

Europe, like Alice, must run fast just to keep in place

Special Agora identifies obstacles on the road to achieving Lisbon goals

In the past decade, the EU's Member States have been increasingly willing to act together in education and training and have made substantial progress toward implementing the strategy enunciated at the Lisbon Council of March 2000. But if Europe is to have any hope of becoming the world's pre-eminent knowledge economy by 2010, the common effort will have to be much greater. Europe today finds itself in a rather dispiriting position that recalls the Red Queen's rebuke to Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass*: it must run just to stay where it is in terms of global competition - and run much faster if it is to achieve its ambitious Lisbon goals.

This was the gist of the Special Agora, *The future begins in the past*, with which Cedefop celebrated 30 years since its establishment and the 10th anniversary of its move to Greece. Participants were as one in agreeing that Cedefop can offer valuable help to all players - the European Commission, Member State governments, social partners, teachers and trainers, researchers, and citizens - in seeking VET-related solutions that are at once economically effective and socially acceptable.

The Special Agora began with a video message from Ján Figel¹, EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, who extolled Cedefop's contribution to the development of a EU-wide policy for vocational training and assured the Centre of his continued support. Three panel discussions followed. The first, chaired by DG EAC's Marta Ferreira-Lourenco, examined the political and institutional background by looking at the history of VET and the prospects for the development of lifelong learning in the EU. The second, chaired by Peter Thiele, Vice-Chairman of Cedefop's Governing Board, presented research underpinning the case for building skills in Europe. Finally, the third panel, chaired by Klaus van der Pas, Director-General of DG Education and Training, looked into the question of investing in vocational training.

Outlining the **history of EU policy in vocational training**, Luce Pépin of the European Commission's Unit for the Coordination of Lifelong Learning Policies, demonstrated how education and training, from very different starting points, have come closer together in response to the growing economic and social chal-

lenges facing the European Union. The founding years of EU-wide cooperation (1971-84) saw the first social action programme and the establishment of Cedefop (1976). However, the first European programmes to involve education and training (Lingua, Erasmus, Comett etc.) could only be launched in the aftermath of the watershed Gravier case (1985). During the 1990s, the concept of lifelong learning grew in importance, especially with the publication of the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment (1993). After the intergovernmental Bologna process (1999) made the case for greater convergence in higher education, it became clear that more continuity was needed in establishing priorities for education and training than what the revolving Council presidency could ensure. By setting out concrete common indicators and defining common goals, the Lisbon process represents an important departure from the fragmentation that usually typifies areas of subsidiarity. EU cooperation in the fields of education and training, concluded Pépin, now possess strong and coherent instruments, but implementation remains difficult.

Peter Lauener of the UK's Department of Education and Skills reminded the au-

dience of the major changes that have occurred since 1975, the year Cedefop was founded: Europe was divided; the only computers were large mainframes; work was permanent and full-time. Today, by contrast, we have globalisation, PCs, mobile phones, the Internet, a sin-

Europe's problem today, Lauener believes, **is as much external as internal/demographic**. The new Asian powers are all investing heavily in education and training at all levels. In Europe, too, qualification levels are rising, but not quickly enough. 'We cannot rely on each suc-



Johan van Rens (former Director of Cedefop), Aviana Bulgarelli (Director of Cedefop), Panos Panagiotopoulos (Greek Minister for Employment and Social Welfare), Peter Rigney (Chairman of the Governing Board of Cedefop), Nikolaus van der Pas (Director General, DG EAC, European Commission), Ioannis Valinakis (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greece), Ioannis Sarmas (Member of the European Court of Auditors). Photo: Pavlos Makridis

gle superpower, and explosive growth in China (manufacturing) and India (IT and financial services). Meanwhile Europe's population has aged considerably: almost a quarter of Europeans are now over 65.

ceeding generation being more qualified', he said, but must instead find ways to give more education and training to adults. At the same time, our competitive advantage lies clearly 'at the value-added

Continued on page 2

Eminent policy-maker and researcher takes the helm

Aviana Bulgarelli, who has had a distinguished career as a researcher and policy-maker in the field of vocational training, has been appointed 5th Director of Cedefop. She succeeds Johan van Rens, whose 11-year term of office came to an end on 30 September 2005.

Ms Bulgarelli served as Director-General for Guidance and Vocational Training Policies at the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2002-2005). During this time, she was in charge of a staff of 160 administrators and seven directors, managing a budget of over half a billion euros' worth of European and national programme funds. She coordinated the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, the European Social Fund Community Support Framework, and other programmes and policies at national level. Ms Bulgarelli also represented Italy in meetings of the EU Directors-General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVT) and took part in EU-level negotiations in the fields of vocational training and social cohesion.

Her experiences at the forefront of policy-making on vocational education and training were preceded by a distinguished career as a researcher on labour market issues. She was for many years Senior Researcher in the Italian Vocational Education and Training Research Institute (ISFOL) where she later became Director of Research, and has numerous academic books, journal articles and conference contributions to her name.

Ms Bulgarelli has had a long association with Cedefop, most recently as a government representative on the agency's Governing Board. She has also been a member of the Editorial Committee of the *European Journal Vocational Training*, an expert in working groups and research teams, and a speaker in Cedefop conferences.

During her orientation visit in September, which coincided with events marking the agency's 30th anniversary, Ms Bulgarelli expressed her appreciation of Cedefop's work, her delight at having been chosen to head the agency, and



Johan van Rens and Aviana Bulgarelli. Photo: Pavlos Makridis

her enthusiasm at facing the new challenges ahead - especially considering the growing importance of vocational training and lifelong learning for the future of Europe.

The staff members of Cedefop welcome Aviana Bulgarelli and wish her good luck in her new post.

Europe, like Alice, must run fast just to keep in place

Continued from Page 1

and creative end of the market'; and it is here that barriers between education and employment should be reduced.

The question for the EU and for Cedefop is to examine which system in which country can best deliver the engagement of employers in education. In addition, Europe needs to provide an appropriate qualifications system and credit framework. This is a long-term project but an essential one, if European citizens are to build qualifications and skills throughout their working life and throughout Europe.

As Professor Maria Joao Rodrigues pointed out, the necessary investment for the development of human resources is very considerable indeed. In fact, the cost is comparable to that needed for transport networks in the previous generation. The speaker, President of the Commission's Advisory Group for the Social Sciences and former Portuguese Minister of Employment, said that **the EU needs a 'more ambitious approach' in promoting human resource development in all sectors**, and pointed to China's spectacular results in competence building. The main task, said Rodrigues, is to give HRD a stronger role within national and local growth and employment policies. A lot depends on integrating training and education with general economic policy by 'emphasising the critical role of lifelong learning strategies for the overall success of the Lisbon Agenda'. This has been recognised in a recent reform in the Stability Pact: while macroeconomic sustainability remains a central concern, it is felt that we should look not only at the levels of the deficit but also at the quality of public expenditure. Redirecting resources to key activities for growth (investment in human resources, innovation and research) is thus taken into account when assessing public deficits. In addition, the European Commission has brought together all instruments depending on the Community budget, in the Lisbon Community Programme, establishing a new role for the structural funds.

Rodrigues emphasised that while the open method of coordination has been a valuable means of building consensus, we now need a stronger commitment to common objectives if we are to implement the Lisbon strategy.

Manfred Tessaring, Head of Cedefop's Research Area, presented data on the benefits of education and training gleaned from the Centre's biennial research reports. **Educational investments have a proven impact on economic growth** (1 % increase in the school enrolment rate leading to a 1-3 % increase in GDP). For individuals, too, monetary and non-material returns for education have been well documented. Upskilling low-qualified workers, a major consideration for the EU, makes not only social but also economic sense, as restricting educational investment to elite groups does not significantly foster growth.

What is most urgently needed, according to Tessaring, is an innovation strategy to promote HRD investment and quality training.

Joël Decaillon, Member of the Executive Committee of the European Trade Unions Congress (ETUC), questioned the prevailing view of the economic and social challenges facing Europe. How accurate is the assumption embedded in our training and employment strategies that the future of Europe lies primarily in the service sector? The current economic crisis, he suggested, points instead to the need for investment in primary resources, especially energy. Decaillon insisted that VET is valuable not only for competitiveness but also for social cohesion; for this reason, **the ETUC welcomes the introduction of the European Qualifications Framework**, encompassing the different ways - formal, non-formal, informal - in which qualifications can be obtained, and believes the Framework has the potential to empower lower- or non-qualified people. Decaillon also welcomed Cedefop's work in identifying sectoral skill needs and appropriate training programmes.

Speaking on behalf of employers, Juan Menéndez-Valdés of UNICE identified two issues that have yet to be elucidated: **how much is really invested in VET? and, are the results achieved worth the investment?** On the first question, it is not clear whether private sector costs should encompass labour costs, indirect costs or the costs of the overall human resource policy of an enterprise. Secondly, he said, training does not necessarily generate learning. We need to assess the outcomes of learning investments, the relevance of skills acquired for labour market needs and the impact of learning on workers' careers and company performance. To be efficient, the various actors and levels of governance will need to coordinate their investment strategies. Menéndez-Valdés pointed out that we are speaking of increasing the level of private investments in circumstances of low economic growth. While there is room for improving VET, especially in small and medium enterprises, it is imperative to strike the right balance between investing in learning and retaining competitiveness.

Both social partners representatives referred in positive terms to the Joint Framework of Action of the ETUC, UNICE and CEEP for the lifelong development of skills and qualification, which supports the design of sectoral training at European level.

Constantin Christofidis of the European Investment Bank presented the Bank's support to HRD investment. Established by the Treaty of Rome to provide long-term finance for projects promoting European integration, the Bank contributes to the Lisbon strategy via its Innovation 2010 initiative financing (a) education, training and human capital, (b) R&D and innovation, and (c) ICT content

and dissemination. The Bank finances conventional infrastructure but also supports research (e.g. incubators and science parks), 'content' development (e.g. distance education) and demand-based measures (e.g. student loans, scholarships). Overall, the Bank adds value on the ground, levers budgetary resources and helps fulfil long-term strategic targets for EU policy.

A 'commando operation' needed to achieve Lisbon goals.

In his concluding remarks, Director-General for Education and Culture Klaus van der Pas said that the EU is not doing enough to reach the Lisbon goals. 'Are we not in need of a commando operation', he asked rhetorically, 'to achieve Lisbon and survive international competition?'

and work towards achieving them. To this end, more evidence is still needed to prove that expenditure for training and development is necessary for all.

But Van der Pas also noted the 'quantum jump' which has been made in policy development and in reporting national policies. He extolled the important role of the open method of coordination in securing the Lisbon agenda. 'The Member States', he said, 'after initial hesitations, have accepted that it's the only way forward...and thus they accept that they can't go it alone any more.' For years, he said, national colleagues refused to countenance indicators. 'It was very frustrating. They would just tell us, "go away with your benchmarks, this is a national issue".' Yet benchmarks are now recognised as the major factor motivating countries to change.



Nikolaus van der Pas and Johan van Rens. Photo: Pavlos Makridis



Photo: Pavlos Makridis

Europe is up against a lack of budgetary resources, an ageing population, governments that fear the political consequences of taking action, and new economic rivals in Asia. Europe now needs to make an effort as considerable as that made by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to join the EU. He warned that the struggle to catch up with competitors will not end in 2010, as 'China will already be ahead of us then'. The key concept that will help us make progress, he suggested, is ownership: all decision-making levels - regional and local, as well as national and European - will need to be buy into the Lisbon goals

Van der Pas wondered aloud whether the national action plans for growth should be merged with national plans for education, but supported keeping them separate. He also insisted that the last thing we should do to face our difficulties on the global scene is revert to protectionism: 'That would be like cutting into our own flesh'.

In the challenging Wonderland in which it finds itself, Europe will need to look beyond the looking-glass if it is to keep up with its competitors and ensure social cohesion.

Source: Cedefop/ine

Greek Minister champions 'measurable goals'

In his speech to the Special Agora of 8 September, Panos Panagiotopoulos, the Greek Minister for Labour and Social Welfare, conveyed a threefold message:

The continued support of the Greek government for Cedefop;
the effort being made today by the Greek government to streamline all services contributing to lifelong learning;
the value of measurable goals in gauging progress on human resource development.

Europe is facing an onslaught of competition, said Mr Panagiotopoulos, from both Asia and the USA. The only way forward - not just for growth but also for social cohesion - is to improve competitiveness. To do so, Europe must make a serious investment in human resource development. The common effort being made today therefore takes on an historic importance.

How do we achieve the Lisbon agenda? For one thing, as the Minister pointed out, we need to improve compulsory education and lower the dropout rate. Furthermore, we need to make training and the concept of lifelong learning more widespread: by improving guidance and orientation; by bringing into training socially disadvantaged groups such as immigrants, the disabled, the aged; and by getting the social partners more closely involved in training, partly through the use of IT-based learning methods.

We need to keep an eye on progress in vocational training, including by publishing statistical information. The Minister underlined the importance of measurable goals, of benchmarks and indicators, which should be 'the permanent framework of all action in this field'. In general terms, what we need now in Europe is more targeted regional and national measures on the basis of specific national action plans.

In Greece, with the support of EU financial aid, there has been considerable institutional progress, with the estab-



Aviana Bulgarelli and Panos Panagiotopoulos.
Photo: Pavlos Makridis

lishment of the National Certification Centre, the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training, and the National Organisation for Guidance. The Minister stressed the importance of the links that have been forged between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education with the services of the Commission. The two ministries have also set up a joint working group, which oversees activities linking initial and continuing training. Furthermore, recent legislation aims to make lifelong learning more systematic.

The next steps will be to define which occupational profiles are valued in today's labour market and link them to initial or continuing VET programmes. In addition, work will focus on the certification of trainers, training providers, and of skills and qualifications. Lifelong learning centres are also to be set up inside tertiary education institutions. The Greek government's efforts focus on streamlining and unifying systems, occupational profiles and standards, the ultimate goal being to achieve visible and measurable results in vocational training and lifelong learning.

But for several issues, such as innovative methods of evaluating skills and experience, or the recognition of non-formal or informal knowledge, we shall also, said the Minister, need the continuing support of Cedefop.

CEDEFOP

Work Programme 2006: getting closer to achieving the European knowledge society

Cedefop's Work Programme 2006 systematically and constructively continues the Centre's activities which are linked to implementing the Copenhagen process. The Work Programme is guided by the Centre's medium-term priorities 2006-08, which concentrate on the priorities set out in the Maastricht communiqué, highlighting quality, attractiveness and innovation of VET at both the upper and lower ends of the spectrum in order both to guarantee global competitiveness and to promote social cohesion.

In the area concerned with 'Developing research', the Centre will pave the way for a VET research agenda involving researchers and research organisations in all Member States, the Commission and social partners. The 4th Research Report, to be drawn up next year, will ad-

dress the conditions for achieving the Lisbon-Copenhagen-Maastricht goals and provide an overview of relevant research in this field. In 2006 Cedefop will also participate in a study further assessing progress towards the Lisbon objectives, to be presented in December in Helsinki.

