

cedefop info

Vocational training in Europe 1/05

The milestone of Maastricht

Following Copenhagen, EU summit marks a further milestone for European VET on the way to the Lisbon goals.

There are still too many hurdles in the field of education and training within the European Union. The aim of the EU VET summit held in Maastricht from 13 to 16 December 2004 was to remove these hurdles.

On 14 December, the Maastricht Communiqué was adopted by the ministers for education and training of 32 European countries, i.e. the 25 EU Member States, the four candidate countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, representatives of the social partners, the European Commission and the European Training Foundation. The adoption of the communiqué had been preceded by a presentation by Cedefop of its synthesis report on the Maastricht study. The declaration which was subsequently adopted highlights the progress achieved in the context of the Copenhagen process and introduces new priorities to strengthen European cooperation in the field of VET.

The ministerial meeting was followed by a press conference for the pre-launch of the new Europass for the transparency of qualifications and competences. The Leonardo da Vinci exhibition, at which Cedefop was represented with a joint stand with the European Commission and the European Training Foundation, was opened in the afternoon. The exhibition showcased 32 of the 165 'success stories' proposed by Leonardo da Vinci national agencies as best VET practice.

On the following day, 15 December, the Dutch Council Presidency and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission invited some 600 experts to a conference to take stock of the progress achieved since the beginning of the Copenhagen process in 2002 and

to take this process forward. The goal had already been formulated by the Lisbon European Council in 2002: to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010.

The main theme of the presentations was the strengthening of European cooperation in VET. The high-calibre participants were headed by Ján Figel, the new EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, alongside Maria van der Hoeven, Dutch Minister for Education, Culture and Science. The guest speakers included Nikolaus van der Pas, Director-General, Education and Culture, at the European Commission, Wim Kok, Chair of the High-level Group on the evaluation of the Lisbon Strategy, and Barry McGaw, Director of Education, OECD.

On the third day of the conference, the participants examined the contributions of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and other instruments and initiatives on the implementation of the Maastricht Declaration. VET experts' workshops examined the progress of national VET systems, new methods of learning and teaching and responsibilities for the establishment of a European training market. The education and training summit concluded on 16 December with an Open Day on the Leonardo da Vinci programme and its success story.

Source: Cedefop/SK

Further information on the conference at:
<http://www.vetconference-maastricht2004.nl/>

The website features direct links to the Maastricht Communiqué and the Maastricht Study. Both the full texts are available in English, French and German.

The website also features press reports and pictures as well as further documentation on the Maastricht Summit.



Maastricht Exhibition & Congress Centre (MECC)



Tom Leney, co-author of the Maastricht study, and Johan van Rens, Director of Cedefop

The European driving force requires national momentum

Maastricht study describes the status of VET in Europe.

What is the status of VET in Europe? What progress has been made towards the Lisbon and Copenhagen goals? These were the key issues addressed by the Maastricht study commissioned by the European Commission and presented in 2004. Cedefop highlights the main results of the study in a synthesis report, comparing the status of VET in Europe with competitors such as Australia and the USA, and gives recommendations for action.

In 2000, the Lisbon European Council laid down ambitious goals for the coming decade by formulating the strategic aim of 'transform(ing) Europe by 2010 into the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, delivering sustainable growth, generating more and better jobs and creating greater social cohesion'. Two years later, the Barcelona Council set an additional objective of making European education and training a world quality reference. The Copenhagen Declaration specified the consequences for VET and

expressly called for enhanced cooperation, prioritising the European dimension, transparency, recognition of competences and qualifications and quality assurance.

The Member States agreed to develop coherent lifelong learning structures with VET as a key element by 2006. However this has only succeeded in some cases. Most European countries still lack the basic requirements for high-quality VET: improved status for trainers, quality assurance systems, intensive counselling and support for learners, and transparency between individual training routes.

Europe's great vision is to become a knowledge society, combining economic performance with social inclusion. However, whereas it is estimated that by 2010 85 to 90 % of additional jobs will require upper secondary level educational and training, at present 80 million EU citizens are low skilled.

Although the European Union has come closer to the benchmark set by the Council in 2003 that an average of 85 % of 22 year olds should have at least upper secondary education and

On course for a competitive, knowledge-based economy

The Maastricht Communiqué identifies new priorities for enhanced European cooperation in VET.

On 14 December 2004, the EU ministers for education and training adopted the Maastricht Declaration which identifies the future priorities for enhanced European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET), above all at national level. At the same time they carried out a review of the progress made in the context of the Copenhagen process, which supplements the Lisbon strategy.

In 2000, the European Council in Lisbon set the strategic aim of making the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion by 2010. In November 2002, the Copenhagen Declaration was adopted by a total of 31 ministers from EU/EEA/EFTA Member States and the accession countries, as well as the European social partners and the European Commission. The Copenhagen Declaration specified the priori-

ty areas for enhanced VET cooperation: the European dimension, transparency, information and guidance, recognition of competences and qualifications and quality assurance.

The ministers note in the Maastricht Communiqué that 'since November 2002, the Council has reached political agreement on a number of concrete results emanating from enhanced cooperation in VET and lifelong learning, in particular in relation to human capital for social cohesion and competitiveness, guidance throughout life, principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, quality assurance in VET and the Europass single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences.' In two years, the Copenhagen process has succeeded in raising the visibility and profile of VET at the European level.

The communiqué expressly describes the strengthening of VET at the European and national levels as 'an essential component for the achievement of a genuine European labour market and a competitive economy', in accordance with the Lisbon goals. The ministers call

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Letter from the Director

The ministerial meeting and high level conference, held at the end of the Dutch EU-Council presidency in Maastricht in December, not only marked a new milestone in the area of cooperation in the fields of vocational education and training (VET) in Europe (see the lead story of this issue of Info), it also signalled the central role that Cedefop is playing in that process. The preparation of the study and the published report resulted from a new type of cooperation between the European Commission and Cedefop. Members of Cedefop's ReferNet also played a key role. It is encouraging that already the Finnish presidency is considering a similar type event in late 2006. In addition, the Commission is already in discussion with Cedefop about how a similar exercise could be carried out in 2005/06, but with a time-scale that is longer than that available in the preparation of the "Maastricht" report.

Mr Ján Figel, European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism played a major part in the Maastricht event. He was also at the conference which under the Luxembourg presidency launched Europass on 31 January. This was a lively event during which participants raised many pertinent questions on the utility and relevance of this instrument in facilitating mobility. More information on Europass is contained in an article on page 6. The use of the Europass in the short period that it has been available has been very encouraging and we have had to double the already large access capacity to our electronic systems.

At the November meeting of Cedefop's Management Board - its name has now been changed to Governing Board - the 2005 work programme was adopted. An article on page 4 contains a brief summary of it. It is available on our website at www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/4043_en.pdf and hard-copy versions are available on request.

At that meeting, the Board also appointed Dr Christian Lettmayr as Deputy Director of Cedefop. Dr Lettmayr (for information see the article on page 5) will start work in Cedefop on 1 April. He will succeed Dr Stavros Stavrou, whose mandate has come to an end. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Stavrou for his major role in the development of Cedefop and of cooperation in the field of VET in Europe over more than ten years. I would just cite in particular his role in the establishment of Cedefop in its premises in Thessaloniki after the difficult transfer from Berlin and then his tireless work leading up to the integration of the ten new member states in Cedefop's activities in May 2004.

2005 is a year for looking back - the thirtieth year since the formal establishment of Cedefop and the twentieth of the operation of the Study Visit Programme. It is also a year of transition, with the arrival of a new directorate, changes in the structure of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission and the expected adoption of a single integrated European programme for lifelong learning.

Last but not least: on behalf of all the readers of Cedefop Info, I would like to bid farewell to Michael Adams, who has, since its beginning, been a part of the editorial team and has carried out that function with great care. We wish him good health and an active and rewarding retirement.

Johan van Rens
March 2005

On course for a competitive, knowledge-based economy

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for greater emphasis to be placed on action to implement agreed objectives at national level. On the basis of the interim report 'Education and training 2010', presented by the European Council and the Commission in February, the Maastricht Declaration identifies the following priority areas for the necessary reforms and investment:

Participation in VET is to be increased by improving the attractiveness of the vocational route. Only high levels of quality and innovation in VET systems can make European VET globally competitive. It is also necessary to link VET with labour market requirements; in view of demographic change, this will not least mean the upgrading and competence development of older workers.

Greater consideration must also be given to the needs of the approx. 80 million low-skilled and disadvantaged groups for the purpose of achieving social cohesion and increasing labour market participation.

The main thrust of the communiqué is towards the priorities to be implemented at national level. The first of these priorities is the use of common instruments, references and principles to support the reform and development of VET systems and practices, e.g. regarding transparency, guidance, quality assurance and non-formal and informal learning. The players are to strengthen the mutual links between these instruments and raise the stakeholders' awareness at national, regional and local levels in Member States in order to enhance visibility and mutual understanding; there is also room for improvement at the level of the 'training incentive effects of tax and benefit systems'.

The declaration stipulates that the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund could be used to support the development of VET. The same holds true for the EU structural funds. In accordance with the policy guidelines of these funds for 2007-13, they should support the key role of education and training in promoting economic development and social cohesion, in particular the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, and renewing and updating the skills of an ageing population.

Moreover, national VET systems must be further developed to meet the needs of people or groups at risk of labour market and social exclusion: low skilled, migrants, persons with disabilities and the unemployed. This should be based on a combination of targeted investment, assessment of prior learning and tailored training and learning. Open learning approaches should enable people to define individual pathways and flexible frameworks should reduce barriers between VET and general education and promote mobility.

On the subject of VET quality assurance, the ministers describe the systematic involvement of all key partners at all levels as indispensable. To this end, more emphasis on the early identification of skills needs and the planning of VET provision is particularly important. Training quality is to be improved by the further development of learning-conducive environments in training institutions and in the workplace, e.g. support for self-organised learning and use of the potential provided by ICT and e-learning. Continuing competence development of teachers and trainers in VET rounds off the list of priorities at national level.

At European level, the ministers attach particular importance to consolidating the priorities of the Copenhagen process and facilitating the implementation of the concrete results. An open and flexible European qualifications framework (EQF), founded on transparency and mutual trust, should serve as a common reference to facilitate the recognition and transferability of qualifications. It should improve permeability within education and training systems, validation of informally acquired competences and support the effective functioning of the labour markets. The EQF is to be underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms to create the necessary mutual trust.

The communiqué identifies as a further priority the development and implementation of the European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET), based on competences and learning outcomes and taking account of the experience of the ECTS in the field of higher education. Practical implementation should include the development of voluntary agreements between VET providers throughout Europe. The ministers call for the examination of the specific learning needs and changing role of vocational teachers and trainers and of the possibilities of making their profession more attractive. Finally, priority should be given to the improvement of the precision and reliability of VET statistics to enable better recognition and evaluation of progress.

In the Maastricht Declaration the ministers expressly call on all actors in the field of VET to contribute to the effective implementation of the Copenhagen process by establishing national networks. They also call for the rationalisation of education and training processes and the full involvement of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training in the implementation and follow up. Moreover, proposals for a European Qualifications Framework and European Credit Transfer System for VET should also be prepared.

Closer cooperation should be developed in higher education, European economic, employment, and social policies, as well as at the level of exchange of innovation and good examples of policy and practice. The biennial report on Education and Training 2010 should provide information on progress made, as well as on planned VET developments at national level, thus stimulating exchange on a transnational basis. Closer links should be developed with the social partners at European, national, regional and sectoral levels who defined a framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications in 2002.

In order to advance VET reform, the Maastricht Declaration calls for effective and full utilisation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and the future integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Cedefop and ETF have the task of supporting these tasks with reporting, monitoring progress, and exchange of experience, in particular through the dissemination of good policy and practice in lifelong learning, the mapping of sectoral activities and the use of study visits in the context of the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Source: Cedefop/SK



Ján Figel, member of the European Commission, responsible for education, training, culture and multilingualism, and Johan van Rens, Director of Cedefop.

The European driving force requires national momentum

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training by 2010, there are considerable disparities between individual countries. Whereas the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden have reached the benchmark of 85 %, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Spain are still far below the benchmark (less than 70 %). In other countries, educational attainment rates have fallen (e.g. Germany: from 74.6 % in 1999 to 72.5 % in 2003).

The overall number of low-skilled people, mainly those who left school early or dropped out of post-compulsory education and training, is still too high across Europe. VET can help reverse this trend. According to the Maastricht study, strengthening vocational streams can help prevent and reduce school dropout rates.

In the future there will be fewer workers and, as demographic data show, they will be older. It will therefore be a question of activating as many as possible of the 33 million people in the 25 EU Member States who are unemployed or not employed for other reasons. This will mean overcoming structural unemployment and raising the level of training, among other things by providing free access to learning opportunities.

The synthesis report warns that it is vital that skills and training do not become the preserve of the elite few but are open to everyone, and points out that a high number of socially excluded people is a burden on economies and limits growth. It is therefore necessary to adapt education and training provision to modern requirements, such as constantly changing new technologies.

The Maastricht study clearly shows that there is little evidence of constructive strategies in national lifelong learning (LLL) plans. Continuing vocational training (CVT) is the weakest link. Although the interest in LLL is increasing in most countries, enterprises still tend to regard training/CVT spending as a cost factor, as opposed to an investment in company performance.

According to the study, financial incentives and intensive individual counselling targeted at both individuals and enterprises can help change this situation. Research by the OECD, Cedefop, the ETF and the World Bank on career guidance in 37 countries reveals that European guidance provision far from meets the demands of a knowledge-based economy. Concepts and practice are in urgent need of reform. SMEs require particular support in the provision of CVT. Progress can also be achieved by LLL pacts in collective agreements and the creation of more conducive learning environments and more flexible learning opportunities.

Given the low level of cross-border mobility, there can so far be no question of the development of a true European labour market. The synthesis report calls for a 'selective immigration policy' to bring the right skills in the right place at



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the right time. In addition, periods spent abroad and the recognition of skills and competences acquired in the transnational context should become a matter of course.

The European Qualifications Framework, together with the new Europass system (which comes into effect this year) and more transnational placements are essential tools for achieving the goal of increasing mobility and greater transparency. Compared with universities, internationalisation strategies are not a strong feature of VET systems. Yet the development of a European labour market is directly dependent on such strategies. Member States and social partners are therefore called upon to recognise the new Europass, a single portfolio of documents reflecting the qualifications and competences of EU citizens. Regular monitoring, evaluation and feedback are needed to measure progress in this field.

More investment in the quality of VET systems is of decisive importance for achieving the Lisbon goals. Average EU spending on primary and secondary education and training is below that of competitors such as Australia and the US. Only Austria, Belgium, Ireland and Romania have so far implemented quality assurance systems. Yet such approaches, with clear training plans, specific goals and measurable success criteria, are indispensable to maximise return on their investment, increase VET efficiency and therefore improve economic competitiveness in line with the Lisbon strategy. It is important that countries reinforce their efforts and draw on the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF).

The quality of VET stands or falls with the quality of VET teachers and trainers. These players increasingly find themselves in the role of developers and facilitators of learning activities and innovation. There are shortages of VET teachers and trainers to be observed in many Member States. This is hardly surprising: their salaries are as low as their image. Given their key function, countries therefore need to improve the social status of VET teachers and trainers, promote the further professionalisation of VET teaching and allow for greater flexibility in policies for their recruitment.

The results of the Maastricht study show that that many agreements have been reached, common aims and frameworks established and practical tools developed. The emphasis must now be on moving to concrete action at national and regional levels. Because of its close links to employment and the economy, VET policy plays a key role. In order

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to fulfil this role, the Member States are assured the continuing support of the EU, in the form of financing, information and exchange of experience. In turn, Member States need to ensure that the financial possibilities for the development of VET offered by the Structural Funds and by the new education and training programmes are used to the full. The study concludes that to move closer to a knowledge-based society, Europe needs an innovation strategy aimed at more effective use of resources, a future-oriented design of VET and new approaches to learning in schools and at work.

Source: Cedefop/SK



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Highlights of Cedefop's Work Programme 2005

Cedefop's Work Programme 2005 reflects the 2003-2006 medium-term priorities and the overriding objective of promoting a European area of lifelong learning in an enlarged EU.

