

30 years with Cedefop - in good times and bad Interview with Burkart Sellin, senior Cedefop VET expert

CEDEFOP INFO: Cedefop was founded 31 years ago. For almost 30 years of the Centre's history, you have played an active role in its work. Your working areas changed over the years along with the changing priorities and competences of the EU. Now that you are about to retire at the end of this year, looking back, what would you say were the most important concerns of the European countries, the European Community (later the European Union) and Cedefop in the course of these last 30 years?

BURKART SELLIN: When Cedefop started off in the 1970s, its political basis - alongside the Treaties of Rome and the founding Regulation - was the first social action programme of 1974 (1), adopted by the EEC in the troubled times of the oil crisis. It was against this background that Cedefop was established in 1975 and opened its doors in Berlin (West) in 1976. The main areas targeted by this action programme were equal opportunities for women, measures to combat the sharp rise in youth unemployment and the integration of the second generation of what were then known as migrant workers, primarily of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Greek origin at the time. Alongside its general information and documentation activities, these were Cedefop's three main fields of activity up to more or less the mid-1980s. One of my first tasks when I started at the Centre in October 1976 was to organise a large-scale conference on the link between youth unemployment and vocational training in the Netherlands that very December. This in turn led to follow-up studies and research, e.g. on the motivation of young people in the transition from school to working life, measures implemented by the Member States to combat youth unemployment and alternance training and continuing training for young people in the transition from school to work.

The target group youth was a recurrent issue on the European Union agenda - and therefore our agenda at Cedefop - in the course of the next 30 years. And basically there has been no change in the generally recognised political concern regarding youth, namely to guarantee young people the right to recognised training following compulsory education. This principle has been repeatedly reaffirmed over the years, e.g. in the Luxembourg employment strategy of the late 1990s, despite the fact that in recent years - triggered, among others, by the rise in long-term unemployment among the low-skilled - the focus has increasingly been on continuing training and lifelong learning for adults. Unfortunately, success in this field has been rather mediocre in many EU Member States where youth unemployment is well over 10 %, or even 20 %, today.

In contrast, considerable progress has been achieved on the second main issue, namely equal opportunities for women and girls in the field of vocational training. The door to further education and employment, in-

cluding employment of higher value in particular, has been opened wide. Although women remain under-represented, in particular in the field of mathematics and sciences and in management positions, they have nevertheless clearly managed to establish themselves in most occupations, including typically 'men's jobs'. The conditions for equal opportunities and access to training and employment have improved substantially. Although this is certainly partly thanks to the relevant European directives, it is of course also due to the general readiness throughout the whole of Europe to effectively implement these directives. Cedefop too has made its contribution to this development in the field of vocational training.

However, as far as the third target group is concerned, the integration of ethnic minorities or persons from a migrant background in the field of education and training, we have so far largely failed to achieve our objectives. Both the Member States and the EU failed to bring this issue into the forefront of their social and education and training policy with sufficient force and in a timely manner. A great deal still remains to be done in this respect!

CEDEFOP INFO: Let's get back to the history of Cedefop...

BURKART SELLIN: At the beginning of the 1980s, the Centre was confronted with a second major issue which was expressly referred to in our founding Regulation: the Centre's activity was to 'deal in particular with the problem of the approximation of standards of vocational training with a view to the mutual recognition of certificates and other documents attesting completion of vocational training'. There were no doubts about the EEC's competence with reference to the liberal professions, free movement and the right of establishment, but the situation was not so clear for workers in dependent employment. On the basis of the 1985 Council Decision on the comparability of vocational qualifications in the Member States of the European Community (2), Cedefop was given the task of building up the envisaged information system, initially at the level of skilled workers. Strictly speaking, this was an executive task. After some teething problems, this task was successfully completed between the years 1986 and 1992, i.e. up to the creation of the internal market. We covered approximately 200 occupations at skilled worker level in 19 sectors, including the construction industry, the catering trade, accounting, banks, insurance, metalworking and electrical occupations. Nursing and social care occupations, which were partly covered by specific occupational directives dating back to the 1960s and 1970s, were excluded. Incidentally, our work was based on an open procedure and we always worked in close cooperation with the experts appointed by the then 11 Member States or nominated by the social partners. Moreover, we set up a successful conference and translation service specifically

for this purpose at Cedefop, thanks to which complicated texts on occupational and activity profiles were adopted by consensus in all nine official languages with the close cooperation of the participating experts and linguists in the course of two-day meetings. The first serious use of computers and laptops made our work a lot easier during the meetings.

CEDEFOP INFO: What effect did this system actually have in practice?

BURKART SELLIN: The EC Member States had committed themselves to implementing the information system on the comparability of vocational qualifications and certificates, based on these occupational profiles, and making them available to both sides of industry in the form of information material. In Germany, for example, Cedefop

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CEDEFOP

The European journal of vocational training has acquired a new image

In many ways the *European journal of vocational training* is out of place in the European vocational training landscape.

It is aimed at a very large target group, and particularly at all those who play a part in the development of vocational training, at decision-makers, the social partners, trainers, researchers, at players in both the public and private sectors. It publishes articles that present new ideas, look at research results, or explain national or European experiences and practices. It also publishes position papers and responses on questions relating to vocational education and training.

The field of publishing occupied by the Journal is, of course, that of initial and continuing vocational training (ICVT). However, this field has been interpreted very broadly. Thus in addition to articles directly addressing vocational training issues, naturally it publishes articles on lifelong training, on the relationship between training and employment and labour-market access, and on the relationship between work and training. The Journal also publishes a great many articles on educational sciences, the philosophy of education, history, the sociology of education, economics, law and political sciences when they are addressing an issue directly associated with ICVT or an issue of general interest with direct consequences for ICVT.

It is the only vocational training journal to be published in five languages, namely Spanish, German, English, French and Portuguese. With a print run of 4300 copies in total, its aim is to make a contribution to comment and debate on vocational training in Europe by publishing high-quality articles on research,

practice, policy and innovation in this field, which means that the Editorial Committee particularly appreciates examples of comparative analysis.

With issue No 37, January-April 2006/1, the first issue of 2006, the Journal acquired a new image. This change of format completes the long journey made by the European journal since the 1977 publication of the first Bulletin of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, entitled *Vocational Training*.

Thus the story of the European journal is the story of the gradual and successful development of this *Cedefop Bulletin* into a scholarly journal, in the interest of all the stakeholders involved in the development of vocational training in Europe.

Conceived at the outset as an instrument of the Centre's

Information Service, in 1981 the Bulletin acquired an editor and an editorial team composed of Cedefop experts.

Starting with issue No 8 of May 1982, the Journal retained the title *Vocational Training*, but was no longer presented as a Bulletin from Cedefop but as a regular publication of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, which was immediately rendered in German as *Zeitschrift* (periodical). So it is to the May 1982 issue of this publication that, to be precise, the birth of the *European journal of vocational training* really dates back.

Between 1982 and 1993, the periodical *Vocational Training*, which was based on topics or dossiers covered by commissioned articles, and also incorporated, as necessary, articles arising from unsolicited proposals,

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30 ans au Cedefop, dans les bons et les mauvais moments

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drew up corresponding occupational material with the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit, and similar exercises were carried out in most of the other Member States. This documentation was available to anyone wishing e.g. to assert equal rights to those of nationals in another Member State by relying on the principle of general free movement within the EC.

CEDEFOP INFO: *And could you tell us why this system ultimately came to a standstill?*

BURKART SELLIN: There are essentially two reasons. A number of EC Member States wished to protect their own occupational concepts, which meant that we were only able to draw up occupational activities for certain profiles in our system. Even today, there is still no uniform interpretation of the concept 'occupation' throughout the EU. The reason is that despite the existence of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the Europeans have not been able to agree on what an occupation actually is - so a European classification of occupations has not materialised to this day. This has made it difficult, for example, to make real progress in the field of recognition.

That was one factor. The other factor was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which brought about a sudden shift in the focus of interest in Germany towards the vocational qualifications of the former GDR. With the social and economic union of the two German states, other aspects faded into the background, including the deepening of the EC. France withdrew from this process, mainly because its qualification system at skilled worker level is much less formal than in Germany. Previously, both countries had been the main pioneers of this process. And, finally, the Maastricht treaty played a role in this context, as it reshaped the competence of the EU in the field of education and vocational training and put a stop to all harmonisation approaches in the field. So there were both political and legal reasons why the project was not transferred to higher levels of qualification - e.g. technician and engineer - and extended to the new EU Member States, although the Council Decision of 1985 itself is still in force. But an attempt was simply never made to adapt the process to the new circumstances. However, cooperation among experts has remained exemplary to this day, particularly in the field of occupation sectors, and in many Member States has had a very positive impact on the development of vocational training provision.

However, in actual fact, EU vocational training policy since Lisbon has re-incorporated a number of the old elements, although they now re-appear in a new guise, e.g. in the form of the European Qualification Framework and the Bruges/Copenhagen process for enhanced cooperation in vocational training. Moreover, the latest recognition directive⁽³⁾, adopted last year, refers to five levels of qualification, which are essentially compatible with the reference framework for training levels developed by Cedefop and recommended by the Council in the mid-1980s.

CEDEFOP INFO: *One of the main focuses of your work has been analysing qualifications and qualification requirements. For several years you were head of a network for research on trends in the development of occupations and qualifications (Ciretoq). Later on you worked on the development of scenarios, and towards the end of your career you have been actively involved in shaping the design of the European Qualification Framework and the development of the European Credit Point System in the field of vocational training. Could you tell us a bit more about this?*

BURKART SELLIN: The Ciretoq network was set up when Cedefop was still in Berlin. It brought together research institutes from the Member States involved in research into trends in occupations and qualifications. They largely defined their main working areas themselves in conjunction with Cedefop. This concept proved to be pretty successful in practice, and the network addressed a number of fields of research in particular detail, e.g. new technologies, small- and medium-sized enterprises and the link between the employment and education and training systems. The network's activities were documented in detail in the form of an overview of social and economic components of occupational and qualification trends, methods of qualification research, etc. The network's research work also flowed into practical policy. For example, one of the network's most active members, Professor Maria Joao Rodriguez, was appointed Portuguese Minister for Labour in the run-up to the Lisbon

summit and became a key player in preparing the Portuguese EU Presidency. I'm sure that part of Ciretoq's research activities flowed into the preparatory work for this important summit.

And I believe that is what Cedefop is all about: it is not the role of the Centre to engage in policy itself, but to advise the political decision-makers. And it does so, not in the short term, subject to pressure to come up with decisions or against the background of short-term economic and social policy configurations - as is sometimes expected of our colleagues at the Commission - but more from a medium- and long-term perspective - on a 'sustainable' basis, to coin a modern buzzword.

CEDEFOP INFO: *Would you say that scenarios also mean research into the future?*

BURKART SELLIN: Yes, certainly, at least to a certain degree. However, scenarios should not be confused with research into the future. When drawing up scenarios, we try to proceed according to the Delphi method, on the basis of trial and error. Different scenarios, scenarios which have a certain degree of probability, are drawn up, e.g. on the basis of an evaluation of predictable or current trends which could occur within a certain time frame under various general conditions. They are almost like case studies under various practical preconditions, to which strategies can subsequently be assigned, depending on the desirability of the corresponding scenarios. The scenarios drawn up by Cedefop along with the European Training Foundation (ETF) provided important comparative indicators for the different priorities in west and eastern European countries.

CEDEFOP INFO: *In recent years, you have also been involved in the impact of information and communication technologies on occupations and the development of so-called e-skills.*

BURKART SELLIN: Indeed. The real breakthrough of the new media really only occurred with the mainstreaming of the Internet, i.e. around the turn of the millennium. More recently, Cedefop has become particularly interested in the development of occupations in the field of information and communication technologies, in hardware and software development where we have been working along with industry, trade, business associations and trade unions, examining possible approaches for a qualification framework in the field of e-skills or e-competences. We have set up a working party on ICT qualifications in conjunction with the European Organisation for Standardisation (CEN), with the Council of European Professional Informatics Societies (CEPIS) and in close collaboration with the European Commission. The initial results have already been published. At the moment, work is being carried out on specific occupational and qualification profiles in this field, with reference to the five-level model and the proposed European Qualification Framework. The aim of this work is not to establish common standards, but to create a voluntary reference framework for EU Member States, enterprises and workers - including those from other countries worldwide - e.g. to upgrade their training provision, cooperate more effectively or analyse and, as appropriate, steer the supply and demand of skilled workers.

CEDEFOP INFO: *Now a few questions of a personal nature: how do you feel about Cedefop's transfer from Berlin to Thessaloniki? Was it enriching, did it provide a new impetus? Or is Cedefop perhaps more isolated in its new host country than it was in its old home?*

BURKART SELLIN: The transfer initially came as an enormous surprise. The staff had at most expected a transfer to Bonn as a number of institutions were being transferred there following the German reunification. But no one expected that we would be transferred all the way to Thessaloniki. However, after the initial difficulties that the transfer entailed for both the management and most of our colleagues, I do after all think that as Cedefop, we took advantage of the opportunity of a new beginning and - as a member of the Management Board once put it - rose like a phoenix out of the ashes.

As for the extent to which Cedefop has 'fertilised' the vocational training system of our current host country, I really think more could have been expected over the last ten years. Greece has done a lot to develop its education system, especially its universities. However vocational training, particularly adult continuing training, unfortunately remains extremely marginalised, even more so than in other countries. And this despite the support of the structural and Mediterranean funds and in contrast to e.g. Portugal or Ireland, which have used the support from the European funds

to great advantage in developing their vocational training systems. It is a pity that Cedefop has not had more of an effect in this respect.

CEDEFOP INFO: *What aspect of your work over the years at Cedefop has been the greatest cause of satisfaction - and dissatisfaction?*

BURKART SELLIN: Looking back, I personally felt particular satisfaction having the opportunity to help shape the work of Cedefop in many respects over a period of three decades. Many of our projects and findings were useful, and were very much welcomed by vocational training experts from many Member States and flowed into policies over the years. One thing I found frustrating was that due to changing competences, not only as far as Cedefop is concerned, but also at the Commission, we often had to start off from scratch all over again. There is evidently a tendency to re-invent the wheel again and again, and we vocational training experts are no exception to this rule. What I mean by this is that we often had to update our advice to policy-makers - although the basic problems actually remained the same. Medium- and long-term research and development efforts are not much use in times of short-lived policies and practice, if greater attention is not attached to short-term advisory needs. Cedefop will perhaps have to develop new, differentiated strategies.

CEDEFOP INFO: *Would you like to make a forecast and tell us how you envisage the future of Cedefop? What advice can you give to us, the younger generation?*

BURKART SELLIN: I think that Cedefop should play a more active role at both sectoral and inter-occupational level in the future. It should develop occupational profiles along with experts and social partners, which in the medium term



could provide the basis for a European register of occupations, to be updated on an ongoing basis. Although it is not the task of Cedefop to develop such a system itself, it is certainly entitled to make it clear that such a system is absolutely necessary and to indicate what elements it could contain. In fact, if the policymakers want to establish closer cooperation in the field of employment policy and make a more effective contribution to the mobility of skilled workers and exchange and more intensive cooperation in the field of vocational training, then there is no alternative.

In order to achieve the much-advocated European Social Area, the EU Member States and the bodies and institutions of the European Union will have to specify the aims along the way and how these aims are to be achieved. The design of this social area includes the dovetailing of employment and educational and training policy. In many countries, e.g. Denmark, France and Germany, there is still not enough readiness to accept the development of a comprehensive European reference framework of occupations and occupational profiles. This is largely the case for graduate professions, but not for other specialised workers at all the other levels. Both efforts, the Bologna process for the development of higher education and the Bruges/Copenhagen process for the development of vocational training, will have to be more closely integrated and brought within a common frame of reference. Perhaps this will succeed with the current efforts in the field of the qualification framework and the credit point system and in view of 2010. In any case, I wish all those involved - in particular the younger generation of practitioners and policymakers - every success in these endeavours.

(1) Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 concerning a social action programme. Official Journal C 13, 12 February 1974, p. 1-4.

(2) Council Decision of 16 July 1985 on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community. Official Journal L 199, 31 July 1985, p. 56.

(3) Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications. Official Journal L 255, 30 September 2005, p. 22-142.

The interview was conducted by Cedefop Info editor Corinna Frey, on 10 May 2006

The European journal of vocational training has acquired a new image

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gradually became a forum for exchanges and dialogue on major vocational training issues in the broadest sense, and a full participant in major vocational training debates.

By the end of 1993, we had come a long way from the 1977 Bulletin, Vocational Training. Indeed, everything was in place to make it genuinely possible to describe the publication no longer as a Bulletin, but rather as the scholarly journal that we know today.

The first issue published as the *European journal [of] vocational training* was published in the second half of 1994. Each issue focused on a very specific theme.

In 1994 Cedefop decided to concentrate on quality, which led to a more rigorous method of selecting articles for publication, and to this end an independent Editorial Committee was established.

Since July 1999, an Editorial Secretariat has assisted the Editorial Committee in its work. It is the Editorial Secretariat that is responsible for acting as intermediary between authors and the Editorial Committee in the double-blind peer review procedure employed by the Journal.

The number of proposed articles was steadily increasing, and so in the same year (1999) it was decided not to systematically publish themed issues any longer, but to publish articles without predetermined links to a given topic. This makes it possible to publish interesting articles within a reasonable time limit - articles that would otherwise have to wait until an appropriate topic was addressed. However, the concept of the themed issue was not abandoned, and as often as possible unsolicited articles are combined around a key topic.

In 2005, the Journal also decided to establish an Editorial Advisory Board comprising well-known personalities and researchers in the field of vocational training who will serve as ambassadors for the European journal in the vocational training world.