In its second area of activity, 'Reporting on developments', Cedefop will help the Commission prepare a European Qualifications Framework and a European Credit Transfer System for VET. The Centre will participate in the newly established 'European Network for Quality Assurance in VET' and promote the development of common indicators and statistics in conjunction with the the Education and Culture Directorate-General and Eurostat. Cedefop will also work on

Contents

Austria 9, 16 • Belgium 14, 16 • Bulgaria 13, 14 • Cyprus 19 • Denmark 13, 17 • Estonia 18 • Finland 14 • France 17, 18 • Germany 8, 9, 15 • Hungary 10, 19 • Ireland 11, 16, 19 • Italy 11 • Norway 12 • Poland 11, 15 • Slovakia 12, 18 • Slovenia 9 • Spain 13, 15 • The Netherlands 14 • United Kingdom 19

Cedefop/Europe

1-9

Europe, like Alice, must run fast just to keep in place • Eminent policy-maker and researcher takes the helm • Greek Minister champions 'measurable goals' • Work Programme 2006: getting closer to achieving the European knowledge society • Letter from the Director • Cedefop creates new electronic platform for research • Library and ETV join forces on newsletter • Work small, think big: nanotechnology - which skills for the future? • Helios - a sustainable observatory on European trends in eLearning • Cedefop turns 30: a glance at the past • 2006 - European Year of Workers' Mobility • Researchers' conference debates Europe's VET agenda • Will the EQF lead to a single model of learning? • Developing a European Qualifications Framework • Germany: Credit points for vocational training • Eurydice: Trends in the structure of higher education in the Bologna process • VET-related conferences during the Austrian EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2006 • New publication takes stock of approaches to validation

New training programmes

9

Slovenia: A new programme for mechatronics operators • Germany/Austria: Vocational training certificates now comparable

Internationalisation of VET

10-11

Joining society and after prison: cooperation between Wallonia/Brussels and Morocco • Hungary: Mobility scheme targeting disadvantaged trainees continues • Poland: External vocational examinations and Europass

Lifelong learning

11-12

Italy: The 'libretto formativo', a new record of personal achievement • Ireland: A strategy for the workplace of the future • Slovakia: A second chance for second-chance schools • Norway: Award-winning project validates skills in electro-technical sector

Education policy

13-14

Bulgaria: A new strategy to bring ICT into secondary schools • Spain: Draft Law on education aims for quality and equity • Denmark: Graduation system in vocational training • Denmark: Reintroduction of traditional apprenticeships • Bulgaria: Distance education expands further • The Netherlands: Lifelong learning and working

Vocational education and training

14

Finland: WorldSkills 2005 in Helsinki a resounding success • Belgium: Gold medal at the World Skills Championships in Helsinki

Continuing vocational training

15

Spain: Distance course in programmable logic control • Poland: Guide to accreditation procedures for non-formal CVT institutions

Initial vocational training

15-16

Germany: Hopes set on the pact • Austria: A modular approach to apprentice training

Employment policy

16

Ireland: Importance of national training authority highlighted • Belgium: Flanders: integration training schemes as a springboard to employment

Special target groups

17

France: National framework agreement on youth integration • Denmark: Workshops on reading and arithmetic for lower-educated adults

Social partners

18-19

France: Social partners supplement agreement on lifelong learning • Slovakia: Bakers' guild takes the initiative on training • Estonia: Strong social partner interest in VET increases further • Ireland: Trade Unions make policy proposals for lifelong learning • Hungary: Industry encourages region-specific training

In brief

19

United Kingdom: Learning and Skills Council cuts jobs • Cyprus: Employment Forecast Studies cover wide spectrum

Study visits programme

19-20

The origins of the Community Study Visits Programme

Letter from the Director



Dear Readers,
I'm delighted to be writing my first 'Letter from the Director' for this issue of Cedefop Info.

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to take up my new role at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. Before coming to Thessaloniki I spent many years in vocational training research and policy at ISFOL and the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. I am enthusiastic about facing new challenges in an agency with which I am familiar, and which I esteem for its contribution to the Lisbon objectives and the enhanced cooperation in VET and lifelong learning set out in the Copenhagen/Maastricht process. You can learn more about my background on p. 1.

The changing of the guard at Cedefop coincided with a double anniversary. In September, the Centre celebrated its 30th birthday and its tenth year in Thessaloniki by organising a Special Agora conference, *The future begins in the past*, which brought together the Greek minister of Labour, high-ranking representatives of the European Commission, the European social partners and other institutions, the members of our own Governing Board and of course current (and some former) Cedefop staff. The event also gave my predecessor, Johan van Rens, the opportunity to stage a symbolic handover of the Centre to the new Director. Our cover story on page 1 is a report on the Agora; you will also find highlights from the speech by Greek Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Panos Panagiotopoulos on p. 3. In keeping with the Agora theme, articles on page 6 provide some interesting jaunts into the past, in-

cluding a review of Cedefop's beginnings and an item on the origins of the Study Visits Programme.

The future, too, is on this issue's menu: you can see a summary of our 2006 Work Programme on p. 3. It focuses on the follow-up to the Copenhagen/Maastricht process in terms of research, reporting, and supporting a concerted approach to priorities in national systems and for enhanced European cooperation in VET and lifelong learning. More and more, Cedefop will provide key expertise for developing innovation in lifelong learning, and supporting evidence-based policy-making.

As our readers are aware, Cedefop is active in a number of specific fields, such as e-learning (see the article on p. 5 about the Helios Project) and early recognition of skills needs (see the report on the nanotechnology workshop on p. 5). Another promising Cedefop-backed initiative is the

European Qualifications Framework, which is spearheading a move to make qualifications and skills more transparent throughout the EU. More about this new tool, which was presented at a major conference in Glasgow at the end of September and will be elaborated further in February 2006 in Budapest, can be found on p. 7. The Framework vindicates Cedefop's longstanding work and support for the recognition of non-formal and informal knowledge and qualifications. Our latest publication in this area is introduced on p. 7.

From the past to the future with both feet in the present!

I am looking forward to communicating with you regularly through these columns and wish you all a happy and successful New Year.

Aviana Bulgarelli

CEDEFOP/EUROPE

Cedefop creates new electronic platform for research

Aware of the role of research in promoting and developing vocational education and training at national and international level, Cedefop has created a platform for the research community, Cedra (Cedefop Research Area), which aims to encourage and support concerted approaches to vocational education and training issues.

One of the strands of Cedra are activities developed for sharing information and resources on VET research at European level, called European Research Overview (ERO). Its online database, the ERO base, was developed in assistance with the Research Forum (WIFO Berlin) and launched publicly in the European Training Village (ETV) at www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/ero/base.asp. This database includes important information dealing with research projects, their results and other publications and presentations connected with the projects as well as the responsible persons and authors of the papers, i.e. experts dealing with VET and human resource development (HRD) research. The data are brought together with the Library database Vet Instit.

The ERO Base is fed regularly by administrators of the database, who are members of national consortia of the European network of reference and expertise, ReferNet. But database users may also send their own proposals. This is the original feature of the ERO Base, which should encourage all members of VET and HRD research community to exchange and disseminate fresh research results. The ambition of the database is to minimise the time lag between reaching research results and disseminating them broadly.

The other important feature of the database is that it offers a direct link with other sources of web-based information (e.g. webpages of European projects) as well as the possibility to download papers or other sources of information, provided these are stored as attachments to the database records.

Basic structure

The ERO Base is divided into three sections:

- Directory of Experts (information on researchers,
- Document Base (mainly conference papers and unpublished reports),

- Project Base (information on national and European research projects).

Each of the sections offers various ways to search sources. It is possible e.g. to search records from the full list in the appropriate section, or to look up a specific expert, paper or project by name or title. It is also possible to search the records according to a profile, defined with the help of three different sets of descriptors. One of the sets of descriptors is included in the database of the European Training Thesaurus, covering about 3 000 descriptors from the field of VET and HRD, and also maintained by Cedefop. In addition, each of the sections offers a template for sending a proposed entry to the appropriate section of the ERO Base or for updating stored records.

Users can contribute to the ERO Base via the template appearing under the

link 'Insert new record in the Directory of Experts/ Paper Base/ Project Base'.

Proposals are not automatically included in the ERO but undergo further processing by the administrator. The ERO Base manual gives the list of the names of responsible persons in each country (National EROBase administrators - NEAs), who check data and may contact providers for further information before inserting the information in the ERO Base.

Further information:
on Cedra: Barry Nyhan bn@cedefop.eu.int
on the ERO Base: Petr Vicenik pev@cedefop.eu.int
See also: www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/ero

Source: Cedefop/Petr Vicenik - ERO Base moderator



Europe 123,
GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
Postal address: PO Box 22427
GR551 02 Thessaloniki
Tel. (30) 23 10 49 01 11
Fax (30) 23 10 49 00 20
E-mail: info@cedefop.eu.int
Homepage: www.cedefop.eu.int
Interactive website: www.trainingvillage.gr

Brussels Office
20, Av. d'Auderghem
B-1040 Brussels
Tel. (322) 230 19 78
Fax (322) 230 58 24
E-mail: info.be@cedefop.eu.int

Cedefop Info is published in DE, EN, FR and contains information on vocational training in Europe, in particular the findings of work carried out by Cedefop and reports from the social partners and the Member States. It is provided free of charge upon request. Cedefop Info is also available on the Internet (<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/publications.asp?section=24>). The electronic version often contains additional items for which there was no space in the printed version. The contents have been selected and edited by Cedefop staff. Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Cedefop. Articles concerning activities and events at EU level and particularly those involving Cedefop are usually written by Cedefop colleagues. Their names and contact addresses are given. Most of the articles concerning the Member States or other EEA countries have been submitted to Cedefop by the members of ReferNet (see Cedefop Info 2/2002). Contact information for these, including names and addresses, e-mails and web sites, can be found at <http://www.cedefop.eu.int/directory.asp?refernet>. Articles concerning the Candidate Countries have been submitted through the European Training Foundation (ETF) by its network of National Observatories.

Unsolicited manuscripts, books and other material will be carefully examined and assessed. Requests for contacts, news of forthcoming conferences and other information would be welcomed. For the accuracy of these, however, Cedefop bears no re-

sponsibility. Reproduction in whole or in part of the contents of this publication is authorized, provided that the source is acknowledged.

Responsible publisher:
Aviana Bulgarelli, Director
Christian Lettmayr, Deputy Director

Editors:
Corinna Frey, cf@cedefop.eu.int
Ioanna Nezi, ine@cedefop.eu.int
Sylvie Bousquet, sbo@cedefop.eu.int

Coordination:
Corinna Frey, Dagmar Wolny

Responsible for translation:
David Crabbe

Layout/Design: Panos Haramoglou,
M. Diamantidi S.A.
Thessaloniki, Greece

Editorial deadline: 31.9.2005
Printed in Spain 2005
Cat. number: TI-AD-05-003-EN-C

CEDEFOP

Library and ETV join forces on newsletter

We are happy to announce that the ETV newsletter was relaunched in August 2005, following the merger of the Library's Eurodoc newsletter (328 subscribers) and the ETV electronic newsletter (2730 subscribers). Cedefop's library and documentation team compiles the content for the ETV newsletter, while the ETV team ensures that it functions smoothly.

The ETV newsletter is intended as Cedefop's monthly information service on European vocational education and training issues. This includes the latest EU legislation and policy; calls for proposals; relevant e-documents, Websites and news; forthcoming events; what's new at ETV; recent Cedefop publications; and much more. ReferNet and Virtual Communities members are encouraged to submit appropriate news items.

The revised newsletter is sent to subscribers monthly as an html-formatted e-mail, displaying news headlines which



link to the ETV website, where full access to the relevant articles or documents is provided. Please remember that you need to be logged in the ETV to access fully the content of the ETV newsletter. A subscription form can be found at the bottom of the newsletter. You can also read the newsletter and previous issues on the site without subscribing to it.

Readers can subscribe to the ETV newsletter simply by submitting a valid email address at
www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/News/newsletter.asp#subscribe

Source: Cedefop/NT, CMC

Work small, think big: nanotechnology - which skills for the future?

The fast development of nanotechnology is often described as a fundamental revolution in technology and compared to the discovery of antibiotics, television, nuclear weapons, or computer technologies. Nanotechnology refers to a wide range of scientific and technological activities that study and work with phenomena or properties of the nanometer scale (around 0.1-100 nm).

Nanotechnology provides great opportunities not only for science but also for industrial production and eventually for the everyday life of individuals. Even the most modest predictions estimate over 30 % average growth rate per year in the nanotechnology field, overtaking both bio- and information technologies' growth. Europe holds a significant share of the growth potential. Such potential creates new jobs at different occupational levels: not only researchers and scientists holding university and post-graduate degrees, but also a range of technicians and specialists with secondary, post-secondary and non-university tertiary education. However, feared skill gaps and skill shortages in the nanofield may significantly diminish its growth potential and positive effects.

An international workshop, 'Emerging technologies: new skill needs in the field of nanotechnology', attempted to

tackle some of these concerns. The workshop was organised by Cedefop's network on early identification of skill needs 'Skillsnet', jointly with the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (Fraunhofer IAO), the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), and the Institute of Structural Policies and Economic Development (isw) in Stuttgart, Germany in July 2005. Participants and speakers from 13 countries came to discuss and share their knowledge and experience on new skill needs in nanotechnology from different backgrounds: research, business, education and training.

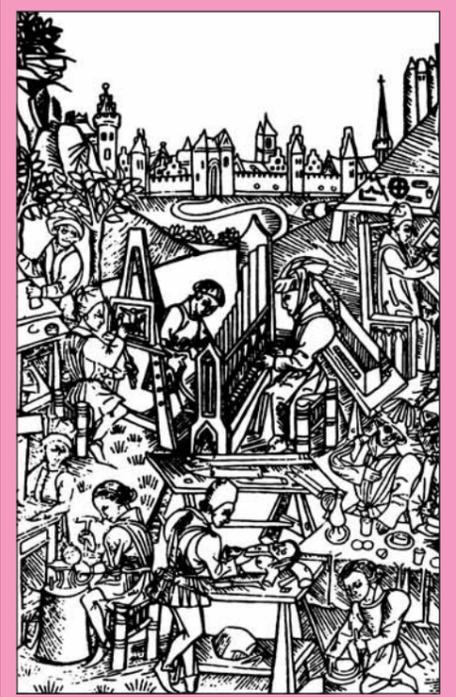
The workshop gave a clear message that nanotechnology is still developing. It has a multidisciplinary character and therefore it is difficult to identify future skill needs especially at the intermediate level. Europe already has a shortage of specialists and scientists with tertiary education, and this shortage is expected to increase in the future. There is a need for monitoring intermediate skill needs and lessons could be learned from the past experience of other new and emerging technologies. As soon as nanotechnology goes into mass production, the shortage of skills in intermediary level occupations will become obvious. The debate on ethical and legal questions al-

so concluded that general risks and the social impact of nanotechnology are difficult to predict and more research is necessary. Workshop participants agreed that an effort should be made to develop a road map for new skill needs in this field with close collaboration between industry, science and education. This may help establish a system for technology monitoring and identifying occupational profiles, and organise regular surveys and data collection. To tackle rising skill shortages, a modular qualification system may help to integrate study fields of nanotechnology and nanosciences into existing educational programmes, including vocational training. Another widely discussed issue was the need to raise awareness of nanotechnology and its potential among the public to attract young people to relevant study fields.

Given the interest shown by members of the network, Skillsnet intends to continue the debate on new technologies and related skill needs by organising workshops and supporting analytical activities in early identification of skill needs.

All presentations are available on the Skillsnet website (www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/projects_networks/skillsnet). The conference proceedings will be published in Cedefop's Panorama series.

Source: Cedefop/ost, azu



The exhibition co-organised by Cedefop and the German Occupational Safety and Health Exhibition (DASA) on the history of VET which was held at Cedefop last year has now gone on tour.

From September to December 2005 the exhibition was shown at the DASA building in Dortmund (www.baua.de).

Tying in with the Austrian EU presidency, the exhibition will be on display at the Technical Museum of Vienna from February 2006 (www.tmw.ac.at).

Helios - a sustainable observatory on European trends in eLearning

Any current attempt to grasp the overall picture of European trends and developments in eLearning usage today will leave the researcher confronted with a myriad of fragmentary data. Yet without reliable data on policies and practices there is little scope for recognising the potential of technology-supported learning, or for taking forward its potential impact on education and training systems.

It is in this context that Cedefop in 2004 took the decision to support the HELIOS project, funded under the 2004-2006 eLearning programme of the European Commission. Through an observatory function, Cedefop wished to contribute to compounding data which would be understandable, useful and policy-related for European national and local policy makers.

The project brought together a number of important players in eLearning issues at the European level: the European distance and eLearning network (EDEN), the Menon consortium as coordinating partner of the project, Alphametrics, ISFOL and the Lambrakis Foundation. Cedefop's support is in providing access to the European stakeholders, surveying the situation through on-line surveys and through ensuring that the eLearning observatory will be sustainable at the end of the project.