The goal set by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 has wide-ranging consequences for education and vocational training policy and hence for Cedefop's activity. Cedefop was actively involved in preparing the groundwork for the Maastricht ministerial conference in December 2004 (cf. the article on page 1); its Work Programme 2005 can be seen as a follow-up to this programmatic conference, which highlighted the need for the sustained skilling of European citizens.

Most of Cedefop's work, whether in the form of research projects, reporting instruments or an involvement in e-learning, follows the main objective of promoting a European area of lifelong learning. Cedefop participates in identifying good examples of policy and practice and actively disseminates relevant information.

The new comprehensive framework for the Europass was launched on 30 January 2005, under the Luxembourg Council presidency (cf. the article on page 6). There is already a keen interest in the Europass; Cedefop expects to be closely involved with the implementation of the new portfolio during 2005.

Cedefop will continue this year to support various technical and expert working groups of the European Commission, among others in the field of e-skills, quality of vocational training and non-formal learning. Its relevant virtual communities will also provide support.

As was the case last year, a priority area of Cedefop's work will be the further development of the knowledge management system (KMS) - a web-based system which provides a thematically retrievable repository of knowledge on VET and brings together policy, research and practice. The KMS is fed by the Network of Reference and Expertise (ReferNet), which provides information from all EU and EEA Member States.

Cedefop's third report on vocational training research has been completed and will be published in English in spring 2005; translation into French and German will follow. A synthesis report in 20

languages will be made available in the Vocational Training Village. Further details on the research report and the contributions of the various authors can be found in the article entitled 'The value of learning' featured in the last edition of Cedefop Info (No 3/2004).

At the initiative of our Governing Board, support for the social partners will take central stage in 2005. The programme on sectoral qualifications and competences will continue to be implemented, while the Study Visits Programme managed by Cedefop (see article on page 19) will offer an increasing number of study visits and workshops on this subject and actively promote the involvement of the social partners.

The activities of the various networks will be continued in 2005. The network for the training of trainers (TTNet) will concentrate on establishing a firmer foothold in Germany, as well as further developing its activities in the new EU Member States. The 10 new Member States will be increasingly involved in Cedefop's projects and reports, while Cedefop will make more information available in the languages of these countries.

Finally, Cedefop will strengthen its European and international cooperation with the OECD, ILO, Unevoc, the Council of Europe, European Schoolnet and the EVTA. In time-honoured fashion, Cedefop will also support the countries holding the Council presidency (this year Luxembourg and the UK) by providing information.

The Cedefop Work Programme is available at:
www.cedefop.eu.int/download/current_act/wp2005.pdf,
www2.train.village.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/4043_en.pdf

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Career guidance: developing and sharing knowledge beyond Europe

The International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICDP) commenced its existence in a pilot phase in November 2004. Its aims are three-fold:

- to promote career development internationally as an integral part of public policies for education, training, employment and social inclusion;
- to promote and support international transfer of knowledge and best practice in order to strengthen public policies, systems and practices for career development;
- to promote methods and resources for evidenced-based policy-making in the field of career development through international collaboration.

The Centre is intended as a resource for policy developers and researchers, in association with social partners and guidance practitioners, in improving career development systems that support life-

long learning and workforce development goals.

In the first three years of its establishment, the Centre will be hosted by Cedefop in its Brussels office. The ICDP has the institutional support of the European Commission, OECD and the World Bank, the international association support of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), and the country support of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, UK and Ireland. John McCarthy, the Director of the National Centre for Guidance in Education in Ireland, has been seconded by the Irish Ministry for Education and Science to establish the centre. Other international institutional, association and country support will be welcome.

More information from: ICDP, Cedefop, 20 Av. d'Auderghem, Brussels B-1049, Belgium, Tel. (322) 233 38 46, fax (322) 230 58 24; E-mail: jmc@cedefop.eu.int

Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Makers

This joint publication (*) of the European Commission and OECD has just been appeared in English and French. An initiative of the Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (see Cedefop Info 3/2004), the handbook contains a range of policy options to meet national, regional and local needs across the education, training and employment sectors.

The handbook is divided into four sections, the first and second of which concern the improvement of services for different target groups of young people and adults. The third section considers the issue of improving access. The fourth section considers transversal topics such as quality assurance and leadership that are relevant for all target groups.

Each of the 14 chapters is organised as follows: challenges facing policy makers; questions that policy makers need

to reflect on; policy options; and good examples of policies.



(*) Career Guidance: a handbook for policy makers, published jointly by the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities (EUR-OP) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ISBN 92-894-8265-6 (EUR-OP); ISBN 92-64-01519-1 (OECD) price 24 Euro available in English and French and can be obtained from:

http://publications.eu.int/others/sales_agents_en.html

or from

http://oecdpublications.gfi-nb.com/isroot/OECDBookShop/Static_html/ab_8.htm

Spanish and German versions of the handbook should be available in March only from OPOCE.

Overview/executive summaries of the handbook can be downloaded in other languages in 2005 from: <http://oecdpublications.gfi-nb.com/isroot/OECDBookShop.storefront/> and place career guidance in the search box. Informal approaches have been made by several countries (Norway, Finland, Portugal, Spain - Catalonia) to OECD and to the Commission to have the handbook translated and published in their languages at their countries' cost.

Source: Cedefop/jma

Education and Training 2010: Reforming Guidance and Counselling in Europe - Changing Policies, Systems and Practices

This 8 page briefing document for policy makers, managers of services, practitioners and researchers has just been published in English, French and German by the European Commission. It describes recent developments in the field of lifelong guidance at European level; provides the political context for such development; outlines priorities for action and progress achieved to date; and

gives useful references. It can be downloaded from:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/educ-form_en.html.



European Joint Action programme for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning

TRANSFINE (Transfer between Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education) was one of the first Joint Action projects financed by the European Commission and has had a significant impact on developments in the field. Funded from 1 May 2002 to 31 July 2003, the main aim of the project was to propose a European architecture for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Work was undertaken by a unique partnership of the European associations covering the various educational sectors. The project contractor was the *Université des Sciences et Technologies* of Lille (USTL), France, with EUCEN (the European Universities Continuing Education Network) as coordinator. The partners were EAEA (the European Association for the Education of Adults), FIEEA (the International Federation for Youth Exchanges), EVTA (the European Association for Vocational Training), and SEFI (the European Association for Engineers).

Case studies were carried out in five European countries (Britain, Estonia, France, Norway and Italy) to look in detail at current developments and to explore with key actors the feasibility of a European framework for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

Based on this work, the main proposal for a European framework took a learner-centred perspective, insisting that the arrangements had to be part of a lifelong learning process, open to all and voluntary, valuing the individual, offering opportunities for a personal development plan, and located in a framework of advice, guidance and support. The proposed framework consists of a set of principles, a set of tools, a shared language, a system of quality assurance, cooperation between actors in different sectors and arrangements for sharing experience. Some of the longer term proposals, for example a system of credits and a framework of levels, have been taken up by various working groups of the Commission.

A second project - REFINE (Recognising formal Informal and Non-formal Education) - is now underway, again funded under the Joint Action programme for two years from January 2004 to December 2005. During the first year the partners have been experimenting with the tools developed by Transfine, testing them with real candidates - more than 200 learners in 10 countries have been involved so far. Again USTL is the contractor, EUCEN the coordinator and EAEA and FIEEA as well as AFPA (French Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes) participate. The testing has been taking place in 13 European countries. In each one of them there is a team representing the university, adult education, vocational training, youth and NGO sectors - a total of around 70 organisations, all places of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The second year of the project is now underway and is focussing on comparing the experience of the testing, across the sectors and across the various tools, both nationally and transnationally. The final report will propose a set of tools for use at European level with appropriate adaptations and supplements useable by all sectors.

Further information:
on TRANSFINE: www.eucen.org/transfine
on REFINE: www.eucen.org/refine

Contact: Pat Davies pat.davies@univ-lille1.fr

Source: Pat Davies

Cedefop's new Deputy Director



Following his appointment by Cedefop's Governing Board last November, Mr Christian F. Lettmayr started work as Cedefop's new Deputy Director on 1 April 2005.

Mr Lettmayr, aged 53, is from Austria and since 2001 has been principal administrator in the unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry dealing with competitiveness and economic reforms. There, he was particularly concerned with policy benchmarking, establishing quantitative targets and promoting peer reviews in the field of enterprise policy.

From 1995 to August 2001, he was Director of the Austrian Institute for Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Research (*Institut für Gewerbe- und Handelsforschung*, later: *KMU-Forschung*

Austria), which is an applied research institute. From 1987, he had been deputy director of the institute.

He holds a master's degree in business administration (Magister rer.soc.oec.) from the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration (1976), while he also studied as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Illinois, where he was awarded a master's in vocational and technical education (M.Ed.) in 1980.

When asked how he feels about his new job with Cedefop Mr Lettmayr says: 'I have worked in the field of vocational education and training since 1976. VET is one of the most important horizontal issues on the Lisbon agenda. I look forward, as Deputy Director of Cedefop, to be part of that process. In some ways I feel it is a challenge I have been preparing for all my life.'

Source: Cedefop



Five languages alone account for 95% of taught languages in secondary education in most European countries

The teaching of languages is becoming increasingly important in a European Union with at present no less than 20 official languages, not to mention regional or minority languages and those spoken by immigrants. The preservation of linguistic diversity and universal proficiency in foreign languages have long been at the heart of European cooperation. In 2002, the Barcelona European Council confirmed the need for a sustained effort 'to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age'.

This first special Eurydice Key Data report on teaching languages at school in Europe contains 37 indicators providing an overview of the situation in 30 European countries.

It is mandatory for one foreign language to be taught in all countries throughout Europe, except in Ireland and Scotland. This generally occurs from primary education onwards. All pupils have to be taught a foreign language at least until the end of their compulsory education, except in Italy and Wales. It is generally

in secondary education that the central authorities make it compulsory for all pupils to begin learning a second foreign language. In the majority of European countries, pupils have to be taught two foreign languages for at least a year during their compulsory education.

In lower secondary education, it is only in Ireland and the United Kingdom (England) that over 10% of pupils learn no foreign language. The average number of languages learnt varies between 1 and 1.9 in the majority of countries. Over 70% of pupils in lower secondary education learn at least two languages in Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Iceland.

Unlike most of the new Member States, over half of the countries in the former 15-member EU specify which foreign language has to be learnt first. In such cases, that language is generally English and this is not a recent trend. In a few countries, other languages are mandatory for historical or political reasons.

English is the most widely taught language in primary education, except in

Belgium and Luxembourg. The same is true of secondary education, except in the case of the two above-mentioned countries and Romania. The percentage of pupils who learnt English in secondary education increased markedly between 1998 and 2002, particularly in the countries of central and eastern Europe. Just five languages (English, French, German, Spanish and Russian) account for 95% of the languages taught in secondary education in Europe. German and French share second place as the second most taught language: German is more widespread in the countries of northern, central and eastern Europe and French in the southern and German-speaking countries. Russian occupies second place in the Baltic States and Bulgaria. In only four countries does another language come second, namely Spanish in France, Italian in Malta, Swedish in Finland and Danish in Iceland. The language concerned is mandatory in the last two countries.

In compulsory general secondary education, the compulsory amount of time for languages has risen slightly in the last ten years in almost half of all European

countries. Pupils are taught on average for over 90 hours a year and over 200 hours in Denmark, Luxembourg, Malta and in German *Gymnasien*. In compulsory education as a whole, the amount of time for teaching languages as a compulsory subject generally represents 10-15% of total teaching time. Where two languages are taught as compulsory subjects, the first generally accounts for the greater number of hours. This amount of time may differ by a factor of between one and two or even more in Germany (in the *Gymnasium*), France, Lithuania, Hungary and Liechtenstein (*Realschule*).

Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe - 2005 Edition, Eurydice. Available on the Eurydice website: http://www.eurydice.org/Doc_intermediaires/indicators/en/frameset_key_data.html

Further information: Eurydice European Unit, Avenue Louise, 240, B-1050 Brussels
Tel. (32-2) 600 53 53, E-mail: info@eurydice.org
<http://www.eurydice.org>

Source: Eurydice



Successful launch of Europass

The official launch of Europass took place in Luxembourg on 31 January and 1 February 2005 at a conference organised by the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the presence of Ján Figel, European Commissioner, and Mady Delvaux-Stehres, Luxembourg Minister for Education and Vocational Training.

Europass is the new single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences. It aims at facilitating the employment and mobility of citizens across Europe by increasing the transparency of their qualifications and competences. Europass comprises five documents developed at European level since the late 1990s: the Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV), the Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, the Europass Certificate Supplement and the Europass Diploma Supplement.

Europass is based on a decision⁽¹⁾ prepared by the European Commission and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 15 December 2004.

Citizens can access Europass through an Internet portal⁽²⁾ developed by Cedefop in close collaboration with the Commission. This site, which is currently available in English and French and will soon cover 25 languages (EU, EEA and candidate countries), gives citizens access to five instruments:

Two instruments used directly by the citizens: the CV and the Europass Language Passport:

The **Europass CV**, an upgraded version of the European CV downloaded by over two million people since its launch in 2002, is the central Europass document. The CV gives citizens the opportunity to present their skills and qualifi-

cations acquired within the context of formal training schemes or in a non-formal context (associations, etc.).

The Europass CV can be completed online via the Europass portal. Detailed instructions (examples, help function) are provided. The CV created can then be downloaded by the user in the format of their choice.

The **Europass Language Passport**, a supplement to the CV, provides citizens with an opportunity to describe their language skills. Developed by the Council of Europe on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the passport is one of the three elements of the Europass Language Portfolio⁽³⁾ (passport, language biography and dossier).

Like the Europass CV, the Europass Language Passport may also be completed online via the Europass portal.

The incorporation of the Europass portal into the Europass framework and Internet access to the Europass Language Passport will help contribute to the acceptance of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as a standard tool for the description of language skills.

Three instruments issued to the citizens by the competent authorities: Europass Mobility, the Europass Certificate Supplement and the Europass Diploma Supplement

The Europass portal provides information (presentation, examples, links and resources) on the three other Europass instruments:

Europass Mobility is a formal detailed record of competences acquired by a person - irrespective of age, level of education or occupational status - in the

course of any organised period of time spent in another European country (European Union/EFTA/EEA and candidate countries) for the purpose of learning or training.

The Europass Mobility experience presupposes a partnership between a home and a host organisation (university, training centre, enterprise, etc.). It replaces the Europass Training, launched in 2000. The structure of the new document in particular offers the opportunity for a more detailed description of mobility experience and acquired competences and to expand the circle of beneficiaries (higher education, non-formal learning).

The **Europass Certificate Supplement** adds information to the details already included in the official certificate, making it more easily understood, especially by employers or institutions outside the issuing country.

The Supplement describes the vocational qualification to which it refers and is in principle identical for all persons holding the relevant certificate. The Europass portal is to feature links to national inventories of Europass Certificate Supplements as soon as they are activated.

The **Europass Diploma Supplement** is issued to graduates of higher education institutions along with their degree or diploma. It helps to ensure that higher education qualifications are more easily understood, especially outside the country where they were awarded. The Europass Diploma Supplement was developed jointly with Unesco and the Council of Europe.

The Europass Diploma Supplement is a personal document containing information about the holder's specific academic history. It is filled in by the insti-

tution issuing the diploma in question. Its inclusion in the Europass framework does not change either the structure of the diploma or the procedures according to which it is issued.

Other Europass resources

The Europass portal gives access to a number of further resources (links, contact points), in particular the network of National Europass Centres, currently under construction, which is to coordinate all activities related to the Europass documents. Further links lead to other mobility and transparency initiatives.

⁽¹⁾ Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass), Official Journal of the European Union L 390, 31 December 2004.