Considering how far we have come since 1977, we have to admit that after almost 30 years of developments in the course of which

the publication has evolved from the Cedefop Bulletin - *Vocational Training* into the *European journal of vocational training* in its present form, our Journal has attained genuine maturity. It nevertheless became increasingly apparent that presentation in A4 format, with covers of varying degrees of colourfulness, was inconsistent with the scholarly nature of its content.

This is what led the Journal's Editorial Committee, in agreement with Cedefop, to opt for B5 format from issue No 37, B5 being easier to handle, and to use only one colour on the cover in addition to black and white. So the Journal has acquired a new image, but it has not changed course or become any less rigorous. It has simply brought its appearance in line with its practice - serious and sober. So even though the change effected with this issue, No 37, January-April 2006, is much more obvious than that effected in May 1982 or in spring 1994, it is actually much less radical. The Journal remains unchanged as regards the serious consideration of vocational training issues in its content - a content which naturally we are constantly working to improve.

We should be delighted to receive your comments and opinions both on the Journal's new appearance and on its content, and we hope that you will continue to read it regularly for many years to come if you are already a subscriber, and, if you are not, that you will become one very soon.



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EURYDICE

Quality assurance in teacher education in Europe

The part played by teachers in improving the quality and effectiveness of education is widely acknowledged, which means that it is especially important to develop systems for quality assurance and accreditation in teacher education. In its latest publication, Eurydice provides an overview of processes for the quality evaluation and accreditation of institutions or programmes offering initial and in-service teacher education for primary and general secondary education.

Evaluation of initial teacher education

Initial teacher education is generally provided at university. In two-thirds of the countries considered, only the general regulations for evaluating higher education are applicable. The way in which the special characteristics of teacher training are taken into account thus largely depends on the documents used as a basis for evaluation. Existing regulations are often concerned with its professional component (including the final 'on-the-job' qualifying phase and school placements). External and internal evaluation are mandatory or recommended in most countries.

External evaluation is normally carried out by teams of experts, peer evaluators or inspectors. The inclusion of students in evaluation teams is mandatory or recommended solely in five countries (*). In half of the countries, the ex-

ternal evaluators make use of special documents and/or qualification standards for teachers. In most cases, evaluation focuses on several different aspects such as programmes, teaching methods, student assessment practices, the balance between professional and general training, the organisation of teaching practice, partnerships with schools and infrastructure. External evaluation is generally based on an internal evaluation report.

Internal evaluation is generally coordinated by the management or an evaluation committee set up within the institution. In virtually all countries with regulations in this area, the involvement of teaching staff members and students in internal evaluation is compulsory or recommended. In a few countries, specialist evaluators also take part. The aspects covered are similar to those considered in external evaluation.

In the majority of countries, external evaluation provides a basis for deciding whether to (re)accredit an institution or programme. A refusal to renew accreditation may have an impact on the public funding of an institution. In some countries, external evaluation may have a financial impact independently of any accreditation procedure. In two-thirds of the countries considered, the results of external evaluation are published as a matter of course.

Evaluation of in-service training

In several countries, in-service training programmes are devised on a fully decentralised basis and are the responsibility of schools or local education authorities. The types of body liable to provide this kind of training vary and include institutions or programmes concerned with initial teacher education, public or private in-service training centres, teacher trade unions or associations, and NGOs, etc. Nearly all countries have regulations on the accreditation and/or evaluation of bodies providing in-service training. The exceptions are France, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Austria and the United Kingdom. Evaluation usually focuses on the content of training, teaching methods, the skills of trainers and infrastructure. The conclusions reached by external evaluation may have repercussions on the accreditation and funding of training providers.

(* Belgium (the Flemish Community), the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Quality Assurance in Teacher Education in Europe, Eurydice, 2006. Available on the Internet at: www.eurydice.org/pls/portal/url/page/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=062EN

Source: Eurydice

Letter from the Director



Dear readers,

In September 2006 the Commission - very much supported by Cedefop - will finalise its formal proposal on a European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The presentation of the EQF Recommendation to

the European Parliament and Council signals that the first part of the road towards a fully operational EQF - facilitating transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications in Europe - has been completed.

It is worth noting that only 2 years have passed since the idea of an EQF was launched in March 2004. The joint interim report of the Commission and Council on the 'Education and Training 2010 process' stated the need for a European reference framework based on learning outcomes allowing for cross-border comparison and translation of qualifications. Developments since then - in particular illustrated by constructive and positive responses to the consultation process - have proven the relevance and realism of the original EQF idea.

Two of the main conclusions coming out of the consultation process - that the EQF must be based on learning outcomes and that it must be supported by National Qualifications Frameworks - deserve some further reflection and comment. Both are keys to a better understanding of rapidly changing education and training policies in Europe.

The shift towards learning outcomes

The choice to base the EQF on learning outcomes reflects a fundamental shift in the way education, training and learning is understood at national and sectoral level. Member States increasingly use learning outcomes for the definition and description of qualifications. The same applies to the setting of overall objectives to be met by education and training institutions and systems.

According to Coles (2005) a shift towards learning outcomes now significantly influences the conception and governance of education and training - at the level of the individual qualification, the level of the curricula, the institution and the system as a whole. This tendency - which will be carefully mapped and analysed by Cedefop in the coming period - is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the definition of learning programmes becomes something aimed at the learner and not so much something of interest mainly to the teachers and

administrators. Secondly, because learning outcomes have to be assessed as having been demonstrated by the learner, the assessment instruments become more criterion-referenced than those used for traditional, input based approaches. Thirdly it will be increasingly clear that some learners already have demonstrated some learning outcomes. It follows from this that the programme of learning will have to refer to prior achievements of the learners rather than to factors linked to teaching. Fourthly, when a learner has his or her learning outcomes validated it is proven that they are competent in relation to that outcome, thus possibly strengthening the credibility of qualifications in the labour market. In input driven systems learners may be assessed as successful across a programme but not necessarily in every area of the programme. Finally, a focus on learning outcomes could, by increasing the overall transparency of qualifications, increase the accountability of education and training systems.

Considerable experience has been gained by some European countries, others are at the very beginning of this 'reformulation' process. Education and training policies in Europe are thus increasingly focusing on the interrelation between learning taking place in formal, non-formal and informal settings. This requires that learning in all contexts and settings is appropriately identified, valued and recognised. An increasing number of stakeholders agree that a general shift in focus end emphasis from learning inputs to learning outcomes is a precondition for making this possible. The shift towards learning outcomes is therefore intrinsically linked to the development of methods for validation of non-formal and informal learning, a field which has been followed carefully by Cedefop for more than a decade.

The described shift towards learning outcomes can thus be understood as a broadening of education and training policies and as an effort to make better use of existing knowledge, skills and competences - be this at individual, enterprise or society level. A knowledge-based society pursuing lifelong and lifewide learning can not be realised if we exclusively focus on learning outcomes acquired within the formal education and training system.

The move towards National qualifications frameworks

Many countries have indicated that the shift towards learning outcomes - and a sub-

sequent linking up to the EQF - will be carried out through the development and implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks. A NQF is defined as an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved (for example learning outcomes) and is seen as an incentive to improve overall coordination of qualifications in a country. It is acknowledged that lack of coordination can prevent access and make progress difficult. The lack of bridges between VET and HE in many countries illustrates this well. A NQF, in particular if it is based on learning outcomes, can reduce these barriers. NQFs can also provide a basis for quality assurance and in particular address the match (or mismatch) between what providers have on offer and what users need and ask for.

The responses to the EQF consultation process show that an overwhelming majority of the countries taking part in the 'Education and Training 2010 process' agree in the crucial role to be played by National frameworks. 25 of the 31 countries responding to the consultation have introduced or are in the process of introducing learning outcomes based on national frame-

works. More than 20 countries have volunteered to take part in the Education and Training 2010 'cluster' on 'Recognition of learning outcomes' - where these topics will be systematically addressed at EU level - confirming the priority given to these issues at national level.

From mutual learning to mutual trust

The impact and success of the EQF depends on the commitment of stakeholders at national and sectoral level to use the framework. The importance attributed to the learning outcomes approach together with the rapid development of the national qualifications framework bides well.

Cedefop can play an important role in supporting these developments. In addition to supporting the Commission in taking forward the EQF proposal the Centre will intensify its comparative and analytical work on learning outcome based approaches and National Qualifications Frameworks. Our main objective will be to provide a strong analytical and empirical basis for mutual learning and - eventually - mutual trust.

Aviana Bulgarelli
June 2006

GERMANY

Cautious support for the EQF

The aims are undisputed - but how are they to be achieved? Social partners advocate a test phase

The aims of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) - to enhance transparency and comparability of qualifications and promote mobility both between educational pathways and within the European labour market - meet with the unanimous support of the German social partners who now intend to plug into the debate on the form the EQF should take to achieve its aims, observing the development process as both active participants and critical observers.

In the opinion of the German business community, the success of the EQF, which the European Commission is currently drawing up in conjunction with the Member States, will depend on the development of national qualification frameworks. Following the proposals put forward by the German Industry and Trade Advisory Board for Vocational Education, the leading associations of German industry believe the time is ripe to initiate an official process of policy development along with the federal government.

In their position paper on the Commission's EQF proposal, the Confederations of German industry emphasise that a comparative instrument of this kind would offer an opportunity to forge closer links between the education and employment systems, make transfer between various educational and training paths easier, and break through ossified structures in national education and

training systems, thus paving the way for the necessary modernisation.

In the opinion of the associations of German industry, the main objective of an EQF must be to promote vocational capacity of action and employability. They advocate the systematic application of the learning outcome approach and access to all EQF levels via different educational pathways, and point to the need for clear descriptors. Moreover, they regard a test and evaluation phase on the introduction of the EQF as indispensable.

This position is reflected by the German trade unions, which also propose a test run for the EQF. In their opinion, the test phase should be accompanied by an EU-level platform with the participation of national stakeholders and the social partners.

For the employees' representatives, the EQF as a strategy to steer vocational training towards a common European labour market must be gauged on the basis of whether it can contribute to quality assurance and enhancement of training. Pointing out that the creation of a European vocational training area must not be based on the lowest common denominator, they draw attention to the high quality of the dual system in Germany, which could offer important structural elements for a European training area, e.g. the perception of training as a social process and the central role of company-based training as a source of specialised labour.

Source: BIBB/DGB/KWB/Cedefop/sk



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The *European e-Skills Newsletter*, featuring the latest news from the field of ICT competences and skills at European level, is published by Cedefop in collaboration with the European Commission (DG EN-TR). The newsletter - in English only - is currently published twice a year, with four editions planned from 2007 onwards. The first five editions are available at: <http://http://eskills.cedefop.europa.eu/newsletter>

Readers interested in receiving the newsletter on a regular basis should please send a short e-mail to eskills@cedefop.europa.eu.

The *European e-Skills 2006 Conference* will be held on 5 and 6 October 2006 in Thessaloniki with the title 'Towards a Long-Term e-Skills Strategy'. This central conference on e-skills, the second since 2004, is to be organised by Cedefop in partnership with the European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry. The conference is expected to bring together 150 participants from European governments, the ICT industry, the social partners, universities and research and other key decision-makers. More details at: www.e-skills-conference.org



UNITED KINGDOM

'Skills Abroad' assesses international sectoral approaches

A new research report for the Sector Skills Development Agency SSDA (*) (see Cedefop Info 2/2005) entitled Skills Abroad: A Comparative Assessment of International Policy Approaches to Skills Leading to the Development of Policy Recommendations for the UK, has been produced in conjunction with the Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester.

The work involves a review and evaluation of sectoral approaches to skills development within a number of mainly OECD countries outside the UK. One of the objectives of the study was to provide international intelligence to support the activities of the Skills for Business network. Particular areas in which this research aims to support the network are in considering potential directions for the future of sectoral skills policies and councils, and how they may influence future government skills policy in the UK.

The case studies in the report are intended to provide inspiration for policy makers and to illustrate a wide range of issues, including best practice, problems encountered and the social and political dynamics of different national policy and practice frameworks. One particular emphasis of this research is to examine the nature of demand-led sectoral approaches and the role of employers within such systems.

The report outlines a number of themes running through the case studies, including: creating incentives and raising demand for skills training; social partner involvement; sectoral systems and economic development; performance monitoring; the changing role of sector bodies; relations with skills providers and national qualification systems.

Structural effectiveness

To achieve maximum impact, incentives for sectoral training must be aligned with other components of the system. Moreover, partnership and collaboration should be developed to ensure that sector bodies are not sidelined by and do not compete with more powerful and well-funded partners in the system. This may require a wider government review of the system in order to achieve balance between various stakeholders.

Sectoral incentives

The various ways of using financial mechanisms to increase investment in training can have quite different outcomes. While levies may be less popular in the UK than in other countries, some overseas examples should provide lessons that may be particularly relevant to UK sectors because of similar sectoral conditions and collective needs for training.

Industry skill needs and the learning culture

Financial incentives are not the only factor driving a higher demand for skills. Establishing a learning culture within the sector is an additional factor. In some sectoral bodies, greater career development among the workforce creates greater demand for higher learning and skills. The SSCs might usefully explore the ways in which they could develop a learning culture within their sector.

National governance and sectoral systems

This study also revealed the importance of national governance on the work of sectoral systems. Sectoral systems located within two-tier governance have very different issues to tackle compared with sectoral systems located in one-tier governance. As the UK moves toward a devolved system of government, there may be important lessons to be taken on board if it is to avoid such problems.

Importance of stakeholder involvement

The case studies show that the involvement of stakeholders is not a matter of who should be involved, but what strategy is most effective in involving those particular stakeholders. Other systems show us that the sector bodies must focus on a limited number of issues of high relevance to the entire sector. There are no readymade answers on how to achieve SME engagement, but it is necessary to develop an appropriate strategy if progress is to be made.

Performance monitoring

Performance monitoring can be used to measure different areas of the sectoral system's work, and can have positive benefits in terms of accountability and ensuring the most effective use of public and private funds. Where per-

formance is closely aligned with funding, some good practices show that sectoral training can be better integrated with the national skills strategy and specific impacts can be evaluated.

Strategic leadership role

Leadership was raised as an important emerging issue in various national systems, but was often an aspiration rather than reality. Most sectoral systems have recognised that influencing skill training is useful, but any progress has to be part of a vision for the entire sector.

Research and labour market intelligence capability

The information role of sector bodies is often closely related to their research capacity, which affects sectoral bodies' ability to coordinate future activities strategically. Within each national approach, there are various views of what role research should play in sectoral bodies.

Industry skills needs and national qualifications frameworks

The SSCs currently have differing relations with the UK National Qualification Framework: some maintain their previous role as lead bodies, while others have few links with standards and qualifications. While different sector bodies will need to take different approaches, a strong link with the qualification framework can be a useful means to engage employers, ensuring that supply meets demand.

Research sponsored by the SSDA is published in a dedicated research series and made available in both hard copy and electronically on its website.

(*) The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) is responsible for funding, supporting and monitoring the network of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). SSC is an employer-led, independent organisation that covers a specific sector across the UK.

Printed copies available from:
Jonathan Sykes, Marketing Assistant, Sector Skills Development Agency, 3 Calliflex Business Park, Golden Smithies Lane, Wath-upon-Deane, South Yorkshire, S63 7ER
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The full report can be downloaded from www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/default.aspx?page=41

Source: ReferNet UK

SPAIN

EUROESTIBA: operational training in commercial ports

Valencia is the leading western Mediterranean commercial port in terms of containerised cargo volumes. However, recent change and liberalisation in the port market has had an effect on its workers, especially the dockers. For this reason the *Sociedad Estatal de Estiba y Desestiba del Puerto de Valencia-SEVASA* (Valencia Port Dockers Company) devised the Euroestiba project for the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The overall aim of the project is to create training opportunities in the port sector.

Euroestiba aims to develop a training model for European port services, with a unified profile for port workers. In doing this, the project will improve the quality of continuing vocational training and will create new training courses, adjusted to the changes in the port sector. In addition, the project will develop a training handbook for trainers.

The project brings innovations:

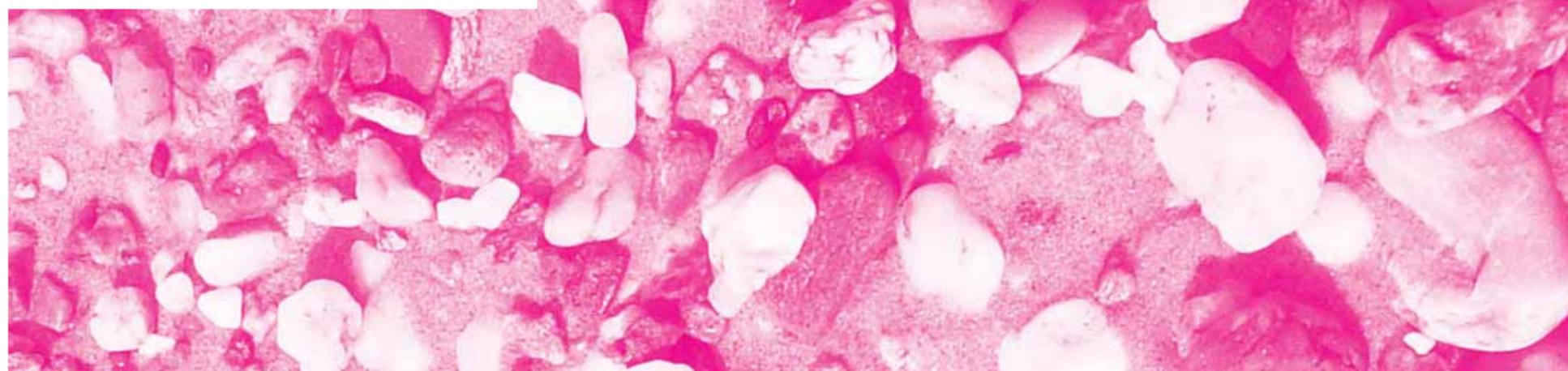
- the approach had originally been local but now it will be European;

- the training courses will respond to the need to identify existing worker profiles;
- the pilot experience will help structure port employment because it will create new profiles in this sector;
- the courses will include new subjects and categories.
- Euroestiba, led by *Sociedad Estatal de Estiba y Desestiba del Puerto de Valencia-SEVASA* (Valencian Port Dockers Company), has the following partners: FEPORTS (*Fundación Instituto Portuario de Estudios y Cooperación*), Livorno Port Authority (Italy), Marseille Port Authority (France), Regional Development Centre Koper (Slovenia), *Organismo Público de los Puertos del Estado* (Spanish Ports Company) and *Fundación Comunidad Valenciana-Región Europea*.
- The *Fundación Comunidad Valenciana-Región Europea* (www.uegva.info) is a non-profit foundation which aims to

strengthen the participation of the Valencia region in the European Union's policies and actions. It also promotes better knowledge of these actions and policies. The *Fundación* has a dissemination role in Euroestiba.