The approach of HELIOS is to structure, integrate and re-orient in a synergic and strategic way the activities and results of the different observation engines currently active in Europe and let them feed into a sustainable European Observation Platform on eLearning which will systematise the 'inputs' received and deliver targeted information. In particular, HELIOS will be able to 'filter' the existing information through a set of policy priorities and so to show not only the state of development of eLearning, but also the impact of eLearning on the EU and on the national policy agendas, thus attracting the attention of policy makers not specific to the eLearning field.

The overall objectives of the approach is a synergy of existing networks and information sources through:

- closing the gap between information existing and need of useful data for decision-makers by producing 12 thematic reports focusing on desk and field research and 2 comparative analysis reports covering the whole EU;
- stimulating synergy and networking among the existing observatories (Eurobarometer, Euridyce, Eurostat, eLearning Observation projects, OECD surveys and reports, EUN Insight, IEA, EENet,

etc) in view of the creation of an inclusive observatory platform that will present all the specific sectors/segments/areas information collected into an overall picture of eLearning development in Europe;

- supporting policy-makers, stakeholders and researchers in the definition of future lines of action in the policy design and implementation and on the future research priorities by producing two yearly reports focused on scenario building and forecast;
- actively involve e-Learning users and practitioners in the analysis so to guarantee adaptability and flexibility of the Observatory services to the different contexts (European, national and sectoral) and innovation dimensions (pedagogical, organisational, economic, technological, institutional, socio-cultural).

To date the first two thematic reports (accessibility to eLearning and eLearning and employability) have been completed on the basis of major Cedefop surveys.

These reports can be downloaded from the European Training Village website, eLearning section www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/ELearning.

The third thematic survey on eLearning and personal development is currently in the course of development and the corresponding report will follow shortly (again on the ETV website).

In addition to this, HELIOS will produce two annual reports outlining current and future expected trends in eLearning development in Europe.

To follow developments within the project and the creation of the European eLearning observatory the reader can obtain updates on the ETV eLearning section or may subscribe to the monthly electronic edition of ETV newsletter at www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/news/newsletter.asp#subscribe

Source: Mara Brugia and Colin Mc Cullough, Cedefop



Cedefop turns 30: a glance at the past

In the early years of the European project, efforts concentrated on creating the strictly economic conditions for an internal market. But in the late 60s and early 70s several events drew attention to the question of social policy.

First, the student movement, which emerged in May 1968 first in France and then in other European countries, revealed the existence of new social needs and new actors in European societies. Secondly, the trade union movement took a more active role at international level, among other things with the creation, in 1973, of the European Trade Union Confederation. Moreover, the economic crisis of the 1970s affected most European countries, especially after 1973, and raised unemployment throughout the continent. Finally, the first enlargement of the EEC in 1973 included countries affected by dramatic de-industrialisation (the UK) and longstanding economic and social backwardness (Ireland).

Against this background the need became evident for a European centre which would address trans-border vocational training research and support European policy in this field.

During this time, various steps were taken toward the development of a more effective European social and educational policy. During the Paris Summit in December 1972, the Heads of State of the European Community declared for the first time that the implementation of a social policy was a major objective and asked the European Commission to launch a concrete social action programme. Vocational training became an important item on the Commission's agenda. Despite the increasing interest of some governments - especially of France, Germany and Italy - in establishing a European Centre for Vocational Training, the Commission had some misgivings. But by December 1973, the Council of Ministers for Social Affairs was able to review the Commission's work on the possible creation of a European Centre for Vocational Training.

By then the Member States of the European Community, facing the grave economic crisis triggered by the Yom Kippur war of October 1973, were determined to devise an effective social policy. In January 1974 the Council adopted its first social action programme, which stressed three basic objectives: full employment, the achievement of better living and working conditions and the growing participation of the social actors in Community decisions. The setting up of a centre for vocational training was an obvious corollary of these objectives, and the Commission began to draft concrete plans. It believed that the Centre, though closely linked to the Commission, should have a certain degree of autonomy, and should be based on tripartite management. Other European institutions, e.g. the Economic and Social Council and the European Parliament, were invited to express their views on these plans; the then Vice-President of the German Confederation of Trade Unions, Maria Weber, championed the creation of a strong European research centre that would be wholly independent of the Commission. This complied with the wish of most Member States to limit the powers of the Commission and to emphasise the predominantly intergovernmental nature of European integration.

In the second half of 1974, the Council decided that the Centre would enjoy broad autonomy and have its seat in West Berlin. The choice of seat was clearly political; it took up a proposal made by the Bonn Government which argued that choosing West Berlin would demonstrate that that city was wholly and fully a part of the West. On 10 February 1975 the Council of Ministers finally announced the decision for the establishment of a 'European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training' (Cedefop).

The early stages of setting up the Centre were taken up by organisational matters. At the first meeting of the Management Board, which did not take place until late October 1975, Carl Jorgensen was appointed Director. Most of the subsequent year was devoted to drawing up the Centre's regulations, recruiting its staff, and renovating the office building. The first secretary to be hired started working in March 1976.

The first substantive task was to identify the main issues on which Cedefop's activities would be concentrated. Youth unemployment, considered an urgent problem, became the Centre's first major work theme. Cedefop's first work programme included the publication of a bulletin, the collection and processing of documentation, the dissemination of existing information and the preparation of thematic and trans-border comparative studies.

A new Director, Roger Faist, took up his post in 1977. The Centre flourished, though interaction with other Community bodies was not always a simple matter. In 1982 Cedefop drew up a three year plan based on the Commission's interest in linking vocational training and the new technologies and promoting the harmonisation of vocational qualifications. It also developed its own areas of activity, extended the library and the information service, and produced further publications.

Ernst Piehl became Director in 1984. Under Jacques Delors, who became President of the Commission a year later, social policy took on a more prominent role in Community policy. Among other things, the Community launched new programmes involving vocational training such as Comett in 1986, followed by Eurotecnet, Petra, Force, Phare, Socrates and Leonardo; Cedefop acquired a new 3-year programme and a considerably higher budget. In 1989, the Commission set up a Task Force for human resources, education, training and youth. From the outset, this body was interested in forging close ties with Cedefop in order to draw on the competences that the Centre had acquired, while Cedefop was obviously keen to play a real part in shaping the decisions taken by the Community.

German reunification and the Maastricht Treaty had radical and completely unforeseen consequences for Cedefop. Germany was to host the future European Central Bank, while Greece had not yet acquired a European organisation or institution within its territory. Thus the October 1993 Council in Brussels decided to transfer the seat of Cedefop to Greece in order to establish a political equilibrium.

In 1994 Johan van Rens was appointed Director of the Centre with the task of handling the difficult shift from Berlin to Thessaloniki. The move was accompanied by a radical change of staff and a reorientation of the Centre's activities. In the subsequent ten years Cedefop worked on developing closer links to the Commission, in the process becoming an indispensable partner of DG Education and Culture, to which it now offers technical support and advice, and active participation in important projects.

Cedefop has set up several networks linking it with all 25 EU Member States, as well as other countries which participate in its work. The Centre has a comprehensive electronic collection of information and the largest library on vocational training research in Europe. It contributes actively to developing a common set of instruments in the field of vocational training (Europass, European Qualification Framework) and, in undertaking policy-oriented research in the context of the Lisbon process, does its utmost to bring about ever closer cooperation in Europe.

Source: CF, based on the article Vocational education and training in European social policy from its origins to Cedefop by Antonio Varsori, published in the European Journal 'Vocational Training' No 32.

2006 - European Year of Workers' Mobility



The European Commission has named 2006 the European Year for mobility of workers. The year aims to raise awareness and increase understanding of the benefits of working abroad and in a new occupation.

Working in new countries and/or sectors provides workers with new skills and experience, benefiting both them and their employers. The geographical and occupational mobility of workers was identified as one of the means for achieving the revised Lisbon objectives. Its role was also stressed in the employment guidelines (2005-2008). Mobility is seen as one of the necessary vectors for establishing a genuine European labour market.

Yet the percentage of Europeans residing in an EU country other than their country of origin has consistently remained around 1.5 % for the last 30 years. This is why 2/3 of the year's EUR 6 million budget will be dedicated to mobility awareness raising projects. The rest will be spent

on major events, such as next June's Vienna Mobility conference or next September's 'Job Fair Europe' which will see job fairs in around 100 European cities. Studies on the impact of mobility, as well as attempts to improve statistical data on it, are also planned. A European prize will be awarded to the organisation that has contributed the most to worker mobility.

Finally, 2006 is when the 12 EU Member States who applied for labour mobility transitional arrangements after the latest enlargement will have the first opportunity to review them. Repealing or easing these temporary restrictions on worker movements from the new Member States would significantly help labour mobility.

The year's official launch will be made in the presence of European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and several Commissioners in February 2006.

Source: EC/Cedefop/cf

CEDEFOP/EUROPE

Researchers' conference debates Europe's VET agenda

'How European are Europe's work and learning policies?' This was the theme of the opening plenary Colloquium of the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) held in Dublin, September 2005. The Colloquium was part of the programme arranged by the European Network on Vocational Education and Training Research (VETNET) and chaired by Dr Ludger Deitmer (ITB Bremen) and Dr Barry Nyhan (Cedefop). About 80 researchers from over 25 countries, including the USA, Canada, India and Australia contributed papers to this annual European Conference on VET research.

In his keynote speech, Professor James Wickham of Trinity College Dublin stated that to fully understand European vocational education and training (VET) policies one has to place them in the context of wider employment, social and economic policies.

A session which gave rise to European debate was the roundtable on 'European and national research networks: how to stimulate community development?' Sponsored by Cedefop (specifically, its Euro-

pean Research Overview Project), this session started out with an overview of activities by new Member States in VET and HRD research, presented by Dr Petr Vicenik. Researchers by new accession countries Bulgaria and Romania also made presentations.

A highlight of the VETNET programme was the Research Forum on 'Setting the European research agenda' which discussed the implications of the recently completed Maastricht Study - a review of the state of VET in Europe - introduced by two of its authors, Tom Leney (QCA, UK) and Anneke Westerhuis (CINOP, NL).

The complete VETNET programme at ECER in Dublin, including a flicker presentation of the keynote speech by Professor Wickham, can be viewed on the VETNET website www.vet-research.net. The proceedings of the debate at the sessions mentioned above will be published by WIFO (Dr Sabine Manning) in cooperation with the Cedefop ERO project on www.wifo-gate.org in the coming weeks.

Further information: Sabine Manning, Research Forum WIFO, Berlin

Source: WIFO/Cedefop

Will the EQF lead to a single model of learning?

Glasgow conference welcomes EQF but sees resistance to outcomes approach

More than 200 delegates from over 30 countries met in Glasgow on 22-23 September for the conference on Qualifications Frameworks in Europe: Learning across Boundaries, one of a series of events under the UK Presidency of the European Council. The conference aimed to inform the European Commission consultation on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and to discuss the future shape of the Framework as well as its relationship to national frameworks. The conference also examined the experience of existing qualifications frameworks such as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Much of the conference programme was organised around workshops on aspects of three general themes: the components of qualifications frameworks, the relationships between frameworks (including between the EQF and national frameworks) and implementing frameworks. An interactive session allowed delegates to vote on questions about the EQF and national qualifications frameworks - after a few warm-up questions which tested their knowledge of Scotland and Robert Burns. A majority of delegates claimed to believe in the existence of the Loch Ness Monster; their attitude towards the EQF, though generally supportive, was more questioning.

Delegates welcomed the EQF's aspiration to provide a 'translation device' for comparing qualifications, and they felt that it would facilitate occupational and geographical mobility and help to remove barriers to lifelong learning. A majority felt that it would strengthen mutual trust among stakeholders at European, local, national and sectoral levels. However several delegates

stressed that the implications of an EQF should be fully understood before going ahead. The aim of the EQF is not to remove national differences but to help to coordinate the diversity of qualifications within Europe. There was nevertheless a concern that in practice the EQF might steer countries towards a single model of learning. Delegates questioned whether all countries would need to introduce a national qualifications framework, and if so what types of framework would be compatible with the EQF. How large and how pervasive an impact would a 'learning outcomes' approach have on national systems where this approach was not currently well established? In the voting session a majority of participants (73 %) perceived that there was reluctance within the educational system to adopt an outcomes approach.

The conference clarified that the proposed EQF is a meta-framework, which can be looser, less detailed and less rigid than a national or sectoral framework. This could make it easier for the EQF to cover different types of learning, including VET and higher education, as well as different modes of learning, including non-formal and informal learning, and different countries. The EQF should not be expected to perform functions that are more appropriately carried out by national or sectoral frameworks, or by complementary measures such as the proposed credit transfer system for VET (ECVET). It was rather described as a catalyst for change.

The countries represented at the conference ranged from those which had already implemented national qualifications frameworks to those which had no concrete plans for introducing one. In the interactive voting session delegates considered that a lack of stake-

holder buy-in and a lack of political will were the biggest obstacles to the development of a comprehensive national qualifications framework. The conference provided an opportunity to exchange experiences of the introduction of frameworks or of different national approaches to such issues as quality assurance, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, guidance and counselling, and the promotion of key competences.

Finally, there was a feeling that the EQF should be kept as simple and close to practice as possible. It should respond to the current needs of stakeholders, and stakeholders must be involved in its development - although delegates recognised that the nature of this involvement might be different in the case of national qualifications frameworks. Many delegates stressed the long time required to develop a qualifications framework and, just as important, to develop a shared understanding of concept and the mutual trust that is necessary if national and other barriers to learning are to be broken down.

Source: Professor David Raffae, University of Edinburgh, conference rapporteur

Developing a European Qualifications Framework

By the end of December 2005 a total of 45 European countries (25 MS of the EU, 4 Candidate countries to the EU, 3 EEA countries and 13 additional countries participating in the Bologna process) are expected to have given their opinion on the European Commission draft outline of a future European Qualifications Framework. This input - to be supplemented by the reactions of the European social partners, European sector associations and non-governmental organisations - will provide the basis for a formal Commission proposal, to be presented to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament by mid-2006. The background to and main elements of this very important European initiative is outlined below.

Why a qualifications framework?

Qualifications frameworks are being established in many countries and sectors, in Europe and beyond. While these initiatives differ in form and character, their principal aim is the same: to clarify - for students, parents, learning providers, employers and policy makers - the main routes to a particular qualification: how progress can be made, to what extent credit transfer is allowed and on which basis decisions on recognition are taken. Countries like Ireland and Scotland have already implemented comprehensive national qualifications frameworks, allowing for the transfer, accumulation and recognition of qualifications. Scotland has also linked this process to a credit accumulation frame-

work. (*) France and Spain have also established NQFs since the early 70s and 90s respectively. Some other countries, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, are currently preparing such frameworks. Similarly, at sector level significant efforts are underway to set up qualifications frameworks on the European level, in fields such as ICT and sports.

Why a European Qualifications Framework?

While these initiatives are important means of enabling and promoting lifelong learning at national and sector level, they can only to a limited extent facilitate the progress, transfer, accumulation and recognition of qualifications across national borders. This function can only be met through the development and implementation of a meta-framework explicitly addressing this particular problem. A meta-framework can be understood as a means of enabling one framework of qualifications to relate to others, thus allowing for a qualification to relate to others which are located in another framework. The meta-framework aims to generate confidence and trust in relating qualifications across countries and sectors by defining the principles on the basis of which quality assurance, guidance and orientation, and credit transfer and accumulation can operate. It is thus intended to create the necessary transparency and mutual trust both at national and sectoral levels and internationally.

The political mandate

In February 2004 the Council of EU Education Ministers and the European Commission (see: the Joint Interim Report 'Education and training 2010') called for the development and implementation of an overarching European Qualifications Framework (EQF). An EQF, it was stated, could stand as a common reference enabling and promoting transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications in Europe. This priority was repeated in the Maastricht Communiqué of December 2004, in which 32 European countries, the European social partners and the Commission emphasised the need to develop an open and flexible framework covering both VET and general (secondary and tertiary) education and training. Finally, the political basis of the initiative was significantly strengthened in March 2005, when the European Council (Heads of State and Prime Ministers) referred to such an instrument as being of the highest priority for implementing the Lisbon objectives, and called for the adoption of an EQF by 2006.