⁽²⁾ Cf. <http://europass.cedefop.eu.int>

⁽³⁾ Cf. <http://www.coe.int/portfolio>

Further information at: <http://europass.cedefop.eu.int>
Contact: Philippe Tissot (pht@cedefop.eu.int)
Source: Cedefop/pht

IRELAND/CEDEFOP/EU

Early identification of skills needs

A conference took place in November 2004 in Dublin, on the subject of 'Systems, Institutional Frameworks and Processes for Early Identification of Skills Needs.' It was organised by Cedefop's Skillsnet (see Cedefop Info 1/2004) the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs of the Irish Government and FÁS-Training and Employment Authority) and was attended by approximately 90 delegates representing 22 countries.

It looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the various systematic, institutional, political and other contextual arrangements for early identification of skills needs in different countries. The questions the conference tried to answer included:

- Which national systems for the early identification of skills needs are in place?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?

- How do the different levels of identification of skills needs (i.e. national, regional and sectoral) interact with each other?

- In what institutional context is the research into the early identification of skills needs conducted and how are the results transformed into policy and practice?

The main elements of the conference consisted of presentations on systems, institutional frameworks and processes for the early identification of skills needs. There were contributions from a wide range of countries including many European Union countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands. In addition representatives of some of the newer and future Member States in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Estonia, Romania and

the Czech Republic gave presentations on the systems that are in place in their countries. The experience of the United States was also outlined.

Following on from the presentations of national systems and institutions for the early identification of skills needs, there were two workshops on the approaches to early identification of skills needs at various levels and as an integral part of the national systems and on the transfer of skill identification results to policy and practice. Contributions showed how regional and sectoral level skills needs identification must form an integral part of national systems, while also incorporating a distinctive methodology. There were also a number of presentations on how the results of skills need research are translated into policy and practice.

Finally, the conference heard reports from speakers on how the European Union and other international organisations are examining the issue of skills needs identification. The question as to whether an EU-wide system for the early identification of skills needs was possible or indeed desirable was posed.

For further information contact John McGrath. E-mail: john.mcgrath@fas.ie. Tel. (353-1) 607 7431

Source: FÁS



Identifying skill needs for the future
From research to policy and practice
Cedefop Reference series 3037
Language: en
Price: EUR 25
Cat. No: TI-57-03-475-EN-C
May be obtained from the EU sales offices

International strategy for education

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published in November 2004 its strategy to build stronger links between English schools and their peers overseas. The International Strategy for Education, Skills and Children's Services sets out plans to ensure a strong international dimension across the UK's education system, to exchange the latest ideas in education with international partners, to offer educational support programmes to developing nations, and to maximise the contribution of education to the economy. It aims to achieve three key goals:

- equip children and adults for life in a global society and work in a global economy, by promoting global citizenship in the curriculum; twinning all schools with schools overseas via an Internet Global Gateway; implementing the national language strategy so that all children at Key Stage 2 (*) study languages; encouraging greater opportunities for further and higher education students to study and work abroad; and working within Europe towards greater comparability of qualifications;
- engage with international partners to achieve common education goals by, for example, working with EU partners to make the EU the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy and sharing expertise and resources to contribute to the improvement of education and children's services in the developing world, particularly in Africa;
- maximise the contribution of the education and training sector and university research to overseas trade and inward investment; building on the £10 billion (ca. EUR 14.5 billion) contribution that the sector already makes to the UK

economy, by establishing the country as an international leader in the use of ICT for education; promoting the role of universities as international hubs for learning and research; and encouraging education and training providers to work internationally in partnership with business.

The Department for Education and Skills spends £36 million (ca EUR 52 million) each year on international work and many other organisations and government departments invest in this area too. The government will now work in partnership with all key education stakeholders to focus this spend and develop the strategy into a detailed plan for change and delivery. The strategy does not seek to impose new requirements on schools, colleges and universities, but rather will make the case for change that will benefit individual pupils and students within existing programmes and structures.

International Strategy for Education, Skills and Children's Services was published in November 2004 on the Department for Education and Skills website <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/> and at TeacherNet website <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DFES-1077-2004&>

(*) These are the National Curriculum key stages.

Key stage 1 - 5 to 7 year olds
Key stage 2 - 7 to 11 year olds
Key stage 3 - 11 to 14 year olds
Key stage 4 - 14 to 16 year olds

At the end of each key stage, pupils are to take national tests and to be assessed by teachers.

More information from
Public Enquiries: Tel. (44) 870 000 2288, or info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Source: QCA

Make lifelong learning a reality

The achievement of the Lisbon aims is still a long way from where we are now. Lifelong learning and the upgrading of the working population (especially older employees) is crucial to get closer to a truly dynamic knowledge economy of world class reference. The strategy for lifelong learning in the Netherlands is to be realised through cooperation between all relevant actors: government departments for education, labour market, integration and social cohesion, social partners, education organisations and temporary taskforces or platforms on, for example youth unemployment, social cohesion and innovation. The newly established Lifelong Learning Taskforce has the role of bringing together all these actors to make lifelong learning a reality.

The government contributes to lifelong learning by realising the following concrete activities in the coming years:

- support a Lifelong Learning Taskforce (to be set up in Feb. 2005, initially for a period of two years (2005/2006));
- develop and implement an on-line market place for education and training;
- further implement the recognition and validation of prior learning;
- implement a 'learning rights system' in higher education;
- continue the Individual Learning Account (ILA) experiment, this time specifically aiming at measuring the effectiveness of the instrument for poorly educated persons. The Ministry of Social Affairs will supervise the experiment;
- research the possibilities for the development and certification of key competences, such as innovative and entrepreneurial skills, foreign languages

and ICT skills. In July 2004, the cabinet proposed an Action Plan on Entrepreneurship and Education, aimed at stimulating the inclusion (and certification) of entrepreneurial skills in educational profiles;

- investigate the possible roles of educational institutions in the training of both the employed and unemployed;
- support and upscale local and regional initiatives;
- review the effectiveness of current training instruments.

Basic principles

There are a few basic principles the government adopts for implementing the strategy of lifelong learning:

- stimulation of the individual is the leading principle;
- specific target groups get special attention (for example youth unemployment, occupational disability, social integration, education of low skilled, innovation and regional partnerships);
- support for bottom-up initiatives; post-initial education and training for the employed remain the prime responsibility of the social partners. Government sees its task primarily as preparing citizens in initial education optimally for the labour market and a lifetime of learning;
- policy connection with the Lisbon aims as well as cooperation in higher education (Bologna process) and European economic and social policy (social cohesion and labour market).

Further information: www.minocw.nl

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science / CINOP

Meeting the Lisbon goals - a report on the current situation

The education and training system has witnessed significant changes in the past year following the reforms of the education and the labour market in 2003. The first signs of this reforming process can be seen in the integration and rationalisation of systems.

ISFOL's analysis, in the last report published in November, describes the present situation and what remains to be done: introducing welfare instruments, launching the *borsa del lavoro* (employment exchange), integrating needs analysis tools at regional level, implementing a guidance system and improving quality of employment and training services.

The education and training systems analysis shows a significant development over the past year, namely an increased number of graduates and a consistent reduction in the university dropout rate, and more courses, resources, and participants in vocational training.

The Censis report on the social situation in Italy provides other relevant data on higher education: more students have chosen *licei* than technical schools (-7.3%

in the past 10 years); because of the reform which foresees eight new types of *licei*, there are more foreign students (3% of the total), especially in the north.

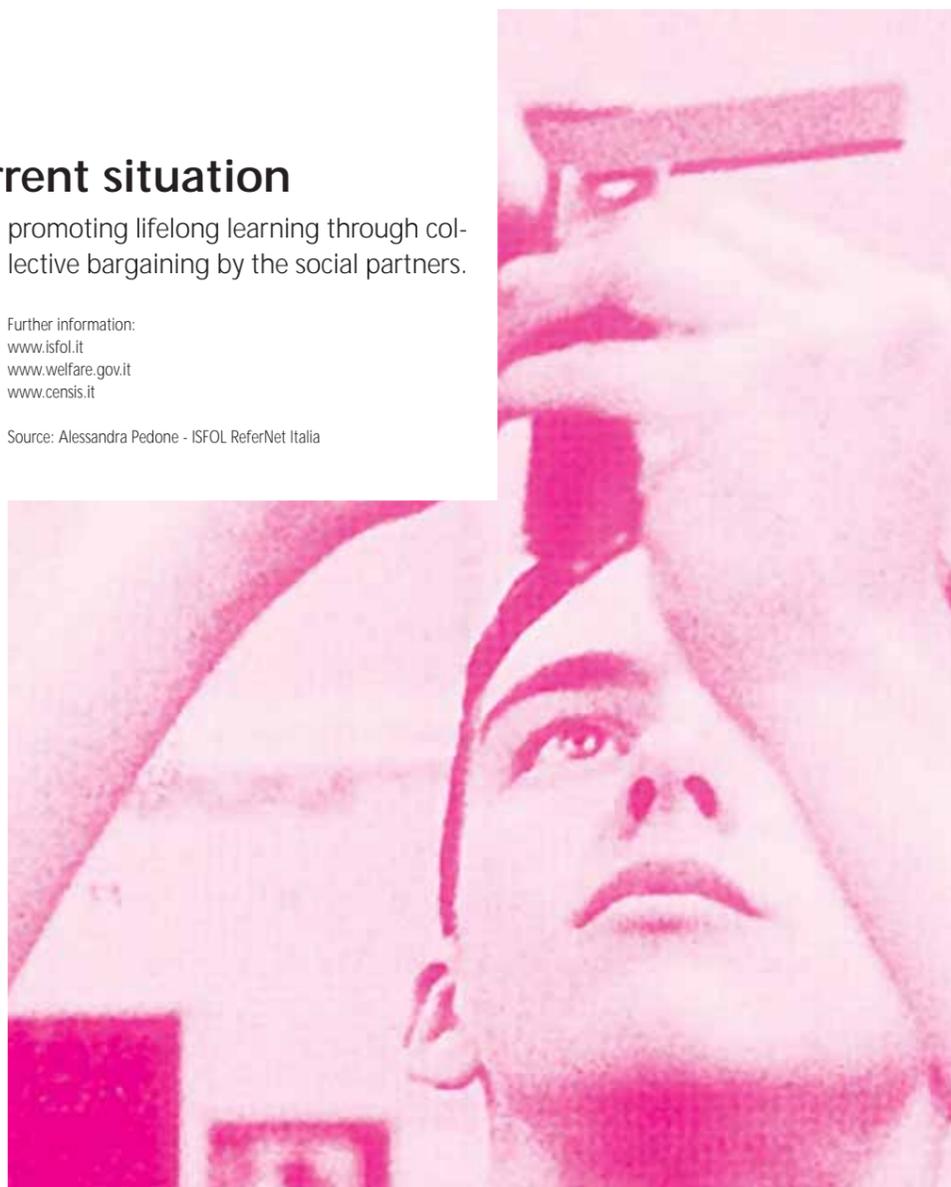
The quantitative and qualitative development of training provision and increasing demand for training have not allowed the Italian system to shorten the gap with the other best developed European countries to achieve the Lisbon objectives by the end of 2010. The most difficult goal will be to have 12.5% of the adult population taking part in lifelong learning activities. At present the level stands at 4.6% (1 million adults), which means increasing involvement to about 3 million adults. Efforts will be made to develop guidance initiatives for all citizens (especially the low-skilled and those at risk of exclusion), increase financial resources, apply new certification models and new tools for supporting learning processes.

Positive trends for reaching the Lisbon benchmark are increasing demand for training from workers, and new resources, such as the multisectoral funds for continuing training. Difficulties remain in

promoting lifelong learning through collective bargaining by the social partners.

Further information:
www.isfol.it
www.welfare.gov.it
www.censis.it

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL ReferNet Italia





BELGIUM

Strategic Contract for Education

Joint Declaration by the government of the French-speaking Community, the organisations representing the educational community and the social partners

Education is of fundamental importance. It has a considerable influence on the present and future of society, at cultural, social, economic and democratic levels. Quality of education is a precondition for sustainable development.

On 29 November 2004, the government of the French-speaking Community, the educational community and the social partners signed the Joint Declaration (1) laying down the objectives, general principles and priorities of the Strategic Contract for Education.

The Joint Declaration commits the educational community and the social partners to a project which is both collective and ambitious: collective, as the school-based projects cannot be the responsibility of teachers alone, and ambitious insofar as the objectives that the signatories have set themselves call for the mobilisation of everyone, on the basis of

their own responsibilities. This is the first time that such a large-scale debate has been organised on education involving not only players in the field of education but also the social partners from the Walloon and Brussels regions.

The Joint Declaration analyses the educational situation in the French-speaking Community, lays down objectives and defines the framework in which the Strategic Contract for Education must be constructed and implemented.

The analysis is clear: the signatories recall that education evolves in a global context which largely influences the conditions under which it is implemented. Education has to face a number of priority challenges, i.e. raising the general level of performance, combating segregation, relegation and educational under-achievement.

With the staunch refusal to level down to the lowest common denominator, the Strategic Contract seeks to guide all students towards a high level of education and ensure that as many young people as possible come out of the education system with a formal qualification.

The Contract is to apply to all students, with a particular focus on those encountering difficulties in reaching the set attainment thresholds. Heterogeneity is to be promoted in each educational establishment. Finally, the choice of educational stream must be a positive one.

To achieve these aims, improve the quality and equity of education and strengthen the effectiveness and functioning of educational organisation, the signatories jointly defined three priority pillars on which the Strategic Contract for Education is to be built.

1. A quality improvement strategy based on two planks:

- refocusing education on basic knowledge,
 - upgrading skill-building programmes.
2. A programme to combat inequalities in education.
3. A plan to modernise the organisation of the education system.

These priorities are based on two principles:

- The problem must be tackled at its root: the Strategic Contract for Education has set itself eight years, from 2005

to 2013, to apply the necessary corrective measures to guide each student to the attainment thresholds and ensure that they reach the final skills without falling behind the achievement targets.

- The refusal to sacrifice a generation: measures have to be taken at upper secondary level school without delay to give these students optimal prospects of emancipation and integration.

If it is to be successful, this project must be supported collectively. Educational organisation must be based on regulation, the responsibility of all stakeholders, and evaluation of every measure.

Finally, the signatories defined a working framework - ongoing concertation - and a working schedule. The Strategic Contract for Education is to set deadlines for each measure and define the transitional measures to be scheduled. Compliance with the deadlines is to be evaluated every six months by a strategic committee comprised of the signatories.

<http://www.agers.cfwb.be/prof/index.asp>

Source: FOREM - Department for International Relations (sigrid.dieu@forem.be)

SPAIN

Educational debate in Spain

In the context of the government's intentions to reform the education system, the Ministry of Education and Science is encouraging a debate with a view to achieving the broadest possible consensus on the necessary reforms. The debate is to serve as a basis for the formulation of a draft law that the government will bring before parliament.

To facilitate and structure this debate, the Ministry of Education has produced a document entitled 'Quality education for all and among all. Proposals for debate', divided into seven different sections.

The first section of the document provides a number of general considerations on the quality of education and equal opportunities and on the coordinated efforts to be made by society, families, students and teachers to guarantee that the exercise of the universal right to education is translated into educational benefits for all. It also proposes aligning Spanish educational objectives on the goals set by the European Union for the year 2010.

The second section comprises proposals to reinforce pre-school and primary education and give these levels a character of their own.

The third section relates to compulsory secondary education and considers main problems affecting this level. The proposals made are aimed at paying more attention to the diversity of pupils, offering educational routes adapted to this diversity and emphasising that no alternative should be irreversible or inevitably lead to exclusion.

The fourth section devotes particular attention to starting foreign languages early to information and communication technologies. It goes on to examine post-compulsory education and includes a series of proposals on upper secondary level education, vocational training and access to university, designed to match these programmes with the skills and knowledge required by 21st century society. The central objective of these proposals is to allow a flexible organisation of these streams and improve the links between them on the basis of bridges facilitating transfer between streams.

The fifth section addresses the demands posed by civics and morals from a general perspective. The proposals seek to promote the development of democratic values among young people, as well as access to full-fledged citizenship. Against the background of the relevant articles of the Spanish Constitution and agreements signed between the State and the various religious denominations, this section also looks at how the religions should be taught at schools.

The sixth section analyses the new demands on teachers - an essential factor in the quality of education, as recognised by all international studies and Spanish legislation in the field of education. It emphasises the need for the social recognition of teachers and the value of the complex and crucially important tasks they have to perform.