More information can be found at the project website: www.euroestiba.org

Source: José Bigorra,
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Free movement of EU labour benefits British economy

The European Union has embarked upon a series of reviews marking the second anniversary of the 2004 enlargement. The impact of free labour movement has been most pronounced in Ireland, Sweden and the UK, the only Member States without transitional mobility restrictions. Three major studies have been released in the past 3 months looking at the impact of EU10 enlargement on the UK's labour market: the Home Office's Employers' Use of Migrant Labour, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Fair enough? Central and East European Migrants in low-wage employment, and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR): EU Enlargement - Bulgaria and Romania: migration implications for the UK. This article outlines the key findings from these reports.

Labour market trends / statistics (from IPPR)

The government's latest Accession Monitoring Report shows that up to the end of 2005, 345 410 applicants had registered with the Home Office Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), reflecting only 0.4 % of the total working population (lower than Ireland, Austria and Germany). 83 % of applicants are aged between 18-30. The post-accession working age migrants have boosted the employment rate of A8 (EU10 accession countries minus Cyprus and Malta) migrants from 57 % in 2003, to 80 % in 2004, taking it above the non-migrant average.

Labour market data shows that post-accession migrants are predominantly filling the service sectors, e.g. transport, health sectors as well as low skilled / low paid sectors such as manufacturing, hotel and catering sectors. Table 1 outlines the major occupation groups benefiting from A8 labour.

There is evidence that many A8 migrants are underemployed in the traditionally low-skilled sectors. A higher proportion of A8 workers have post-secondary levels of education than the EU15 average. This example of 'brain waste' may have costly implications for receiving countries: if they miss out on the migrants' additional skills they run the risk that future migrants may not be prepared to accept lower status employment.

It has been widely recognised that A8 migrants have made a positive fiscal con-

tribution to the UK economy. Many of the 30-40 % of A8 nationals that would have been working in an irregular manner are now registered to pay income tax and National Insurance contributions, leading to an estimated £240m economic contribution. At the same time, bottlenecks in the labour market have been eased, leading to increased flexibility and increased output in many sectors, especially agriculture and fishing.

The young age and high education level of many migrants has prompted fear of 'youth drain' in accession states. But analysis shows that the nature of A8 migration is likely to be a short-term phenomenon. Many are expected to return to their home countries with increased financial and knowledge capital to fund further study or start a business. The nature of A8 migration to Britain is almost purely economic, with opportunities to earn far higher salaries than those at home. Thus, an economic downturn in the UK should, in theory, result in fewer opportunities for A8 workers. Also, the relaxation of accession regulations in other EU states may provide a wider market for A8 labour.

Experience of migrants in low-skilled sectors (from J Rowntree Study)

There seems to be a mismatch between the (self-reported) skills / qualifications of workers with those required by the employment role. Elementary occupations, such as in catering, hospitality and construction, usually require a minimum level of general education. By contrast, the Rowntree study showed that more than half of respondents had post-secondary education, with 42 % having completed some form of tertiary education.

A8 workers tolerate this mismatch because the trade-off between job satisfaction and remuneration is seen as acceptable. But this is also the reason why A8 migrant labour is often temporary. Many migrants cite the indirect benefits of their jobs, such as customer contact with native English speakers as a tool for enhanced language learning (and presumably a better job later).

Employers' use of migrant labour (From Home Office)

Employers and employers' groups agree

that migrant workers have become an important source of labour, with numbers increasing across all sectors over the past 5 years. Migrant workers are essential in several sectors and are often preferred to domestic labour, notably in agriculture, catering and construction.

The low skilled sectors report acute labour shortages, despite efforts to recruit domestically. Employers are finding it difficult to find UK recruits prepared to accept the working conditions, salary and nature of the work. In addition, many more young people in the UK are also looking to remain in education. But recruitment difficulties in the high skilled Financial and Business sector are due to specific skill shortages rather than a shortage of labour. Employers report many advantages in employing A8 workers, primarily in terms of attitude and work ethic. Among migrant workers lower turnover and absenteeism are lower, while workers tend to work longer and more flexible hours and to be more productive.

For many employers, the only disadvantage is the language / communication

barriers, especially in complying with UK Health and Safety legislation. Some larger and medium-sized companies are providing employees with English language training. The extent of on-the-job and induction training for A8 workers varies considerably by sector, and by the English language proficiency required by the job.

Source: ReferNet United Kingdom

Table 1. Registrations to the Workers Registration Scheme by occupation of interest

Occupation of interest	Registered workers July 2004 – December 2005	Percentage of total registered workers
Process operative (other factory worker)	70 555	21.4
Packer	18 765	5.7
Kitchen and catering assistant	18 255	5.5
Cleaner / domestic staff	14 440	4.4
Farm worker	12 645	3.8
Food processing staff*	12 160	3.6
Care assistant and home carers	9 380	2.9
Labourer	7 305	2.2
Bus, lorry and van driver	6 695	2.0
Crop harvester	5 975	1.8
Dental practitioner (inc. dental nurse and hygienist)	490	0.1

* Nota: Comprend les boulangers, bouchers / découpeurs de viande, poissonniers / désosseurs / employés à l'étripage, ouvrier agro-alimentaire (viande et fruits et légumes) et équarisseurs

Source: Ministère de l'intérieur et al. (2006)

GERMANY/FRANCE

Pulling together for '1 pro 1 000'

Franco-German economic cooperation to extend cross-border trainee programme

The working party on Franco-German economic cooperation is to extend its cross-border trainee programme '1 pro 1 000' to an exchange of apprentices next year. This was announced by the co-chairs of the working party, Jean-Louis Beffa, CEO of the Saint Gobain industrial group, and Dr Gerhard Cromme, chairman of the supervisory board of ThyssenKrupp AG, at the latest meeting

of the Franco-German council of ministers in Berlin.

German firms participating in '1 pro 1 000' take on one French trainee for every 1 000 employees in their facilities in France while their French counterparts in Germany do likewise. This year the focus of the 4 to 5-month programme is on the training of junior skilled workers and managers with an international dimension. So far the ten companies which are members of the Franco-German working party have been ac-

tively involved in the programme and offered more than 100 trainee opportunities. The working party's initiative was expressly welcomed by the Franco-German council of ministers which pledged its support in recruiting other firms to participate in the programme.

There are some 2 700 German firms operating in France with a total headcount of 350 000, while some 1 600 French companies with 270 000 employees are based in Germany. The chief objective of the Fran-

co-German economic cooperation initiative, established in October 2004, is to pool joint activities, among others in the field of employment and training, with a view to improving the position of the two nations in terms of their global competitiveness.

Source: DFAG/BMWI/Federal Press Office/Cedefop/sk

What is gained by mobility projects?

Introduced in Poland in 1998, the Leonardo da Vinci programme has consistently helped to modernise the country's vocational education and training and to promote the European dimension of training. Seen from the perspective of national social and educational policy, the programme is valuable mainly because it responds to the current need to increase mobility and prepare beneficiaries to meet the requirements of the European labour market. In the period 1998-2005 about twenty thousand Polish beneficiaries took part in just one type of project - mobility (1).

Mobility projects provide beneficiaries with an opportunity to acquire new qualifications and gain vocational experience that will make them more employable on the labour markets of Poland and of Europe at large. But do such vocational placements and exchanges actually meet beneficiaries' expectations, and do beneficiaries receive tangible benefits from the exercise? This is the question which the LdV National Agency addresses in its regular evaluation surveys.

The most recent survey of this kind was conducted at the turn of 2004/2005 (2) and covered the beneficiaries of placements and exchanges held in 2001-2002, including HE students and recent graduates. The survey made use of two sources of information: the beneficiaries' reports, including 482 student reports (80 % of the total number of beneficiaries in the evaluated period) and 669 recent graduate reports (91 % of all the beneficiaries), as well as direct interviews with the beneficiaries of the exchanges, conducted two years after completion. The interviews only included 22 % of the students and 16 % of the graduates due to difficulties in contacting respondents as a result of their go-

ing abroad or changing their place of residence.

The survey findings indicate that the beneficiaries had a much more favourable opinion about the usefulness of the exchanges two years after completion than immediately after completion. The majority of the respondents (over 85 %), if given the chance, would gladly repeat the experience, and as many as 95 % would recommend such exchanges to their friends. A definite majority of the surveyed students (89.1 %) and more than half of the recent graduates (52.9 %) were of the opinion that their participation in an LdV exchange enhanced their employability, while about 35 % of students and about 22 % of recent graduates believed their participation in a placement abroad helped them find a job. Moreover, two years after completing their LdV experience about half of the (former) students were already working, of these, 70 % believed their placement abroad played a role in achieving this. Most importantly, they believed that their stay in another country helped them improve their ability to use a foreign language in the workplace, and allowed them the opportunity to prove themselves in a new environment and to address their fear of the unknown. Most of the respondents (especially those who are employed) agreed that, increasingly, employers regard foreign placements and exchanges as a strong plus point for any potential employee. This is confirmed by interviews conducted with the employers of those who took part in placements. However, there is still a large group of employers who refuse to acknowledge the value of placements abroad, partly because the results have not been as yet fully or consistently documented.

The surveys quoted above show that placements abroad produce benefits for those who participate, both in terms of personal development (e.g. ability to adapt to new conditions) and labour market performance (e.g. improved employability). It is to be hoped that by recording such experiences in detail, Europass-Mobility, introduced on 1 January 2005, will help to change employers' attitudes and allow them to better appreciate what it means for a candidate to have participated in placements and exchanges abroad.

(1) Data provided by the Leonardo da Vinci National Agency
(2) Report from the evaluation of the results of mobility projects for students organised as part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme in 2001-2002, commissioned by the Cooperation Fund and prepared by PBS-Sopot, Warszawa 2004 (typescript); Report from the evaluation of the results of mobility projects for young workers and job seekers organised as part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme in 2001-2002, commissioned by the Cooperation Fund and prepared by PBS-Sopot, Warszawa 2005 (typescript).

Further information: www.leonardo.org.pl

Source: Agnieszka Luck, Task Force for Training and Human Resources, Cooperation Fund

BELGIUM

Wallonia - Forem International Traineeship (FIT) programme

Persons wishing to fine-tune their career project, improve their language skills, complete a work placement before commencing a specialised course abroad or simply acquire work experience, can apply for a Forem International Traineeship (FIT) in one of the EU Member States.

The main objective of the FIT project is to provide job-seekers with a three-month in-company work experience opportunity in another EU Member State. The FIT is designed to develop trainees' entrepreneurial spirit, technical and language skills and their adaptability to different company cultures.

Although trainees have to find their own host company, Forem international mobility counsellors can help put them on the right track. The traineeship is assimilated to a vocational training course and trainees receive EUR 1 000 per month.

The role of the mobility counsellors is to

- select candidates on the basis of FIT criteria;

- take care of the various administrative formalities: signing of agreements, applications for exemptions, assurance, payment of grants;
- organise guidance for the trainees with the assistance of a local company player who provides direct assistance to trainees on the spot, as appropriate.

Further information: FOREM - Ligne Mobilité Internationale

Source: FOREM/Sigrid DIEU, Department for International Relations
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New training organisations and programmes

PORTUGAL

New Opportunities Initiative

Government strategy for combating the low level of schooling in Portugal involves providing a variety of courses leading to dual academic and vocational certification under the *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades* (New Opportunities Initiative). This programme aims to raise the qualifications of one million Portuguese citizens by 2010, and is overseen by both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

Two key ideas underpin this strategy to provide Portuguese citizens with qualifications: a New Opportunity for young people and a New Opportunity for adults. For young people the strategy is reflected in the provision of courses leading to dual academic and vocational certification. The 12th year of schooling is taken as the minimum level of qualifications for all young people, and the aim is to reverse high repetition and school drop-out rates.

For adults it is a case of recovering their levels of qualification by mobilising and strengthening the various instruments adapted to the training of working people. This is reflected in promoting the consolidation of mechanisms for recognising and validating skills, in combination with greater provision of education and training that meets working people's needs.

The Ministry of Education is helping to raise the qualifications of the Portuguese by expanding the network of Centros de Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências (RVCC) (Skills Recognition, Validation and Certification Centres). This network currently consists of

98 Centres, 34 of which operate within companies. By expanding and consolidating the CRVCC network, primarily located in particular in-school network coordination centres and secondary schools, one of the Ministry's objectives is to provide an effective response to meet the needs of adults who would like to take advantage of processes for certifying the skills they have acquired in different contexts throughout their lives. This project involves expanding the RVCC process up to the level of the 12th year of schooling from 2006, and when 400 new Centres have been opened by 2010, the network will cover new categories of organisation.

Putting the key skills frame of reference into operation at secondary education level is based on the same approach adopted for other levels of education, the teams that will operate on the ground being trained by the *Direcção-Geral de Formação Vocacional* (Directorate-General for Vocational Training).

In the last 30 years Portugal has laid great stress on providing its citizens with qualifications at all levels of education in order to make up the gap distancing it from many EU and OECD countries. Portugal continues to have low levels of schooling, however, which affect not only the old but also the young: 45% of young people between 18 and 24 years of age are not studying and have an education which is below secondary level.

The education of the population at secondary level is the objective to be achieved and is regarded as an essential condition for supporting the development requirements of knowledge-based economies.

The expansion of the CRVCC to secondary schools will be facilitated by the fact that these organisations have teaching staff who are familiar with syllabuses at this level of education. The only requirement will be to provide further training in the use of instruments specific to the RVCC process.

The New Opportunities Initiative requires a broad-based mobilisation of various stakeholders in Portuguese society, and as key stakeholders in the economic and social system, enterprises have a special part to play. The objective is to create synergies through joint action to reinforce the qualifications of employees by means of mechanisms for recognising, validating and certifying skills and by means of different training pathways that will allow the goals set out by the Government in relation to qualifications in Portugal to be achieved.

Further information: <http://www.dgfv.min-edu.pt>, www.novasoportunidades.gov.pt

Source: CID / DGEEP
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IRELAND

Facing the challenge of improving SME management skills

Poor management skills in SMEs are an acute problem worldwide, as recognised by the OECD working group on SMEs. In Ireland there are in excess of 200 000 SMEs - mostly very small owner-managed micro-enterprises. A recent report, based on a consultancy study by an expert group (1), notes that the success of SMEs is largely attributable to the quality of their management. This study reviews reports from the OECD, UK, EU and Ireland and draws conclusions from discussions with SME representatives, organisations that work with SMEs and management trainers.

Successfully addressing the needs of SME managers is not easy, the report states, and many countries are dissatisfied with their performance. Addressing the skills deficits of Irish SME managers should be an important policy objective. The following seven barriers to management training and development were identified, on a scale of 1

(highest) to 5 (lowest), in a survey with organisations involved in SME training.

The report concludes that the overriding reason there is not enough development of management skills is that SME managers do not think that skills development, as currently available, is worth the cost. According to the consultants, this is because the quality and relevance of training provision is not sufficiently geared to the 'real' needs of SME managers. There is therefore a need to provide a much better range of training, including peer-learning, mentoring and very short courses on basic skills.

Time constraints	1.3
Cost of courses	2.5
Lack of relevance	2.2
Local unavailability	2.7
Key topics unavailable	3.4
Insufficient course information	3.2
Insufficient information on quality	3.7

The consultants also note that the level of service SMEs receive from the State is quite variable, and that SMEs perceive a lack of coherence and adequate co-ordination across Government and its agencies. The Expert Group suggests that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment consider establishing a coordination committee or forum.

The report lists a set of actions that are required to meet management training needs, such as: providing an accessible point of reference on courses and other learning services for managers; inducing course providers - including higher education institutions - to respond to identified gaps; and publicising the benefits of management development through Irish SME case studies that show the payoffs delivered by management training. Many of the actions proposed are already underway but the report asks whether more should be done.

Recently, joint initiatives between State agencies, SME representative bodies and management trainers have been taken on management development, and are expected to cover a number of the needs highlighted in the report.

(1) ME management development in Ireland / Expert Group on Future Skill Needs. Dublin, 2006. Available: Forfás Secretariat, Wilton Park House, Wilton Place, IRL-Dublin 2. Tel. (353-1) 6073116, www.skillsireland.ie

Source: FÁS

BELGIUM

Wallonia - Job Focus: an action plan designed to gain an insight into the skills shortages and take appropriate action

FOREM, the Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment, has launched an action plan to gain an insight into skills shortages and take appropriate action in this field. Objective: to provide a concrete response to the skills requirements of industry and offer better guidance to job-seekers.