What the EQF is intended to deliver and what it is not

As already stated, the EQF is a meta-framework, enabling national and sectoral frameworks and systems to relate to and communicate with each other. One of the main functions of this framework would be to strengthen mutual trust between the different stakeholders involved in lifelong learning. The EQF is

to be implemented on a voluntary basis and would not entail any legal obligations; its role would be to foster change by supporting and informing reform at national and sector level. The EQF would fulfill the following specific functions: The core would be a set of common reference points, referring to learning outcomes, located in a hierarchy of 8 levels. These reference levels have primarily been designed to support the work of policy-makers, stakeholders and expert bodies in Member States and sectors.

These common reference levels cannot stand alone and would therefore be supported by a range of tools and instruments addressing the needs of individual citizens, notably through the implementation and dissemination of an integrated European credit transfer and accumulation system for lifelong learning, the Europass and the Ploteus database on learning opportunities. Following the adoption of the EQF, individual qualifications awarded at national or sectoral level should contain a clear reference to the framework, further strengthening the direct relevance of the framework and its common reference levels to citizens.

Finally, the EQF would consist of a set of common principles and procedures providing guidelines, as developed in the framework of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, for cooperation between stakeholders at different levels - notably in quality assurance, validation, guidance and key competences.

Continued on page 8

Developing a European Qualifications Framework

Continued from page 7

An EQF would *not* fulfill the following functions:

- An EQF would not replace existing or emerging national and/or sector frameworks; it is intended to fulfil additional and different tasks and should not be understood as the 'the sum' or 'representative average' of national/sector frameworks.
- An EQF cannot encompass detailed descriptions of particular qualifications, learning pathways or access conditions. This would be the task of qualifications frameworks at national and/or sector level. National systems and institutions would maintain their full autonomy in using and identifying the purpose of their own NQF as well as of the EQF, and if appropriate to go beyond what is envisaged in the EQF.
- An EQF cannot encompass processes for defining new qualifications or for communicating the range of qualifications to potential users. Again, this would be a task for national and sectoral qualifications frameworks.
- An EQF could well contribute to but not directly carry the functions of a formal equating or comparison of specific qualifications, nor could it be binding in terms of a regulatory, legal, wage bargaining and quality assurance function, which is often deemed necessary at national or sectoral level.
- An EQF would not be a device for making final decisions on the recognition of qualifications. These decisions must be made by the relevant sectoral, national or international agencies or official bodies on the basis of the increased transparency provided by the EQF.
- The above illustrates that an EQF is a multipurpose framework needing to serve a number of stakeholders operating at different levels. Common to all these stakeholders, however, is a need to address lifelong learning (increasingly) in an international context. The role of an EQF would be to provide a common methodological and conceptual approach and thus inform and support reform at national and sectoral level. While the introduction of a non-prescriptive reference level structure would in itself con-

tribute to change, a set of principles and procedures should be agreed upon in order to guide cooperation and interaction between stakeholders and frameworks at European, national and sector level. Consequently, the development of an EQF should be paralleled by the development of national and sectoral qualifications frameworks for lifelong learning.

The crucial element of an EQF: 8 levels described through learning outcomes

The focus on learning outcomes is fundamental to an EQF. It is the conviction of the expert group that the only way to establish a European reference framework capable of bridging the huge diversity of frameworks, systems and structures is to base it on a clear definition of learning outcomes⁽²⁾. The challenge is to strike the right balance between a sufficiently general and a sufficiently specific description of these levels. Responding to this challenge, the consultation document recommends that qualifications at each level in the EQF be described in terms of three types of learning outcomes⁽³⁾:

- knowledge;
- skills; and
- wider competences, described as personal and professional competences.

These three types of outcomes help specify each level of the framework in a way that facilitates amplification and exemplification by national and sectoral bodies. Consequently, each level of an EQF can be described in terms of the expected typical learning outcomes. The levels ought not to include detailed descriptors of specific qualifications or systems that operate in countries and sectors. By approaching the design of an EQF in this way, each national or sectoral qualification or level can be matched by national and sectoral experts and competent bodies to a particular EQF level. The three types of learning outcome (knowledge, skills and personal and professional competences) develop from the lowest level of qualification to the highest. It is important to attempt to define this progression in learning outcomes so that EQF levels are clearly progressive and can be defined consistently when all three types of learning outcome are combined

to form a level descriptor. Table 1 provides for an indicative summary of the 8 levels and the way they have been described (for the full proposal, see the Table 1 in the consultation document available in DE, EN and FR in <http://training.village.communities/eqf>).

A critical part of the consultation process will be to receive feedback on the way these 8 levels have been described and to what extent they enable us to cover, if in rather abstract terms, the realities of European education, training and learning provisions and outcomes.

Further steps

In early 2006 the European Commission, with the assistance of Cedefop and the EQF expert group, will assess the feedback on the consultation document and prepare recommendations. On 28 Fe-

bruary a conference will be held in Budapest, at the initiative of the European Commission and with the support of the Hungarian National Institute for Vocational Training and the Austrian Presidency. For further information, readers are advised to log into the Virtual Community on EQF, mentioned above.

⁽¹⁾ Scottish National Qualifications and Credits Framework
⁽²⁾ See the expertise delivered by the research unit of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on behalf of Cedefop and the Credit Transfer working group: Cedefop (2005). *European reference levels and zones of mutual trust*, Luxembourg
⁽³⁾ See the study of the Toulouse business school commissioned by Cedefop in 2004 on a *Typology of knowledge, skills and competences*, forthcoming

Further information: Jens Bjørnåvold (JB@cedefop.eu.int) and Burkart Sellin (BS@cedefop.eu.int)

Source: Cedefop/Jens Bjørnåvold

Indicative summary of EQF levels	
EQF-Level	Brief indicator of level of qualification
1	Qualifications at level 1 recognise basic general knowledge and skills and the capacity to undertake simple tasks under direct supervision in a structured environment. The development of learning skills requires structured support. These qualifications are not occupation-specific and are often sought by those with no qualification.
2	Qualifications at level 2 recognise a limited range of knowledge, skills and wider competences that are mainly concrete and general in nature. Skills are applied under supervision in a controlled environment. Learners take limited responsibility for their own learning. Some of these qualifications are occupation-specific but most recognise a general preparation for work and study.
3	Qualifications at level 3 recognise broad general knowledge and field-specific practical and basic theoretical knowledge, they also recognise the capacity to carry out tasks under direction. Learners take responsibility for their own learning and have limited experience of practice in a particular aspect of work or study.
4	Qualifications at level 4 recognise significant field-specific practical and theoretical knowledge and skills. They also recognise the capacity to apply specialist knowledge, skills and competences and to solve problems independently and supervise others. Learners show self-direction in learning and have experience of practice in work or study in both common and exceptional situations
5	Qualifications at level 5 recognise broad theoretical and practical knowledge, including knowledge relevant to a particular field of learning or occupation. They also recognise the capacity to apply knowledge and skill in developing strategic solutions to well-defined abstract and concrete problems. Learning skills provide a basis for autonomous learning and the qualifications draw on experience of operational interaction in work or study including management of people and projects.
6	Qualifications at level 6 recognise detailed theoretical and practical knowledge, skill and competence associated with a field of learning or work, some of which is at the forefront of the field. These qualifications also recognise the application of knowledge in devising and sustaining arguments, in solving problems and in making judgements that take into account social or ethical issues. Qualifications at this level include outcomes appropriate for a professional approach to operating in a complex environment.
7	Qualifications at level 7 recognise self-directed, theoretical and practical learning, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a specialised field that provides a basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context. These qualifications also recognise an ability to integrate knowledge and formulate judgements taking account of social and ethical issues and responsibilities and also reflect experience of managing change in a complex environment.
8	Qualifications at level 8 recognise systematic mastery of a highly specialised field of knowledge and a capacity for critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas. They also recognise an ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt substantial research processes. The qualifications also recognise leadership experience in the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.

GERMANY

Credit points for vocational training

Credit point systems have long been used by universities to evaluate student performance and have students' results recognised by other universities or countries. However this tool had so far not been used in the field of vocational training. In a recent research project, 'Credit points in IT continuing training', the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB) has demonstrated that a credit point system is an appropriate instrument for a comparative evaluation of skills acquired in a workplace and a university setting which can promote mobility between academic and non-academic training. The aim of the project was to develop a set of instruments as a basis for a credit point system in the field of vocational training and test its viability on the basis of a model sector (IT).

The starting point for the BIBB project was the IT continuing training system introduced at the beginning of 2002. Building on an IT specialist (skilled worker) qualification, participants can systematically add on certified qualifications, progressing from the status of IT specialist to IT operator and finally IT professional. The qualifications are comparable to a bachelor's degree at the operative professional level and a master's degree at the strategic professional level.

To guarantee the comparability of skills acquired in the field of vocational training with those acquired in the course of a IT degree programme, on the one hand, and to accredit these skills towards further training courses, including university programmes, on the other, it was necessary to devise a set of instruments for the quantitative and qualitative eval-

uation of on-the-job learning and occupational performance.

The BIBB project, implemented in cooperation with the Fraunhofer Institute for Software and Systems Engineering, specifically evaluated qualifications and skills at the operative IT professional level. The project not only demonstrated that the approach can be applied to the qualitative evaluation of skills acquired in the course of the working process but also that it is transferable to other qualification levels, both in IT and in other occupational areas.

By testing this process for the evaluation of skills acquired in the workplace on the basis of the model of the IT sector, BIBB has paved the way for the further development and introduction of a qualitative credit point system covering both vocational training and higher ed-

ucation. The broadly-based application of this system would facilitate the recognition of acquired qualifications and skills and therefore make it easier to enter or transfer to other fields of training. Introducing a credit point system compatible with the system used in higher education in the field of vocational training would represent concrete progress towards the recognition of the equal value of general and vocational education streams.

Further details on the 'Credit points in IT continuing training' project can be found in the BIBB publication by Kerstin Mucke and Stefan Grunwald: 'Hochschulkompatible Leistungspunkte in der beruflichen Bildung. Grundsteinlegung in der IT-Weiterbildung', Bertelsmannverlag, Tel. (49-521) 911 01-11, Fax (49-521) 911 01-19, E-Mail: service@wbv.de.

BIBB contact: Kerstin Mucke, Tel. (49-228) 107-1325, email: Mucke@bibb.de
 Source: BIBB/Cedefop

Trends in the structure of higher education in the Bologna process

A Eurydice report on how higher education in Europe is structured in 2004/05 has been produced and covers the situation in the 40 states signatory to the Bologna Declaration.

The two-cycle structure: a reality in Europe

Courses in higher education now have a two-cycle (Bachelor/Master) structure in 33 countries. The structure is applicable to almost all fields of study, although medicine and closely connected fields are generally exceptions.

The system relates primarily to academically oriented programmes (ISCED 5A). In countries with practically oriented programmes (ISCED 5B), opportunities for transferring to ISCED 5A courses vary markedly.

ECTS is increasingly used for purposes of credit accumulation

Initially devised as a means of facilitating transnational student mobility, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is now frequently used as a system for accrediting courses at national level. Some countries have adapted a na-

tional system existing prior to ECTS, while others have directly incorporated ECTS within their system.

Frequent student participation in quality evaluation

The great majority of countries have a national body for evaluation and/or accreditation, which is in most cases a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

For the external evaluation of higher education institutions, a third of all countries call on the assistance of experts of national standing and from abroad, students, and professionals from the world of work. Internal evaluation is becoming general practice. In just 11 countries, students take part in both internal and external evaluation and are represented in the national body responsible for coordinating evaluation.

Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe (2004/2005). National Trends in the Bologna Process, Eurydice. Available on the Eurydice website: www.eurydice.org/Documents/FoCHE2005/en/FrameSet.htm

Source: Eurydice

VET-related conferences during the Austrian EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2006

16/17 March 2006 Vienna	Conference of European ministers for education and training - Quality in the lifelong learning approach - Focus on the western Balkans - an extended European education and training area
27/28 March 2006 Vienna	Meeting of the Directors-General for VET - Educational approaches for VET quality improvement - European Commission conference programme
11/12 May 2006 Graz	Conference on quality assurance in VET and higher education - Models of good practice, mutual learning processes, networking, European Qualifications Framework
7/9 June 2006 Turin	Austrian Council Presidency/European Training Foundation - Human resource development in EU partner countries
14/18 June 2006 Vienna	EDEN 2006 annual conference - E-competences and e-qualifications in clusters of innovation

Further information: Website of the Austrian EU Council presidency, www.zukunfteuropa.at and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture Department 27, Ms Ursula Fritz, ursula.fritz@bmbwk.gv.at

CEDEFOP /EUROPE

New publication takes stock of approaches to validation

Validation policies, practices and methods are core issues in any strategy aimed at lifelong and life-wide learning. The recent Cedefop report, The learning continuity: European inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning, represents the first effort to establish a European inventory of approaches to validating non-formal and informal learning.

Validation policies are examined in detail for 14 Member States of the EU; more limited information is presented for eight

new Member States and two candidate countries. By defining basic concepts, analysing similarities and differences between national strategies, and indicating the main trends in validation, the report points the way toward the possible elaboration of national comprehensive validation systems and the establishment of common European principles.

The report addresses three issues affecting the quality and credibility of validation approaches: defining standards;

developing modularised and flexible pathways for learning; and involving stakeholders. Particular emphasis is given to assessment methods, of which five main categories are identified. The most recent European initiatives relevant to validation are also discussed, especially the common European principles for validation (2004), the Europass portfolio supporting the transfer of qualifications and skills at national and European level (2005), and the first steps toward the develop-

ment and implementation of a European Qualifications Framework (2005).

Further information: Jens Bjørnåvold, jb@cedefop.eu.int

Source: Cedefop/JB



The learning continuity: European inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning
National policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning
Cedefop Panorama series 5164
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-57-03-516-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop

New training programmes

SLOVENIA

A new programme for mechatronics operators

Mechatronics has been introduced as an interdisciplinary study at the University of Maribor in 2001; it is offered by the Faculty for Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Informatics and the Faculty for Mechanical Engineering. Employers using mechatronics submitted initiatives for secondary and higher education. Following these initiatives, the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) prepared occupational profiles, occupational standards and some catalogues of standards for professional knowledge and skills.

Based on the occupational standard for mechatronic operators, the CPI started to prepare a new education programme for secondary vocational education with the same name, mechatronic operator. The programme was shaped according to the new guidelines (integration of the contents from general part, key qualifications, open curriculum, etc.) and encompasses technical communication, production processes and mechatronics. This new programme has been confirmed by the National Council of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training; it was launched in the school year 2005/06 in five school centres in Slovenia and was very warmly welcomed. According to the

data of the Slovenian Maintenance Association, the Slovenian economy will need about 1 600 people with such education by the year 2007.

In parallel with the three-year programme mechatronic operator, the higher education programme for mechatronic technologist. The higher education programme was prepared according to the guidelines for higher education programmes and already adjusted to the requirements and system of the expected credit study. The programme comprises a general part and different professional subjects.

Currently, the CPI is also preparing a secondary education programme for mechatronic technician based on the occupational standard for operator of the process devices and equipment, mechatronician. The programme will fill the missing part in occupational vertical in mechatronics. This programme will also be prepared according to the new guidelines and will probably be the first four-year programme developed in that manner.

Further information: Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (www.cpi.si)

Source: Darko Hribar, Centre of the RS for Vocational Education and Training (info@cpi.si)

GERMANY/AUSTRIA

Vocational training certificates now comparable

Germany and Austria have reached an agreement on the comparability of vocational training certificates. The basis of the Vienna declaration is the year-long cooperation between the two countries in the field of vocational training. Over 200 individual vocational training certificates have been harmonised in the course of the last 15 years. The German ministry of education and research pointed out that this transparency of voca-

tional training certificates would make it easier for companies and employers to take on manpower from across the border. Moreover, the ministry described the joint declaration with Austria as an important signal for the dual system of vocational training in Europe. Following a similar agreement signed with France last year, optimal conditions for occupational mobility had now been established with two neighbouring countries.