Finally, the seventh section of the document examines the participation and co-responsibility of the educational community in the task of education for all and among all. The management, autonomy and evaluation of educational institutions, understood as scenarios of harmonious coexistence and socialisation, are examined from the perspective of the requirements of the public education service.

The timetable for the reform is as follows:
 Debate on the document: September to December 2004;
 Presentation of the conclusions of the debate, formulation of reform proposals and drawing up of the draft law: January - February 2005;
 Parliamentary debate and adoption of the law: by the beginning of academic year 2005/06;
 Introduction of the legislation within the various educational administrations: academic year 2005/06;
 Reforms applicable from: academic year 2006/07.

The document, designed to stimulate a debate between teaching staff, students and their families, the social partners and any other interested parties, is available (in Spanish) at: <http://debateeducational.mec.es>.

Source: INEM, state public employment service

UNITED KINGDOM

14-19 reform - final report published

Radical changes to the education system to help address employers' concerns over basic skills standards are set to go ahead. The final report into education for 14 to 19 year olds, carried out by a government working group chaired by Mr Mike Tomlinson (see Cedefop Info 1/2004) was published in October, 2004.

The Education Secretary, announced that the government welcomed the proposals put forward by the working group and would publish a white paper on 14-19 curriculum reform in 2005. This would represent the 'biggest single reform of qualifications'.

Mr Tomlinson's report proposes the introduction of a four-level diploma system integrating vocational qualifications to replace A-levels and GCSE exams. But the Education Secretary fell short of confirming that. He also appeared to reject the working party's proposal to scrap external assessment at 16 to free-up students and teachers from excessive workload.

As Mr Tomlinson launched the report, he said that any 'cherry picking' of some aspects of the report would not be as effective as a fullscale adoption of his plans.

The report also recommends making numeracy, communication and computing studies compulsory.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) said it was supportive of the proposed changes. 'The proposal to

include more employability-related learning is an important step forward,' said Ms V Gill, CIPD adviser for learning training and development.

However, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said that the government needed to persuade business that all the targets are achievable. 'Business is not yet convinced that vital improvements to basic and key skills can be delivered at the same time as radical reform of qualifications towards an overall diploma. ...It is encouraging that Tomlinson proposes a new qualification in basic skills, as well as fit-for-purpose vocational qualifications,' said John Cridland, deputy director-general of the CBI.

In response to the Tomlinson report, the Institute of Directors (IoD) called for improvements to the existing structure which focused on better educated school leavers rather than a mass upheaval in the examination system. Richard Wilson, Head of Business Policy, said: '...Forty-eight per cent of IoD members in the recent NOP survey said that their organisations had encountered basic literacy and numeracy deficiencies in young employees.'

More information on Tomlinson report and his working group 14 to 19 reform can be found at: <http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk/>
 The final report was published in October 2004. Copies of the document can be obtained free of charge from DFES Publications, PO Box 5050, Annesley, Nottinghamshire, NG15 0DJ, Tel. (44) 845 602 2260, fax (44) 845 603 3360. E-mail: dfes@prolog.uk.com
 Quoting reference: 14-19 Reform Final Report - DFE-0976-2004

Source: OCA

Publications

These are the most recent documents on vocational education and training, selected by the Cedefop's Library and Documentary Service (Anne Waniart - E-mail: anw@cedefop.eu.int).

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http://publications.eu.int/others/sales_agents_en.html

Facing the challenge : the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment

Report from the High level Group chaired by Wim Kok

Luxembourg : EUR-OP, 2004. - 54 p.

http://libserver.cedefop.eu.int/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgesa/2004_0021_en.pdf

Fundamentals of a common quality assurance framework (COAF) for VET in Europe / Fernanda Oliveira Reis

European Commission. Directorate General for Education and Culture

Technical Working Group Quality in VET - TG3.

Brussels : European Commission, 2004

http://libserver.cedefop.eu.int/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgeac/2004_0011_en.doc

Maastricht Communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) :

review of the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002

Brussels : European Commission, 2004. - 7 p.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/news/ip/docs/maastricht_com_en.pdf

Other European organisations

Distance learning and eLearning in European policy and practice : the vision and the reality : policy paper

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Budapest : EDEN, 2004. - 6 p.

http://www.odl-liaison.org/pages.php?PN=policy-paper_2004

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Brussels : Eurydice, 2004. - 100 p.

ISBN 2-87116-376-6

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Brussels : Eurydice, 2004. - 84 p.

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In: Policy futures in education vol. 2, no 1 (2004), p. 1-158 (2004)

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ISSN 1478-2103 <http://www.worldwords.co.uk/pfie/>

Vocational education and training

SLOVAKIA

Secondary VET schools not happy to be a B

A recent decree from the Ministry of Education (1) has provoked a lively dispute among educators. It provides legislative backing for a new model for secondary school leaving exams (maturita) from the school year 2004/05 and aims for valid, nationwide comparable information for all students, parents, employers and subsequent education providers, predominantly higher education institutions. The previous school-based model, with teachers as both educators and examiners, was considered untenable because assessment was not comparable between schools, leading to softening quality standards.

The most important changes include a two-component (internal and external) school-leaving exam and three levels of examining commissions (central/national, school, subject). The internal component follows the traditional school-based examination, setting a new framework for its organisation and content. Examination themes are prepared by subject commissions according to knowledge and skill requirements and specified characteristics, all given in the annex to the decree.

In VET schools a delegate from the professional chamber could become a standing member of the examining commission provided he/she meets relevant professional requirements; an additional expert in practice, even without VET experience, might become an active member of the commission, though without the right to assess.

Students can select from a total 36 subjects. In VET schools, Slovak language and literature and theoretical and practical parts of the vocational exam are obligatory. The theoretical element contains up to 25 themes and the practical up to 15, for each cluster of study sectors. Where instruction is in Hungarian or Ukrainian, students must also be examined in the respective language. All students have the right to take exams in two additional subjects if they wish to do so, with one of the two optional subjects limited to selection of a foreign language.

The new external component (currently only in mathematics, English and German) is standardised test-based. This is the most disputed innovation, mainly because of high demands fuelled by very low scores in

prior monitoring. Both students and teachers are afraid that the points scored, and not the percentile, will be considered a quality reference in practice, though this is not intended by the reform. Slovakia faces passionate debate on the experience of this school year reform, with the pros and cons of norm-referenced and criteria-referenced testing a major part.

The second disputed novelty is the introduction of the discrete exam levels A and B (in foreign languages also C). Students are free to decide, where applicable, their exam level as a statement of acquired knowledge and skills. For example 'Level B is the sum of requirements on knowledge and skills of students framed by syllabi (i.e. the centrally set characteristics of the respective subject matter) and target requirements (which were framed by the decree and operationalised by the Catalogue of target requirements by curricular authorities) at basic level'. However, assignment of levels in specific subjects was effectively based on the number of week-hours allocated study in the curriculum, with low input subjects allocated level B regardless of individual student competence. Exam levels at VET schools have been assigned level B, and surprisingly also in two vocational parts (subjects).

The frustration affecting VET schools because of B-rated maturita subjects could have been prevented. Levels A and B could be interpreted in English as Advanced and Basic but they have no similar interpretation in the Slovak language; using different letters could have prevented this frustration. In a sports-obsessed country like Slovakia, being a B always means being part of a lesser quality team, which is definitely not the case with all VET schools; B graduates might be excellent students and first class professionals. Not to be a B is the slogan of the year 2005 for VET graduates in Slovakia.

(1) No 510/2004 Coll., adopted in August 2004.

For further information contact:
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<http://www.statpedu.sk/>

Source: Juraj Vantuch, sno@netax.sk

UNITED KINGDOM

Enterprise education for all

The Department for Education and Skills has produced guidance that will support schools in teaching young people commercial skills such as innovation, creativity, risk management and business understanding. The guidance has been informed by 700 schools that took part in pathfinder projects and will help schools as they prepare to deliver enterprise education. It forms part of a wider Enterprise Education strategy, which includes:

- £60m (ca EUR 86.5 million) funding from September 2005 that will support a new focus on enterprise education, announced as part of the 2002 Spending Review;
- as set out in last year's 14-19 reforms, an Enterprise Education entitlement from September 2005 that will provide all Key Stage 4 (1) pupils with the equivalent of five days' activity which develops enterprise capability;
- Enterprise Advisors, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), who are already working alongside head teachers in nearly 1 000 secondary schools in the most disadvantaged areas, to encourage enterprise among teachers and pupils.

(1) See note on page 7.

More information:
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/14to19/ks4/enterpriseeducation/guidance/>

Source: OCA





CZECH REPUBLIC

Independence the keynote in Czech schools act

A new schools act (*) became law at the beginning of 2005, introducing substantial changes in school operations.

By introducing framework and school-based education programmes, the law provides more room for teacher involvement, particularly in choosing and organising subject matter and selecting methodological approaches. Frameworks from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports will define the compulsory content and scope of education as a necessary common base; schools will derive their own programmes from the frameworks. A school programme may incorporate the school's own goals and plans and may adjust to local needs and the expectations of students and their parents. The new law also provides for some subjects to be taught at basic and upper secondary schools in a foreign language. It offers scope for independent

decisions; it will be up to schools, and particularly teachers, to benefit.

An important secondary education feature is the new definition of education levels and the new concept for the matura examination taken at the end of upper secondary education. The examination will consist of two parts: the common part (formerly called 'state'), and the 'profile' part. The new matura examination will become reality in the school year 2007/2008.

To enhance transferability within education as part of lifelong learning, the law has introduced elements such as shortened studies leading to a secondary qualification (either a matura or a vocational certificate) and post-matura specialisation courses. The influence of the social partners is being strengthened, particularly in vocational education. For example, there is obligatory participation by experts from the world of work in final examinations for vocational train-

ing courses without matura, and voluntary participation in final examinations for other programmes provided by secondary and higher professional schools.

The law also aims to improve the quality of education in higher professional schools. These, like higher education institutions, will offer study programmes accredited by the Ministry. School councils will be established in all basic, secondary and higher professional schools irrespective of their founding bodies. A school council should be an independent body facilitating the involvement of parents, mature students, pedagogical staff and other partners in the school's operations.

The autonomy of schools and their facilities is enhanced by giving directors of schools several new responsibilities, for which they must have the relevant instruments. They will manage the provision of education and school services, have responsibility for underage children

and students and for developing school-based education programmes. They will also establish the work environment for teachers and the use of public resources.

Children of citizens of EU Member States are granted the same rights, including the use of school facilities, as those granted to Czech citizens. The law also requires regions to provide the children of citizens of EU Member States with a long-term residency permit with free courses in the Czech language and with support in learning their mother tongue and the culture of their country of origin.

(*) Act No 561/2004 on pre-school, basic, secondary, higher professional and other education

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Source: Department for External Relations and Communication of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Continuing vocational training



GERMANY

Master craftsman certificate loses currency

Costly and time-intensive upgrading training in the craft trades is losing its appeal. Continuing training initiative aims to counter this development.

The master craftsman certificate, the pinnacle of the German vocational training system, has clearly lost its appeal. According to the Cologne Institute for Business Research, only 125 534 candidates took the master craftsman examination in 2003 - 26 % down on 1993. The decline was most marked in the craft trades, whereby the plans for the relaxation of the Craft Trades Act which finally became law at the beginning of 2004 were presumably the reason for the waning interest in this continuation training programme.

The amendment abolished the regulations making the master craftsman certificate compulsory for anyone wishing to set up or take over a craft business in a total of 53 craft trades, including floor tile/ coating fitters and industrial con-

tainer and apparatus manufacturers. In principle, those wishing to set up their own business in a craft which is potentially a danger to health or life-threatening or which requires specific training still have to provide evidence that they hold the master craftsman certificate. However in practice a number of years of practical occupational experience in a higher-level function will also suffice in the majority of the 41 craft trades still requiring this qualification. The 'owner principle', whereby the owner of a craft enterprise had to be a master craftsman himself, has also been abolished. It is now sufficient to take on a works manager who holds the master craftsman certificate to be able to set up or take over a craft enterprise.

Time and costs play a decisive role in the decision for or against the master craftsman continuing vocational training programme. Full-time courses may often cost up to EUR 5 000 or more, on top of which come living expenses, travel costs and teaching materials. And to do the

course on a part-time basis while working at the same time, requires perseverance and stamina. The additional tuition of 400 to 1 000 hours of tuition (depending on the specialisation) may take up to more than two years. The public authorities have been promoting this upgrading training programme since 2002 by offering income assistance or loans, along the same lines as students' grants. A total of 122 000 persons, i.e. 97 % of all course participants, benefited from this financial assistance in 2003.

In 2003, some 82 % of candidates passed the final master craftsman examination. Whereas the pass rate was close to 100 % in the craft trades, nearly every second accounting clerk failed the examination. A survey by the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce among some 11 000 persons who passed a master craftsman examination organised by a German chamber in 1997 and 2003, showed that successful candidates fully benefit from their new qualification. Seven out of ten respondents

reported that they had moved up the career ladder while one in every three had improved their financial situation.

The Land of North Rhine-Westphalia is currently exploring a shorter route to the master craftsman certificate in a pilot project implemented by the Düsseldorf chamber of crafts. The 'Meister-Express' is designed for school leavers with an academic or vocational upper secondary school-leaving certificate, who complete initial vocational training and the master craftsman course in only three and a half years. So far the master craftsman course alone lasts two years, on top of generally three years of apprenticeship. This fast-track route is part of a continuing training initiative in the craft trades designed to encourage a greater number of SME employees to opt for continuing vocational training.

Further details from the regional chambers of crafts.

Source: iwdb/ibw/Press office of the federal government/Ministry of Economic Affairs NRW/SK

PORTUGAL

Further training for higher education graduates

The achievement of employment policy goals requires more than just an adjustment between labour market demand and supply. It requires a complex approach involving different sectoral policies such as, economics, taxation, education and training, innovation and social protection.

The increasing unemployment rate among higher education graduates requires a prompt adjustment between labour supply and demand, making the

mechanisms intended for that purpose more flexible. Therefore, the government through the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education is trying to develop short-term measures aimed at the promotion of employment for those with scientific qualifications in order to reinforce the fight against long-term unemployment and youth unemployment.

The Operational Programme - Science, Technology and Innovation (POCTI) provides support for graduates in areas where

employment opportunities are presently scarce by providing them with re-qualification courses in areas with better employability prospects. The creation of a training programme in areas with higher potential employability for higher education graduates, whose entry or re-entry into the labour market is difficult, fits into the active employment policies provided for in the National Action Plan and works as an instrument for increasing qualified training in Portugal.

The measures (!) now presented try to create the technical requirements for the coordination between this programme and the unemployment protection scheme.

(1) Ordinance no.71/2005 of 25 January, published by the Ministries of Economic Activities and Labour, of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and of Social Security, Family and Child. In Diário da República, I série B, nº 17, 25 de Janeiro de 2005. Available in Portuguese: <http://www.mcies.pt/docs/ficheiros/05700571.pdf>

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Learning without lessons

Research shows that small businesses want coaching not courses

Much important learning takes place at work, but it is often not recognised as "learning" in the usual sense because it happens informally. New research carried out by the Learning and Skills Development Agency in collaboration with the Small Enterprise Development Initiative aimed to discover the support needs of people providing learning in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It investigated ways in which informal and unstructured learning is currently being undertaken in these companies, how effective it is and how it can best be supported or developed.

The study shows that employers and employees in SMEs learn best from their everyday experiences and place great value on informal learning, rather than taught courses or structured training programmes. The findings published in a report (*) entitled Learning without lessons, demonstrates the potential of the workplace as a rich source of learning opportunities.

Researchers found a wide range of different types of learning, both formal and informal, taking place in SMEs. A common pattern is for managers of small businesses to undertake formal learning before the business starts, often in unrelated areas. Subsequent learning tends to be less formal, involving activities such as talking to colleagues and staff from other companies, watching demonstrations, reading books and trade magazines, or attending conferences and seminars. Employees and owners also mentioned the different ways in which people learn - by observation, by doing, through 'osmosis' (picking up things subconsciously), or through a taught course.