Although there are over 260 000 people out of work in Wallonia, Walloon firms are still unable to find candidates with the skills to match certain job vacancies. Why is this the case?

To find out the answer to this question, FOREM was commissioned by the Walloon Government to set up an integrated plan to combat skill shortages. It has now drawn up an action plan designed to provide a concrete response to the needs of Walloon industry and to improve the provision of guidance for jobseekers.

'Understanding' and 'action' are the two key words of this project. The action plan is based on four strands:

- systematic identification and forecasting of occupations with skills shortages: FOREM is to examine 40 occupations over a period of four years, i.e. ten occupations per year;
- transfer of the findings into concrete actions in each regional directorate;
- development and implementation of training programmes to directly and sus-

tainably resolve identified skills shortages: the objective envisaged by the Priority Action Plan 2006-09 is to create 17 000 supplementary training programmes;

- concrete guidance for jobseekers and closer relations with firms with the relevant skills requirements;

How is the plan actually implemented in practice?

- Each occupation or group of occupations is subject to a 'stock-taking' process to detect the causes, locations and extent of skills shortages;
- one of the reasons for firms' recruitment difficulties is the gap between the supply of skills within the workforce and the demand for skills at the level of Walloon employers. In order to reduce this gap, FOREM defines activities, skills and requirements specific to the occupation in question, in collaboration with the relevant sector. This collaboration leads to the development of job/occupation and screening standards to be used in assessing the skills of jobseekers;
- jobseekers in the relevant occupation are asked to attend a skills screening session. Its purpose is to ascertain whether the required skills are available in the job market. Following the screening process, jobseekers can position themselves against the relevant occupation, whereby there are three possibilities: (i) they already have the necessary skills and are in a position to apply

for a job vacancy immediately; (ii) they require supplementary training; or (iii) they do not offer the level of skilling indispensable for the level of employment in question;

- activities are also implemented at the level of employers, in partnership with the relevant sector, to increase the visibility of job vacancies which are difficult to fill. Along with the enterprises, a workplace analysis is conducted by FOREM recruitment counsellors on the basis of the relevant job/occupation standard. Job vacancies are published not only through the various FOREM channels, but also through the press, via a partnership with Sud Presse newspaper group.

A comparison of the screened jobseekers and the job vacancies notified by the employers allows an objective identification of the real skills. FOREM then draws up an action plan to counteract these skills shortages, either in the form of training programmes, guidance for enterprises, an adaptation of the PFI (training integration plan), or simply by establishing contact between the two parties concerned if it transpires that the Walloon workforce offers the required skills.

In order to increase the visibility of this action, partnerships have been established with the press. A special feature on occupations with skills shortages is published

once a month in the newspapers of the Walloon group Sud Presse, with various pages of information on a specific occupation, its skills requirements, relevant training programmes and possible openings. At the same time, the feature includes numerous job vacancies for the occupation in question, while a series of information spots and a special programme on the occupation of the month are broadcast on local radio (Appelez, on est là on Vivacité) on the Monday following the publication of the press feature.

Further details on the occupations covered: www.leforem.be/informer/trv_Belgium/trvBelgium_JobFocus_Metiers.htm

Source: FOREM/Sigrid Dieu, Department for International Relations Sigrid.dieu@forem.be

BELGIUM

Flemish graphic sector initiates a unique training programme

Four large-scale graphic sector enterprises in the Campine region have unveiled a new training project which they describe as unique. A 14-day training course set up by the Flemish Community and Regional Office for Vocational Training and Employment (VDAB), offers low-skilled workers the opportunity to upgrade their skills

to prepare them for another function within the firm.

This training project was initiated by four companies, Spichal, Brepols, Joos and Proost (Turnhout) with the support of the training institute of the graphic sector (Grafoc), the Regional Economic and Social Council (Serr), the Regional Socio-economic Consultative

Committee (Resoc) and the two trade unions, the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC) and the Belgian General Federation of Labour (FGTB). Several months ago, the Proost printing works observed that most of the operatives in the finishing department, mainly low-skilled workers, seemed to have a greater degree of vocational ap-

itude than had been realised and came up with the idea of consolidating the acquired skills.

Further information: VDAB - <http://www.vdab.be>
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Source: Belga/De Standaard/De Tijd

Foreign languages open doors

First nationwide, cross-sectoral survey indicates a growing demand for language skills - increasingly a decisive criterion for recruitment.

Foreign language skills, among the key skills of the European knowledge-based society, were one of the fields of concentration of the Austrian EU Council presidency of the first half of 2006, including, among others, the implementation of the Commission proposal on the development of a European Indicator of Language Competence. A survey conducted within the framework of the 'go international' initiative, implemented by the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (BMWA) and the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKÖ), shows just how high the demand for foreign languages is within Austria itself and how important language skills are for mobility and employability.

The Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw) conducted a company survey on training quality and continuing training in order to pinpoint the demand for foreign language

skills and existing skills in this field; it was the first time that a survey of this kind was conducted for the whole of Austria and across all branches of industry. The survey among over 2 000 firms showed that English has now overtaken all other EU languages and has virtually become a sine qua non in the modern world of work. The demand is essentially for oral skills; written skills (correspondence) are of secondary importance.

Over 80 % of the surveyed companies confirmed that in view of the strong international activity of many sectors of Austrian industry, a command of English has become indispensable. Alongside the services sector, this is above all true of the technical field, IT and software; moreover the demand for English is no longer only to be found at the level of upper and middle management, but also applies to secretarial staff and specialised production operatives. 'It is often a plus point

in business if you can express yourself in the language of your trading partner', remarked Sabine Archan, ibw project leader and one of the study's authors.

Languages open doors - not least to employment. Language skills are increasingly becoming a criterion for the selection of personnel. One half of the surveyed firms said that foreign language skills played a role in selecting their staff; some 25 % even said that languages played a decisive role. More than 60 % of the firms expect their demand for foreign language skills to rise in the coming years. Apart from English, Italian is becoming increasingly important in view of the lively business relations between Austrian and Italian firms. Eastern European languages are also gaining ground. Many companies expect Czech, Hungarian, Slovene and Slovak to show a considerable increase in importance in the next few years.

The surveyed companies were on the whole satisfied with the standard of language teaching in Austria, with universities and higher-level business colleges coming out on top. But companies see room for improvement in oral communication, which is much more important to industry than written skills. 70 % of the surveyed firms indicated that they required their staff to negotiate directly with foreign clients, suppliers and partner firms and therefore want the focus in language teaching to be on oral expression. Over half of the surveyed firms provide their staff with continuing training opportunities for language learning, especially in the form of participation in courses taught by native speakers, or one-to-one sessions.

Source: WKÖ/BMWA/ibw/Cedefop/sk

VET quality

The importance of contacts

A recipe for training quality: contacts between the partners in the dual system of vocational training

Austria was intent on proposing positive initiatives in the course of its EU Council Presidency from January to June 2006, and accordingly opted for 'Quality is the objective' as the headline for its work in the field of education and training. This objective applies not least to the dual system of vocational training. Approximately one half of all training places in Austria are provided within the context of this system which is a combination of attendance at a vocational school and in-company training. Quality issues are accordingly particularly relevant in this field.

A flow of information and communication between the participating vocational schools and the training company are of major importance for quality development and quality assurance within the dual system of vocational training. This is the outcome of a study on 'optimising cooperation between

part-time vocational schools and company-based training', conducted by the VET experts of the Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw) on behalf of the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The results of the study were presented in March 2006 at the meeting of the Directors-General for Vocational Education and Training in Vienna, which addressed the subject of 'Pedagogical approaches to improving quality standards in VET' in line with the emphasis of the Austrian EU Council Presidency on quality in education.

Over 300 training companies and almost 400 vocational schools returned the questionnaires sent out by the educational researchers. Between 85 and 90 % of the firms - mainly those which consider the information flow from the vocational schools as good - said that they were satisfied with vocational schools' tuition. The study showed that the better the cooperation between the two

places of learning, the higher the level of satisfaction of both training partners and, ultimately, the higher the overall standard of training. In contrast, companies which regard themselves as inadequately informed by the vocational schools are generally dissatisfied with the theoretical and practical tuition delivered by the schools. The question however is: how can adequate communication and information between the two partners be guaranteed?

The authors of the study identified personal contact between trainers and teachers, as well as industry-based continuing training provision for vocational schools teachers as key variables for quality assurance. The survey points to existing models of good practice in this respect, e.g. company internships, invitations to events and in-company training courses.

However, the size of the training company plays an important role in the nature and degree of this cooperation. Whereas

large companies with training departments and full-time training managers have ample resources to maintain contacts with vocational schools, smaller firms need 'brokers' to establish contact and ensure that the exchange of information and the communication flow do not wane or evaporate completely. The guilds and business associations in the regional chambers of industry have an important role to play in this respect.

It is only when a sustainable level of communication has been established and the qualification of the participating players is assured that the various information tools and cooperation models can come into play. These range from vocational schools' open days, through joint working parties, to excursions, notifications and talks on the training progress of young people.

Source: BMBWK/ibw/Cedefop/sk

ITALY

Quality assurance within the training system in the context of the Lisbon process

The development of a training quality system in the European context was analysed in the annual report (2005) on the status and projections of vocational training activities, drawn up by the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies, on the basis of reports submitted by the regions and autonomous provinces, as well as input from Isfol.

The report provides the basis for an analysis of the vocational training system from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view. Starting out from considerations on European policies and moving on to the national context, it analyses the issue of the quality of the training system.

At European level, quality assurance in the context of the Lisbon process has led to the establishment of the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET and the dissemination of a Common European Quality Assurance Framework as a benchmark for quality improvement at the level of training systems and structures.

Italy has been an active participant in these activities, and is also involved in the new European network for quality assurance in education and training. However, whereas in

other European countries, training structures are subject to a quality assurance audit, but have a free choice of the actual model and instruments applied, Italy uses an accreditation model defined at central level.

The quality issue has recently gained particular importance in the context of the application of Law 53/2003⁽¹⁾. This Law gives the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System (INVALSI)⁽²⁾ responsibility for the assessment of vocational training in collaboration with the regions, on which exclusive competence in the field of training was conferred by the 2001 constitutional reform.

Quality certification has been gradually entering the vocational training system since 2001, with the agencies applying a number of the minimum quality standards according to ISO standard 9000:2000.

Recently, the various quality systems used throughout Europe (EFQM, TQM, OECD), previously only applied to a minor extent, have become an important benchmark in Italy.

One aspect which requires consolidation is the evaluation of processes and pedagogi-

cal and didactic relations, e.g. the levels of competence of the players involved in the training quality management system. One of the methods most suited to this context is self-assessment, as a set of practices to ensure transparency in the relations between the factors determining training success, alongside external assessment of the training structure by means of accreditation and/or certification by the competent authority.

The principal focus of quality assessment is on training and learning outcomes as the main indicators of training quality.

There are two main approaches to the evaluation of learning: an objective evaluation (by means of tests and questionnaires) and a method based on descriptive models.

The methodologies, implementing mechanisms and roles of the various players have still to be defined to pave the way for a vocational training system for Europe 2010.

ISFOL has drawn up a model for the quality assessment of regional training systems, which was piloted in the Centre-North region, Campania and Sardinia. The system is based on the definition of quality dimensions (strate-

gic training system areas, e.g. efficiency of communication systems, efficiency of monitoring systems, the extent to which provision caters for the needs of the relevant geographical area, training outcomes and impacts on the world of work).

The initial results of the pilot phase showed that despite the difficult contextual situations in certain regions, an ongoing improvement of all the factors relevant to training can be observed and even if some of the regions have not yet begun to introduce the system, it can nevertheless be said that the level of vocational training is reaching a reasonable level of quality.

(1) Law No 53 of 28 March 2003, 'Delegation to the Government to draw up general standards for education and minimum service levels in educational and in vocational training', published in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic, General Series No 77, 2 April 2003, p. 6 ff. www.education.it/normativa/2004/legge53.shtml
(2) www.invalsi.it

Further information: www.welfare.gov.it

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL, ReferNet Italy



LATVIA

Forum enhances links between economy and education

Vocational training policy in Latvia in light of the Lisbon Strategy, a forum co-organised by the National Vocational Education Development Agency (PIAA) and the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Latvia, was held in Riga on 6 April 2006.

Centering on the interplay between education policy and economic development, the forum aimed to establish a continual dialogue between sectoral institutions and educators and to discuss the contribution of vocational training to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy and the Latvian National Lisbon Programme.

Forum participants included representatives of sectoral associations and enterprises, economists, education policy planners and experts from both Latvia and the United Kingdom, including Latvian Minister of Education Ina Druviete and the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority expert on international research and strategy, Tom Leney.

In her opening address, PIAA Director Dita Traidas said: "Human resource development from 2007 to 2013 will be able to access an unprecedented amount of investment finance from the EU Structural Funds. Therefore the establishment of dialogue and the development of a common understanding about the contribution of education policy to the creation of a knowledge-based economy today are even more important than in the year 2000, when Europe agreed upon the Lisbon Strategy". The UK Ambassador to Latvia, Ian Bond, seconded Ms Traidas' statement on several points.

During the forum, education, economics and sectoral experts gave presentations on the role of education in the development of a knowledge-based, competitive economy and debated the reciprocal impact of vocational training and business, strategies for investment support, and necessary improvements in planning and implementing education. The overall objective of this high-level forum was to arrive at a common understanding of what must be done so that education reforms do not remain a string of loosely connected policy papers, strategies, initiatives or pilot projects, but become a consolidated action plan for the achievement of change. This requires allies and partners to develop a common vision and share a common

understanding of the tasks to be performed. Latvian education suffers from a lack of coordination between the different strands of the educational and economic system. A company cannot be made to offer internships to students if it sees no benefit from this. Enterprises cannot be asked to certify what students have learned in school if no one has asked what entrepreneurs consider worthy of certification. Education policy makers cannot be asked to ensure training provision that can face up to the dynamics of the labour market if they lack access to analysis, forecasts or conclusions on these dynamics.

PIAA Director Dita Traidas said: "Rather than complain about the lack of resources needed to realise a qualitative leap, the education system has been given an opportunity, through this forum, to join an alliance of education specialists, policy planners, decision makers and sectoral experts to jointly determine the most significant areas in which to invest energy, resources and efforts. For too long we have each been working on our own. We can no longer afford to continue in this manner. We must listen to sectoral experts, economists, education experts and think about what we need from each other, so that systems do not function in isolation. ESF investment in people and systems that ensure human resource development will give results only if we elaborate a well thought-out, deliberate



British Council Expert Adrian Clark-Morgan, minister of Education and Science I. Druviete and ambassador of Great Britain I. Bond at the launch of the Forum.
Photo: AFI

approach and clear tasks for the use of such great resources."

Further information: Agency for vocational education development (PIAA), Latvia: www.piaa.gov.lv

Source: Inita Blatchford, Public Relations PIAA, tel. (371) 7814326, inita.blacforda@piaa.gov.lv



Director of Vocational Education Development Agency Dita Traidas opening the Forum

Photo: AFI



The experts of the Forum: Director of Vocational Education Development Agency Dita Traidas, expert of UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Tom Leney, Member of the Association of Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking Industries of Latvia Baiba Medne and executive director of Latvian Forest Industry Federation Harijs Jordans.

Photo: AFI

Formation professionnelle



SPAIN

Integrated vocational training centres

In December 2005, the government issued the provisions regulating the basic requirements of the integrated vocational training centres. Although these centres were established by Organic Law 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Training, their characteristics, functions, typology and operating rules had so far not been defined.

The integrated centres are to deliver all the training provision leading to vocational training certificates and certificates of vocational aptitude stipulated by the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications.

The centres will deliver modular and flexible provision in the framework of existing sub-systems in response to the training needs of the sectors of production, as well as to individual needs and personal expectations of career advancement. In this context, the centres will facilitate the participation of the more representative social agents in the autonomous communities.

Training activities will include both initial vocational training, job integration and re-integration schemes, as well as lifelong learning programmes for the active working population.

The integrated centres will also offer career information and guidance services and carry out the evaluation of

skills acquired in the context of non-formal learning and work experience in the framework of the national system of qualifications and vocational training, as appropriate.

The integrated vocational training centres may be public- or private-sector bodies, newly established institutions or the result of the transformation of already existing centres. The educational administration must have the authorisation of the labour administration to transform its vocational training centres into integrated centres. Similarly, the labour administration must have the authorisation of the educational administration to transform its centres into integrated centres.

The integrated centres will be independent in their organisational, pedagogical, economic and personnel management, in the framework of the provisions defined by the competent administration.

The integrated vocational training centres are to draw up a functional project for the centre, establishing its organisational system, management procedure, draft curricula for the training cycles, didactic programming and tutorial action plan.

For the purpose of quality assurance of the actions of the functional project, a continuous improvement system will

be established for each centre; its quality criteria and indicators will be in accordance with the objectives of the functional project and will as a minimum evaluate the degree of vocational integration of students and users and their level of satisfaction.

The educational and labour administrations at the level of central government and the autonomous communities (insofar as they have been devolved competence in this field), in collaboration with the most representative employers' and union organisations, will establish a joint planning model on an annual or a multi-annual basis, for the network of integrated centres within their territory. This planning model will take account of the characteristics of the territorial and sectoral labour market, as well as the annual guidelines envisaged by the national employment action plans (currently national reform plans) to be applied in the relevant field of action.

Source: State public employment service, INEM

Training pact overtaken by employment trends

2006 Vocational Training Report shows an all-time low in the transition from school to training / Federal minister Annette Schavan to focus on comprehensive modernisation of training

The German Minister for Education and Training, Annette Schavan, is committed to moving the structural development of VET forward. She intends to implement a full-scale modernisation of the system, which, among other things, aims to break down barriers between vocational and higher education. In her presentation of the 2006 Vocational Training Report, the minister called for joint strategies for reforms that will face up to current economic and demographic change.