Again, there is no space...

The names and addresses of the ReferNet members, who provide the text for many of the articles in Cedefop Info can be found at www.cedefop.eu.int/directory.asp?refernet. For the monthly lists of new acquisitions in Cedefop's Library, please go to http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/HomePages/Front_page_news/nal200306.pdf.

In the electronic version, which can be found at www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publications.asp?section=24, there are several items for which there was no space in the hard-copy version or which now appear in shortened form.



Joining society and after prison: cooperation between Wallonia/Brussels and Morocco

The project in context

The bilateral cooperation agreement between the Walloon region/government and the Kingdom of Morocco includes a sectoral cooperation component on vocational training. FOREM is in charge of the coordination of activities in this field. This task is carried out by FOREM's Department for international relations.

Morocco has asked the Walloon region for technical support to sensitise prison staff to the idea of reintegrating detainees into society and work. Since his accession to the throne, King Mohamed VI has focused particular attention on the improvement of prison conditions and on the socio-occupational reintegration of prisoners; it was on the monarch's initiative that a foundation bearing his name and of which he is the effective president was set up on 15 January 2002. The main role of the Mohamed VI Foundation for the Reintegration of Detainees is to serve as a catalyst for activities aiming to make prisons more human.

Negotiating partnerships

Having established the similarities between Morocco and Belgium in terms of prison organisation, the objectives and concerns of politicians and leading administrators, and the needs of prison inmates, the Moroccan and Belgian partners agreed on a number of joint opinions.

This led to setting up an integrated training action addressed to all the players involved in the daily life of prison inmates: directors, executive and management staff, the wardens, psychosocial and medical personnel, vocational trainers and socio-cultural facilitators, be they part of the administrative staff or representatives of civil society associations.

Responding to the expressed training needs required the support of experts from various fields: members of the administration and prisons, trainers of trainers, psychologists, social workers, medical staff, etc.

Partnerships were established in both Morocco and Wallonia-Brussels.

In Morocco, the Mohamed VI Foundation for the Reintegration of Detainees

established a collaboration with the ministry of Justice, the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training, the Office for Vocational Training and the Promotion of Employment (OFPT), the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC) and civil society associations active in prisons.

Similarly, in Wallonia-Brussels, FOREM structured the project around a number of partners: the federal public justice agency, SPF Justice; social promotion education agencies; and the non-profit-making association, AVANTI. The project is implemented with the support of the Association for the Promotion of Education and Training Abroad (APEFE) which provides two specialised aid workers in Morocco.

As France is working with the same target groups in collaboration with the same Moroccan partners, action is regularly coordinated. The French project includes a major vocational training component aimed at the training of trainers working in prisons. The fact that the implementing agency on the French side is the National Association for Adult Vocational Training (AFPA) in Lille makes exchanges with Walloon region agencies easier.

As similar issues are being addressed by the INSERT project within the European Commission's EQUAL programme, close contacts between the projects will promote exchanges of experience in Europe.

The heart of the project

In January 2003, a bilateral agreement was signed between the government of the Walloon region and the Kingdom of Morocco adopting this solidarity project and providing for its funding over three years by the Walloon government and FOREM. The project aims to help detainees rejoin society and work so that they can accept both themselves and society, and successfully re-integrate into their community without re-offending. It is not limited to vocational and technical aspects but also includes social skills. Experts from Wallonia-Brussels provide technical support to Moroccan prison administrators, wardens, social workers, medical staff, psychologists, cultural facilitators and prison trainers, as well as

to NGOs working with prison inmates during and following their detention.

Of strategic importance for relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the government of Wallonia-Brussels, the project concentrates on a limited number of pilot prisons in order to keep to a human scale and in proportion to the resources of the Wallonia-Brussels region, to render its outcomes visible and to optimise the possibilities of multiplication. The sites originally identified were the cities of Casablanca and Rabat, which both have a men's and a women's prison as well as a juvenile reform and education centre. In 2004, the Moroccan authorities requested that the project be extended to the staff of the prisons of Oujda, Agadir, Ait Melloul, Fes and Tangiers.

This project essentially involves positive initiatives to provide information, training, experience and exchange between partners, in order to promote the coordinated and consistent development of a new prison culture in pursuit of a common goal: the socio-occupational reintegration of prison inmates.

Activities

Prison staff - directors, wardens, social workers, doctors, psychologists, trainers and cultural facilitators - from Morocco visited their counterparts in Belgium. Training groups addressed the following issues: the prisoner; the training process; the medical and psychosocial staff and trainers; partnership between the public administration and NGOs. They compared the different approaches, examined the methods used in Belgium and analysed how they could be adapted to Moroccan prisons on the basis of available resources and local culture and customs.

In 2004, 16 experts from the Walloon Region offered their services in Morocco for a total of 112 days. In the same year, 58 Moroccans participated in a total of 808 days of training in the Walloon Region.

Over the last two years, Morocco has made a substantial effort to establish training centres within prisons as a vector of social prevention. Specialised trainers deliver technical training modules in both traditional areas, e.g. electricity, plumbing, carpentry, welding, etc., and

new fields such as computing. In women's prisons, courses are delivered in dress-making, hairdressing, body care, cookery and office automation. The courses may be validated by a certificate or continued outside prison if the detainees are released before the end of the course. Ensuring a work placement is a problem for which a solution has yet to be found. For adults and young people alike, these courses are often preceded by literacy programmes, sometimes provided by willing prison wardens who wish to acquire training qualifications themselves.

Bolstering or setting up art workshops (e.g. music, singing, photography) will give inmates an opportunity to discover new and fulfilling cultural activities which they can pursue following their release.

What about follow-up?

It is important to note the positive impacts of these jointly implemented activities. Belgian prisons have a substantial population of detainees of Moroccan origin. Learning about Moroccan culture is extremely enriching for the Belgian staff working in support, surveillance and orientation of inmates, both during detention and following release.

Further efforts are also afoot to help reintegrate former detainees. Moroccan associations, still in an embryonic state, are all part of civil society. Inside prisons, the training of trainers, e.g. in literacy, remains a priority issue. The task of orienting prisoners towards specific vocational training deserves its own fully-fledged project. Similarly, the choice of training streams offering a positive socioeconomic spin-off for prison inmates will also require an in-depth study in the future. Together with ongoing guidance offered to prison inmates during their detention, measures to help them after their release must also be launched.

A great number of projects are being set up every day to face this enormous task, in all prisons throughout the world.

Further information from: FOREM - Department for International Relations, Ms Muriel Sempoux, Boulevard J. Tirou 104, B-6000 Charleroi
Tel. (32) 71 20 61 65, Fax (32) 71 20 61 98
E-mail: muriel.sempoux@forem.be

Source: Sigrig DIEU, FOREM - Department for International Relations (sigrig.dieu@forem.be)

HUNGARY

Mobility scheme targeting disadvantaged trainees continues

Experience within the mobility measure of the Leonardo da Vinci programme has shown that projects involving young people in initial vocational training tend to benefit those receiving post-secondary training rather than youngsters attending secondary-level vocational school. The latter generally come from a disadvantaged social background and are less motivated to study than those attending the other secondary schools. And yet the labour market in Hungary faces a dearth of qualified craftspeople.

To tackle this problem, the Hungarian Ministry of Education set up a Development Programme for Vocational Schools

in 2003, to which the Hungarian Leonardo National Agency linked a special mobility scheme targeted at this disadvantaged group. This initiative, financed by the Ministry of Education, helps organise work placements abroad for vocational school graduates, and is very similar to the Leonardo mobility measure, with some modifications. The increased financial support it provides for is intended to contribute to key activities for implementing good quality placements, i.e. project management and the thorough preparation of the trainees. The programme also helps cover the cost of living for this more socially disadvantaged group.

Following the first application round, 163 apprentices spent 3-14 week-long placements at foreign companies (mainly in Germany) in the framework of 12 mobility projects. According to a study on the implementation of the first round, most of the placements were of high quality, with continuous support provided by mentors at the host companies. Apprentices learned a lot and gained new professional and personal experiences.

In the second application round (with projects starting from September 2005) 3 to 39 week-long placements of 309 pupils are foreseen in the framework of 23 projects. This time, apart from Ger-

many, there are a number of other receiving countries, such as Italy, France, Finland, Austria and the UK.

We should also mention the role of accompanying teachers who benefit as much from the mobility activities as their pupils. (Their number was 26 in the first round and is foreseen to be 59 in the second.)

Further information:
Ms Bianka Hajdu
Tempus Public Foundation
bianka.hajdu@tpf.hu

Source: Tempus Public Foundation, member of ReferNet (www.refernet.hu)

External vocational examinations and Europass

The Task Force for Training and Human Resources Cooperation Fund, which plays the role of the National Europass Centre (NEC) in Poland, with the support of the Ministry of National Education and Sport, organised the Europass launch conference in Warsaw on 10 June. The conference was opened by the Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of National Education and Sport, Ms Anna Radziwi, and brought together 200 participants from educational institutions, regional authorities, vocational counsellors, social partners and representatives of four other NECs. Speakers included Polish NEC employees, representatives of the institutions involved in issuing Europass documents - the two departments of the Ministry of National Education and Sport responsible for supplements and the Further Teacher Training Centre engaged in creating the Polish version of the language portfolio - and Mr Carlo Scatoli from the European Commission.

The conference initiated Europass promotional activity which, in Poland, has

been combined with the promotion of external examinations confirming vocational qualifications.

Polish educational authorities are fully aware of the Europass potential in strengthening educational mobility throughout Europe but also see a local role. It can encourage young people to confirm officially the vocational qualifications gained during vocational education in the school system, thus increasing their opportunities in the Polish and European labour markets.

The idea of external examinations confirming vocational qualifications is quite new in Poland and is a part of ongoing educational reform. The external examinations are intended to ensure consistency in teaching, comparability and transparency of qualifications, and in consequence, better quality and higher prestige of vocational education and training. The first external vocational exams were held in 2004 for two-year basic vocational school leavers and are gradually replacing the up to date internal examinations conducted by the school, with

the teachers as examiners. In 2005 the external vocational exams also covered the three-year basic vocational school leavers. However, the new principles for acquiring a vocational diploma do not seem to be wholly convincing to their potential holders, with just over 67 % of the two-year basic vocational school leavers and 50 % of the three-year basic vocational school leavers taking the external examination this year.

To help matters, the Ministry of National Education and Sport decided that the Europass certificate supplement will not be issued together with the school leaving certificate but with the diploma confirming vocational qualifications obtained after passing the external vocational examination. The Europass certificate supplement should become an incentive motivating vocational school leavers to make the effort to take the exam. Moreover, with the EC approval, the supplement in Poland will be introduced by an ordinance of the Minister of National Education and Sport and will bear the number (identical with the number

of the vocational diploma) and the name of the holder, which will give the document more importance and will make it more attractive to school leavers.

The promotion of the Europass certificate supplement is a significant point in the promotional activity plan of the Polish National Europass Centre and, as with the promotion of the rest of Europass documents, is aimed at two target groups: potential holders and final receivers, i.e. employers. This should contribute to better understanding of the European framework for transparency of qualifications and competence and will convince young people that, thanks to the Europass certificate supplement, their vocational qualifications will be more easily recognised abroad, giving them opportunity to seek employment or continue education anywhere in Europe.

Further information: Agnieszka Luck, task force Training and Human Resources, Cooperation Fund Foundation, National Europass Centre.
e-mail: europass@cofund.org.pl
tel. (48 22) 625 39 37.

Source: Agnieszka Luck, task force Training and Human Resources

Lifelong learning

The 'libretto formativo', a new record of personal achievement

A new record will soon be available to the citizen and worker, one which will enable skills acquired in formal, non-formal and informal environments to be recognised. The Ministry of Labour and the Education Ministry, working in consultation with the Regions⁽¹⁾, have agreed on the format of this 'training booklet' as well as on guidelines; both are contained in a dossier produced by a working group of experts. The next step will be a trial run of this new instrument, which will document the individual's education and training record and the skills acquired. The booklet will collate and document personal details, information and attestations on experience acquired in education and training, at work, and in social, recreational or family environments. By adopting this approach, a single document can be put together to serve as a comprehensive record of the 'skills acquired in the course of training through apprenticeship, work integration contracts, specialist training and continuing

training throughout one's working life, and provided by bodies with accreditation from the regions; as well as recording the competences acquired in a non-formal and informal manner, according to European Union guidelines on lifelong learning, provided that they are recognised and certified'⁽²⁾.

The training booklet is no bureaucratic formality, but an evolving instrument at the service of the citizen. Its main value is as a record maintained during changes in work and training, since the format is comparable both nationally and across the regional education, training and working systems throughout Italy.

The system of education and training has been decentralised in Italy over the past few years; as a result, there is now a shared new instrument for certification at national level. The regional training systems issue certificates (attestations of skills and other diplomas) on the basis of common principles (adopting the minimum indicators to be entered in attestations

of vocational qualifications issued by the regional authorities and the autonomous provinces), in accordance with national definitions of certification, using a single certificate of qualifications⁽³⁾. This single form of attestation at national level, whose guiding spirit is transparency, has been adopted by most of the regions, and has contributed towards the dissemination and use of transparent methods of certifying skills in Italy.

The format of the training booklet, therefore, takes account of the constraints, i.e. the current status of minimum standards, recognition and certification of competences, which has not yet been defined at the Italian national level, and EU guidance on the transparency of qualifications and certificates (Europass).

The training booklet will be of value in that it makes it easier to recognise vocational and individual skills on the labour market, thus guaranteeing and formalising training routes provided by local establishments.

After the experimental phase, the authorities in the Regions and Autonomous Provinces will issue the training booklet, leaving it to the discretion of the individuals concerned as to what should or should not be made 'transparent' (the owner of the booklet is always the individual), and implementing guidance measures.

The booklet is divided in two sections: the first sets out personal details and occupational experience, educational and training diplomas and training experience, while the second part describes the skills acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning situations.

⁽¹⁾ Decreto Ministero del Lavoro 174/2001 (Ministry of Labour Decree 174/2001). Decreto legislativo 276/2003 (Legislative Decree 276/2003). Accordo Stato-Regioni 18/02/2000 (Agreement between State and Regions, 18 February 2000).

⁽²⁾ Legislative Decree 276/2003.

⁽³⁾ Ministry of Labour Decree of 12 March 1996.

Further information: www.governo.it and www.welfare.gov.it.

Source: Alessandra Pedone/ISFOL

A strategy for the workplace of the future

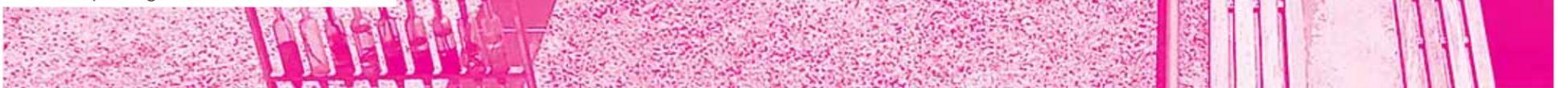
Ireland needs a radical National Workplace Development Strategy if it is to develop a successful knowledge economy according to a recent report⁽¹⁾. The report was part of an in-depth assessment of Irish workplaces conducted under the aegis of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP). Though Ireland has been very successful in attracting foreign-owned knowledge-intensive industries, the domestic innovation base remains weak. The report finds general agreement on the need to move towards a knowledge economy, which requires greater innovation in the

workplace. The influential Enterprise Strategy Group report (see Cedefop Info 3/2004) had earlier identified workplace innovation as an important driver of productivity and competitiveness. Apart from conducting a survey of employer and employee attitudes towards innovation, the NCP also examined how other countries approached the issue, particularly Finland, which has had an integrated National Workplace Development Programme in place since 1996.

One of the conclusions is that Ireland can gain a significant international competitive advantage by building on its successful experience of social partnership. Such partnerships can become the engine of change of the new National Workplace Strategy.