'Trial and error' and 'learning by mistake' were frequently mentioned. There was also a preference for coaching and mentoring, rather than more structured learning leading to national qualifications.

A key message is that learning providers - colleges and training organisations - need to fine tune what they offer so that they focus on providing ready made services for SMEs that support individual business needs. Increased market specialisation means that SMEs have a narrowing band of generic needs and a broadening band of specific needs that are not easily catered for by colleges or training organisations. Therefore, learning providers need to rethink the kind of support they offer SMEs by helping them develop in-house capacity and cascade knowledge and skills throughout their organisation. Developing supervisors and other employees as mentors, coaches and advisers, rather than providing standard courses, is one way of achieving this as it helps staff to become better at supporting learning in their organisations.

Maria Hughes, Research manager at LSDA, says: "The way that learning takes place in small firms is often organic rather than structured and many small firms may not want or need to adopt more formal approaches to learning and workforce development. All workers, regardless of level and qualifications, have knowledge and skills they can potentially share."

(*) Learning without lessons - supporting learning in small businesses by Lisa Doyle and Maria Hughes is obtainable from: Information Services, LSDA, Regent Arcade House, 19-25 Argyll Street, London W1F 7LS. tel. (44-207) 297 91 23, E-mail: enquires@LSDA.org.uk, ISBN 1-84572-028-8

For further information contact: Anne Nicholls, Communication manager, LSDA, tel. (44-207) 297 90 17, E-mail: anicholls@LSDA.org.uk

Source: QCA

PORTUGAL

Training and qualification of human resources in public administration

The Portuguese Government is to invest 140 million Euro in public administration reform during 2005 and 2006 under the Public Administration Operational Programme (POAP). The programme was approved by the European Commission in December 2004 and provides Community funds to the amount of 104.5 million Euro together with 34.8 million Euro from national public resources. This programme is part of the 3rd Community Support Framework and aims to support productive and multiplier projects and investments that are expected to be the driving force of the change desired in the Portuguese public administration.

The POAP's first goal is the training and qualification of public administration human resources. The Government intention is to have 130 000 workers participating in vocational training activities.

This is 25 % of all managerial and administrative staff. 150.000 civil servants benefited from training actions, in the previous stage of the programme, each with an average duration of 27 hours. Training has been focused mainly on the computer science and information technologies areas.

The POAP includes a policy of training periods that are intended to refresh the civil service and to help the integration of young people into the labour market. The goal is to provide 4 000 medium and long-term periods of training to people with secondary, higher, and postgraduate educational levels.

For more information: http://www.portugal.gov.pt/NR/rdonlyres/CB84880D-4DDA-413F-96C5-6F17ADC2D869/0/Ap_POAP_2004_2006.pdf
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Source: CID/Fatima Hora/Claudia Arriegas

AUSTRIA

Investors in People - a tried and tested recipe for success comes to Austria

The importance of targeted investment in human resources as a factor guaranteeing the competitiveness of Austria as a location for industry provides the background to the introduction of the international quality label 'Investors in People' (IIP) which gives Austria a pioneering role in central Europe in this respect. Since its inception in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s, the IIP model has been introduced in some 37 000 organisations.

The driving force behind this initiative is the Federation of Austrian Industry (IV). In cooperation with the consultancy group Pendl & Pischwanger (which also operates in Eastern Europe), the IV uses the IIP label to support organisations with their strategic HR and business development, offering them a tried and tested tool for the continuing training of their staff. The Austrian pilot project is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and supported by the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

IIP is a flexible instrument which assesses the position of an organisation against twelve broadly-based indicators of good practice, ranging from planning, employee motivation and process quality to the organisation of industrial processes. Assessment plays a key role. The twelve indicators provide a framework which

facilitates the systematic organisation of personnel development according to the specific aims of the organisation. The IIP profile, which builds on IIP, offers firms a new tool to measure themselves against an international benchmark and compare themselves with IIP-recognised firms in the same branch of industry.

Over ten organisations from different sectors, of different size and with different HR development needs, have been participating in this project since the IIP launch in Austria in the spring of 2004. The spectrum of the participating organisations ranges from public-sector (regional job market service) and private-sector service providers through medium-sized enterprises in the pressed metal, mechanical engineering and biotechnology industries to large multinationals. The initiators hope to acquire as a broad as possible a picture of the application of IIP in different settings and thereby ensure swift and smooth dissemination of the label once the pilot phase is concluded.

An IIP circle serves as a platform for the exchange of experience between the participating organisations which are also supported by counselling and further training measures.

Further information: www.investorsinpeople.at

Source: Helmut Hafner, ibw

POLAND

Poland trains its vocational examiners

External examination to confirm vocational qualifications was introduced in Poland in 2004. It was necessary to train a pool of examiners, requiring appropriate training curricula to enable future examiners to learn how to assess the performance of practical tasks in a comparable way, with agreed criteria and grading.

The training is organised by regional examination commissions, which prepare detailed programmes based on the national framework curricula developed by the Minister for National Education and Sport (*). The 40-hour programme is delivered in two parts and makes use of supplementary self-study materials distributed in advance to participants.

The first part comprises 15 training hours over two days and is the same for all occupations for which vocational exams are held. It deals with topics such as the structure and organisation of the exam.

The second part comprises 25 training hours over three days. It is more practical in nature and combines practical classes with analysis of the standards for a given occupation (or group of occupations) followed by observation and evaluation of a practical assignment testing the skills acquired by the student. During training, candidates practise assessing task performance based on predetermined criteria in the following areas:

(a) planning task performance, using actual 'task planning' forms filled in by the students during trial exams;

(b) organising the work station, based on video recordings from exams;

(c) task performance, based on video recordings from exams, followed by observation of an actual examination task; these activities are conducted in groups of up to 10 participants;

(d) presentation of task outcomes, based on video recordings from exams.

One of the conditions for successfully completing the training is obtaining a satisfactory score in

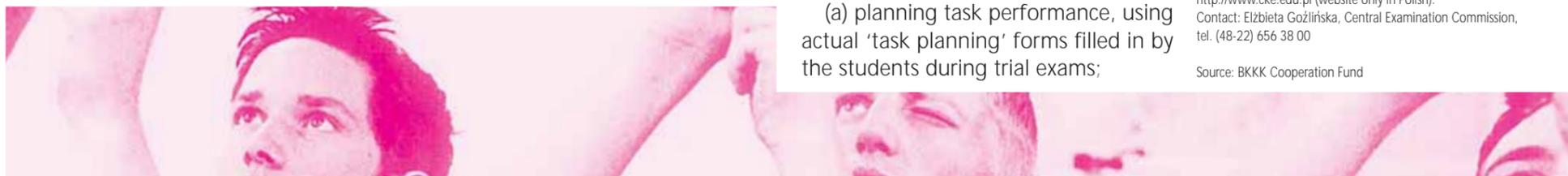
evaluating a practical task during the exam held at the end of training. These exam tasks for examiner candidates are prepared by the Central Examination Board (Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna). The candidates observe an exam simulation of an actual task in groups of up to six persons. Depending on the occupation, the time allocated for a practical examination task is between 180 and 240 minutes.

Currently, work is under way to prepare training curricula for all examiners in the so-called blue-collar occupations, with relevant exams held upon completion of basic vocational schooling.

(*) Laid down in the Ordinance of the Minister for National Education and Sport of 5 March 2004 on the framework curriculum for training of candidates for examiners, manner of keeping records of examiners and procedure of entering and removing examiners from such records (Journal of Laws No. 47/2004, item 452).

Further information: Central Examination Commission <http://www.cke.edu.pl> (website only in Polish).
Contact: Elzbieta Gozliniska, Central Examination Commission, tel. (48-22) 656 38 00

Source: BKKK Cooperation Fund





FRANCE

Developing francophone 'human capital'

The tenth summit of the Francophone Community, held on 26 and 27 November 2004 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), provided the countries 'which share the French language' an opportunity to renew their commitments and reinforce their actions in favour of the development of vocational training.

'We reaffirm the will of our states and governments to refocus their education systems on the integration of young people into working life and the match between training and employment'. This is one of the declarations adopted by the participants of the Ouagadougou summit of the Francophone Community. The Heads of State and Government of the Francophone Community intend to reinforce the actions implemented by the agencies of the International Organisation of Francophone Countries (OIF) (1), in particular the Intergovernmental Agency for Francophony (AIF), in the course of the last two years.

In his report to the summit, OIF Secretary-General Abdou Diouf, formerly president of Senegal, emphasised that education and training, as 'major dimensions of sustainable development', were 'one of the priorities of francophone multilateral cooperation in 2003 and 2004.'

In the field of technical vocational training (TVT), 'a strategy of concentration and exchange has been implemented at

regional and multilateral level within the French-speaking countries with a view to supporting national TVT policies and developing engineering.'

AIF has in fact given its support to a series of regional and inter-state partnership activities in the context of training system reform.

AIF's activities in central Africa in 2003 included the organisation of meetings on issues such as 'the programme approach' and 'the autonomy of training centres', 'the match between training and employment' and the 'implementation of the skills approach in training agencies.' As a follow up to these meetings, it initiated a conference of the ministers responsible for TVT from eleven francophone countries of this region and Madagascar in June 2004 in Brazzaville (Congo), with a view to the adoption of 'a common regional cooperation framework'.

In West Africa, AIF's activities included training programmes for the trainers of the managerial staff of training agencies in Dakar in 2003. Further courses for 30 trainers of heads of training agencies were organised in April and May 2004. At the initiative of OIF, a group of regional experts conducted 'a comparative study of TVT funding mechanisms'.

Activities in North Africa and the Middle East region above all involved an 'analysis of the labour market and train-

ing provision' (Beirut, 2003), 'centres of excellence' and the 'skills approach' (Tunis, 2004). In central and eastern Europe, AIF addressed 'accountability' and the 'harmonisation of qualification standards within the European labour market'. In south-east Asia, it turned its attention to the 'networking of the TVT decision-makers and high-level policymakers', 'reinforcing the capacities of the heads of establishment and the educational skills of trainers', as well as the development of a 'regional methodology for the development of a frame of reference of standardised competences'. Actions in island states involved an 'analysis of the labour market, the legislative and regulatory framework of TVT, the training of trainers for the management of training agencies and the preparation of a framework cooperation agreement between the countries of the region'.

Over and above these activities, the OIF secretary general added that the experts of the French-speaking countries were working on training systems engineering, with the objective of 'convening working parties on the strategic challenges of training systems and upgrading francophone experience'. To this end, AIF has set up a multilateral group of francophone experts, comprising some 60 experts from 20 different French-speaking countries. This group will provide the basis for the organisation of the

work to be carried out around different themes (TVT funding, French in TVT, implementation of training at local level, educational engineering). AIF group meetings were organised in Paris (March) and Quebec (April) in the course of 2004.

Moreover, a 'database of francophone knowledge' has also been created 'to provide TVT systems with tools of collaboration and offer access to common documentation'. The first version of the site has been operational since March 2003 (<http://francophoniept.org>).

OIF comprises 51 member states and governments and five observers and represents a total population of over 500 million. Website: www.francophonie.org

Source: Centre INFFO, INFFO Flash, No 648, 1 to 15 December 2004

IRELAND

Training authority reviews labour needs

In its latest annual labour market review (1), FÁS-Training and Employment Authority, forecasts that employment in Ireland will rise by over 30 000 in 2005. It warns, however, that a range of policy initiatives is required to maintain the momentum in both employment and economic growth. The policy initiatives it proposes are in the areas of immigration, training and initiatives for the non-employed.

The importance of immigration for labour force growth has been apparent for some time. Non-nationals accounted for almost a quarter of the overall labour force increase between 1999 and 2004. The review states that Ireland will need a large number of immigrants over the coming years to meet its high skill needs, and, if employment growth continues rapidly, its unskilled labour needs. It calls for the development of a skills-based immigration strategy that will attract a sufficient number of professionals and appropriately skilled workers to eliminate knowledge and infrastructural bottlenecks. Part of this strategy would

include a Green Card system for workers from outside the EU.

Policy reports including the Enterprise Strategy Group's report (2) (see Cedefop Info 3/2004) argue for more focus on skills development to meet Ireland's economic objective of being a "high-skills, knowledge-based economy". The review considers two training areas that need to be expanded, the apprenticeship system and training of the employed.

It calls for the apprenticeship system to be extended to a wider range of occupations. While the number of persons entering the apprenticeship system has grown rapidly - the total number of apprentices rose from 13 978 in 1997 to 25 380 in 2002 - the system still covers a narrow range of occupations. The review proposes that a major consultative process be undertaken with a range of industry representatives, with a view to developing a large number of new apprenticeships. These apprenticeships should not be confined to craft-level occupations, but should be both in occupations for which little formal training

currently exists and also in other areas currently served by full-time off-the-job provision.

The needs of the economy and changing demography mean that more of Ireland's growth over the next decade must come from increasing the productivity of those already at work. Investment in training is a critical factor in this regard. Particular weaknesses, as in many other countries, relate to training in SMEs, management development and training of poorly-educated, low-skilled employees. The review proposes a new paid learning scheme to fund off-the-job training for low-qualified employees. Specific initiatives to support SME management development, a problem area identified in the Enterprise Strategy Group's report, should be developed in consultation with sectoral and regional organisations. More generally FÁS should increase its expenditure on employee training by EUR 20-30 million per annum over the next 2-3 years.

Initiatives for the non-employed proposed in the review include a new em-

ployment subsidy of EUR200 per week to employers to take on workers unemployed for more than two years and measures to ensure social welfare claimants do not lose out financially by taking up employment.

(1) The Irish Labour Market Review 2004 / FÁS - Training and Employment Authority. ISBN 0-9477-7629-X. Available: FÁS, Planning and Research, 27-33 Upper Baggot Street, IRL-Dublin 4. Tel. (353-1) 607 0526 Fax (353-1) 607 063. E-mail: brian.mccormick@fas.ie

(2) Ahead of the curve, Ireland's place in the global economy / Enterprise Strategy Group. Dublin: Forfás, 2004. Download address: http://www.forfas.ie/publications/esg040707/pdf/esg_ahead_of_the_curve_full_report.pdf

Source: FÁS

Walloon government issues Regional Policy Declaration

Renewed Contract for the Future of Wallonia

Wallonia is back on course! A first step in this direction was taken by the adoption of the Declaration of Complementary Regional Policy in 1997. In January 2000, the Walloon government then adopted the Contract for the Future of Wallonia, a genuine long-term development project for the region. Wallonia has thus set itself priority objectives incorporating the requirements of sustainable development and introduced a new method of governance by becoming the first government to submit its actions to an external audit.

Nevertheless, although Wallonia is back on course, its unemployment rate remains too high and the level of training of too many Walloon workers and young school-leavers is still too low. Private investment is insufficient and there are not enough enterprises in the region.

A substantial number of Walloon stakeholders (employers, trade unionists, politicians, associations, teachers, etc.) have expressed their will to act with determination and vigour to make their region a more prosperous one.

In this context, the main dimensions of the renewed Contract for the Future are highlighted in the current Regional Policy Declaration of the Walloon government. The Declaration comprises two parts: the first refers to transversal strategic policies and the necessary modalities of governance for their success, while the second part of the document relates to sectoral policies complementary to the

transversal policies developed in the first part of the document.

The renewed Contract for the Future is designed as an instrument to mobilise Walloon society and to harness regional energies. It is to be applicable for the period 2005 to 2015. Effective governance must take account of long-term considerations in order both to identify the actions to be implemented and define the necessary objectives. At the same time, it must always be combined with short-term objectives and priority and immediate action plans.

The renewed Contract for the Future is targeted towards four transversal strategic plans; as the various evaluations and consultations have identified the need to strengthen the coherence of public actions, a greater degree of transversality is necessary in order to decompartmentalise actions.

The four transversal strategic plans are:

- business development;
- development of human capital, knowledge and skills;
- social inclusion;
- balanced and sustainable territorial development.

The second of these strategies, relating to the development of the knowledge and skills of the society, is at the heart of the Lisbon process and the European Union's goal to become the world's leading economy based on knowledge and research. The Walloon government fully shares this ambition.

Economic development in Wallonia - which is the subject of the first strategic plan - is to be underpinned by a skilled

workforce, scientific researchers who are recognised and appreciated, trained entrepreneurs and citizens with a command of information and communication technologies.

