to gain more time for discussions during the visit, etc.

**Participants undertook to maintain contact with each other and possibly develop a website to continue sharing good practice.**

**One group member set up a 'blog' for the group for further knowledge sharing. This is an idea that is free to implement and could be set up before the meeting.**

- statistical information and results of policy monitoring and evaluation are presented to the participants.

**Evidence should be gathered to measure the effectiveness of the programmes – how long do students stay in a job, do they change jobs, do they move to a higher level job, etc.**

**Practical outcomes and results are not yet visible as ageing policy to help older workers is still in early stages and could not be assessed during the study visit.**

**We learnt about a very good collection and use of data on labour market needs, unemployed adults to target training and support.**

**It would have been useful to get hard stats before almost all visits (or simply more concrete data during presentations) and other comparative statistics, e.g. on funding, etc.**

**There is a need for research into the link between school initiatives and business start up.**

In the Lifelong learning programme 2007-13, study visits is a key action in the transversal programme to support policy development and cooperation at European level in lifelong learning. It addresses a much wider target group and follows an integrated approach to education and vocational education and training. The new programme is for experts and officials designated by national, regional and local authorities, directors of education and training establishments, guidance and experience accreditation services, and social partners.

More information on study visits is available at the study visits programme website. It provides information to 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/>

**Study visits in the Lifelong learning programme 2008-13**

**Study visits website**

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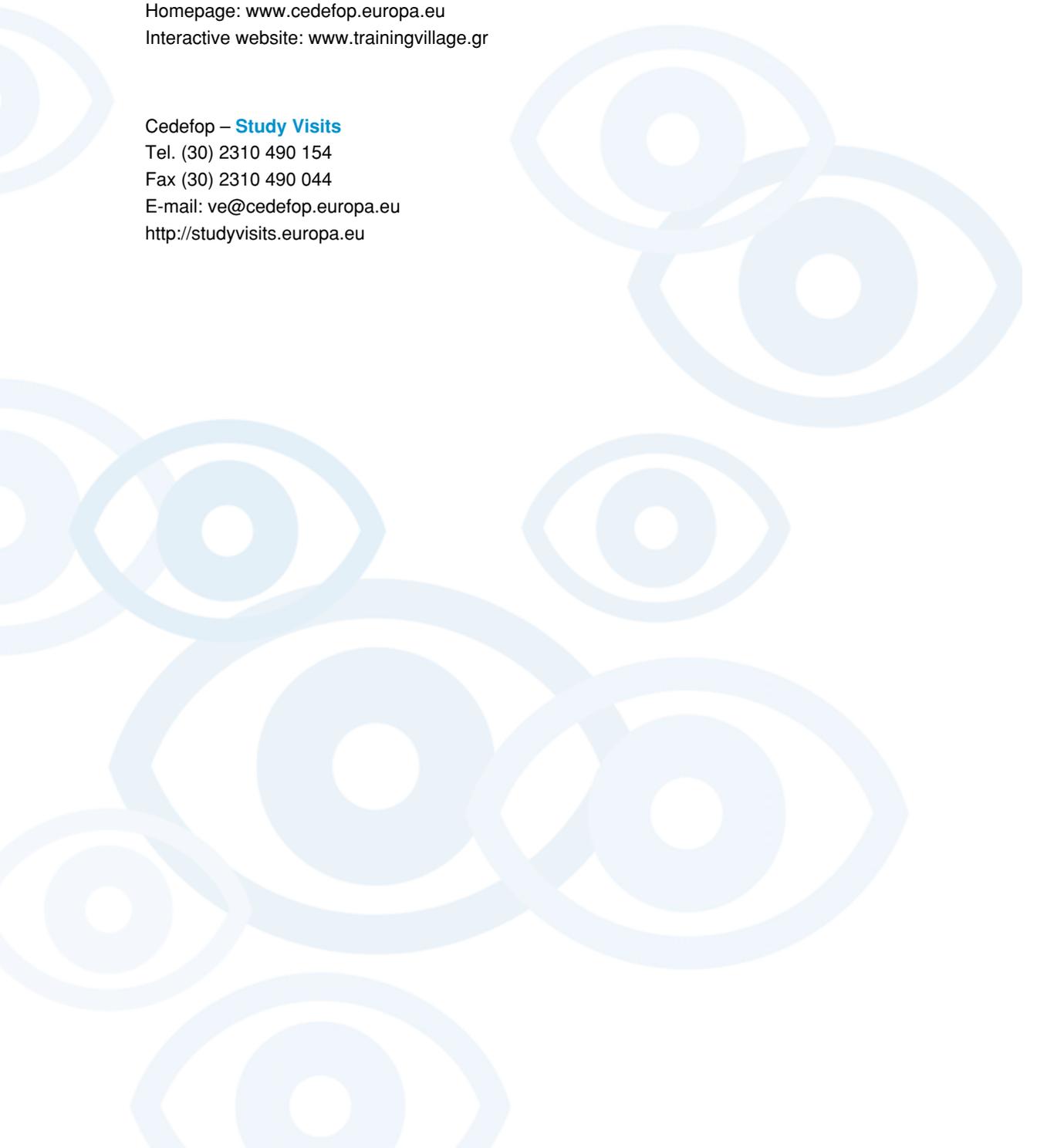
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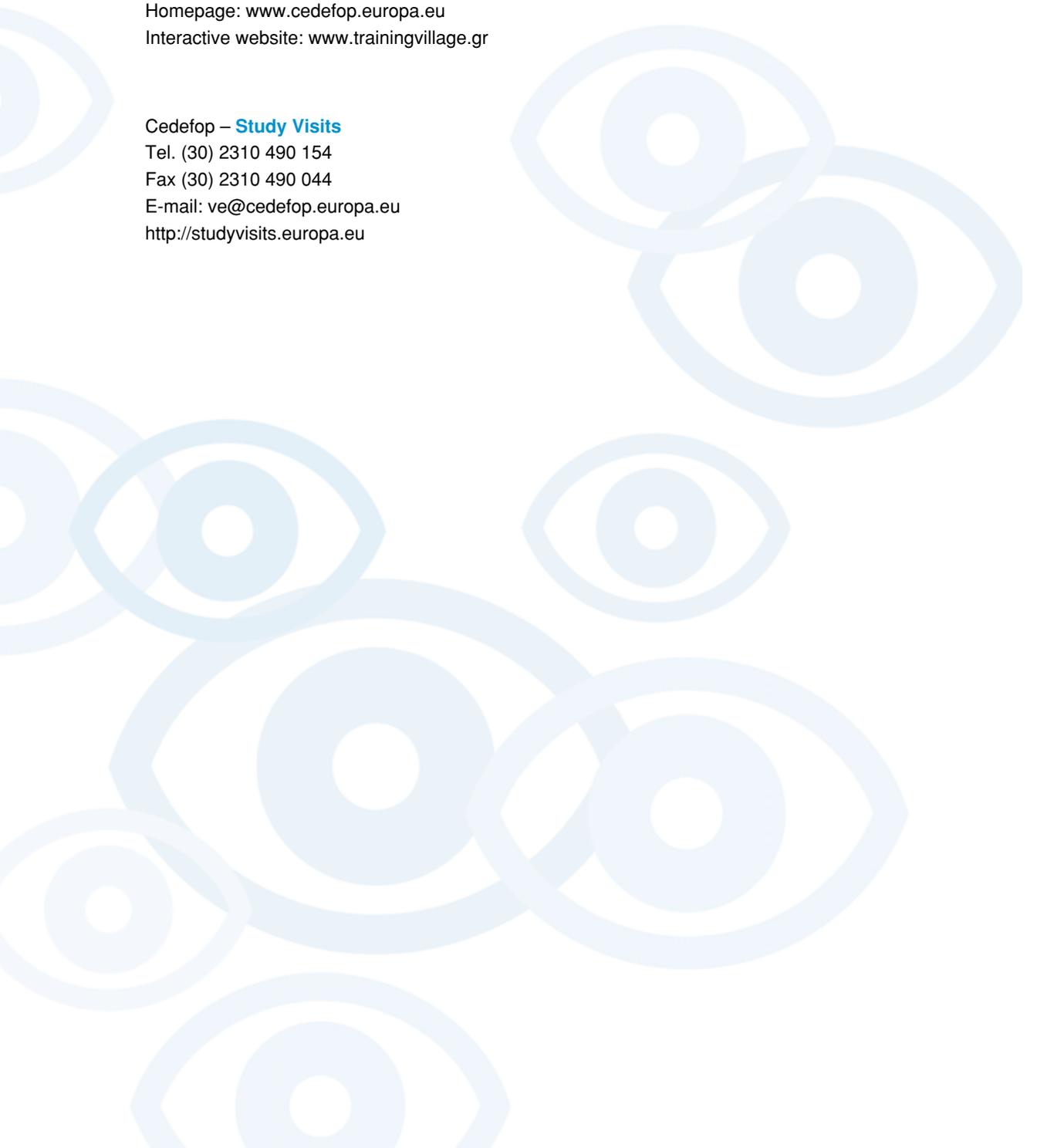
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