⁽¹⁾ Forum on the Workplace of the Future: Working to our Advantage, a National Workplace Strategy. Dublin: NCCP, 2005 ISBN 0-7076-91109. Download address: www.nccp.ie/dynamic/docs/NationalWorkplaceStrategy.pdf

Source: Peter Rigney, peter.rigney@ictu.ie



A second chance for second-chance schools

Although Slovakia is among the best-performing countries in the EU in terms of ISCED 3 attainment and early school leaving rates (91.3 % among 20-24 year olds and 7.1 %, respectively - Eurostat 2004), low educational attainment continues to be a problem, and in fact is becoming worse. Slovakian data do not adequately reflect the educational achievements of socially marginalised groups, such as poor families living in Roma settlements - an estimated 140 000 people. Thus, we are seeing an army of low-educated people whose high rates of long-term unemployment lead to even lower employability. Unlike the education sector, employment services recognise the problem and have urged action to be taken. The approximately 15 000 job seekers who lack an education represent 4 % of job seekers nationwide but over 10 % in the underdeveloped districts of Eastern and South Slovakia (and 16 % in the district of Spišská Nová Ves).

In September 2004 the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family launched a project, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, aimed at

- providing ISCED 2 level education for 139 low-educated people from East and South of Slovakia;
- testing an experimental curriculum developed by the National Institute for Education;

- instigating cooperation between district labour offices, schools and job seekers.

The results of the project provide food for thought in considering the next step forward. In statistical terms, the efficiency of the project is questionable. The cost of each programme is four times higher than regular ISCED 2 education programmes. In addition, a high dropout rate was recorded despite the motivating tools offered (e.g. reimbursement of travel costs, provision of meals, contributions to childcare, a financial contribution usually offered to jobseekers involved in municipal public works). One-third of the participants dropped out of the programme; of these, 70 % simply lost interest, while 17 % left because of other obstacles (prison or maternity leave).

A follow-up report has recommended continuing the project with 240 participants starting in the 2005/2006 school year, but also suggests imposing a lower age limit (up to 30 years), limiting the number of pupils per class to 15, and introducing exploratory screening in order to better reflect the different needs of participants.

Another problem is the employability of people acquiring this new certificate. In the regions mentioned above, with low job creation for low-skilled work-

ers, the certificate is a pathway to continuing education rather than a ticket to employment. Thus, the monitoring body recognises that the involvement of VET schools is inevitable. The guidance services of labour offices must therefore concentrate not just on those willing to complete basic education, but on people who wish to acquire a qualification - for the sake of efficiency, this should be a qualification that is in demand by regional employers.

Slovak education authorities should reflect on this experience in the light of the following challenges:

- The provision, already introduced, of preparatory grades for socially deprived pupils, and the employment of Roma assistants to mediate between non-Roma teachers and Roma pupils and parents, should be urgently expanded and the introduction of bilingual Roma/Slovak and Roma/Hungarian elementary schools should be reinforced;
- Learning by doing should be strengthened at the expense of general education, as it is precisely the academic approach of traditional education that has caused most of these people to drop out of mainstream education in the first place;
- ISCED 2B programmes, which have not yet been officially recognised, should be further elaborated for those reluctant to join the mainstream, academically-ori-

ented programmes of basic schools, and more attention should be paid to achieving functional literacy;

- Recognising prior and experiential learning should help pupils acquire certificates of apprenticeship. To this end, however, methodological tools should be urgently developed, in cooperation with small craft industries and guilds representatives.

For further information: Juraj Vantuch, Slovak National Observatory of VET, Černyševského 27, SK - 851 01 Bratislava. Tel./fax (421-2) 62410678, E-mail: sno@netax.sk, www.siov.sk

Source: Eneke Hanzelová, Centre for Work and Family Studies, hanzelova@sspr.gov.sk

Award-winning project validates skills in electro-technical sector

The Norwegian-coordinated project Elbus was one of three to receive the first-ever Leonardo da Vinci award launched by DG Education and Culture of the European Commission.

The project's scope of work was validation, assessment and transferability of formal, non-formal and informal learning in the electro-technical industry throughout Europe.

The project group, consisting of members from Norway, the UK, Greece, Denmark and Sweden, developed a pan-European method/procedure to enable electro-technical and other enterprises to document and assess an employee's or potential employee's accumulated knowledge and skills. This method is explained in a handbook, and is supported by a web/electronic-based tool to aid the process.

The last few years have seen an increased mobility of the workforce across European borders, and greater staff turnover in individual enterprises, not least in the electro-technical industry. Enterprises are thus increasingly aware of the need to accurately and efficiently assess the knowledge and skills of potential and existing employees.

This method will be used to account for existing knowledge resources, on an individual and enterprise level, as follows:

The individual: The interests of the individual are central to this project. The system will be used to obtain a precise, goal-oriented definition of the employee's knowledge-development needs based on their professional needs and wishes, and private interests. The individual plan of professional development for each employee in an enterprise will always be set up in collaboration with the employee.

The enterprise: An enterprise can gain a competitive edge by becoming more familiar with each employee and the total knowledge and skills he or she possesses, and by using and nurturing these skills. For the electro-technical industry quantifying knowledge and skills will make it easier for both workers and companies to keep an inventory of their resources, thus providing a better basis for their use and allocation, such as in a development plan for the enterprise.

A main goal of this project is therefore to supply the tools to increase awareness of non-formal and informal learning and knowledge, and of the benefits of such

awareness to both employee and enterprise.

Documentation procedure and associated tool: The project group have developed and tried out a tool in several different European electro-technical pilot companies, which aids the identification and assessment of an individual's knowledge and skills. Both method and tool are available in all five partner country languages.

The tool will help the individual record in his or her own experience and skills. This means registering, in a systematic manner, personal data, qualifications, social skills (family life, social activities, interests), skills acquired at local community level (commissions, voluntary duties, affiliations to any societies, sports club, choir), professional skills (work, hobby, interests, etc.) and any wishes or future intentions related to interests or work. A three-part CV will be used for this (1. personal data, 2. professional skills, and 3. general skills).

Soft skills: The assessment involves a conversation with the employer based on what the individual has recorded about herself. It will follow clearly defined guidelines and will be strictly confidential be-

tween the individual and the employer. To aid this development dialogue the project has developed an 'Ability to take action' questionnaire. The main objective of this assessment is to develop the basis for a personal development plan involving measures that the employer is able to initiate or support.

The mapping tool is web-based while the CV and 'Ability to take action' forms are available electronically through the AKS web site for those who have passwords for the main mapping tool.



For more information on the project please visit the webpage at: www.aks-international.com or contact the project coordinator Svein Harald Larsen at phone (47) 2295 5150

Source: AKS



BULGARIA

A new strategy to bring ICT into secondary schools

In April 2005 the Bulgarian Government adopted the National Strategy and Action Plan for introducing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in secondary education, including VET. The strategy, covering the period 2005-2007, aims to introduce a qualitative new study environment, which will assist students in the search, analysis and use of information as part of the education process, in order to eventually make them more competitive in the labour market. The intention is to pro-

vide all Bulgarian schools with up-to-date computer classes and high speed internet links. All students graduating from secondary education will be computer literate, skilled in using Word, Excel and Powerpoint programs, as well as database and web based applications.

The strategy has five main directions:

- the development of adequate legal base for the ICT and ICT-based education;
- introduction of computer classes at all schools;

- provision of high speed internet links in all schools;
- training for teachers who will be using ICT to all school disciplines;
- setting up an educational portal and forms of distance learning and educational content for all disciplines.

If the strategy is successfully achieved, Bulgaria will in 2007 have reached average EU indicators. By the time Bulgaria joins the EU, all schools will possess computer rooms with access to broadband internet. Young Bulgarians will be

able to compete with their European contemporaries and will become active participants in the knowledge-based economy.

Further information: Mr Jonko Bushnyashki, Programme Director, National Management School

Source: Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Education and Science

SPAIN

Draft Law on education aims for quality and equity

On 22 July 2005, the council of ministers agreed to refer the draft Framework Law on Education to parliament for debate and subsequent adoption. The government hopes that the bill will be adopted in December and has foreseen a five-year timeline for its application. The bill includes a financial statement which provides for a total funding of EUR 6 031 m over this period.

The principal objective of the new law is to deliver educational quality based on the principle of equity for the entire population, without exception. To achieve this, the bill includes measures focusing on bringing all students through compulsory schooling successfully; promot-

ing lifelong learning; citizenship; and equal opportunities and social cohesion.

The bill focuses on providing a better grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic as these skills are critical for subsequent learning. One relevant measure is to equip all state schools with a school library as a means of encouraging students to read. Moreover, in order to nip educational failure in the bud, low achievers are to benefit from remedial programmes starting from primary school.

In accordance with European guidelines, the bill also promotes lifelong learning. Every citizen will get the chance to engage in lifelong learning, both within and outside the education system, to ac-

quire, update, supplement and expand their knowledge, capacities and skills, in the interest of their personal and occupational development.

In vocational training, the bill introduces greater flexibility in access to VET as well as in links between various sub-systems. To increase flexibility within the education system and promote lifelong learning, various bridges will be built between general education and vocational training streams.

The bill also stipulates that children are to be taught a foreign language and receive instruction in information and communication technologies from the age of 5.

To ensure quality, the new regulations provide for two appraisal sessions at the end of the 4th class of primary school (age 9) and the second year of secondary school (age 13). These appraisals will not be included in students' academic records or used as a basis for awarding qualifications. Their aim is to provide precise data on the evaluation and overall functioning of the education system in order to steer the decision-making process in the right direction and upgrade student learning.

Source: National public employment service, INEM

DENMARK

Graduation system in vocational training

In August 2005, a consolidated statement on vocational education and training in Denmark was presented by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Minister of Education Bertel Haarder and Minister of Economic Affairs Bendt Bendtsen.

The statement sets out the biggest challenge in vocational training: to make sure that students do not drop out of their vocational training programme. It is a declared aim of the government that by 2015, 95 % of an age cohort completes youth education.

To achieve this aim, vocational education and training is being restructured. A graduation system is being introduced

so that young people with different skills and ambitions are attracted to vocational training. The system allows students to leave their training programme at predefined levels; some will complete only the first level and others will continue training to the highest possible level.

The statement is largely supported by the social partners. 'There must be training offers and challenges for all', says Minister of Education Bertel Haarder. 'The introduction of the graduation system is also a way to meet the needs of students who want to continue their studies at higher level. The door of technical colleges should also open doors to higher education'. The Minister em-

phasised that vocational training should not lose its status just because some students choose to leave the system before others.

More work placements

The government and the social partners also agreed on the need to find more work placements for students in vocational training. 'Employers of a certain size should bear a bigger burden than is the case today', said PM Anders Fogh Rasmussen to representatives from industry; he was supported by the Minister of Education who stressed that public employers should also offer more work placements.

During the summer, the government set up two committees to come up with recommendations on how Denmark may offer the best vocational training in the world.

One committee is focusing on how to ensure that more young people complete youth education: this work should be finished before the end of 2005. The other committee is discussing how to orient vocational training in Denmark for the future, including how the system may cover new trades. Recommendations on this should be presented by 1 February 2006.

Further information: Peter Højer, Ministry of Education, Peter.Hojer@uvm.dk.

Source: Cirius

DENMARK

Reintroduction of traditional apprenticeships

More young people should enrol for a vocational training programme and more should complete their training programme. These are declared aims set by the government and, at the beginning of June, recommendations were presented on how to improve opportunities for young people to enrol in and complete vocational training.

The most eye-catching recommendation is the reintroduction of the traditional form of apprenticeship, which in-

creases the responsibility for training by companies. Apprentices would be trained at the workplace by skilled workers within their field instead of the present system where basic training takes place at vocational colleges and specialised training takes place at college and in company in turn. The aim is that this form of training is offered for all training programmes; however, the social

partners may decline the opportunity to make such an offer if deemed inadequate by the relevant trade committee.

More information: Nicolai Kampmann, Head of Communications Department, Ministry of Education, tel. (45) 3392 5009. Thomas Harder Rasmussen, Press Officer, Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, tel. (45) 3395 5848.

Source: Cirius



Distance education expands further

Distance education is new to Bulgaria's educational system, with the relevant Regulation governing distance education at tertiary level approved in November 2004.

A centre for distance learning was established in 1997 at the University of National and World Economy of Sofia (UNWE), with the first Master's programme in International Economic Relations financed by the Phare programme. Other master's programmes followed, in Public Finances, Public Administration, Marketing, Business Administration and Economics of Defense and Security.

Currently, educational resources are being gathered for the master's programmes in Human Resources Management, Healthcare Management, International Project Management, and Insurance, which are expected to start during the 2005/06 and 2006/07 academic years.

Between 1997/98 and 2004/05, the number of those graduating from distance education programme grew from 24 to 1364 persons. Two new centres for distance education are expected to begin functioning in September 2005 in smaller towns. Bachelor's degree programmes will begin in 2006/07.

In order to comply with state requirements, the system for distance education at the UNWE as of May 2005 was based on the iLearning Module, based on Oracle E-Business Suite software. This allowed:

1. publishing information on the major subjects, organizing and controlling enrolments and tuition payments;

2. locating all educational and assessment materials on a specialised server with high-speed access to the Internet;

3. creating and maintaining catalogues for tutors, students and their status, educational materials and educational mod-

ules, instructions and requirements for examinations;

4. organising on-line consulting with tutors and discussion forums among the students.

Thanks to extensive changes in early 2005, the Center for Distance Education has updated all of its programmes in compliance with the requirements of the Regulation on the State Requirements. Special textbooks and educational and training materials have been compiled for 75 per cent of the major subjects on paper or on electronic data-carriers, as well as multimedia and interactive educational materials. Educational materials and modules for education and assessment for 70 per cent of the major subjects have been located onto a specialized server with guaranteed high-speed access to the internet, as well as educational materials and resources for self-training, located in the internet-

based system. A total of 30 per cent of the auditory activities, foreseen for the regular course of education are realized in the form of consultancies in Sofia or at the local centres for distance education. Furthermore, as a part of the i-Bulgaria Initiative of the National Development Programme, five telecentres were established in May 2005 at the UNWE, including the Center for Distance Education and its two local centres.

As a result of the applied efforts, in April 2005 the quality management system of the Center for Distance Education was certified in accordance with the requirements of BS EN ISO 9001:2000 by Moody International.

Further information: Associate Professor Vesselka Pavlova, Director of the Center for Distance Education at the University of National and World Economy of Sofia, e-mail dedu@mail.prosoft.bg

Source: Center for Distance Education/Vesselka Pavlova

THE NETHERLANDS

Lifelong learning and working

The need to learn throughout life is widely recognised. Yet it is the combination of lifelong working and learning that ensures optimal participation in, and contribution to, the knowledge society and economy. This is what the new Project Directorate for Learning and Working will promote in the coming years.

The Project Directorate for Learning and Working was set up by the ministries of education, culture and science, and social affairs and employment, in March 2005. Other ministries are also involved: agriculture, nature management and food quality; economic affairs; immigration and integration; and finance. This

temporary directorate is responsible for implementing an action plan for lifelong learning (⁽¹⁾). Concrete measures are defined in the corresponding work plan 2005-07, entitled Strengthening learning and working (⁽²⁾). It is based on the aim for citizens to participate optimally in the knowledge economy and in society and to engage not only in a working career but also in a closely linked learning career.

Proposed action includes:

- the promotion of dual trajectories, i.e. closer cooperation between education institutions and companies and learning at the workplace. Different levels are fore-

seen, with the aim of reaching 15 000 participants;

- regional/local one-stop-offices for information on education and career guidance: this includes validating prior learning (up to 12 500 finished procedures in 2007), in combination with career guidance and orientation towards education and training possibilities at regional level, plus developing an open online marketplace for training. A link to the Europass framework and digital portfolio should be established;
- promoting innovation and personal initiative and motivating target groups: this includes different financial measures

(e.g. individual learning accounts for the lower educated), developing innovative LLL strategies and mutual learning and the experimental introduction of an associate degree (two year programme within higher professional education).

The budget for these activities ranges from EUR 15 million in 2005 to EUR 24 million in 2006.