The knowledge and skills of the citizens are determining factors. The action of the Walloon government is geared towards sustainability and continuity. The Walloon government is to establish new partnerships with the French-speaking Community of Belgium and reinforce existing synergies with the social partners. As far as collaborations with the German-speaking Community of Belgium are concerned, the various measures will be adapted to meet the specificities of this community. The strategic transversal plan for the development of human capital, knowledge and skills, which is to be defined following consultation with the various players, must in any case include the following seven areas of action:

- improving the quality of technical and vocational education and reorganising alternance training and education programmes (introducing the modular approach to skill-building courses and improving their quality, upgrading equipment in skill-building streams and alternance-based apprenticeship schemes);
- promoting the validation of prior learning by strengthening procedures for the validation and certification of non-formal learning;
- matching vocational education and training to the realities of the job market;
- expanding vocational education and

training provision by concentrating on measures such as reinforcing literacy and detecting illiteracy, additional pre-skilling and skill-building training provision, developing ICT-based distance education and training, introducing industrial tutorship courses, developing social clauses incorporating training obligations in public procurement, developing training provision outside traditional hours;

- improving guidance and training provision for young people, jobseekers and workers in job transition;
- reinforcing universal accessibility to the tools of the information society by applying measures such as continued development of existing ITC training programmes, including the ITC mobilisation plan (PMTIC), expanding Internet access and democratising access to hardware;
- supporting an effective and integrated policy of research and innovation by setting up a systematic research monitoring system with the definition of quantitative and qualitative indicators comparable to those applicable at European level; this system is to be used as a basis for ongoing benchmarking, reinforcing synergies and partnerships and opening up research to increased international and inter-regional collaboration.

For further details, the Regional Policy Declaration of the Walloon government Declaration can be consulted (in French) at <http://www.parlement-wallon.be>

Source: FOREM - Department for International Relations (sigrid.dieu@forem.be)

VET quality - certification systems

Labour market passport, based on the European CV

"In essence, there are only two actors: the job seeker and the employer."

When entering the labour market, be it directly after finishing (vocational) education or as an unemployed job seeker, it is essential to make competences visible. In 2004, the Youth Unemployment Taskforce proposed the development of an instrument to help (unemployed) job seekers to make their competences visible. This initiative is directly related to European initiatives on the accreditation of prior learning and the implementation of the Europass framework on transparency of qualifications. More specifically, it takes the European format for a CV as a basis. The first results of the pilots were promising.

The Netherlands is the first country to introduce a specific application of Europass to support the unemployed in finding a job. The labour market passport is an instrument for (unemployed) young people, in which they can describe their competences and work experience and which helps them to better prepare themselves to apply for a job. Furthermore, employers can see more easily which competences relevant for the job the applicant possesses. This specific instrument has been developed in various settings in four pilots, based on the demands of the labour market and employers.

The partners involved are from the reintegration services, the field of accreditation of prior learning, employment offices, the employers' organisation in the metal sector, a project for unemployed young people and early school leavers, and the counselling sector. Conclusions of the pilots included:

1. young people are eager to use the passport and are able to do so;
2. the labour market passport enables people to look differently at themselves - this motivates and increases their self-confidence;
3. the passport is a good way for young people to present themselves to employers;
4. the passport supports them in finding a job;
5. the passport stimulates young people to further develop their competences. They indicated that they wish to test their career choice in addition to completing the labour market passport.

The system, which was developed in one of the pilots by the employers' organisation in the metal sector (Koninklijke Metaalunie) in cooperation with Learning Park Dordrecht and the advisory organisation APS will be used for further development. The essence is that young people can indicate in a computer programme to what extent they pos-

sess the six competences used by employers to select successful candidates: an ability to work together, independence, a sense of responsibility, a capacity to work with dedication and care, a sense of initiative and social competences.

Employers positive

Important in the pilots was the involvement of employers. Generally, they were positive about the format of the European CV and about the content and the use of the labour market passport. It helps them to get a quick and effective insight of the qualities of the applicant.

The fact that young people are motivated to fill in the labour market passport is also seen as an asset by the employer, proving that they are doing something extra to find a job.

The Youth Unemployment Taskforce presented recommendations to the national authorities to further develop the labour market passport. They recommended the Ministry of Social Affairs to support the Centres for Work and Income (employment services) financially to enable them to use the labour market passport in their task of matching supply and demand on the labour mar-

ket. Furthermore, it suggested that it is interesting to offer the unemployed who have completed the labour market passport the possibility of proceeding with guidance and a career choice test. The Ministry of Education was asked to investigate the possibility of linking this to the labour market passport. Finally, the taskforce recommends the Ministry of Education to make it possible for all school leavers not only to leave school with a diploma, but also with a completed labour market passport.

Link to Europass

The Dutch experiences link closely to the ambitions of the European Commission in developing the Europass and illustrate very well the chosen pathway. A European Commission expert underlines the conclusion that while the digital instrument should be filled in via Internet, local support remains vital for good implementation.

More information: www.werk.nl, www.arbeidsmarktspaspoort.nl or (31-70) 333 50 60 (Taskforce Youth Unemployment).

Source: CINOP / Taskforce Jeugdwerkloosheid



Transfer between the various systems guaranteed in all regions and autonomous provinces

In the context of the devolution of vocational training competences to the Italian regions and provinces, a new important agreement has been signed between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment, the regions and local authorities. The agreement establishes general principles for the certification of vocational education and training and the recognition of credits facilitating transition between streams. The Unified Conference (of the state, regions and local autonomies) has provided clear references on the transparency of qualifications and competences (including EUROPASS), recognition of credits and training quality. The National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) and the Institute for the development of the vocational training for workers (ISFOL) have drawn up a 'Glossary of adult education' as a nationwide reference manual to facilitate mutual understanding between streams.

The new certification system (which may also be applied at local level) pro-

vides the regions with a model of 'attestation of evidence of vocational qualifications' which is valid nationwide and increases the transparency of acquired competences. It will also be useful in a European context as it is to be translated into three official languages of the EU. The main elements of the new certification model are as follows: name of the second-level qualification, course content, occupational areas or sector of reference, data on the occupational profile, acquired competences and the training route, and details on any work placements effected.

The agreement, sanctioned by a Ministry of Education ordinance, contains instruments valid at national level to facilitate transition from the vocational training and apprenticeship system to the general education system by a recognition of credits. Subject to the go-ahead from a commission set up in each school or school network, comprising teachers, labour specialists and VET experts, young people of compulsory schooling age will

therefore have the opportunity to transfer to upper secondary education on the basis of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in the course of vocational training or an apprenticeship scheme.

This gives further recognition to the importance and validity of apprenticeship schemes. As reconfirmed by a Ministry of Employment circular (circular 40/2004), apprenticeship contracts of which training is a characteristic element are now the only employment contracts with training content.

The new apprenticeship will become a useful instrument in the construction of a genuine alternance route between training and employment, in the context of a strategy of lifelong learning. To this end, three different hypotheses of apprenticeship have been envisaged:

1) apprenticeship in the context of the fulfilment of the right and obligation to engage in education and training; 2) skill-building apprenticeship; 3) apprentice-

ship leading to a diploma or higher-level training routes.

The first of these forms of apprenticeship involves the attainment of a vocational education and training qualification in the context of compulsory schooling; the second is targeted at the attainment of a vocational training qualification in the context of training in the workplace; the third, linking practical instruction in the workplace with secondary, university-based, high-level training or high-level technical specialised training, is targeted at the attainment of a certificate leading to higher training routes. The new apprenticeship types will be operational as soon as the regulations have been adopted by the regions, in conjunction with the social partners.

Further information: <http://www.welfare.gov.it>, <http://www.istruzione.it>

Source: ISFOL/Alessandra Pedone

DENMARK

Validation of real competences

In line with EU efforts to increase transparency in education and training and the continuous development of instruments for validation and certification of skills and competencies across borders, the Danish government presented a statement on the validation of real competencies in the education system to parliament in November 2002.

The statement aims at the recognition, validation and development of skills and competencies that have been acquired outside the formal education system. Skills acquired at work, during courses and seminars or stays abroad, or through voluntary work, should form the basis for the continuous improvement of the individual's competencies.

The initiative is known as "Real Competence" (Realkompetencer) because it deals with the individual's actual abilities and know-how. It aims at ensuring that any competence should count at any given time and in any training or job situation, for instance in the over-

all assessment for admission to education and training programmes or in deciding on a reduced period of study.

The standards for recognition remain the current ones established in the education system, such as the journeyman's certificate, the upper secondary school leaving certificate, the bachelor degree or other diplomas from higher education institutions.

Individual assessment of real competences

The core objective of the initiative is that all citizens should if they so wish have their skills and competencies assessed and validated. This form of individual assessment of real competencies already takes place in labour market training (i.e. to be admitted to the so-called AMU courses), but the government's aim is that it should be available to everybody.

The results of the assessment are documented in a certificate. The methods

used for the assessment ensure a reliable measurement of the individual's skills and competencies. It is undertaken by competent staff at the relevant school or educational institution and takes its point of departure in the aims and objectives, level, and admission requirements of the course, which the individual wishes to enrol for.

This initiative is significant for recognition in both the education system and in the labour market. For the maintenance of high educational and professional levels, it is important that objective and qualitative criteria form the basis for the assessment.

Actors involved

Given the complexity of the assessment of real competence, the statement has been prepared jointly by four ministers: those for Education, for Science, Technology and Innovation, for Culture and for Economics and Business Affairs. The statement was presented to parlia-

ment by the Minister of Education. It was debated in December.

Actors involved in education and training are invited to participate actively in the implementation, development and realisation of real competence assessment. Representatives from schools and educational institutions, local authorities, and the social partners, will therefore regardless of prior experience in the field, take part in the debate that will take place throughout 2005 in companies and associations, in educational institutions and in homes, as well as in the political system.

To start the process and debate, a conference was to be held in early 2005.

The statement is available (at present only in Danish): "Anerkendelse af realkompetencer i uddannelserne", <http://pub.uvm.dk/2004/realkompetencer/>

For more information: Svend-Erik Povelsen, Cirijs, tel. (45-33) 95 70 99, E-mail: sep@cirijsmail.dk

Source: Cirijs

UNITED KINGDOM

Employers the key to the future of further education

In June 2004, the then Secretary of State Charles Clarke announced his intention to establish, by April 2006, a new national strategic body to drive forward quality improvement in the learning and skills sector. Following work by the Department for Education and Skills to assess the feasibility of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) undertaking the new role. In November 2004 Clarke announced his intention to restructure the LSDA to take on the role of the new Quality Improvement Body.

The new body is the Department's response to consistent messages from

the sector that current arrangements for accountability and quality improvement lack clarity and coherence. It is a key part of the work to reduce bureaucracy and release capacity to the front line.

The Education and Skills Secretary encouraged the further education (FE) sector to engage more with employers for a more successful future. Launching a consultation exercise on the proposed introduction of a 'National Quality Improvement Body (NQIB)' in 2006, designed to drive quality improvement in FE, he said:

'The role of the Sector Skills Councils is paramount. They provide an important new voice in identifying the skills that we need to drive up productivity across the UK sector by sector. I hope colleges take the opportunity to work with the Sector Skills Councils, and the Regional Skills Partnerships to put in place a coherent skills offer for individuals and employers.'

The consultation process is now in progress. It involves all the major stakeholders in providing comments on the vision, roles and responsibilities of the NQIB and the way it will work with oth-

er organisations, which have responsibility for improving the quality of education and training.

More information can be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/>

Source: OCA



NORWAY

New journal on vocational training

In November 2004 the first issue of "YRKE", a new journal on vocational training, was published in Norway. The journal, its name meaning "craft" or "vocation", is published by the Union of Education Norway (Utdanningsforbundet). It will focus on all aspects of vocational training, including initial vocational training in school and in companies, continuing training in the workplace, post-secondary and non-tertiary vocational training in schools, retraining, adult training, etc.

Several years ago a journal by the same name was published by the Norwegian union of vocational teachers (Norsk Faglærrelag), now merged with the Union of Education Norway. However the new journal will not be a membership publication. The new publication aims to fill a gap that has been felt by the vocational training community in Norway for quite some time. General education has its publications whereas there has been a lack of opportunities for people in vo-

cal training to discuss topics of current interest in a regular and up-to-date manner. With this new journal, VET professionals, such as teachers, counsellors, instructors in companies, public administration officers, politicians, social partners and trade unions will now have a forum for debate and updated information.

YRKE will be published quarterly and intends to report on what is going on in companies, institutions, schools, work-

shops etc. in relation to vocational training. It will also focus on areas such as vocational training pedagogy and policy and how vocational training is carried out in other countries.

More information (in Norwegian only): <http://www.uddanningsforbundet.no/>

Source: National Institute of Technology, Norway

Special target groups



GERMANY

Modules bridge knowledge gaps

Support structures for disadvantaged groups: BIBB Central Committee urges industry to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by vocational training induction.

Too many young people with learning impairments and social deficits are left by the wayside in the race for vocational training leading to a qualification. According to the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), in 2003 this was true of 1.36 m young people aged 20 to 29, i.e. some 15% of this age group. This group is in need of special support to get a start in training and working life. The BIBB Central Committee (a quadripartite advisory body to the federal government on fundamental VET issues, comprising representatives of the employers, workers, central government and the Länder) has adopted a number of recommendations on the subject of vocational training induction (VTI), urging industry to make full advantage of the opportunities and possibilities offered by VTI.

Courses or placements preparing young people for apprenticeship have so far often been regarded as stop-gap measures to 'park' unplaced young people. The Central Committee firmly believes that VTI should be more specifically oriented towards the intended course of voca-

tional training and expanded as a preliminary phase to vocational training. In its opinion, the aim must be to train young people step by step according to their individual abilities, so that they will be in a position to move on to a regular training course.

The VTI programme, which is based on skilling modules, was introduced by legislation adopted in 2003. It offers firms the opportunity to run preparatory courses imparting fundamental skills and knowledge of relevance to a specific field of training to disadvantaged young people, thus giving them an opportunity of acquiring initial vocational experience and guiding them towards a regular industrial training place. Skilling modules based on industrial practice offer young people an insight into the real world of work and give them a realistic impression of learning and working under normal conditions.

The skilling module concept above all aims at integrating disadvantaged young people into a regular industrial training place. These modules are learning units, limited in content and time, based on the course material used in recognised training occupations. This approach is neither able nor intended to replace vocational training courses. In certain cases, however, successfully completed modules

may be recognised towards a subsequent vocational training course.

The Central Committee recommends the introduction of skilling modules in the curriculum of vocational training schools. It also advises the Federal Agency for Employment to push through the use of skilling modules in the vocational induction courses it supports. The Central Committee urges companies, training institutions and vocational training schools to coordinate at an earlier stage and cooperate more closely in order to pool their competences and resources in the interests of disadvantaged young people.

The Federal Ministry of Education Training and Research, with the support of the European Social Fund, is sponsoring a project in which the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), in conjunction with the Central office for further training in the craft trades sector (ZWH), is working on skilling modules to be valid nationwide. The players have already developed 84 skilling modules for training occupations in the crafts sector attracting a substantial number of trainees. The BIBB has developed model skilling modules for training occupations under the scope of the chambers of industry and commerce. The Central Committee urges all VET practitioners to

uses these models for the VTI of young people, and also recommends them as a basis which can be adapted and developed as required. The Central Committee also points out that the BIBB Good Practice Centre (GPC) for support structures for disadvantaged groups has a database documenting all the skilling modules which have been confirmed by the competent agencies. This database is available to chambers, companies and training institutions on the Internet at www.good-practice.de/bbigbausteine.

The federal government is pulling out all the stops to encourage private-sector employers to participate in the VTI programme. Under the federal government's special programme for the introductory training of young people (EQJ), set up in October 2004 for a total period of three years, employers active in this field are eligible for public funding. Moreover, upon request the Federal Agency for Employment covers the costs for the necessary socio-pedagogical support of the young people in the course of vocational induction.