Although the Vocational Training Report shows that the dual system still gives access to qualified vocational training programmes for a majority of youngsters, in 2005 the percentage of school-leavers entering newly concluded training contracts (58 %) fell below the 60 % mark for the first time - and this despite the training pact and government support measures. This figure must be compared with levels still well above the 70 % mark in the early 1990s.

Contradictory trends

Whereas the number of school-leavers reached an all-time high at 948 200 in 2005, training place supply fell by 4 %, that is 23 600 in 2004 to 562 800. The downward trend is particularly pronounced in the craft sector where the number of new training contracts fell by 11 300 (6.7 %). On the other hand, as pointed out in the opinion of the quadripartite Central Committee (CC) of the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), which advises the federal government on basic VET issues, overall employment in the craft sector also fell 1.7 % to 4.6 m in the period from 1995 to 2004.

The position of the CC is that government support for VET is still necessary, not least to promote the integration of disabled youngsters, career guidance and vocational induction. The minority votes cast by the social partners show just how divided opinions in the CC actually are.

Employers: training pact on track for success

The employers regard the second year of the training pact between industry and the federal government as a clear sign that it is on track for success. In their opinion, the slight increase in the number of company-based training contracts - despite an overall loss of 1.5 m jobs over the last three years - is due to the training pact. The employers nevertheless concede that the pact alone will not lead to a sustainable increase in employment and thereby to more training places.

Transfer concept for careers guidance

The employers believe that improving youngsters' maturity for training has to be the top priority of schools. Industry has been offering support in this field for some time by providing careers guidance. The employers' group draws attention to a collection of tried and tested instruments for careers guidance, including cooperation between schools and firms, company traineeships and mentoring programmes, which are now available under the headline 'The training pact begins at school'. Moreover, in order to firmly root careers guidance in day-to-day school life, a working party within the training pact has developed a guide for schools, companies, job agencies and other players.

As the employers see it, opportunities offered by the amended Vocational Training

Act to improve the general conditions for the dual system of training have not been seized; therefore, fine-tuning is now required. They stress that 'the law must allow greater flexibility of apprentices' wages for contracting partners not bound by collective agreement'. They regard the average level of apprentices' wages of EUR 600 as a 'massive obstacle to training' and are in general in favour of cutting back VT-related legislation.

The employers also want to see more flexibility for training regulations. They are in favour of an expansion of two-year training programmes, for which they identify potential in the service sector, and for combinations of occupations, in which a two-year apprenticeship could be counted towards a subsequent three-year training programme. Under no circumstances do the employers wish to see continuing vocational training extended into a 'fourth pillar' of the education and training system. In their opinion, the challenges of the future can only be met with a flexible continuing training system 'without regulation and excessive legal red tape'.

Workers: time for a paradigm shift

In contrast, as far as the workers' group within the BIBB CC is concerned, the training pact has by no means fulfilled its expectations. They point out that, yet again in 2005, not all applicants found a training place and not even a quarter of firms entered into training contracts. 'The political and business communities fail to take note of the re-

ality of the training market' is the workers' representatives' response to a report drawn up by the Institute of the German Economy (IW) which shows that the vast majority of German firms is indifferent to the training pact: 71 % have neither created more nor re-established previously eliminated training places. Without explicitly mentioning the term 'training place levy', the workers advocate the introduction of a financing system which would create more equity between training and non-training firms.

The workers believe that the political and business communities are merely playing for time, given the imminent dip in the number of school-leavers from 2008 onwards. The unions are convinced that this fact will have no impact on the multitude of applicants who remain unplaced from previous years.

The workers' representatives point out that the development of new jobs and the modernisation of existing occupations has not offset the dearth of training contracts. Instead, the growing pace of modernisation has all too often been to the detriment of quality. They therefore advocate a 'paradigm shift' so that the restructuring process can be carried out with more calm and serenity and with more consideration to aspects of quality. This applies not least to two-year training occupations - introduced, as the workers see it, with no regard for the principle of consensus - and which have by no means generated a higher number of training places. Here the workers draw attention to the risk of a 'fragmentation' of occupa-

tions, which would raise further barriers within the vocational training system and between Germany and the training systems of other countries.

Pilot projects as a breeding ground for the future

Whereas in the opinion of the workers the introduction of two-year training programmes with less theory merely lead to a dead end in terms of VET policy, they see pilot projects as the 'breeding ground for the future of vocational training'. They thus advocate more pilot projects as an important driving force for innovation and the further development of the dual system.

Unlike the employers, the workers' representatives support uniform rules on continuing vocational training. They point out that the call for more senior worker participation in continuing training stands in stark contradiction to actual practice, while fragmentation, a lack of transparency and networking deficits stand in the way of lifelong learning. Given the decline in company-financed continuing training, they call for federal rules and regulations, specifying the right to continuing training, establishing equal general conditions and spelling out recognised qualification standards.

Source: BMBF/BIBB/Cedefop/sk

SLOVAKIA

The road to a knowledge-based economy

'Slovakia's achievements and challenges on the road to a knowledge-based economy': This was the title of the conference held in Bratislava on April, 11, 2006, with the participation of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission and Jan Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Culture and Multilingualism.

In addition to priorities endorsed by European leaders - knowledge, enterprises, jobs and energy - two figures mentioned by Mr Barroso attracted the attention of the audience: possible benefits for Slovakia from cohesion funds in years 2007-2013 that are equivalent to 4 % of Slovakia's GDP, and the reiteration of the commitment of the Slovak government to increase investment in research and development up to 1.8 % of GDP in 2010 (after years below 0.6 % of GDP). Macroeconomic reforms have already led to economic growth and the substantial decrease of government deficits, but Slovakia still lags behind other EU countries in building a knowledge-based society.

Interestingly, the initial impetus for the conference came from the American Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic. In the previous summer the Chamber had circulated a questionnaire to its members to gather opinions about the country's competitiveness strategy for the period up to 2010, i.e. the National Lisbon Strategy and the related MINERVA programme (see Cedefop Info 1/2006). The results of the questionnaire identified these fields and measures as being critical for competitiveness: improved law enforcement, regulatory impact assessments, centres of excellence, lifelong learning, foreign language teaching, use of ICT in education, training for

the job market, e-Procurement and e-Government.

The conference, organised in cooperation with the Representation of the European Commission in the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Finance, was attended by over 200 participants including official representatives of 22 countries, journalists, ministers of the Slovak government, representatives of political parties, members of the academic and business world and of think-tanks and NGOs.

The temperature of the conference was raised by the presentation of Anton Jura, President of the National Union of Employers (RUZ) who harshly criticised the Slovak education system. The ensuing debate revealed the necessity of restarting a dialogue between the education and business worlds and of rethinking the reform of the early 2000s (in particular of VET), especially with regard to relations between public and private institutions. But the conference also provided positive examples. The success story of the anti-virus company ESET showed that Slovakia can develop ICT and other high-skills industries, if it lays down the appropriate policy infrastructure.

However, the conference did not adequately answer the question of VET in Slovakia. If business has no tax or other incentives, how can it be expected to invest in training its staff? If the present situation is left unchanged, underinvestment in vocational schools and a lack of quality teaching staff is likely to continue.

According to a 2006 report from the Economist Intelligence Unit 'Foresight 2020: Economic, industry and corporate trends' a real GDP growth of 5.3 % and 3.5 % is expected for Slovakia for 2006-2010 and



Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister of Slovakia, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

Photo: Press agency SITA

2011-2020, respectively (compared to 2.0 % and 2.0 % for the EU15). So far so good; but Estonia has showed that a better policy mix can result in even stronger GDP growth.

In the run-up to the June 2006 parliamentary elections, much money has been promised for building a knowledge-based economy. In fact, this money will be available regardless of the result of the elections. It remains to be seen whether the added funds will be wisely invested.

Source and further information: Juraj Vantuch
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New integrated training plan for the textile sector

The signing of the protocol of understanding between the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies, and the social partners (Confindustria and the Federation of Textile Companies and the Fashion Industry, on behalf of the employers, and CGIL, CISL, UIL, on behalf of the trade unions) in March 2006 marked the launch of the integrated training plan, designed to give new impetus to the competitiveness of the textile, garment and fashion sector. Following the launch of the integrated training plan for the footwear industry last year, the operations of the two programmes are now to be dovetailed.

The ministries of education and labour are to support the roll-out of the two integrated training plans envisaged by two

protocols in the context of the measures designed to promote active employment policies.

The training plan provides for measures targeted towards young people entering education and vocational training pathways, and upper secondary lycees, and adults in employment in the context of the continuing training system. Its objectives are the skilling of young people and adults with a view to promoting the transfer of technological innovation and the outcomes of applied research to product innovation which will lead to the implementation of integration systems within the industry.

The main locations of the textile sector are Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Marche, Piedmont, Puglia, Tuscany, Umbria and Veneto.

The regions are to implement regional intervention plans involving the enterprises, the social partners, schools, vocational training centres, universities and research institutes/centres.

Within the scope of the regions, it will also be possible to operate back-up measures, such as networking between agencies and research structures, the development of guidance manuals, linked school-and-work alternance projects (apprenticeship and company placements), and identification of training requirements.

As far as the plan for the footwear sector is concerned, the preliminary operations for the implementation of the integrated training plan are already underway.

Analyses of the training requirements of enterprises and the relevant industrial loca-

tions have been conducted and critical occupational figures identified on the basis of the data from the training agencies involved and a number of company resource persons from the various areas.

A skills model has been determined for each strategic occupational profile identified in each region of production. This model takes account of the changes under way and identifies new specialised, transversal and basic skills requirements.

The results obtained from the various footwear industry locations will be compared to the data from the textile sector with a view to defining general guidelines for the design of new training pathways.

Further information: www.education.it

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL, ReferNet Italy

GERMANY

New think-tank on vocational training innovation

Top-flight group of experts to draw up strategies for the structural improvement of vocational training

The federal government wishes to secure jobs for the future by introducing a 'new training culture', the keystone of which is a 'vocational training innovation circle' (IC) of high-ranking personalities from the world of politics, the scientific community, business associations and trade unions, leading entrepreneurs and representatives of innovative vocational training practice, appointed by federal education minister Annette Schavan in April. The IC's mission is to identify the key challenges for innovation in the German vocational training system and draw up concrete options for action to ensure the structural improvement of vocational training.

The IC, dubbed by the education minister as a 'think-tank for the further development of the flagship of our education and training systems' addresses four main fields: (i) modernisation: new skills requirements in the wake of changing economic structures, a new training culture in growth sectors and sectors with close ties with the research community and staggered training programmes; (ii) transition management: improving structures of cooperation between vocational schools and company-based training, structural improve-

ment of support measures for the disadvantaged, higher training participation among migrants and second chance skilling opportunities for young adults; (iii) continuing training/permeability: forging links between vocational education and continuing training and permeability between vocational training and higher education and (iv) 'opening up to Europe': the national and European Qualification Framework, the credit point system in VET and occupational concepts.

The IC's deliberations, due to be concluded by the summer of 2007, are to be underpinned by working parties on specific thematic areas in which the members of the circle will be joined by further experts. The ministry of education intends to stage a major conference to present the main outcomes of the IC's work and implement its proposals in the course of the current legislative period by 2009.

Source: BMBF/Cedefop/sk

AUSTRIA

Skills model sets new standards

Austria is to play a pioneering role in the development of educational standards in vocational education.

Austria is to set new standards by implementing a pilot project on the development of educational standards in vocational education in the context of the VET quality initiative (QIBB). This is new ground for VET experts, because unlike the field of general education, there are as yet no recognised approaches for the development of standards in the field of technical vocational education. Austria is to play a pioneering role in this field by developing educational standards for core subjects of general and vocational education in the coming years.

A series of specific working parties has been working on the development of educational standards for higher-level vocational schools (BHS) since last year, with the initial focus on the following subjects: German, applied mathematics, English, economics, law, IT and natural sciences. A further series of working parties was subsequently set up to develop educational standards for the specific vocational subjects taught by the BHS. The work is carried out in close collaboration with Austria's neighbours and other EU Member States.

In initial discussions, it became apparent that the experts considered the development of solution- and action-oriented skills

models in apprentice training to be much more meaningful than standards for specific subjects. Accordingly, the working parties are basing their work on a skills model for a specific occupational field for the full range of technical education imparted throughout the vocational school course - evidently a much more complex task than a skills model for a single specific subject which means determining the necessary breadth of competences, methodological diversity, basic skills and their relevant interaction within a given occupational field. The evaluation of learning outcomes is an equally arduous task as it not only calls for a methodology, instruments and criteria, but also identification of when the training goal has actually been reached.

As this ambitious project calls for substantial resources in terms of personnel and funding, the Austrian experts are looking to cooperate with as many partners from throughout the European Union as possible.

Source: BMBWK/Cedefop/sk

Initial vocational training

SLOVENIA

Teachers pleased with new directions in education

The new Slovenian programmes for vocational education and training have introduced a series of new concepts. Principally, they adopt competence-based learning and teaching, the main goal being to develop students' possibilities and to help students use their knowledge and skills in the real world.

The modular structure of educational programmes is also a new element, with compulsory modules concentrating on transversal skills (entrepreneurship, communications, quality awareness), and optional courses concentrating on special skills for each field.

All programmes are part of the National Framework for Educational Programmes, which takes a holistic approach to learning. What it defines is no longer classroom time but the learning goals to be achieved. Each school prepares and applies its own curriculum, which is defined by both the National Framework and the work of its own teachers. The aim is to implement the goals set in the National Frame-

work in the best possible way for the specific school. Evaluating the knowledge achieved is an important part of this effort.

For teachers, these new processes have led to more teamwork, more cooperation with colleges, greater mutual learning and greater self-confidence. The first evaluation shows that teachers believe that the new concepts are valuable and the new educational programmes more conducive to learning. These are typical answers in surveys about teacher satisfaction:

'This programme has led to greater achievement for students but also for teachers - for their personal growth, for better relations with their students and better teaching.'

'We (teachers) are just now starting to cooperate - until now, teamwork has been very occasional and ad hoc. I have been motivated to think about what students at this level of study really need. I used to leave such decisions to the institutions in charge of the curriculum, but now I look at my

own learning plan in relation to other branches and to specific students. In this way I am able to prepare my learning goals more accurately and to connect these goals with those of other teachers.'

'I am satisfied with the changes. This concept of education connects the various kinds of learning processes much more closely and intensively.'

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Source: ReferNet Slovenia

White Paper maps out necessary reforms

At the end of February 2006, the government published its White Paper 'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' (1) in response to the report by Sir Andrew Foster on the future role of colleges, published in November 2005 (Cedefop Info 1-06). The White Paper builds on recent secondary school reforms, the 14-19 and skills strategies (See Cedefop Info No 1-06), the Success for All programme, and the Learning and Skills Council's Agenda for Change.

Further education needs to be reformed if it is to tackle the key training problems facing today's economy. Many employers in the UK claim to have difficulty finding staff with the right skills; many adults still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills; and the number of young people with a Level 3 ISCED qualification is still lower in the UK than in France and Germany.

The White Paper sets out a series of measures. Adults between 19-25 years old will now have the right to free education enabling them to obtain their first full Level 3 (at the moment the upper limit is 19 years of age). Thus, those who leave school at 16

with few or no qualifications will have a second chance to obtain recognised qualifications, tuition-free. People in this age group who are in low-paid work will also be able to obtain training grants. For learners who wish to acquire a level 3 qualification in a sector where there is a significant skills gap, the government will pilot learning accounts, offering learners a choice of training provider paid for by the government.

Training providers need to focus on two priorities: to fill skills gaps identified by employers, and to concentrate on learners who have the most to gain from acquiring new skills. Quality also needs to be improved. The White Paper introduces four new programmes to attract good teachers to colleges. Providers that fail to improve quickly enough will have their funding withdrawn, while high-performing providers will be rewarded by greater autonomy.

Employers also need to become much more involved in developing new qualifications and courses, an approach for which the Centres of Vocational Excellence already provide a successful precedent (2). National

Skills Academies, too, will work with employers and leading vocational training institutions to provide high quality specialist training nationally.

The Trades Union Congress welcomed the White Paper, in particular its strengthening of the economic mission of FE, its recognition of the role of the trade unions, and its commitment to dialogue with the Department for Education and Skills on collective learning funds. Also welcome are the new learner accounts, Level 3 entitlement for 19-25 year olds, and measures responding to the Women and Work Commission.

But the TUC believes that more needs to be done to ensure that employers contribute to the cost of training their employees, and that the social role of the colleges must be maintained. The unions point out that the pay gap between comparable professions makes the recruitment and retention of high quality staff into further education difficult, and threatens to undermine the Government's goals. The trade unions also insist that they be included in any structural changes to the learning and skills system so that

the voice of employees and learners, is fully heard.

On the employers' side, the Chartered Management Institute welcomes the White Paper's focus on economically valuable skills and the need for greater employer engagement, but it expressed concern that further funding of training for the young could jeopardise measures to improve adult skills. Petra Cook, Head of Public Affairs, said: 'It is disappointing that the new entitlement to free education up to A-level will extend only up to the age of 25. Eighty per cent of the workforce of 2015 is already in employment, but there is little in this White Paper to help up-skill and re-train'.

Further Education provides training, courses and qualifications for people from the age of 16 and over. Employer-led training bodies that provide specialist training in a particular employment sector, such as construction.