(⁽¹⁾) Available in English at: www.minocw.nl/levenlangeren/doc/actionplan.pdf.

(⁽²⁾) Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, The Hague, 2005. Document available in Dutch at: http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/35/2005/35_2005_3_7577.pdf.

Further information can be found at www.minocw.nl; www.minszw.nl

Source: Project Directorate for Learning and Working/CINOP

Vocational education and training

FINLAND

WorldSkills 2005 in Helsinki a resounding success

The 38th WorldSkills Competition, held on 26-29 May 2005, brought together 670 young technicians and craftspeople from all over the world to test themselves in their chosen field against tough international standards. WorldSkills was the main event in Finland's National Year of Vocational Training and Young Professionals.

The hosting rights for WorldSkills 2005 had been awarded to Finland during the 50th Anniversary General Assembly of the WorldSkills Organisation. The goals set for the event were as follows:

- to enhance appreciation of vocational education and training and the status of skills needed in working life
- to improve the quality of training and to highlight excellence in vocational skills
- to consolidate national skills competitions and their role in developing skill levels
- to build up new national and international skills networks and to strengthen the international capacity of vocational education and training.

The competition attracted young competitors from 38 countries to Helsinki,

where they competed in 39 different skills for the world championship in their field. The skills categories represented widely different fields of industry and services - from PC network support to cabinet-making, and from graphic design technology to landscape gardening. In addition, 636 experts were involved in preparing technical descriptions and test projects and judging competitors.

WorldSkills 2005 generated remarkable interest in vocational education and training, gathering almost 120 000 spectators. Of these, over 60,000 were young people, mainly comprehensive school pupils aged 13-15. During the competition the media gave much coverage to the competitors and their skills, and highlighted the importance that skills play in our modern societies. A website for the event was maintained in 5 languages, and a special competition page was made available in Finnish and English, including a well-resourced image bank.

For Finland, the main intention behind organising WorldSkills 2005 was to involve a broad group of vocational education organisers from all over the coun-

try and to capitalise on the event to develop the quality of Finnish vocational education and training.

The Finnish providers of VET rose to the challenge, taking charge of all skills categories and of accompanying activities (such as the opening and closing ceremonies and the official tours)- and doing very well in the competitions themselves. Schools and students taking part in the competition were offered a superb opportunity to link the project to their own teaching programmes and study plans.

The next WorldSkills Competition will take place in Shizuoka, Japan, in 2007.

Further information: www.wsc2005helsinki.com, www.worldskills.org
Markku Lahtinen, Communications Manager, Tel. (358-9) 8689 6811
E-mail: markku.lahtinen@skillsfinland.com

Source: Markku Lahtinen

BELGIUM

Gold medal at the World Skills Championships in Helsinki

In May 2005, a delegation of twelve talented young Belgians was sent to the World Skills Championships in Helsinki (Finland) to display their country's level of technical skilling and competences.

The national team returned from Helsinki with a number of medals. A gold medal was won by a competitor from the Walloon office for vocational training and employment (FOREM), a printing trainee. The Belgian team was also awarded a bronze medal and four honorary diplomas in graphic arts, masonry, computer network management and welding.

These results show that Walloon training provision is at a level of international excellence and that investment in the development of skills centres in the region has paid off.

Source: Sigrid DIEU, FOREM (sigrid.dieu@forem.be)



SPAIN

Distance course in programmable logic control

Increasing automation of industrial production means that employees in the various sectors of industry are having to familiarise themselves with new technologies in the field of control engineering.

An increasing number of computer-assisted control engineering systems are used in industry for which employees require specific training, e.g. programmable logic control (PLC). Universities and vocational training centres have therefore incorporated industrial automation into their curricula and are now delivering masters programmes, add-on courses and continuing training.

But what is the solution if the players are pressed for time? It is often difficult for employees, trainers, etc. to find the

time to attend continuing training courses. This consideration, coupled with the technical feasibility of offering a PLC programming module on the web, led to the idea of setting up a PLC distance learning programme.

The programme is a basic PLC course addressed to company employees, job seekers, trainers, students, and persons living with physical disabilities of both genders.

The only admission requirement is access to a computer connected to the Internet, either at home or in the workplace, as well as a basic knowledge of control engineering and data processing.

When they enrol, course participants receive a learners' kit with CD-ROMs cov-

ering the theoretical learning content, a self-evaluation tool and the software editor (instructions for use, PLC technical data, communication software, PC station number, the password to access the virtual campus, etc.).

Upon completion of the theoretical part of the course, the participants begin the practical programming tasks. They are given the solution to the initial task so that it need only be copied and forwarded to the control unit for testing. This is followed by the remainder of a maximum of six programming tasks.

The PLC system is located in the institute of the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and is connected to simulators so that the exercises can be conducted with

real components such as those to be found in industrial practice.

Cameras have been installed to enable the participants to monitor their programming results in real time.

The course lasts a total of four months from the date of enrolment.

Since the course is a specialised programme, successful participants are awarded an official Polytechnic University of Catalonia certificate.

Further details can be found on the Fundación Politécnica de Cataluña website at: www.fundacio.upc.edu (online courses) or from: Joaquin Ros Florenza, Member of the teaching staff, Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña, Escuela Univ. de Ingeniería Técnica Industrial, C/Colom nº 1. E-08222 Terrassa
E-Mail: rosf@ee.upc.edu

Source: Joaquin Ros Florenza

POLAND

Guide to accreditation procedures for non-formal CVT institutions

The dynamically changing labour market and a free market for educational services spur constant development of the continuing education sector. This calls for mechanisms such as accreditation of service providers able to ensure that learners' interests are adequately protected in terms of the quality of provision.

A provider can be awarded accreditation if it guarantees well-equipped training facilities, employs qualified staff, develops training materials and makes them available to trainees.

The detailed criteria for evaluating these areas are set out in the evaluation sheet, appended to the Ordinance. Meeting the prescribed requirements can prove a challenge to both parties involved in the process. To support both the entities intending to seek accreditation and the Superintendent's offices, KOWEZIU submitted an application in December 2004 for ESF cofinancing of the project entitled Guide to accreditation procedures for non-formal CVT institutions.

Upon completion of the project in December 2005, the guide, as a hard copy

and a CD (2 000 copies) will be disseminated free of charge to: school administration bodies and continuing education providers such as Superintendent's offices, continuing education centres and practical training centres, district and regional labour offices, and the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education at the Ministry of National Education and Sport.

It is confidently expected that the guide, by providing a wealth of useful and practical information, will help popularise the concept of accreditation and increase

the number of accredited providers, so contributing to improved quality in continuing education provision in Poland.

Legislation governing the accreditation process:
- Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (Journal of Laws No 67/1996 item 329 as amended)
- Ordinance of the Minister of National Education and Sport on the accreditation of institutions and centres offering non-formal continuing education services, of 20 December 2003 (Journal of Laws No 227/2003 item 2247).
Further information: National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education, www.koweziu.edu.pl.
Further information: Witold Wozniak, Head of the Vocational and Continuing Education Unit, KOWEZIU
e-mail: sekret@koweziu.edu.pl
tel. (48 22) 844 07 40

Source: KOWEZIU/Witold Wozniak



GERMANY

Hopes set on the pact

Increasing dearth of industrial training places raises concerns.

In the opinion of the Federal Employment Agency (BA), the situation in the German training market - at the end of September 2005 there was still a shortfall of some 30 000 training places - is even more tense than it was a year ago. As this trend became apparent in August of this year, Ludwig Georg Braun, president of the association of German chambers of commerce and industry (DIHT) launched an initiative on apprentices' wages, triggering a debate on a lump-sum 'basic apprentice wage' of EUR 270, which came up against strong resistance from the trade unions and the political community.

The critics are now calling upon employers to respect the terms of the training pact agreed between the federal government and the umbrella organisations of German industry in 2004. The pact was a compromise which put an end to the heated controversy on the introduction of a training place levy for firms po-

tentially able to deliver training but effectively failing to do so. Under the terms of the pact, industry pledged to create an additional 30 000 training places annually over a period of three years, as well as 25 000 work experience opportunities every year up to 2006 for young people requiring a kick-start into working life (known as 'entry-level training').

Though employers appear to be confident that training place supply will match demand by the end of the year, vocational training experts are increasingly concerned about the growing dearth of training places. Less than one third of all German firms currently participate in the training effort. The decline in the number of newly concluded training contracts is so sharp in the craft sector that it cannot be offset by the increase in training

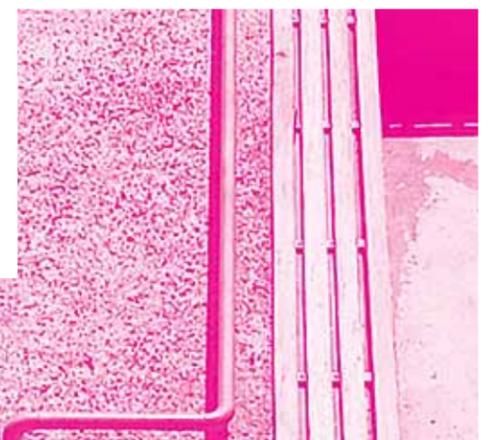
contracts in industry and commerce. Moreover, experts believe that the actual training place deficit is much more serious than the BA statistics suggest.

Since young people starting an 'entry-level training' scheme, a work placement, further school-based training or simply a temporary job no longer appear in the statistics as training place applicants, over 330 000 applicants were deleted from the BA statistics last year. However, many young people merely opt for these alternatives to industrial vocational training as a stop-gap measure, which means that sooner or later they will end up in the training market as first-time applicants. The federal government's latest vocational training report indicates a demand for 626 000 training places in 2005 alone.

The federal government has earmarked substantial funding to alleviate this situation - and not only for this year. A further EUR 100 million (EUR 18 million of which contributed by the European Struc-

tural Fund) has been set aside for the period up to 2010 in order to stimulate a structural change in the training market. The federal government especially wishes to tap the potential offered by growth sectors and innovative technologies, e.g. bio- and nanotechnology, optical engineering and micro-systems technology. More than 250 regional projects within the 'Job starter' programme are to help firms (re-) join the training effort and secure the skills base they need for the future, priority being given to the creation of training associations and networks, training coaching and external training management.

Source: BMBF/BIBB/DIHT/DGB/rtr/Cedefop/SK



A modular approach to apprentice training

Following the adoption of relevant legislation, a modular approach to apprentice training is to be introduced in Austria at the beginning of 2006. This measure is the federal government's response to the increasing specialisation of Austrian firms as a result of which ever fewer companies are in a position to deliver apprentice training in an entire occupational profile - which has in turn im-

plied a decline in the number of firms potentially able to deliver training at all. A modular training occupation consists of a basic and at least one main module, as well as one or more specialised modules. The basic module generally lasts at least two years and comprises those skills and knowledge corresponding to the core activities of one or more training occupations. The main module lasts one

year and comprises skills and knowledge corresponding to the qualifications required by an occupation or an occupational area. Finally, the specialised modules comprise skills and knowledge corresponding to the qualifications required by an occupation or an occupational branch with reference to its specific means of production and services. This new approach is to lead to more flexible or-

ganisation of the training effort thanks to better combination opportunities. It is also designed to provide greater transparency of training provision, make it easier to recognise previous and acquired learning and in general make young people more mobile thanks to easier accreditation of modules.

Source: Helmut Hafner, ibw free-lancer

Employment policy



Importance of national training authority highlighted

The role of the National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) in contributing to the current positive economic climate in Ireland has been underestimated, according to a recent report (1). The report reveals that since its inception, the Irish State has used FÁS to address a myriad of policy problems, from hi-tech skill shortages to functional illiteracy.

The report provides an institutional analysis of Ireland's principal labour market agency and explores the politics of policy-making in the labour market. It considers the capacity of the Irish state to effect change, the pattern of governance that developed within this policy area, the associated ideological and political struggles and the broad consequences of these for social and economic policy. The study argues that the Irish model of active labour market policy has combined an ambitious interventionist strategy to mobilise and upskill labour with low levels of funding.

FÁS, the report states, has fundamentally reshaped the Irish welfare state. In the absence of alternative mechanisms,

FÁS remains the key instrument used by the state to tackle policy problems ranging from underinvestment in training by Irish employers to social exclusion. However, the study also suggests that the state's reliance on 'quick-fix' solutions generated by FÁS may have inhibited efforts at more fundamental policy reform of education and social policy in other government departments.

The author looks in detail at two 'signature' programmes of FÁS, the Standards-Based Apprenticeship and Community Employment, to provide insights into the policy decisions surrounding their introduction and their subsequent governance e.g. how they were co-ordinated, who had control over them and who had responsibility for delivering them. He notes criticisms of FÁS from the education, employers and community sectors. For example some employers contend that they have been manipulated into paying for an apprenticeship system that FÁS controls, while under the framework of the Community Employment scheme community organisations say they have been manipulated into becoming em-

ployment/training organisations, increasingly detaching them from their original purposes. FÁS was thus able, the report states, to manipulate both business and community groups into bearing a significant proportion of the burden associated with schemes whilst it retained effective control over policy. And control over programmes meant it was able to respond quickly to political demands.

Nevertheless, the study notes that FÁS and its activities enjoy widespread support amongst elected politicians. FÁS, with its regionalised structure, is highly responsive to the local, clientelistic nature of Irish politics, the report argues. Furthermore, the local nature of Irish politics provided a robust constituency of politicians largely immune to research-based criticism. In addition, FÁS's capacity to deliver policy with low fixed and low net costs has contributed to its success, winning the approval of the Department of Finance and the European Commission.

The author concludes:

- In the absence of radical institutional change within the Irish public sector,

institutions such as FÁS provide an effective, if not optimal, means of addressing policy problems.

- FÁS is well adapted to the ideological, fiscal, and clientelistic realities of Irish politics. In the absence of other mechanisms to address policy problems ranging from labour market to education and social exclusion issues, it appears that FÁS will continue to play an important role in addressing these policy issues.

(1) Boyle, Nigel: FÁS and active labour market policy 1985-2004. Dublin: The Policy Institute, TCD, 2005. ISBN 1-902585-16-X. Available: The Policy Institute, Trinity College Dublin, IRL-Dublin 2.

Source: FÁS

Flanders: integration training schemes as a springboard to employment

The transition from school to the labour market

New integration training schemes directed towards job-seekers and low-qualified school leavers were introduced with effect from 15 August/1 September 2005. However a condition for admission to the programmes is participation in a training course or enrolment in compulsory education no less than four months prior to admission. The new schemes were introduced on the basis of a decision by the Flemish government, upon the proposal of the minister for employment and education. The integration training schemes offer an advantage to both sides - to the employers, as the national employment office, ONEM, covers most of the wage bill for the first two months of the scheme; and to job-seekers, as they are taken on by the employer on the basis of a permanent contract at the end of the scheme.

The longer job-seekers and school-leavers remain out of work, the wider

the gap to their previous learning becomes. This reduces their appeal to employers, even in the case of job vacancies with a dearth of applicants. The Flemish government and the social partners intend to tackle this problem by means of the integration training schemes. The schemes were already addressed in the Flemish employment agreement at the beginning of this year; their implementation is now possible on the basis of the action plan against youth unemployment introduced by the federal minister for employment.

Target groups

The following groups are eligible for integration training schemes:

- job-seekers coming out of a vocational training programme of at least 400 hours duration (no age limit is applicable);
- low-qualified school-leavers holding no more than the lower secondary certificate (ESG), a certificate of second-level secondary technical, vocational or artis-

tic education, qualifications acquired in the context of middenstand programmes (1) or a certificate of part-time vocational secondary education, alternance-based vocational education or secondary education for students with special needs;

- young people awarded a diploma of technical education or vocational education. The Flemish minister for employment and education is to consult the Flemish social partners on this matter.