Source: BIBB/ZWH/SK

FINLAND

Diverse learners - common school

The aim of this project initiated by the Finnish National Board of Education is to find means to reduce the number of underachieving pupils and students. The project will also support practices that help all pupils and students to apply their learning skills in an optimum way. Particular attention will be paid to gender differences in learning. The project encompasses pre-primary, primary and general upper secondary education as well as vocational upper secondary education and training. It was launched in spring 2004 and will continue until the end of 2006.

The quality of education is high in Finland. According to the OECD PISA assessments the learning outcomes are excellent. In addition the differences between pupils, schools and regions are relatively small. However, some pupils and students seem to underachieve. This may be one of the reasons behind, for example the considerable differences in the average learning outcomes for boys and

girls: the average results of the boys in all subjects are clearly less good than those of the girls.

In Finland the ideology of equal rights has a long tradition. The schools need to be able to support learning and individual growth as best as they can. Thus it is important to try to identify the reasons behind the differences in learning outcomes and find ways to develop school cultures and teaching.

Three development themes

The "Diverse learners - common school" project will help develop environments that favour diverse learners, enhance teacher cooperation and strengthen the cooperation between the school and the home.

The project has three development themes: 1) strengthening of learning skills, early detection of learning difficulties and early intervention by intensifying the cooperation of the different actors (in pre-

primary and primary education); 2) developing learning skills; 3) developing pedagogy that stresses the awareness of learner diversity and guidance and counselling.

A network of 33 education providers from different levels of education has been created. The National Board of Education organises the activities of the network, supports the education providers in self-assessment, and provides information to steer the project and plans concrete actions in cooperation with the education providers and university experts. The project is carried out in cooperation with the other Nordic countries.

Reducing segregation in vocational education and training

One of the motivations for the project has also been the fact that the labour market is exceptionally strongly segregated in Finland. Vocational education and training is also strongly segregated into female and male dominated fields:

more than 90 per cent of students in health care and social services are women, while 85 per cent of students in the technology and transport sector are men.

Segregation is maintained by attitudes that are often unconscious. The first step to reduce segregation in choosing optional courses and studies is that the stereotypical attitudes are recognised in the schools. The attitude of the teacher towards a student with the 'wrong sex' is decisive as the teacher can negatively affect the student's motivation with his/her unconscious behaviour and use of language. Recognition of these hidden attitudes and messages in one's own work is one of the focal points in this project, especially within VET.

More information only available in Finnish from: <http://www.edu.fi/SubPage.asp?path=498,24009,24538,35413>

Source: NBE

The Compas method: adapting skills to the job profile

Jobseekers have better prospects if enterprises indicate realistic details of the skills expected from job applicants. This is the conclusion of the four pilot projects conducted on the basis of the so-called Compas method, developed by sponsors from five joint industrial committees for employment and training at sub-regional level.

The Compas method is designed to promote the vocational integration of applicants from risk groups, e.g. the long-term unemployed and unskilled, migrant workers, women and older jobseekers.

To participate in the project, an enterprise has to meet the following criteria:

- dearth of skilled manpower;
- use of the developed method for the integration of trainees,
- offer placements to trainees from risk groups.

Example of the application of this method by bus and coach manufacturer Van Hool in Lier, Flanders, one of the pilot companies involved in the project.

Faced with a constant dearth of skilled welders/fitters, Van Hool decided to take action. Objective: to recruit candidates motivated by a welding training programme, by mobilising various resources (VDAB, temping agencies, newspaper advertisements). The manufacturer also delivers part-time training schemes for young people and individual skilling courses for jobseekers. The enterprise, which has a workforce of 4 000, mainly blue-collar workers, has thus acquired solid experience in the recruitment and training of unskilled manpower and workers at risk.

Three other enterprises collaborated in the project: Eurobrookers (storage and distribution), Technicas (container and

metallic palette repair) and the Sacred Heart hospital of Tirlémont.

Method of recruitment

The sub-regional joint industrial committee for employment and training runs a network of some one hundred partners with the task of recruiting candidates. The Compas project leaders then select the candidates; information meetings followed by personal interviews guide the candidates towards training programmes commensurate with their aptitudes and the requirements of the partner enterprise. The guiding principle of the project: support for the new recruits within the enterprise.

Training

Apart from the technical training delivered by the enterprise, the programme comprises occupational behaviour session and guidance in the workplace from external trainers. This method which optimises candidates' prospects of integration was developed by sponsors from five sub-regional joint industrial committees for employment and training (CSEF), with the assistance of the institute of higher education, Haute École Charlemagne, and the management of the western Flanders chamber of commerce, and was tested and adapted in the four pilot enterprises.

At the end of the training programme, the enterprise offers a permanent job to those trainees who have reached the required standards. The personnel of the enterprise concerned are actively involved in the project (induction, training, assessment).

At Van Hool, the technical training of the trainees began in February 2003. Training is delivered in different stages.

It commences with a 10-week technical training course at the welding school, a combination of many hours of practice and a few hours of theory, with a daily hour of theoretical instruction on in particular welding installations, equipment and how to read technical drawings. One of the special features of this training programme is that it includes two hours a week devoted to occupational behaviour. At the end of the ten weeks, training continues in the workplace under the supervision of a mentor responsible for job initiation.

During their training, the trainees are under a 'contract of individual vocational training in an enterprise (FPI)' which means that the contracting firm can train the jobseekers in the workplace without being liable for wages or social security contributions and only having to pay a productivity bonus equivalent to the difference between the average unemployment benefit and the regular wage of the trade in question.

When the Compas project was launched, Van Hool had not yet formalised its skills profiles. In collaboration with skills management experts, Van Hool foremen fine-tuned the skills profiles, based on the knowledge and aptitudes required by a good welder. The principal selection criterion remains motivation and the willingness to learn the trade; a basic command of Dutch is also required. Technical knowledge is an advantage but not a must. By fine-tuning the profile of welder/fitter, the emphasis is on skills such as flexibility, a sense of responsibility, collaboration, safety and communication. A further innovation: diversity training for team leaders.

On the basis of the experience of the four pilot enterprises, a range of practi-

cal tools has been developed for firms to manage the induction, training, guidance and flows of risk groups in the enterprise. A manual accompanied by a CD-ROM is also available for intermediary agencies wishing to enter the field of skills management (Iedereen competent, Handleiding voor competentie-management dat werkt - Skills for all, manual of operational skills management, Lou Van Beirendonck, 2004). The manual is available at the VDAB library.

The Flemish Minister for Employment, Education and Training regards the results of the project as promising and intends to promote this approach. The ministry is to provide a training course on the Compas approach for VDAB guidance and job vacancy staff. The effective transposition of this model at the level of placement services is also to be examined.

Further information at: www.vdab.be

Source: VDAB

Employability and opportunity in Cyprus

The Community Initiative Programme (CIP) Equal for Cyprus, for the period 2004-2006, was agreed with the European Commission in April 2004; official approval was granted in July 2004. The total financial resources for the programme amount to EUR 3.62 million, of which EUR 1.81 million will be co-financed from the ESF.

CIP Equal for Cyprus seeks maximum possible impact by focusing on three priority themes: employability; equal opportunities for men and women; integrating asylum seekers. New and innovative approaches and actions are sought across all areas.

Employability

The objective is to facilitate access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or reintegrated; the labour market must be open for all.

Approaches could include promoting long-term training programmes in selected areas, and combining medium-

or long-term continuing vocational training with placements in enterprises and organisations. Of particular interest would be posts which offer opportunities for full-time employment.

Other possible actions include promoting cooperation between employment support structures such as the public employment services, private employment offices, local authorities, voluntary organisations and social partners. Raising equal opportunity awareness among employers and promoting the advantages of using employment offices in recruiting human resources are also of value.

Equal opportunities

The objective here is to reconcile family and professional life, as well as reintegrating men and women who have left the labour market, through more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services. Possible approaches include upgrading the skills of women who have left the labour market

because of family responsibilities, using flexible forms of training such as tele-training.

Actions could also be developed to eliminate gender stereotyping in the family. These include: promoting the right to parental leave for male employees; trying to establish a culture among young people of equal participation of the sexes in the care of children and other dependants; and educational packages aimed at eliminating stereotypes.

Integrating asylum seekers

This aims to offer support interventions for asylum seekers until the final assessment of their application. It includes actions to enhance the skills of asylum seekers through training programmes, so they are better qualified to enter the labour market in Cyprus or better equipped for reintegration into their home country if their application is rejected. An additional approach offers programmes of personalised services for employment seeking. The same programmes could

promote Greek and English language classes to enable rapid integration, combined with vocational training to develop their skills.

By the end of 2004, 23 organisations had submitted to the Managing Authority of Equal for Cyprus their applications to form development partnerships (DPs). The procedure for assessing and selecting development partnerships was to have been completed by mid-January 2005.

More information:
Managing Authority for Equal (Contact:
alexandros.alexandrou@planning.gov.cy)
ESF Unit/National Support Structure: esf@mlsi.gov.cy,
Tel. (357-22) 40 09 57.

Source: HRDA, Human Resource Development Authority, Cyprus



DENMARK

Mentors to reduce school dropout rates

Up to one in four of an age cohort drop out of school. Despite serious efforts in recent years at government and school level, the number of dropouts remains high. Vocational education and training programmes are hardest hit by students not completing their programme.

A mentor scheme is therefore being set up by the Ministry of Education with the aim of easing the transition between lower secondary education and vocational education and training.

Young people are attached to a mentor, who provides guidance on an individual basis and who may provide support, if deemed necessary, to help the individual student complete his/her course.

The target group is young people with specific needs who have personal, social or professional problems to a degree which makes it difficult for them to manage in the education system without individual support. Some may not yet have enrolled for a programme after lower secondary education, some may have dropped out of a training programme, and some may face the imminent threat of dropout. Second generation immigrants are part of the target group as experience shows that they drop out of education in substantially higher numbers than ethnic Danes.

The mentors are teachers, guidance counsellors, social workers and others, who are equipped with pedagogical and

guidance tools to fulfil the task, and are able to build a relationship with the individual based on mutual confidence.

The mentor scheme is a positive initiative. Recent research demonstrates that a considerable number of young people drop out for personal reasons and this is a field that has not previously been targeted by the government. Through the mentor scheme, competent and committed adults may provide help and guidance to young persons, which stretch beyond education into leisure time and the personal sphere. For some, the mentor will presumably fill a role, which parents for some reason do not succeed in filling.

It is anticipated that the mentor scheme will be a highly efficient tool in breaking the negative social inheritance in terms of education. The scheme was expected to start at the beginning of 2005 and will run for two years. DKK six million (Euro 800 000) have been allocated for the total period of time.

For more information: Peter Højer, Ministry of Education
Tel. (45) 3392 5384, E-mail ph@uvm.dk

Source: Cirus



DENMARK

Parents guiding offspring

A new survey (1) carried out in December 2004 on Danish parents' influence on their children's choice of education shows that parents are deeply involved in guiding their young offspring into a future educational pathway.

The survey *Undersøgelse af Forældre og Vejledning* was carried out by the consultancy firm Rambøll Management at the request of the Ministry of Education. The purpose was to map guidance patterns and the profiles of 13-20 year old students. The core tasks have been to clarify the role of parents in their children's choice of education and jobs, and to discover sources of information and the expectations of the chosen pathway. Parents' expectations of the vocational guidance and counselling system have also been looked at in the survey.

The reason for carrying out the survey was that a reform of the guidance system is currently being implemented. A new structure is being set up in which local youth guidance and counselling centres (*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*) provide guidance to young people deciding on upper secondary education. Similar centres (*Studievalg*) exist for students seeking guidance on higher education. The aim of the survey was to define different student profiles in order to be able to target the guidance effort to meet the needs of the young people.

The results of the survey indicate that the role of parents should not be neglected. One third of the parents participating in the survey discuss education or job prospects with their children once a week and 75 per cent wish to be involved in their children's choice of future pathway. "This is a very useful indication of the importance which parents in general attach to their children's choice of education", says Noemi Katznelson, research coordinator at Centre for Youth Research at Learning Lab Denmark. "It stresses the importance of taking parents into account when dealing with guidance and counselling", she adds.

(1) The survey was based on questionnaires and telephone interviews with 1 400 parents of 13-20 year olds. It also shows that the main sources of information are the parent's own work and the Internet. The report is available in Danish from the Ministry of Education's website:
http://www.uvm.dk/nyheder/a_001_hm_MMtmp3f8a379d/rapportvejledning.pdf
For more information:
Nikolaj Ejler, Rambøll Management, (45) 2948 8164
Noemi Katznelson, Learning Lab Denmark, (45) 2068 6680
Per Bredholdt Frederiksen, Ministry of Education, (45) 3392 5394

Source: Cirus



CZECH REPUBLIC

Counselling centres help Czech secondary school transfer

The transition to a market economy created a need for career counselling to provide young people and the general public with information about the labour market, vocational training opportunities and related qualifications. This task was taken on by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; in 1990, labour offices began to provide career counselling services. Information and counselling centres (IPs) were gradually set up at labour offices and equipped, as part of the EU Phare programme, with audio-visual and computer facilities. The aim of career counselling is to provide information on employment opportunities and related vocational guidance and advice.

Most IPS clients are pupils in the eighth and ninth years of basic school. Schools tend to host group counselling in a so-called 'forum'; individual consultations are normally provided to pupils accompanied by their parents. IPs offer schools various programmes on career choice. From September to January they hold discussions with pupils in the ninth year of basic school under the Career choice programme. In early November they organise a fair presenting study programmes

available, with counsellors attending afternoon or evening meetings of parents of ninth year pupils. From February to June IPs offer the My career choice programme for eighth-year pupils, primarily focused on pupil self-evaluation.

IPs offer video-programmes about various occupations and their requirements in terms of qualifications and health, physical and intellectual qualities. They provide information about employment opportunities relevant to specific skills. Pupils are given maps and cards with descriptions of various occupations. They can use computer programmes to establish their career interests and there are printed materials and leaflets presenting various schools.

Labour offices use the OK práce (OK work) system which processes information about matters related to their activities. The system consists of interlinking modules, each covering a particular area. For example, the Career choice module contains detailed information about secondary technical schools, secondary vocational schools and higher professional schools, the number of applicants and students admitted, admission requirements, tuition

fees, etc. There is also information on whether the programmes are suitable for the disabled.

To assist pupils in making the correct career choice there are career counsellors at IPs, and educational counsellors at schools. Parents, acquaintances and the media can also be good sources of advice. A special information service is provided by IPs in April and May for pupils who failed in the first round of admission proceedings to secondary schools and for their parents. Information about the remaining places on programmes offered by schools in the region is processed, and parents may contact counsellors and ask for up-to-date figures.

Since January 2005 the provision of IPS services has been expanded to cover internet-based career counselling via the websites of labour offices. Those interested may search for information about what is available and may contact their counsellor. Web-based counselling services are quick, user-friendly and relatively anonymous. Where pupils have difficulty expressing what they need on the phone, or have their parents speak for them, it is not a problem for them to type up a message or a query, as most of them

have access to a computer at school, at home or in a library.

Most activities offered by IPs take place in the relevant IPS, as they have the necessary facilities and resources. In large regions some pupils may face difficulties getting to their IPS. In such cases the counsellor visits the schools.

Another group of IPS clients are students and graduates of training centres and secondary and higher professional schools. IPs offer their services to other individuals, including job seekers and those who wish to change their career or improve their qualifications.

More information available from:
Bc. Jana Komárková
Information and Counselling Centre (IPS)
Benešova 70, CZ - 284 51 Kutná Hora
E-mail: jana.komarkova@up.mpsv.cz
Tel. (420-327) 58 01 41

Source: NVF

Vocational counselling and career information

In the coming years, developments in science and technology will be major factors shaping the labour market, with new occupations and activities emerging. It is expected that skills to improve performance at work (teamwork skills, communication skills or thinking in economic and quality terms) will gain in significance, as will the ability to cope in a volatile labour market.

In addition, growing acceptance of lifelong learning will demand increased access to vocational counselling and broadly-based career information, both during formal education and at later career stages. Access to career-related information and the assistance of vocational counsellors in solving work-related problems (e.g. selecting an occupa-

tion for the first time, changing job, entry and return to the labour market) should help individuals make appropriate choices and take informed career decisions. This, in turn, should lead to an increased sense of satisfaction, stability and better performance in the workplace.