Further information:
The White Paper online: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/further_education/

Source: ReferNet UK

CYPRUS

Policies target ICT skills and greater access to tertiary level

As Cyprus is a small and open economy with limited natural resources, human resources constitute its most important factor of production, and therefore its development takes a high priority. The main policy priorities for Cyprus, as stated in the National Lisbon Programme related to education and training, are as follows:

Continuous improvement of eLearning in education at all levels

eLearning has already been introduced into the Cyprus educational system but a more comprehensive effort, co-funded by the European Social Fund, is currently underway. The acquisition of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) certificate is now being promoted for both teachers and students. For secondary school teachers the first four core modules of the ECDL become compulsory, with optional modules also made available. The target is that 65% of all secondary school teachers will complete the compulsory modules by 2007. For students, information technology becomes a compulsory course in lower secondary education, with curricula geared towards the ECDL exams. Beginning in academic year 2006-2007, the ICT skills of third grade pupils (age 15) in lower secondary education will be certified according to the ECDL.

Increased opportunities for university studies

The operation of the Open University of Cyprus by September 2006 and the Technological University of Cyprus by September

2007, as well as the introduction of new departments in the University of Cyprus will substantially increase opportunities for university studies. Furthermore, the establishment of private universities has now become possible following the entry into force of the relevant regulatory framework in July 2005.

Development of better links between skills and the labour market

The European Social Fund will be co-financing action aimed at strengthening the quality and attractiveness of secondary technical and vocational education and improving its organisation, as well as measures to upgrade the apprenticeship system. The Fund will also support schemes for the unemployed, inactive women and school leavers. Two new systems will also be introduced: an appraisal and certification system for training providers and, in two phases (2006-2013) a vocational qualifications system covering a broad range of occupations.

Development of a Comprehensive Life-long Learning Strategy

The elaboration of a comprehensive life-long learning strategy by the end of 2006 will provide appropriate links between initial and continuing education and training. For the first time, qualification standards will be competence-based.

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Source: Human Resource Development Authority

GERMANY

More and more first-time training providers

Initial analyses point to the success of the EQJ programme for both training place applicants and firms

Following its introduction a good 18 months ago, some observers suspected that the federal government's special programme for the introductory training of young people (EQJ) would merely serve to 'park' youngsters in this new scheme, offering them no prospect of finding a training place; others even predicted it would turn out to be a training place killer. However, contrary to these initial expectations, the EQJ has proven to be a success. This is evidenced by the third interim report of Innovation Research and Consultancy (GIB), the agency responsible for the scientific monitoring of this special programme on behalf of the federal government. The GIB report comes to the conclusion that the EQJ is not only achieving its main objective of helping youngsters with particular placement difficulties to find a training place, but has also encouraged more firms to join in the training effort.

This conclusion is all the more striking as the EQJ got off to a rather weak start. Although German firms delivered considerably more than the originally pledged annual quota of 25 000 places for a maximum of one-year traineeships (subsidised by the government to the tune of EUR 192 per trainee per month, as well as EUR 102 towards the trainees' social insurance costs), the initial take-up rate within the target group was

low: only 17 500 places were filled in the first year. However there has since been a reversal of this trend: GIB registered 23 500 trainees by the end of February and the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce as many as 29 300 by mid-April 2006.

The news has evidently spread that young people coming out of the EQJ programme have significantly better prospects of finding a training place. A GIB career development survey among 1 500 training place applicants, half of whom were EQJ participants, showed that 61 % of EQJ participants subsequently entered a training programme, 90.4 % of these in company-based training, whereas the transition rate was 40 % lower among those youngsters who had received no or other forms of support.

The GIB analysis shows that the EQJ programme has also had a positive impact on the training behaviour of German firms. Of the 341 companies which responded to the GIB survey, 23 % had not delivered training prior to their participation in the programme. However, after hosting a EQJ trainee, almost one third of these companies decided to join in the training effort. The behaviour of those firms which had already delivered training showed a mixed picture: almost 30 % of firms reduced and 54 % raised their training quota, whereas the behaviour of the others showed no change. On balance, the average training rate of those firms which had already delivered training rose by 0.8 % within the course of one year; this represents more than one additional training place per company.

Source: BMAS/GIB/DIHT/Cedefop/sk





FINLAND

Guidance and counselling to prevent exclusion

Chances - Developing career counselling services to prevent exclusion of young people is a 3-year project (ESF/EQUAL) coordinated by the Finnish National Board of Education and implemented in close cooperation with the partner organisations: Institute for Educational Research and Department of Teacher Education of University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä Vocational Institute and University of Joensuu.

The project is based on increasing interaction between various levels (individual, organisational, institutional, local, regional, national, European) in order to bring about a systemic change in the way guidance and counselling services are delivered to vulnerable young people - i.e. youngsters outside of formal education or at risk of social exclusion, special needs students, and ethnic minorities. The goal of the project is to offer guidance and counselling services in cross-sectoral cooperation and to create tools to prevent the exclusion of young people from the labour market. The project also aims to generate new training models and good practices that can be applied nationally and disseminated to a wider, international audience.

The Chances project promotes recognition and understanding of individual needs for guidance and counselling from a gender- and culture-sensitive perspective. The collaborative research, training, development and experimental work on creating thematic contents, models and good practices aims to improve the quality of counselling as well as to build up the skills of guidance counsellors. The

primary target groups of the project are staff in educational institutions, experts in various administrative sectors as well as in business and industry. The main results of the Chances project will be, among other things, two publications, research reports, seminars and training programmes, guidance methods, models and tools.

Choices: Cooperation between European EQUAL projects

The Finnish Chances project cooperates in the Choices partnership with projects from Denmark, Italy and Spain funded under the EQUAL programme. Choices partners exchange expertise in multicultural and gender-sensitive counselling. The partnership also aims to devise methods for guidance and counselling of young people at risk of exclusion and for the promotion of equality between men and women in the labour market. The Finnish National Board of Education coordinates the European Choices cooperation.

The goals of the Choices cooperation are:

- to identify differences and similarities in the position of minority youth in the labour market in the participating countries;
- to compare and analyse guidance and counselling practices targeted at groups with special needs;
- to develop guidance methods to encourage boys and girls to choose careers that do not follow traditional gender divisions; and

- to disseminate experiences and results of the transnational cooperation regionally.

Concrete results of the European Choices cooperation will include research reports, good practice guides, newsletters, exchanges of experts and a thematic seminar to disseminate results.

Expertise in research and development of guidance and counselling in the Chances consortium is represented by the partner organisations and their subprojects:

- Institute for Educational Research: Provision of guidance and counselling services in network and multiprofessional cooperation to support students at risk of social exclusion.
- Department of Teacher Education: Multiprofessional cooperation to support the integration of immigrants into working life.
- Jyväskylä Vocational Institute: Developing career guidance of young people with special needs.
- University of Joensuu: Learning partnership in guidance and counselling processes and gender.

Further information about the Chances project and the Choices cooperation: Mr Mika Launikari, Project Coordinator, Finnish National Board of Education, P.O.Box 343, FI-00531 Helsinki, Finland, Tel. (358-9) 7747 7289, mika.launikari@oph.fi

Finland holds the Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2006. Information is available on the Presidency website: www.eu2006.fi

In brief



CZECH REPUBLIC

Schools portal targets wide range of users

Early in 2006, the Institute for Information on Education launched a pilot version of the EDU.CZ portal (www.edu.cz) providing information about the Czech school system. The portal, authorised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, is part of the international initiative European Schoolnet (www.eun.org) which brings together European countries with the aim of developing ICT-based teaching and learning methods. The Schools Portal offers information mostly in Czech, with some basic data also available in English.

The new portal provides reliable information about schooling and education, and a number of useful links to other web-based resources. Information provided is classified by type of user - basic and secondary school pupils, tertiary level students, teachers and school staff, school directors, parents, researchers and academics, public administration and the media. For instance, school directors can find various education decrees and regulations, while parents and students will appreciate school listings. Portal users can also take part in discussions on various topical issues.

In the upcoming months new functions will be added, particularly as regards the communication section. The portal will be fully operational in September, and in autumn work will be launched on the learning section.

Further Information: Czech Institute for Information on Education (UIV): www.uiv.cz

Source: UIV/Jitka Pilbauerová, pilbauer@uiv.cz

Lifelong learning



UNITED KINGDOM

New agency focuses on quality in post-16 training

A new national agency was set up in April 2006, the Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA). Its mission is to lead the drive for quality improvement - to increase participation and raise standards and achievement in further education (FE) and training. The then Secretary of the State for Education and Skills, said: '...A continued drive to improve quality in the sector is essential if we are to meet the needs of learners and employers and ensure the UK remains economically competitive in the years to come.'

The QIA provides advice and support services to help colleges and providers offer high quality education and training programmes. It also works with a range of organisations such as the Skills for Business Network to develop a new national Quality Improvement Strategy (QIS) for FE, which aims to develop an expert workforce, publish performance

information to drive improvement and help learners and employers make informed choices, and provide evidence on quality and standards.

The QIA has been formed out of the policy and strategic work of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), whose research, training and consultancy work continues under the banner of the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) www.lsneducation.org.uk/, a private company with charitable status.

The QIA, an executive non-departmental public body with a Board appointed by Ministers, has now become the single commissioner of all quality improvement programmes, services and products in the learning and skills sector. Many improvement programmes within adult education are also being transferred to QIA. The QIA will work with the Learning and Skills Council, which will focus on quality assurance work, and with the

Adult Learning Inspectorate, whose main responsibility will be quality assessment. This will create economies of scale and bring greater coherence to the planning and delivery of quality improvement programmes.

During the first year (2006-2007), QIA will provide the following services:

- an adviser service that will include a 'rapid response' unit to champion excellence
- a quality framework for improvement suppliers and services
- Train to Gain, a support programme to help colleges and training organisations to work effectively with employers
- A state-of-the-art website, 'the learning exchange', designed to help education and training organisations to share best practice: <http://learningexchange.qia.org.uk/>

Excellence and innovation programmes, including Beacons and STARs (awards for outstanding performance in further educa-

tion and training), support for key skills, quality programmes for juvenile offender learning and the 14-19 vocational learning support programme will also be commissioned by the QIA in future.

Further information: QIA Media Office at Media.enquiry@qia.gsi.gov.uk, or phone on (44-5511) 43 77 65

Source: ReferNet UK

Government sets lifelong learning goals

In November 2005, the Estonian government approved the 2005-2008 Lifelong Learning Strategy. Originally formulated on the basis of proposals made by an expert group, under the auspices of the Minister of Education, the strategy also involved contributions by the Adult Education Council, other ministries and the social partners.

The cornerstone of the Estonian strategy is the idea that learning does not end when a person leaves school but continues during his or her entire lifetime. In fact, the strategy concentrates on the acquisition of learning beyond formal education - on developing study opportunities for adults and on offering solutions to problems and bottlenecks in education and training.

To improve learning opportunities for adults, the strategy sets appropriate goals, benchmarks and indicators. One such indicator is the availability of training. According to the 2005 Eurostat labour market survey, 5.9 % of the Estonian population aged 25-64 participated in training, while the average for 25 Member States was 10.8 %, with par-

ticularly high numbers in the neighbouring Scandinavian countries: 24.8 % in Finland, 34.7 % in Sweden and 27.6 % in Denmark. Estonia's goal is to increase the rate of adults participating in lifelong learning to 10 % by the year 2008.

Besides its overall objective - to improve adults' opportunities and motivation in lifelong learning - the strategy aims to:

- provide flexible opportunities for lifelong learning for all adults, including people with special needs;
- establish a transparent funding system;
- provide opportunities for non-Estonians to learn both the Estonian language and their mother tongue;
- establish and implement a quality assurance system for adult training;
- set up a database on learning and training opportunities for adult learners;
- develop a professional qualification system for employees;

- devise a mechanism for the validation and accreditation of prior learning and work experience.

If the current situation is measured against the strategy's goals, Estonia certainly has a long way to go; yet the strategy is already producing results. Much has been done to offer varied and flexible study opportunities for adults. The implementation of activities such as the accreditation of prior learning and the development of a professional qualification system has already started, with additional funding from the ESF. Steps are now being taken to set up a transparent funding system and to ensure the quality of adult training. The more Estonians appreciate the opportunities offered, the more chances their country has of reaching its goals for lifelong learning.

Source: Anita Orav, Estonian National Observatory, Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development Innove

Consortium focuses on up-to-date methods for adult learning

A consortium of 11 institutions operating under the control of the Ministry of Employment and Labour has started implementing a project titled Developing and applying up-to-date adult training methods. The project, Measure 3.5.1. of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP) of the National Development Plan, aims to implement programmes that will modernise adult training and by extension enhance lifelong learning opportunities. It is scheduled to run for two and a half years.

The consortium is led by the National Institute for Adult Education (*Nemzeti Felnőttképzési Intézet, NFI*). Members include the Public Employment Service (*ÁFSZ*) and the nine regional training centres that were established in the early 1990s as subsidised adult training institutions by the Ministry of Labour.

The programme focuses on three main areas:

Development of programmes and training materials

This area includes complementary programmes such as prior learning assessment, remedial general education, career guidance and re-orientation, job search and mental health, as well as the pure learning programmes and materials. The programmes will be implemented in the same way throughout the network of regional training centres.

In this context training programmes will be developed for vocational qualifications that are in demand on the labour market. More than 200 modular training material packages (including 25 for e-learning) are expected to be produced for special demands of adult training. The programme includes the review, correction, improvement and elaboration of training programme and material systems, the piloting of a part of these in experimental - test and control - groups, as well as their dissemination following the necessary corrections.

Training the trainers: an in-service training model

A precondition for applying up-to-date training programmes is the ability of teachers and trainers to use them. Teacher training must therefore incorporate new elements. The focus of the development work is on elaborating and piloting a separate in-service teacher/trainer training system in the sector of adult training provided outside the school system.

The contents of the continuing training programme primarily cover European Union directives on adult education, tasks related to their adaptation to the circumstances of each Member State, and the theoretical and practical knowledge of training programme and material development discussed above.

Providing an information system

The objective of this programme element is to enhance employment, improve the cost-efficiency of training provi-

sion, improve the accessibility of information on adult training, extend distance learning opportunities, and develop infrastructure. Up-to-date information and search options for training providers, programmes and participation rates will be available for actors of adult training holding various levels of accessibility rights.

The database to be developed in the programme will contain the following information:

- a registry of adult training institutions;
- information on available training programmes and courses;
- data on training provision (based on the National Statistical Data Collection Programme, *Országos statisztikai adatgyűjtési program, OSAP*); and
- various services offered to potential users.

Source: Nemzeti National Institute for Adult Education

Europass Mobility: a premiere at FOREM Formation

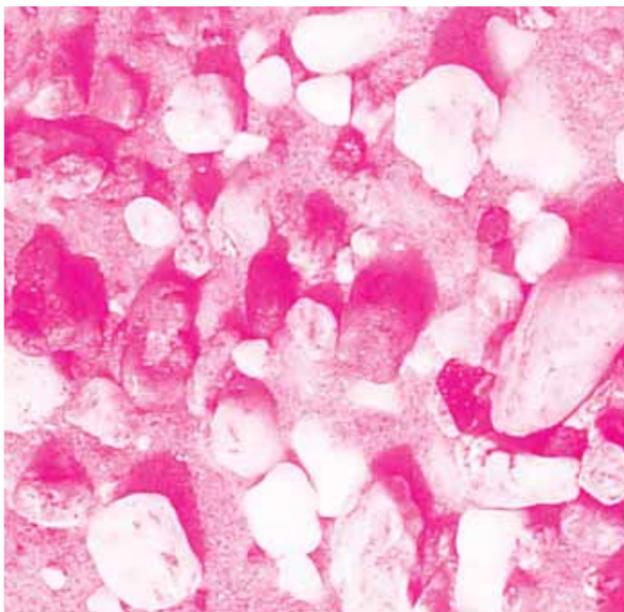
The regions of Wallonia (BE) and Champagne-Ardenne (FR) organised a seminar on Collaborative Working on 8 June 2006 in Lessive in the context of the cross-border project Interreg III.

In the course of the seminar, a team from the association for distance collaborative working - comprising trainees from FOREM Formation Charleroi and continuing training agencies from both sides of the border (GRETA des Ardennes and AFPA Champagne-Ardenne) - presented their working method and the outcomes of their activity in the form of a 16-page A4-format brochure on 'Collaborative Working in industry' to an audience of potential employers, distance training specialists, training managers, trainers, etc. The brochure is a summary of a survey conducted by the association among firms on both sides of the border.

At the end of the seminar, all the participants were awarded a Europass Mobility, a new European document designed to make competences and qualifications comprehensible and standardised in a total of no less than 32 European countries (European Union, EFTA/EEA and candidate countries) and promote mobility within Europe.

FOREM Training is the first agency in the Wallonia Region to award this new European document.

More information at www.europass.cedefop.eu.int or contact andree.hougardy@forem.be and/or marianne.hennaut@forem.be





GREECE

Training for prisoners takes a practical slant

For the past two years, OEEK, in conjunction with the Ministry for Education and the Ministry of Justice have been implementing a programme aiming at the smooth rehabilitation of young offenders. Two Vocational Training Institutes (IEK), both of which train lower secondary school graduates up to Isced Level 3, have been operating for the last eighteen months in correctional facilities - Avlona reform school and the women's ward of Korydallos prison. In both cases, the prisoners' response has been satisfactory and has demonstrated the desire of people at the fringes of society to achieve their reintegration.

The relevant Ministerial Decision, made official in July 2005, was the product of cooperation between OEEK and the Ministries. The courses offered are Assistant Confectioner (Korydallos IEK) and 'Assistant Cook' (Avlona IEK). It was decided that the fees, amounting to 150 euros per semester per trainee, would be paid by the Ministry of Justice.

