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Innovative professional development for teachers and trainers drives vocational education and training reform forward

Enhancing the competence and status of trainers is not just about creating more master's degrees – it is also about devising informal ways to update skills from within the relevant economic sector, and with the help of other trainers. This will be the major theme of the Cedefop conference, *Teachers and trainers at the heart of innovation and VET reforms*, to be held in Thessaloniki on 23-24 February 2009.

The reform of vocational education and training that is currently in progress across Europe is underpinned by new concepts of teaching and training, such as the shift from teaching inputs to learning outcomes. **Implementing these reforms will be impossible without the active involvement of the teachers and trainers themselves**, who in turn need to upgrade their skills in order to make an effective contribution.

Cedefop's upcoming conference will examine the innovative ways in which teachers and trainers in some countries are able to grow on the job, and whether these practices can be more generally adopted.

Several of these practices are based on informal and non-formal learning rather than on formal education. For instance, online "communities of practice", in which trainers exchange materials, information and experience, can provide the basis for assessing training needs and setting up continuing training seminars.

Workshops

Conference workshops will cover how to **update skills**, how to **raise qualification** requirements, and how to **retain and attract** teachers and trainers:

- If teachers fail to keep up to date with new technologies and working practices in enterprises, vocational school graduates will not have the knowledge and skills required by the labour market. For this reason some continuing training

programmes adopt a **dual approach**: teachers spend part of their training working in companies, allowing them to keep abreast of technological and work organisation changes.

- Both teachers and in-company trainers are now requested to meet **higher qualification requirements**, though these may be based on the recognition of informally acquired skills.
- The prospect of retirement of older teachers needs to be managed carefully. Several countries are striving to create new entry routes into the teaching profession for professionals from trades and businesses. **Experienced teachers will increasingly need to be persuaded to remain in the profession** instead of retiring early. and may therefore require additional professional support.

In all these issues, the aim of the conference will be to find the best ways of providing flexible and reliable routes to professional recognition and development and to help motivate training staff.

The conference is open.

<http://www.agora.cedefop.europa.eu/teacher%5Ftrainer%5Fconference/>

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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.

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