To address this need in Poland, a network of vocational counselling and career information centres is being developed. This is being done by increasing the number and types of vocational counselling institutions and expanding their forms and scope of activity:

(a) 528 municipal information centres (Gminne Centra Informacji), promoting vocational activation of young people and local communities through easier

access to modern communication technologies;

(b) 49 mobile career information centres (*Mobilne Centra Informacji Zawodowe*), of the Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP, *Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*), addressing their services mainly to young people from small towns where there is restricted access to up-to-date information about education and the labour market;

(c) 254 school career centres (*Szkolne Ośrodki Kariery*) in lower and upper secondary schools, enabling pupils to access ICT and supporting them in choosing a suitable occupation and career path, and assisting school leavers in their transition to working life;

(d) 202 academic career bureaus (*Akademickie Biura Karier*), providing

assistance to students and recent graduates in planning their career paths.

These are in addition to the existing network of labour market institutions, which includes 338 local labour offices and 54 career planning and information centres established within the structures of provincial (voivodship) labour offices, offering vocational counselling services for adults (the unemployed and job seekers).

Further information: Ministry of Economy and Labour, www.mpips.gov.pl
Contact: Cecylia Pielok, Labour Market Department, Ministry of Economy and Labour.
Tel. (48-22) 461 60 00.

Source: BKKK Cooperation Fund

Social partners



Employers call for more training for the employed

In response to a recent survey Irish employers have called on the Government to allocate more resources to training the employed. The membership survey (*) of human resource policy and practice by the Irish Business Employers' Confederation (IBEC) covered around 400 companies employing 145 000 employees with respondents evenly divided between manufacturing and services companies. It shows that the current priorities for members are training and development, followed by performance and management appraisal issues.

The top four outcomes in the survey in terms of assessing the effectiveness of performance management are competence-related - development of skills, improved quality, development of competence and improved customer care. In the area of training and development:

- Seven out of ten respondents have a training budget, resulting in an average company spend of 3.15% of payroll and an average range of 3-5 days training per annum per employee. This compares with the UK where an average 5-8 days training per annum are provided, according to the most recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey;

- some 75% of respondents are designing and/or delivering training directly to staff, compared to 68% in 2002;

- over two-thirds of companies evaluate their training;

- as part of a broader commitment to training and development, nine out of ten companies provide financial sponsorship and support (exam/study leave) for various employee development and educational courses, leading to professional, academic and vocational qualifications;

- the key drivers of training are health and safety, technological change and customer service.

At the launch of the report, Mr. Brendan McGinty, IBEC Director of Human Resources said that the survey showed that employers are taking practical steps to move Ireland towards being a 'knowledge economy' and called on the government to be more supportive of this move by increasing spending on enterprise-led training. Current funding for enterprise-led training through training networks (Skillnets)(see Cedefop Info 3/2003) stands at EUR 5 million per annum. IBEC wants this sum increased to EUR 20 million.

He went on to outline a number of specific initiatives to speed up the shift towards the knowledge economy, echoing points raised in the IBEC education policy document published earlier in 2004.

The Government should get rid of fees for third-level part-time courses, with initial priority being given to those who have not benefited from third-level education to date and/or on low income;

- education providers should be more flexible in terms of location, timing and modularisation of programmes and delivery tools i.e. elearning and multi-media;

- the development of a foundation qualification in workplace skills for employees, regardless of sector or occupation, should be considered, in line with the recommendations of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (see Cedefop Info 1/2003);

- in addition to the system of apprenticeship, there is a need for more formalised accreditation of skills. This should include prior learning to give additional funding support to the system of enterprise-led training being promoted by Skillnets and to mainstream the rollout of occupational qualifications;

- priority should be given to initiatives that address the needs of employers in vulnerable sectors and workers with poor basic skills (literacy and numeracy), IT literacy or non-transferable skills; increase access to training, especially for the low-skilled and older workers; and cater for the needs of non-nationals and women returning to work;

There is a need for more cross-discipline training in engineering and sales and marketing skills.

(*) Human resources management survey 2004/ Anne Coughlan. Available: IBEC, Confederation House, 84-86 Lower Baggot Street, IRL-Dublin 4 Tel. (353-1) 605 1500, Fax (353-1) 638 1500, E-mail: info@ibec.ie. Price: EUR 250

Source: FAS

Reorganisation brings new social partner cooperation

Following the White Paper "Culture for Learning" that was adopted in June 2004 (see Cedefop Info 2/2004) there has been a reorganisation of the initial vocational education system and in particular of the "tripartite cooperation" within it.

The main changes were the reduction of vocational programmes in upper secondary school from 12 to 9 and of programme modules from more than 100 to less than 50. As a result of these changes and the overall quality objec-

tives of the reform, all programme curricula will undergo a comprehensive reorganisation. A specific 'competence platform' will be defined for each module and the detailed curriculum content will also be redefined.

To meet the new situation the former councils involved in deciding the content and structure of the vocational curricula have been replaced. The new Cooperation Council for Vocational Training (*Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring - SRY*) has replaced the former Council for

Vocational Training in Working Life, while nine new trade councils (*faglige råd*) have replaced the approx. 30 former training councils. The nine trade councils correspond to each of the nine new vocational programmes.

The secretariat for the Co-operation Council will be the new Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education which was established in June 2004 (see Cedefop Info 3/2004) and which is the responsible body for initial vocational training in Norway.

In Norway there is a strong tradition of close cooperation between public authorities, employers' and employees' organisations in the area of vocational education and training. This principle has been upheld with the new organisational changes, which means that the Co-operation Council comprises members from all three categories. The trade councils comprise members from employers' organisations and employees' organisations.

Source: National Institute of Technology, Norway

Certification as a component of collective agreements: a promising new approach



Industry is subject to constant criticism for the lack of continuing training opportunities offered to the workforce, where-

by it tends to be forgotten that the general conditions are not often conducive to a major training effort on the part of firms. An original new approach was recently launched in Austria to overcome this sad state of affairs.

The provisions of collective agreements hold great weight in Austria. So why not use these instruments in the interests of continuing training? In 2004, training certification was specifically included in an IT sector collective agreement for the first time. The training certificate, rec-

ommended for companies of an appropriate size, is valid nationwide and provides evidence that both sides of industry are prepared to assume an active and responsible role in the process of lifelong learning. The initiative was developed by the business consultancy and IT section of the Economic Chamber of Austria (WKÖ) and the trade union representing private-sector employees (GPA). The parties to the collective agreement have also developed a training certificate manual.

The firms applying for the award of the certificate do so on a voluntary basis and agree to have their continuing training courses monitored by an audit committee. They are also prepared to

pay a price for certification: EUR 1 600, excluding tax. Compliance with the precise specifications are also monitored after the award of the certificate. Certification, which is valid for three years, is voluntary, but is strongly recommended to IT firms by the collective agreement. The industrial IT sector with its approx. 20 000 firms can therefore play a pioneering role in this respect, the participating enterprises serving as a model of good practice for other branches of industry.

One of the criteria for the award of the certificate is the principle of non-discriminatory access to training for the entire workforce, in particular older employees, whereby it should be pointed

out that the IT industry is now far removed from its traditional image of only young programmers: almost one third (10 000) of IT sector employees are now aged 50-plus. Further information, including a list of the certified firms, will soon be available at: <http://www.bildungszertifizierung.at>.

Further information:
Union of Salaried Employees (GPA): <http://www.gpa.at>
Economic Chamber of Austria (WKÖ) Austria: www.ubit.at

Source: Helmut Hafner, ibw, und Michael Tölle, Federal Chamber of Labour



The Study visits corner

Response to the study visits

Study visits generate enthusiasm among all participants. Though for some they are too short, and for others too dense, they are always full of surprises. However, they sometimes fail to live up to expectations. Examples:

The role of universities and institutes of higher education in vocational training (Venice, Italy)

The study visit to Venice was Jeanne's first Cedefop study visit. She went home somewhat disappointed. Motivated by the success of the Italians in bringing together trainers and employers in a single association, she regrets that the question of how this cooperation actually works in practice was not broached until the last day of the visit. 'Employers do not participate enough in the working group we have set up in North Wales. Their collaboration would help to better define the content of graduate training programmes. From this point of view, the Italian experience could have given me some answers.' Director of studies at an establishment with a roll of 5 000 students and 18 000 trainees in vocational training, Jeanne is trying to reduce the dropout rate which currently stands at 13 %. 'If employers are not strongly motivated we will not manage to mobilise them effectively in order to develop programmes matching market needs. This working party is a real bridge between the world of work and teaching staff. In fact, this collaboration should help us find an answer to a very simple question: which formal qualification should be pursued?' Jeanne has found an event in Finland on the same subject in the study visits catalogue and definitely intends to sign up for it.

The impact of vocational training on the quality of training in the road transport sector (San Sebastian, Spain)

Halfdan had not imagined there was so much road transport, both goods and passenger transport, in

Spain. Having recently come to the end of his career, he knows a lot about this subject. He is nevertheless impressed by the way training is organised by the Spaniards. 'I wish we were as effective as that in Norway. We will soon see what happens with the entry into force of fundamental changes to our training system on 1 January 2005.' All the participants praised the quality of the content of the visit, in particular the funding system jointly agreed and set up by the employers' organisations and the trade unions. 'Both sides seem to attach enormous importance to training their

The Community study visits programme celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. The programme was set up on the basis of two Council resolutions in 1983 calling upon the Commission to develop a study visits programme for VET experts. Since 1999, the study visits programme has officially been part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and is run by Cedefop. The annual conference of the national liaison officers, to be held at Cedefop's headquarters in Thessaloniki (Greece) in May of this year, is planned to tie in with a 20th anniversary event. The event will include a roundtable debate among high-ranking participants on the educational value of mobility, as well as a cultural programme. Our summer issue will feature a report on the anniversary event.

staff. In my opinion, this clearly has a spillover effect, not only on the quality of employment (punctuality, safety), but also on the health and overall well-being of the employees. Moving goods and persons necessarily involves road transport, at one point or another. So training in this sector is priceless.'

Halfdan's only regret, shared by many: the bilingual character of the study visit. It was of no help; on the contrary, it actually discouraged informal exchanges, with English and French speakers failing to communicate with each other.

Education through sport (Brussels, Belgium)

Despite the generally positive impression of this visit, the participants returned home with a certain sense

of frustration. For a first visit exclusively devoted to sport, it perhaps tried to be too specific while the participants had many different expectations. 'There wasn't enough time to discuss the presentations given by the various participants on their national context', remarks Bert. The visit focused on two aspects of the question - the impact of sports education on children and adolescents, on the one hand, and social integration through sport, on the other - to the detriment of a more global approach. Bert observes that the visit also illustrated the difficulty of

applying the Copenhagen Declaration within the same country: 'There is some way to go to achieve real cooperation between the Flemings and Walloons'. As in many visits, the informal discussions seem to be the locus of an exchange of views promoting the creation of a European vision. For the organisers, the difficulty is to strike the right balance between the time allocated to the visit and the time for communication within the group. Bert concludes that this visit, along with the Agora conference on sport held last May in Thessaloniki, is a good start to addressing this issue and should be followed up in 2005, the United Nations Year of Sport.

Source: Marc Mangin, journalist

Cedefop's Study Visits Unit is compiling electronic dossiers on all the subjects which can be downloaded on the website: www.studyvisits.cedefop.eu.int or requested from Cedefop by e-mail: ve@cedefop.eu.int. The website features further details on the Community study visit programme.



Vocational training reform underway

Over the recent years, a series of initiatives have been introduced to generally adapt the Luxembourg vocational training system to the challenges of an ever-changing environment.

The Grand Duchy has not yet developed a coherent and integrated educational and training policy strategy in terms of lifelong learning. In Luxembourg, vocational training is principally regulated by two pieces of legislation dating back as far as 1945 and 1990.

With a view to modernising the vocational training system, successive governments have initiated reforms of the apprenticeship system to introduce a new dimension - lifelong learning.

Two government declarations led to a draft law introducing lifelong learning as a key principle of the vocational training system. A series of measures are envisaged to accompany the implementation of this reform.

The draft law includes four major elements:

1. A modular approach to training

The introduction of a modular approach means that training provision can be differentiated and tailor-made - which will help to motivate learners. A flexible training process continually guides learners towards new learning thresholds and thus contributes to the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning.

2. Validation of prior learning

Validation of prior learning enables those having interrupted the formal learning process to return to a training programme; moreover it offers those who have not yet received formal learning the opportunity to engage in a training course without necessarily having to go through the full training programme.

3. Lifelong guidance and counselling

Modular training and the validation of informal learning cannot be achieved without appropriate lifelong guidance and counselling which must commence at

school and extend throughout working life. As well as youth guidance counsellors, adult guidance counsellors are also to be trained to help adults having interrupted formal learning to return to the training process on the basis of their qualifications and real potential.

4. Adult education

In the context of lifelong learning, the relevant educational approach must be adapted and differentiated according to the target group in question. A new function is to be created to meet this requirement: adult trainer.

The current status of the proposed reform is that a preliminary draft law has been submitted to the social partners for their opinion. Work will continue towards a draft law on which stakeholders will be consulted before it is brought before parliament for adoption.

Source: Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training

Partners keep their word

Training pact: The number of training contracts is rising for the first time in years. But acceptance of introductory placements is sluggish.

The federal government and the economic associations unanimously agree that the national training pact concluded last summer has been a resounding success. With this pact and the promise to offer a training place to all youngsters eligible for and willing to engage in training, the employers had managed to ward off the threatened introduction of a statutory training levy. The ministries of economic affairs and education, the Federal Agency for Employment and the umbrella organisations of German industry see this first rise in the number of training contracts since 1999 as a turn of the tide in the tight training market and made a positive assessment of the training pact on the basis of the latest figures.

According to the data from all the German chambers, almost 573 000 apprentices had signed a new training contract by the end of September 2004, 3% up on 2003. The calculations of the Federal Institute for Vocational training (BIBB) indicate that a total of some 519 000 training contracts were signed by industry and the public administration, 22 500 (4.5%) more than in 2003. The federal administration alone increased the number of its training places by more than 20%, while 14 000 training places were created in the context of the federal government/Länder training initiative for eastern Germany.

Although the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) observes an increase in industrial training places in the context of the training pact, it also notes a rise in the number of young people dropping out of school in the same period. It points out that the resulting increase in demand in fact meant

an overall contraction of training place supply as far as individual applicants were concerned, with no sign of a change in the trend in 2005.

Whereas the job centres still had 15 000 unplaced training place applicants on their books at the beginning of this year, 4 200 training places remained vacant. Moreover, at this point in time 24 300 of the total number of 31 500 training places created under the federal government's special programme for the introductory training of youngsters (EQJ) still remained vacant. This programme, due to run until 2007 with a total budget of EUR 270 million, offers employers a grant of up to EUR 192, plus a flat-rate monthly social insurance contribution of EUR 102 for every training place.

So far these introductory placements have not proven very popular among young people, not least in view of their low level of remuneration. Many young people prefer to take on casual labour or stay on at school. The DGB points out that these introductory training places and the 116 400 places in vocational induction schemes do not offer young people a genuine prospect of access to a vocational training course leading to a formal qualification.

German industry and the federal government concede that it is often difficult to match the interests of young trainees with those of employers. Employers sometimes have problems in finding suitable candidates. The age of applicants who are still unplaced may play a role in this context: 45% are aged 21 or above. On the other hand, it is pointed out that introductory training is a new instrument and it will take some time for it to gain wider acceptance.

Further information can be found inter alia on the website of the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment: <http://www.bmwa.bund.de>

Source: BMBF/DGB/BIBB/SK

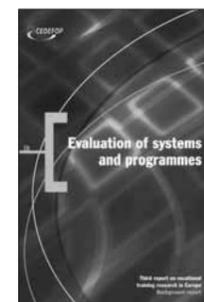
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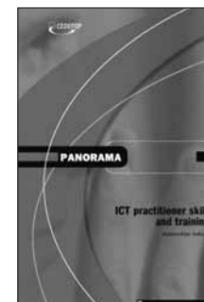
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