In Avlona, the course began in the fall semester of 2005 with twelve trainees for a total of 224 hours. 54 % of the training took place in the workshop, with theoretical training in the classroom making up the balance. Theoretical coursework included Food Quality, Elements of Tourism Legislation, Health and Safety, and Technical Installations. In addition, trainees received training in practical arithmetic and computer use. Six trainers were employed during the first semester, ending February 2006. Of the original 12 trainees, six enrolled in the second semester; the rest were either released from prison or had failed to attend the requisite number of classes during the first semester. The second semester devotes a greater proportion of time (60 %) to practical workshop training than the first. Classroom-based teaching includes Elements of Hotel Management, Principles of Costing and Accounting, and Stock Management. Mathematics and computer training continue in the second semester. Similarly, the Assistant Confectioner pro-

gramme at the women's ward in Korydallos prison is geared toward practical training, devoting 70 % of course time to workshops. Fifteen prisoners enrolled, nine of whom proceeded to the second semester. Eight trainers were employed to teach subjects of the first semester and ten in the second. Classes meet three times a week.

With these programmes, OEEK has given offenders a helping hand in order to help them successfully rejoin society. We expect the first graduates of this programme at the end of the current semester and hope to be able to report a high success rate.

Source: OEEK

GERMANY

Individualised support for the disadvantaged

New support structures to focus on skills planning and ongoing guidance

The ministry of education is to overhaul its special programme for the integration of disadvantaged groups in the course of the year with a view to improving the prospects of young people with poor starting chances. This was announced by the Federal Minister for Education and Training, Annette Schavan, in the VET magazine of the chambers of industry and commerce, 'position'. 'We are not doing justice to young people who have practical talents if we simply let them carry on at school: what is needed is individualised support', said the minister.

The Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) confirms that support measures for disadvantaged young people are 'a matter of the highest urgency'. This statement comes in reaction to the latest figures which show that every tenth young person leaves school without a formal qualification, while 15 % of

20 to 29-year-olds and more than one third of young people from a migrant background have no formal vocational training qualifications. A review of the implementation of the BLK recommendations on improving cooperation in the field of support for the disadvantaged issued four years ago produced sobering results.

The study comes to the conclusion that the transparency of the support structures 'still leaves much to be desired'. The multitude of partly overlapping individual projects, pooling programmes and cooperation agreements make it virtually impossible to identify overarching structures. Rather than introducing supplementary schemes, the BLK insists that it is imperative to shore up and target the deployment of existing support measures. The measures have to be better pooled and coordinated and their transparency enhanced.

The series of pilot projects entitled 'Development initiative: new support structures for young people in special need

of support', implemented in conjunction with the Federal Employment Agency (BA), comes to similar conclusions and has provided the basis for a new technical concept whose core elements include individualised support and skills reviews. Individual skills planning builds on an analysis of aptitude, while ongoing educational guidance seeks to lead the client towards the agreed objective. Existing programmes - job induction, initial training and second-chance training - are to be better dovetailed. The players hope that skilling programmes based on cooperation, catering for clients' specific needs and implemented as close to industry as possible will provide disadvantaged young people with a higher level of skilling and thus improve their prospects of integration.

Source: BLK/Federal Employment Agency/BMBF/BIBB/Cedefop/sk

BELGIUM

Attractive training tools to develop entrepreneurial spirit among youth

Those working with young people (aged 15 to 19), in particular disadvantaged young people and those with negative experiences of school, will be aware of the need to adopt alternative approaches to education and training for this target group. At the same time, it is indispensable to recognise young people's strengths and build on them to develop a positive approach.

The Sabien project ⁽¹⁾ is a transnational partnership involving educational and training bodies from seven European countries. Sabien encourages the creation of new training modules establishing a link between social and life skills and entrepreneurial spirit for young people in apprenticeships, alternative education and vocational training programmes. In order to encourage young people and to develop their social and entrepreneurial (relational) skills, the objective of SABIEN is to examine the quality and relevance of educational materials and training methods for educational courses centred on the social dimension.

Objectives of the training modules

The main objective is to develop new or update existing materials for young people in alternative education programmes. Seven themes, namely citizenship, communication, cultural awareness, the environment, health, the job market, and life skills, are addressed in modules on social, community (citizenship) and life skills, with a view to stimulating personal creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit to promote motivation and self-esteem among the young peo-

ple. The modules have been designed to stimulate young people's potential for self-organisation and creativity by improving their personal entrepreneurial spirit.

The training modules are designed to be more interactive than many current training materials. Moreover, by optimising the effective deployment of ICT resources in the training materials, they give young people an opportunity to apply and use their basic ICT skills. Previous studies and projects at European level have ascertained that young people react positively to creative learning situations and that full advantage has not been taken of computers and software programmes as an opportunity for delivering innovative or motivating forms of learning.

Transnational partnership

The project partners - Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Northern Ireland, Poland and Portugal - bring a range of expertise in working with young people aged 15 to 20, most of whom have become disengaged from or disenfranchised within traditional or mainstream education programmes.

The partners initially identified three key phases of activity:

- Needs assessment: identification of key competences and the relevant thematic areas for the content of a module
- Development of a set of training modules centred on social, community (citizenship) and life skills

- A pilot project and an evaluation of training modules with the young people and trainers/project leaders.

The results of the first two phases are presented below.

Assessment of skills needs

An assessment of skills needs was carried out in the seven partner countries, involving not only the trainers and leaders working with the young people, but also the young people themselves. The approach was developed from the results of a previous European project ⁽²⁾ which drew up an 'entrepreneurial profile' based on the principle that self-organisation and creativity are the keystones to an entrepreneurial spirit.

⁽¹⁾ The Sabien project (Successful Apprenticeship Building on ICT and Entrepreneurial Needs) is co-funded by the European Leonardo da Vinci programme.

⁽²⁾ The MEET/STEP project (co-funded by the EQUAL programme).

Further information: www.sabien.org

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UNITED KINGDOM

TUC launches workplace learning initiative

Chancellor Gordon Brown joined leading union and education representatives and employers on May, 2 for the launch of unionlearn, the new TUC (Trades Union Congress) workplace learning initiative, which brings together TUC education, learning services and skills research.

Speakers at the launch include the Chancellor, Education Secretary, Ruth Kelly, and TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber. The event attracted over 500 of the leading figures from trade unions, employers, universities and colleges, as well as individual learners and people already involved in union-sponsored learning schemes.

The project will be delivered through the six English TUC regions, with Scotland launching its own similar initiative. It will complement union-specific projects and support a network of learning centres based in colleges, at workplaces and union offices across England. Online learning opportunities will also be available through www.unionlearn.org.uk.

Unionlearn will provide support and advice on lifelong learning and workforce development across England and play a key role in meeting the government's Skills Strategy

(Cedefop Info No 1-06). It will focus on literacy and numeracy skills and Level 2 qualifications (Isced level 2/3) among the seven million adults in England who lack basic skills, and will also provide continuing professional development. The initiative aims to encourage greater employer support for training and to strengthen union membership.

The project is a partnership between the Department for Education and Skills and TUC, and the government has provided £4.5 (EUR 6.3) million funding for initial costs. From April 2007, Unionlearn will also takeover the management of the Union Learning Fund, currently standing at more than £14 (EUR 19.6) million, from the Learning & Skills Council, a funding body for English post-16 education.

Unionlearn will also lead the way in providing support to workplace Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), who since 2002 have had a statutory right to paid time off when they need to train and to undertake their duties. Their main role is to raise awareness of learning opportunities and to help workers find suitable courses. There are currently 14 000 trained learning representatives in the UK. By 2010, Unionlearn aims to have recruited 22 000 learning repre-

sentatives, and will help 250,000 workers access learning each year.

Director Liz Smith said: 'For individual workers, Unionlearn will bring opportunities to develop new skills and ambitions. For employers, it will demonstrate the benefits of a better-trained workforce and higher productivity. Unionlearn will place unions at the centre of skills development.'

Further information:

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Source: OCA

IRELAND

Economic and Social Council points the way forward

Over the last years, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has produced national strategy documents setting out a framework to support the national partnership/wage agreements. The latest strategy report was published in December 2005 (1). It presents an assessment of how Ireland should develop economically and socially over the coming years and provides a context for policy analyses across many areas, including education and training.

The Council believes that progress towards an effective national system of training has been delayed by disagreements on how training is to be resourced, but that 'an effective national training system is now an urgent economic and social requirement'. Such a system, it believes, should help upgrade skills in the public, private and voluntary sectors; enhance employability; include significant external benchmarking to standards and a forward-looking perspective.

There have been significant policy initiatives on a pilot or experimental basis which, the Council says, can now help resolve wider issues. These initiatives have set up the key elements required for an effective system: a national framework of qualifications, enterprise-led training networks,

monitoring skill needs, upgrading the skills of low-skilled workers and a substantial increase in funding for training of people at work.

Specifically, the NESC calls for greater focus on people with low levels of qualifications and those most at risk of redundancy. For these groups, the costs of training should be met fully and training leave be provided by the State. Consideration should be given to a 'training bond' for those who have not achieved Level 3 from school. For the wider population, the longer term funding instruments for training need to be settled promptly and an integrated guidance service put in place.

A system for monitoring future skill needs in the public and voluntary system comparable to the Expert Skills Group's (EGFSN) work for the private sector is recommended. Collaboration between enterprises and providers should be encouraged by monitoring and disseminating best practice, as recommended in the National Centre for Partnership and Performance report on the Workplace of the Future (2).

The Government should produce an overall strategy statement for training, helping to achieve co-ordination across departments and agencies. A human resources and skills de-

velopment strategy to cover the wider education and training system was advocated in the FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006-2009 (see Cedefop Info 3/2005).

As regards higher education, the Council recommends that part-time students on relevant skill-based third-level programmes should not pay fees and should be eligible for maintenance grants. It notes that the entry rate to higher education may reach 65 % by 2015, but believes that the era of rapid growth is coming to an end. 'The emphasis will have to shift to ensuring high quality and systematic occupational and vocational training programmes for the approximately one third of younger people not transferring to higher education and to providing feasible access routes for adults of different ages who wish to begin, or return to, higher education'.

(1) NESC Strategy 2006: People, Productivity and Purpose / National Economic and Social Council. Dublin: NESC, 2006.

(2) www.nesc.ie/dynamic/docs/Main%20Report.pdf

Source: ReferNet, Ireland

Cedefop publications



Vocational education and training in Austria. Short description

Cedefop Panorama series 5163
Languages: de, en, fr

Cat. No: TI-74-06-338-EN-C

Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Spotlights on VET: Austria

Flyer
8017
Languages: de, en, fr

Cat. No: TI-75-06-324-EN-D

Free of charge on request from Cedefop



ICT skills certification in Europe

Cedefop Dossier series 6013
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-75-06-421-EN-C

Free of charge on request from Cedefop



European approaches to credit (transfer) systems in VET

Cedefop Dossier series 6014
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-70-05-722-EN-C

Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Innovative practices in the field of training and related professional development issues

Cedefop Panorama series 5158
Languages: en/fr

Cat. No: TI-72-05-176-2A-C

Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Identification of skill needs in nanotechnology

Cedefop Panorama series 5170
Languages: de, en

Cat. No: TI-73-06-631-EN-C

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Review of a peer-learning activity

How social dialogue can help deal with restructuring

Restructuring is hardly a new phenomenon in European industry, but until recently it was driven mainly by the internal logic of company strategies. Since the 1990s, however, the transnational activity of companies - both inside and outside the internal European market - has also contributed toward restructuring, in the form of relocation, offshoring or delocalisation (1).

Naturally, this new dimension has generated research, literature reviews and debate about the evolution of the post-Fordist paradigm (2); but apart from that has also highlighted the need for European and international organisations to support restructuring itself - a phenomenon which has already caused multiple and complex consequences.

The continuous rapid changes caused by technological innovation and fierce competition between companies in a ever-globalising market have introduced concepts such as digital production, automation and flexibility (3), which today are of major importance. In the long term these factors are expected to generate wealth and new opportunities, though there is also a serious risk that they might lead to greater inequality. In the short term they could force restructuring on both business and employees, replacing labour by capital (including information capital) and imposing new forms of work organisation.

These changes must be anticipated and managed by social dialogue and cooperation. Identifying the respective contributions of the social partners can help create a balance between the interests of companies and those of employees. The challenge for the social partners is to help bring about the conditions necessary to support and encourage businesses and employees to adapt to change in the best possible way. In recent years the European Commission and the European social partners have all been assigning increasing importance to exploring what these trends mean for European economies and for social cohesion. Social partner orientations, European Commission Communications and opinions delivered by the European Social Committee have all stressed the importance of supporting the restructuring process through social dialogue (4).

Clearly, the insistence of the social partners that training, skills and qualifications be made part of collective agreements may contribute to building and updating skills, both for the new business environment and for workers who are interested in transferring their professional experience to other sectors. It is therefore crucial to involve the social partners in this debate. Promoting lifelong learning among workers and employers should mitigate some of the traumatic consequences of restructuring.

Gaining knowledge from the experiences of social partners and other stakeholders: findings from a seminar and peer-learning activity

Taking into account these important challenges, Cedefop, in cooperation with the Portuguese Association of European Centres of Public Enterprises (APOCEEP) and

the Portuguese Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP), organised a joint action that was held in Lisbon on 27-31 March 2006. The main objective was to prepare social partners to participate more actively in managing the process of restructuring, and to carry out a peer-learning review in order to compare experiences about sectors or companies that have undergone restructuring and relocation and examine what role training can play in this process.

The seminar that was held on the first day (5) explored different sides of social dialogue as it deals with industrial change in Europe and in Portugal, including training as a means of supporting employment. Both ETUC and UNICE representatives made contributions on the achievements and challenges facing social dialogue as it attempts to support the Lisbon strategy.

The ageing population, and the need to integrate young people into the labour market, are the two faces of the challenge facing the European social partners in the years to come (6). Meanwhile, lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important to discussions and evaluations of the Lisbon strategy: it is a factor for the development of employability that is recognised by both sides of industry.

The other three days of the event (29, 30 and 31 March) were devoted to a peer-learning activity that was based on an exchange of stakeholder experiences on different aspects of restructuring. First, a cluster of countries and sectors was established taking into account the prevailing tradition of social dialogue and the current effects of restructuring in specific sectors. The sectors chosen (car industry, banking, textile and information technology) are all clearly undergoing significant change at different stages, depending on their importance in the respective economies.

This cluster, divided by stakeholder, sector and country, is presented in Table 1 below.

Stakeholders and experts who participated in the sessions expressed their concerns about how sectoral changes have affected employment in recent years. A first overview of the impact of restructuring on sectoral employment across Europe is presented in Chart 1.

As the chart shows, only the IT sector enjoyed a positive balance of employment in the period 2003-2006: the total number of jobs created is 19 730 as opposed to 15 782 jobs lost. In the other sectors, the cumulative effect of restructuring on employment has been negative.

Specifically, financial services and textiles have been most strongly affected by change, each for different reasons. Financial services are more prone to mergers, and the impact of new technologies on internal organisation and client service has been considerable. The textiles sector, on the other hand, has been facing stiff competition from other economies - especially Asian - which, thanks to gradual deregulation, have been able to produce more cheaply than the European sector. Moreover, the European textile sector is hampered by inadequate protection against unfair competition (such as the cloning of Italian styles by low-cost competitors), and by outsourcing

and relocation of production to other countries (the case of the Portuguese textile industry).

In the European car industry, restructuring has taken two major forms: the relocation of factories to Eastern countries, and the falling competitiveness of European cars on the global market vis-à-vis the production capacity of the Asian automobile industry.

Chart 2 offers more detail on planned job reduction and creation by country. Some of the trends explained above can be observed in the balance of employment inside and among countries.

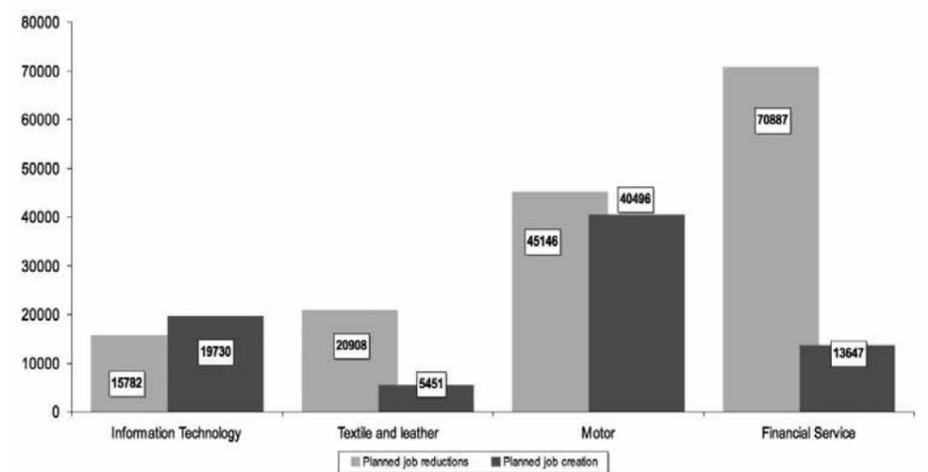
Facing the consequences: what does restructuring mean for social dialogue in lifelong learning?

In the course of this event, many questions and hypotheses emerged concerning the paths to be followed in order to face the new challenges - especially in terms

these issues. Moreover, a distinction must be drawn between internal flexibility (i.e. inside the company) and external flexibility (outside the company). Internal flexibility, which involves establishing flexibility formulas and providing appropriate training, is acceptable; not so external flexibility, which is in effect a euphemism for dismissing staff in order to solve a structural problem.

Flexibility should therefore be redefined on the basis of the principles of equity and security. This would render it not just a positive way of managing restructuring and its consequences but also a good basis for devising human resource strategies. Achieving this would require a consolidation of social dialogue strategies in a climate of mutual trust and of accessibility for all concerned - a challenge for trade unions and for those employers who wish to base economic growth on appropriate human resource policies. In fact, such a social dialogue would require a change in the atti-

Chart 1: Effect of restructuring on employment in financial services, the motor industry, textiles and leather and information technology.



Source: EMCC – European Restructuring Monitor (Eurofound). Announcement date 1.1.2003 to 31.12.2006 and job reduction timeline ending 31.12.2006, and Cedefop (own elaboration).

Note: During this period, total planned job reduction is 874 888 and planned job creation 421 675. The total number of recorded fact sheets is 4 697. For other methodological remarks please see: www.erm.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/erm/index.php?template=help

of helping social partners to develop training as a way of facing the consequences of restructuring. Some conclusions and reflections from the peer-learning activity provide guidelines for action.

- Globalisation is an irreversible economic phenomenon which is accompanied by the internationalisation of the workforce and its knowledge capital. Therefore - according to one of the main conclusions from the seminar (including the social partners' panel) - the development of social dialogue is a key tool for managing the negative consequences of restructuring, as it mitigates the impact of globalisation for both companies and workers.

In addition, it is clear that the working paradigm itself is experiencing rapid change. Flexibility has emerged as a key concept for understanding the new requirements of production both for employers and for employees.

Assuming that flexibility is becoming a structural dimension for working activities, it should be better incorporated into the bargaining process between social partners, especially at sectoral and company levels. Indeed, during the week of discussions the concept of flexicurity took central stage. It is necessary to train employers and trade unions so that they can bargain satisfactorily on

tudes of all parties: dialogue would become a way of motivating all the main actors within companies to develop in a synergistic way. That is why, as already mentioned, developing related negotiating skills for both sides of the social partnership is a key challenge.

- Regarding political and economic consequences, the success and failure of the relaunched Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs will play an important role in restructuring at European level, particularly if there is a rethink of measures aimed at improving the European internal market. Knowledge and innovation are of crucial importance in restructuring businesses, but also for strengthening the European social model. An appropriate innovation strategy is required if Europe is to move forward - and innovation should involve greater investment in training. But apart from dealing with technological change, training also helps prevent or correct increasing inequality.

- Industrial restructuring, though mainly an economic and social process, also has important cultural ramifications. Usually restructuring involves forcing organisations and persons to adapt to new and unexpected situations. The success or failure of such ventures is strongly affected by the

Review of a peer-learning activity

Continued from Page 18

personal, entrepreneurial and national cultural environment.

Participants stressed that a stronger legislative framework regulating market practices in Europe should be explored in order to protect European business from unfair competition from other economies, espe-

cially in important sectors such as textiles. Another important strategic tool for adaptation is a stronger social corporate responsibility, which necessitates the involvement of all actors, including public authorities. Here, it is expected that the European work councils will have a role to play.

At this stage, the role of social partners is extremely important in areas such as the social integration of youth, developing citizenship networks, preparing and supporting workers for other activities (outplacement). There is also much to be gained by transferring experiences of social dialogue from the EU 15 to the new Member States.

Developing training programmes that respond to the needs thrown up by restructuring and relocation is a major task for lifelong learning and industrial relations. Social dialogue, as a tool for promoting learning and wider access to training, is of strategic importance in helping workers and companies adapt to the complexity of the international economy in the 21st century.

(1) European Monitoring Centre for Change (EMCC) uses 7 categories to classify restructuring at European level: Business expansion; Internal restructuring; Bankruptcy/closure; Offshoring/ delocalisation; Relocation; Merger/acquisition and Outsourcing.

(2) For a review of the literature on post-Fordism, see Coriat Benjamin (1983, 1990 and 1991) and the works of Boyer, R. and Duran J.P. (1993) and Boyer, R. (1997).

(3) Some interesting works about flexibility in working environments and transformation of mass production into flexible mass production are reviewed in Boyer, R. (1986); Sabel, Charles (1985) and Sabel, Charles & Piore, Michael J. (1984).

(4) Among other references, essential sources are as follows: Official Journal of the European Union (2006/C 24/ 17); Commission of European Communities COM (2005) 120 final-Brussels 31/3/2005 and 'Orientations for reference in managing change and its social consequences' (UNICE-UEAPME-CEEP-ETUC, 16/10/2003).

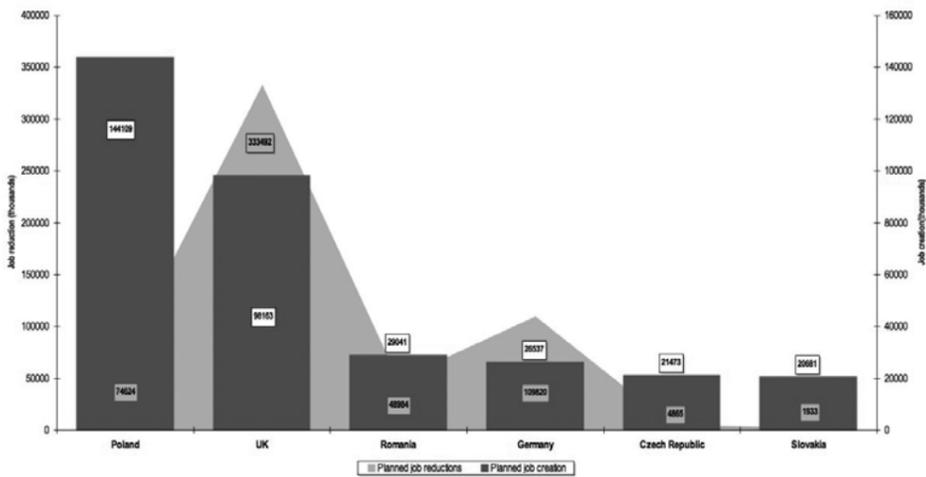
(5) The title seminar was 'Social dialogue as a tool for management of change' (28th march, 2006). Programme and presentations of the complete action are available at: http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?cid=3&scid=81&per_id=1405

(6) For working guidelines, see Work Programme of the European social partners, 2003-2005 and 2006-2008 (UNICE-UEAPME-CEEP-ETUC).

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Source: Cedefop/J. Manuel Galvin Arribas

Chart 2: Breakdown of employment effect caused by restructuring by country



Source: EMCC - European Restructuring Monitor (Eurofound); Announcement date: 1.1.2003 to 31.12.2006 and job reduction timeline finishing on 31.12.2006, and Cedefop (own elaboration).

Note: During this period, the total number of planned job reduction is 874 888 and planned job creation 421 675. The total number of recorded fact sheets is 4 697. For other methodological remarks please see: www.erm.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/erm/index.php?template=help

The Study visits corner

Peer-learning visit discusses social inclusion

'Policies to combat social exclusion for young people have too often 'hit the target, but missed the point.' (1)

Professor Howard Williamson

Vocational training represents a crucial step towards adulthood: it opens the door to employment and thus to full participation in society. Statistics reveal a clear link between lack of training, on the one hand, and unemployment, dependency and poverty, on the other. This means that all citizens need to acquire and continually update their knowledge and skills through lifelong learning - those who fail to do so are at risk of social marginalisation.

As part of implementing the Copenhagen process, the Maastricht communiqué asked the Community Study Visits Programme, managed by Cedefop, to support mutual learning through peer reviews. Consequently the Study Visits Programme has started organising peer-learning activities; three such activities are foreseen in 2006. Their overall objective is to encourage knowledge sharing and promote a better understanding of social exclusion of young people. The Study Visits are expected to inspire participants to strengthen mutual learning and take account of existing good practices in countries sharing similar concerns. In this way, they will be able to develop a common understanding of success factors for the improvement of policy-making and the implementation of reforms.

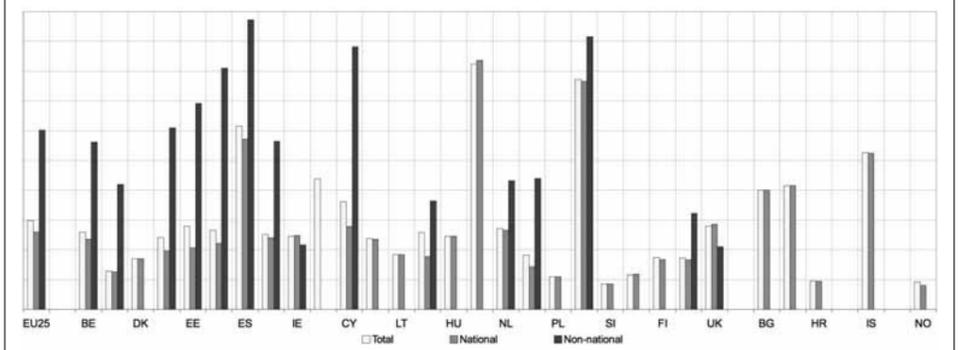
The first peer-learning study visit was organised by Cedefop and the European Commission, in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the German national liaison institution of the Study Visits Programme InWent gGmbH, (Capacity Building International) on March 6-9, 2006, in Bonn. The title was 'Vocational integration of disadvantaged young peo-

ple'; the focus was on Germany and the ten participating countries (Cyprus, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom). Bringing together representatives from ministries and government agencies as well as practitioners and experts designated by the Directors General for Vocational Training, the visit focused on identifying and analysing existing policies and initiatives undertaken at national level which aim to promote the social and labour market integration of young disadvantaged people. By identifying and analysing good example of practices at national level, the participants would be able to identify reasons for the success or failure of present policies.

The target group was disadvantaged young people: low-skilled youngsters from vulnerable groups facing labour market and social exclusion. More concretely, we focused on youngsters facing social exclusion, migrants (especially second and third generation), the disabled, underage mothers, school dropouts, young offenders, and young people with a difficult family background. In the words of John Monks, General Secretary of the ETUC: 'When we leave millions of unqualified young people idle...we are putting brakes on Europe's economic growth'.

The peer-learning study visit offered the opportunity to better understand and assess the challenges and problems faced by countries in implementing selected priorities, to identify good practice and effective policies and to provide new data, ideas and recommendations that can be exploited further by participative countries. The group tried to identify ways and ideas that can help close the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged young people by creating a second-chance institutional framework for dropouts.

Share of early school leavers by nationality, 2005 (Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with only lower-secondary education and not in education or training, by nationality, 2005)



	EU25	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
Total	14.9	13.0	6.4	8.5	12.1	14.0	13.3	30.8	12.6	12.3	21.9	18.1	11.9	9.2	12.9	12.3
National	13.0	11.8	6.3	8.5	9.8	10.3	11.1	28.6	12.0	12.4	-	13.9	11.8	9.2	8.9	12.3
Non-national	30.1	28.1	21.0	-	30.5	34.6	40.5	48.6	28.2	10.8	-	44.1	-	-	18.2	-

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
Total	41.2	13.6	9.1	5.5	38.6	4.3	5.8	8.7	8.6	14.0	20.0	20.8	4.8	-	26.3	-	4.6
National	41.8	13.3	7.2	5.5	38.3	4.3	5.9	8.4	8.3	14.3	20.0	20.8	4.7	-	26.2	-	4.0
Non-national	-	21.6	22.0	-	45.8	-	-	-	16.1	10.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Data source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2005

Additional notes:

- Cells with '-' represent data either not reliable or not available.
- The reliability of the share of non nationals is used for both rates.
- Due to implementation of harmonised concepts and definitions in the survey, breaks in the time series: CZ, DK, EL, FR, IE, CY, LU, HU, AT, SI, SK, FI, SE, IS NO (2003), BE, LT, MT PL, PT, RO (2004) and ES (2005).
- DE: data for 2004
- LU, MT and the UK (2005) provisional data

At national level, the main actors working to improve the vocational integration of disadvantaged young people, along with social partners and/or the community services, tend to be the Ministries of Education (Latvia, Hungary, Cyprus, Romania) or other bodies set up by the Ministry. The involvement of NGOs is limited, due to lack of, or difficult access to, public and private funding. Such obstacles discourage the development of pri-

vate initiatives to support ways of integrating young disadvantaged people through VET. Yet such initiatives - from NGOs, resource centres, second chance programmes,

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Peer-learning visit discusses social inclusion

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guidance and counselling centres - can ensure the next generation of skilled workers by helping young people who initially do badly in school, or who only appear to have learning difficulties, to obtain the qualifications required by the labour market. The task of vocational assistance programmes is thus to turn disadvantaged young people into qualified employees

During the discussion we also tried to identify policies that support the social inclusion of the young disadvantaged people through VET at all levels: national, regional and local. As employment opportunities are increasingly dependent on good vocational qualifications, untrained youngsters face a particularly tough situation. For this reason, one of the objectives of education policy is to secure access to vocational training for all young people.

Clearly, policies should switch from problem identification to problem-solving. But in every country, the challenges and barriers to turning policy into practice are due to various factors: level of reforms in VET, cultural barriers and social background, lack of programmes tailored to young persons' needs, lack of appropriate initiatives and programmes, inefficient cooperation between schools, parents and the young disadvantaged, misidentification of the needs of target groups, etc. It must be said that while in the old Member States the problems mostly concerned implementation at local and regional level, in the new Member States the problems cover a broader spectrum. But in general, it is necessary for policy-makers to ensure that the policies and means intended to support the young (mission, ways of implementation, methods, systems), are clear, consistent, coherent and coordinated with other agencies and activities at regional and local level. Other desirable qualities include pattern, predictability, effectiveness and accessibility.

The peer-learning study visit came up with a few good practices that can increase the role of VET in promoting social inclusion. The most relevant was the well-known success story of Wiesbaden detention centre. Some of the successful tools mentioned during the PLA included competence assessment tools (used also in the case of the prison from Wiesbaden) and networking.

Mentoring is seen as a tool to support young offenders or those at risk of offending, as well as young people living in extremis (poverty, alcohol, drugs, violence and low expectations). Many young people in such circumstances are passive and do not see themselves as actors in their own lives. The key beneficial multipliers are good family relations and social networks.

Since migrants represents one of the most vulnerable groups of disadvantaged young people, more attention should be paid to their empowerment. Here, implementing more efficient competence assessment tools can help individuals to become aware of their own potential, and provide recognition of this potential within the school system.

Creating networks, especially between companies and schools at all levels (national, regional, local) could encourage enterprises to support young people by providing in-company training.

To provide more 'food for thought' on this topic, we invite you, the readers, to send us your comments and suggestions, or examples of good practices.



Visit of the Internationaler Bund GmbH, a training center for young people with and without a school certificate who learn basic social and industrial skills in order to improve their life and job perspectives

An example of good practice: The case of Wiesbaden Detention Centre

'A range of themes has recurred across Europe over the past 20 years. It includes social reproduction, the dominance of pathological analyses and responses and the challenge of mainstreaming models of best practice. We are

As many prisoners have insufficient German language skills, most qualification courses concern language.

- The prisoners are able to qualify for a secondary school certificate.
- Those who have a school leaving certificate and fulfil certain other conditions may take a regular vocational training

**WENN DRUCK KEINEN AUSDRUCK
FINDEN KANN, WIRD DARAUS GEWALT.**



Photo: JVA Wiesbaden

over-reliant on heroism to deal with disadvantage. We must reassess notions of 'risk' and 'prevention'. We need to build social capital.' (2)

During the peer-learning study visit, the group visited Wiesbaden Detention Centre, where they were introduced to the pilot project 'New Approaches to Vocational Training for Young Migrants - Enhancing Reintegration opportunities for young prisoners'. This project runs from September 2002 until August 2006 and is financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The aim of the project is to offer the prisoners vocational qualifications in order to make it easier for them to enter the job market after their release.

About 370 male prisoners at the age of 20-24 are imprisoned in the Wiesbaden Detention Centre. About 50-70 % of them are foreigners from more than 40 different countries. About 46 % of the prisoners have no school leaving certificate, only 6 % have completed a course of vocational training and just 3 % were in steady employment before being imprisoned. Above all, over 40 % had a drug dependency - indicating that most prisoners belong to groups whose several disadvantages lead to exclusion from the job market.

The first part of the project is a competence assessment, to evaluate the skills and knowledge of the prisoners, and which takes into account their special experiences due to their cultural background. Assessments used are the manual skills / motor aptitude test hamet2, a school test, monitoring of behaviour and a single case analysis MIVEA.

Depending on the results of the competence assessment, a personal development plan is established and the following qualifications and education possibilities are offered:

- The prisoner can attend various qualification courses. Besides basic skills like reading, writing and calculating, it is possible to attend courses in media and information technology or to qualify for a licence for fork-lift truck driving.

course in fields such as electronics, metal working, woodwork and catering. As the prisoners remain in custody on average for 12 months, the availability of such modules is important: if a prisoner successfully completes a six-month vocational training course, he can receive an official certificate of the chamber.

- Those prisoners who have not chosen a career path are able to acquire insight into different trades and learn some basic skills.

After the release of the prisoners, transition management offers them guidance and counselling during a period of 6 months in order to help them to reintegrate into society. The aim is to find a training placement allowing prisoners to complete the course they started in prison, or alternatively to help them find a job. This is a particularly challenging aspect of the project; the help of cooperation partners such as labour agencies, companies and volunteers is necessary. For this project to be truly successful it will be important to enlarge such networks in order to help achieve the reintegration of prisoners of migrant background.

(1) Cedefop, Synthesis of the Maastricht study, 2004: 'Almost 16 % of young people in the EU still leave school early, reflecting only slight progress towards the EU 2010 benchmark of 10 %. Nearly 20 % of 15 years - olds continue to have serious difficulty with reading literacy, reflecting no progress since 2000 against the EU benchmark of reducing the share by one fifth. 77 % of 18-24 years olds complete upper-secondary education, still far from the EU benchmark of 85 %, despite good progress in some countries.'

(2) Comments belonging to one of the participants.