Procedure

Participants must commence the integration training schemes within four months of completion of their education or training. Unemployment benefit or a waiting allowance is payable by ONEM for the first two months of the scheme. This means that employers only have to make up the difference between this benefit and a start-up wage. Upon completion of the integration training schemes, participants are offered a permanent contract. By introducing this measure, the

Flemish minister for employment and education is looking to encourage Flemish companies to draw on the resources offered by those who have completed vocational training and to stimulate the employment of low-qualified school-leavers so that they can put into practice what they have learned as soon as possible. The integration training schemes also offer participants the prospect of permanent employment.

The (VDAB) Flemish public service for employment and vocational training is responsible for the implementation of the integration training schemes.

(1) Training organised by WIZO for apprentices (in alternance mode) or heads of enterprise (business set-ups or continuing training) in the Flemish community. Identical systems can be found in the French and German-speaking communities.
Contact: R. Van Weydeveldt, VDAB library administration

Sources: Press service, press release dated 22 July 2005, Office of the Flemish minister for employment, education and training, Frank Vandebroucke/De Standaard and De Tijd newspapers, 23 July 2005



FRANCE

National framework agreement on youth integration

Partners rally around the 'professionalisation contract'

In the current conditions of high youth unemployment - almost one quarter of young people are out of work - representatives of the employers and the national employment agency (ANPE) 'have decided to develop a partnership to promote the vocational integration of young people, offering them genuine perspectives of sustainable employment by leveraging the strong mechanism of the 'professionalisation contract' (CP). Objective: to consolidate the development of the CPs, which reached 16.3 % from May to July 2005: according to the ministry's research and statistics unit, Dares, 29 200 contracts of this type were registered by the ministry of employment at the end of July 2005.

Gérard Larcher, minister for employment, labour and the vocational integration of young people, ANPE and 18 sectoral and inter-sectoral organisations - including the employers' association (Medef), the confederation of SME employers (CGPME), the craftwork employers' association (UPA) and the national union of liberal professions (UNAPL) - signed a national framework agreement on 'the vocational integration of young people via the CP' on 1 September 2005.

ANPE has in particular made a commitment to:

- appoint a correspondent within ANPE for each sectoral and inter-sectoral organisation 'at the most appropriate level as a function of its presence on the national territory'. Along with their counterparts from the relevant sectoral or in-

ter-sectoral organisation, these correspondents will be tasked with analysing the 'specific needs of enterprises to develop response strategies'. They will also have responsibility for facilitating and coordinating the activities of the occupational teams within local job centres;

- develop their counsellors' proficiency in relation to the CP. To this end, the facilitators of the occupational team of each agency are to 'define the action plans necessary for the realisation of the agreement in the occupational sectors for which they are responsible' and 'follow up and coordinate the implemented actions';

- inform and advise enterprises on the CP and provide them with customised support;

- organise a CP promotional campaign within industry at the level of each local agency.

ANPE is to inform and sensitise young people to CP opportunities offered by industry. In collaboration with the sectoral and inter-sectoral organisations, ANPE will organise and facilitate information forums on job prospects. 'The agency may decide to carry out a campaign directly targeted to unemployed youngsters by organising a mail-shot or distributing brochures'. Finally, in the talks conducted in the context of the personal action plan (PAP-PARE), counsellors are to present the CP mechanism to unemployed clients along with any 'offers which may be made'.

The sectoral and inter-sectoral organisations for their part commit themselves to:

- inform and advise enterprises on the CP;
- inform and 'sensitise young people to the skilling opportunities offered by industry';
- entrust ANPE with the management of CP placement.

A steering committee is to analyse the initial results with a view to pooling and sharing models of good practice. Its inaugural meeting is scheduled for October 2006.

ANPE is to set up a scoreboard to follow 'the two major impact indicators expected from this agreement': the number of offers registered/followed up per business sector.

The agreement of 1 September, concluded for a period of one year, may be signed by any sectoral organisation wishing to do so.

The next step: an information portal sponsored by the social partners is to be up and running at www.formations-pour-tous.com with effect from 13 September 2005. The site will provide young people and heads of enterprise information on the specificities of the CP per sector of industry.

Further information on the CP at the following websites:
Centre INFFO: www.centre-inffo.fr/article.php?id_article=46
the ministry of employment: www.travail.gouv.fr/dossiers/Contratpro/index.html
CGPME: www.professionnalisation.org/

Source: Le Quotidien de la formation/Stéphane Héroult/Centre INFFO

DENMARK

Workshops on reading and arithmetic for lower-educated adults

In the next four years, seven major vocational training centres are to be approved as pilot providers of workshops that improve the basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills of lower-educated adults. The workshops are aimed at lower-educated adults who already participate in continuing vocational training but who need to improve their reading and arithmetic skills to be able to follow the course. Expectations for the success of the workshops are high.

The need for improved basic skills often becomes evident once participants are enrolled in continuing vocational training and adult education: quite a number have difficulty in following training and, in the worst case, they drop out. To avoid this, supplementary education in reading, writing and arithmetic is required to complete the course. Fortunately, experience shows that most adults are keen on improving their basic skills when it is for the purpose of getting better at doing their job.

More information: Ministry of Education, uvm@uvm.dk, tel. (45) 33995 5600

Source: Ciriuz

CEDEFOP PUBLICATIONS



The value of learning: evaluation and impact of education and training
Third report on vocational training research in Europe
Synthesis report

Cedefop reference series 3042
Language: en
Price: EUR 40

Cat. No: TI-64-04-256-EN-C
May be obtained from the EU sales offices



Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems
Using common European reference tools

4045
Languages: de, en, fr

Cat. No: TI-67-05-121-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



ICT and e-business skills and training in Europe
Towards a comprehensive European e-skills reference framework
Final synthesis report

Cedefop Panorama series 5149
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-AF-04-001-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Trends and skill needs in tourism
Cedefop Panorama series 5161
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-68-05-745-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Cedefop in brief
Promoting a European area of lifelong learning

4023
Languages: el, en

Cat. No: TI-64-04-321-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Vocational education and training: key to a better future
Cedefop's medium-term priorities

4050
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-69-05-472-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Vocational education and training in the United Kingdom
Short description

Cedefop Panorama series 5159
Languages: de, en, fr

Cat. No: TI-68-05-309-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Quality in e-Learning
Use and dissemination of quality approaches in European e-learning
A study by the European Quality Observatory

Cedefop Panorama series 5162
Languages: de, en

Cat. No: TI-67-05-905-DE-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



The value of learning: evaluation and impact of education and training
Third report on vocational training research in Europe
Executive summary

4042
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-64-04-272-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



European reference levels for education and training: promoting credit transfer and mutual trust
Study commissioned to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, England

Cedefop Panorama series 5146
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-67-05-379-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Vocational education and training in Luxembourg
Short description -C

Cedefop Panorama series 5160
Languages: de, en, fr

Cat. No: TI-64-05-765-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Lifelong learning bibliography: a European VET perspective
No 7-8
January - December 2004
A Cedefop Library and Documentation Bibliography
Cedefop Dossier series 6012
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-AH-05-008-EN-C
Free of charge on request from Cedefop



FRANCE

Social partners supplement agreement on lifelong learning

On 20 July 2005, two riders to the national inter-sectoral agreement (ANI) of 5 December 2003 were adopted by the social partners who are signatories to the ANI. The first of these riders relates to the career interview, skills assessment and the training pass, while the second addresses the accreditation of previous learning (APL).

The new texts adopted by the delegations may be signed by trade unions up to 23 September 2005, following which they will be transmitted to the public authorities for official approval and implementation. The two riders envisage four major innovations which were already the subject of unsuccessful negotiations in July 2004.

The first rider specifies the details of the implementation of the new lifelong learning tools provided by the law of 4 May 2004.

The career interview is to become general practice. Implemented upon the initiative of either the employer or the employee, it is intended as a guide allowing employees to work out their career projects on the basis of how they wish to develop, where their abilities lie, and 'what the company requires'. The interview may address the following aspects:

- means of access to information on employee guidance and training mechanisms;
- identification of skilling targets so that employees can develop their skills or qualifications;

- identification of appropriate training mechanism(s) as a function of the established skilling targets;
- conditions for the implementation of part or all of the training effort outside working hours.

Upon the initiative of the employee, training measures proposed in the course of or subsequent to this interview may be recorded in the annex to the training pass.

The training pass, established by the employee (who is also responsible for its utilisation) may record the following information in particular:

- certificates and qualifications acquired in the course of initial training;
- work experience acquired in the course of work placements or training programmes;
- vocational certificates awarded in the context of continuing training or APL;
- type and duration of vocational training programmes, including those effected during periods of idleness;
- jobs held in one and the same enterprise and the knowledge, skills and abilities deployed in such jobs.

Employees may establish their training passes, taking account in particular of the European CV, on the basis of a standard document which is to be drawn up by the joint industrial committee for vocational training (CPNFP) by 31 December 2005. The information in the pass and the dissemination of the training pass model developed by the CPNFP in electron-

ic or hard copy form will be provided by the FUP equalisation fund.

Finally, employees wishing to add more personalised information to their training passes may incorporate information from their skills assessment summary document.

The second rider relates to the accreditation of previous learning (APL). The social partners wish to promote the development of APL. As in 2004, the social partners agree on the importance of any APL approach that allows previous experience, especially work experience, to be validated, with a view to the acquisition of a certificate or qualification for occupational purposes or a certificate of vocational qualification (CQP) registered in the national directory of vocational certificates (RNCP). CQPs not registered in the RNCP may also be awarded via APL.

References:

- Rider No 1 to the national inter-sectoral agreement of 5 December 2003 on employee access to lifelong vocational training, dated 20 July 2005
www.medef.fr/staging/medias/upload/81582_FICHIER.pdf
- Rider No 2 to the national inter-sectoral agreement of 5 December 2003 on employee access to lifelong vocational training, dated 20 July 2005
www.medef.fr/staging/medias/upload/81583_FICHIER.pdf
- INFFO Flash, No 663, 1 - 31 August 2005

Source: Stéphane Héroult/Centre INFFO

SLOVAKIA

Bakers' guild takes the initiative on training

In post-war Slovakia, as in other communist countries, the State favoured mass production and heavy industry. This bias, along with the nationalisation of the economy, weakened the status of professional organisations, which, based as they were on professional honour and the defence of individual interests, did not serve the government's political ambitions. Guilds and communities were restored only after 1989. Currently, the Slovak Small Business Chamber (SŽK) and the Slovak Craft Industry Federation (SZZ) support the interests of small entrepreneurs. These organisations try to combine the State's efforts to create a qualified labour force with their traditional interest in providing quality service and protecting the craft. But revitalising and improving relevant legislation takes time.

The training of apprentices at Slovak VET schools faces a lack of resources that are necessary to update equipment, and a severe brain drain. The return of private entrepreneurship led many excel-

lent professionals to quit teaching. A decline in teaching standards was feared to be inevitable. Yet when the final competition testing the professional competence of bakers from all over the world (World Bakery Cup) was held during the World Bakery, Patisserie and Catering Exhibition in Paris, Slovak team members ranked 4-6 among the 12 finalists. Though this success belongs to the individual competitors, it also constitutes evidence that Slovak vocational schools are getting better.

The Guild of Bakers and Pastry Makers organises extensive continuing training activities. Since 1992, over 500 students have completed a 168-hour course to obtain basic skills and have undergone retraining to take on board professional changes; over 100 practitioners have shown interest in completing the 208-hour school for master bakers. The guild has developed and issued two dictionaries (English, German) and 8 textbooks, of which some were approved by the

Ministry of Education as official supplementary textbooks for VET schools. Yet as far as Slovak law is concerned, the master baker certificate confers no formal advantage to its holders. Despite accreditation by the Ministry of Education, graduates are awarded qualifications that are recognised abroad - but not in Slovakia.

The problem lies in existing legislation. Though graduates of such secondary vocational schools can obtain a business licence, no school within the formal education system can provide them with a higher-level qualification in their craft. The last such school for master craftspeople in former Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in the 1950s. Reopening such schools would require the recruitment of qualified trainers and a change of legislation. Vojtech Szemes, the Bakers' Guild Master, is convinced that the necessary know-how is already available in the Guild thanks to the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce of Trier, Germany. As soon

as the new Education Act, submitted by the Ministry of Education to the government in November 2005, allows for the establishment of these schools, the Guild will provide assistance to three regional schools in order to immediately start training master bakers. But this is conditional upon the successful adoption of a new law by parliament, and upon raising the status of trainers at secondary vocational schools. The first graduates should also serve as future trainers at the schools. In the meantime, the State should support trainers already in service to obtain at least the current certificate of master baker issued by the guild. As of June 2005, this certificate has already been awarded to over 90 active entrepreneurs in the field.

Further information: Juraj Vantuch, Slovak National Observatory of VET, Černyševského 27, SK - 851 01 Bratislava, Tel./fax (421-2) 62410678, E-mail: sno@netax.sk, www.siov.sk

Source: Vojtech Szemes, Guild of Bakers and Pastry Makers, ul. M.R. Štefánika 10, Pezínok, tel. (421-33) 6412397, fax (42133) 6413314

ESTONIA

Strong social partner interest in VET increases further

At the meeting of the Ministers of Education of the Member States in London in July, the Estonian Minister of Education and Research was pleased to hear that the active participation of Estonian social partners in promoting vocational education and training was cited as a positive example for the rest of Europe.

Many countries have recognised the need for greater involvement of social partners. In Estonia, it is mainly the employers and employees who have supported the development of vocational education and training. Entrepreneurs have been active in establishing which skills are needed, and have supported integrating the teaching of those skills in the system of education and training.

The social partners have participated actively in the creation of the Estonian Qualification System. The development of sectoral skills has been the focus of interest since 1998, with the establishment, on the initiative of entrepreneurs, of the Estonian Qualification Authority, which brings together representatives of employers' and employees' organisations and government agencies dealing with education and employment, and the creation of a national qualification system.

Today Estonia has 16 sector councils and 68 qualification-awarding bodies, as well as a number of working groups who prepare and update occupational standards - 508 standards are already completed, and many are under review.

Since 1998 over 1500 different institutions have taken part in working out the standards.

It is worth pointing out that working in such groups is voluntary, as is usually the case in a country with limited resources (notably human resources). Entrepreneurs and the representatives of professional associations recognise the importance of such work, and this recognition has ushered in a new phase for Estonia. Vocational education institutions' and entrepreneurs' mutual fingerprinting has been replaced by constructive cooperation.

According to the new education strategy, which runs until 2008, the role of partnership is set to become even more

important. Employers, employees, and professional associations will be - in fact already are - involved in all aspects of vocational education, sectoral as well as general. Such aspects include the management of vocational training institutions through the establishment of councils, participation in preparing national curricula, the development of occupational standards, and the setting up of apprenticeships and in-service training of trainers.

For further information: Age Rosenberg, Public Affairs Department, Ministry of Education and Research, age.rosenberg@hm.ee, or Katre Savi, Head of Unit, Estonian National Observatory, katre.savi@innove.ee

Source: Innove

Trade Unions make policy proposals for lifelong learning

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has recently published a policy document on Lifelong Learning (1). The document analyses the lifelong learning debate as applied to the Irish workforce, drawing on recent European Commission, Cedefop and Irish policy and research.

Ireland currently ranks fifth out of eleven countries on the numbers of 25-65 year olds participating in some form of lifelong learning. The European Commission has commented on the limited nature of Government response to the issue in successive national employment plans. The development of the National Qualifications Framework is singled out as the exception to this pattern.

Among the major policy recommendations of the ICTU document are:

- **The introduction of paid learning leave**

This would enable workers to ensure that their skill levels kept pace with innovation in their sector. The cost of such an initiative could be partly met from the social insurance fund. 'Studies have shown that Ire-

land and the UK are at the bottom of the league of our European partners in not having some form of learning leave entitlement. This is hardly consistent with Ireland becoming a knowledge-based society.'

- **The opening up of the National Training Fund (NTF) for individual applicants**

ICTU also wants the Government to provide increased resources to the NTF, which was set up in 2000 and is currently funded through an allocation of 0.5 % of employers' social insurance. The organisation recommends that the same percentage of employees' insurance be allocated to the fund, which should then be opened to individuals seeking to increase their levels of qualifications, with priority given to support lower skilled workers to upskill.

- **Treating equally for fees purposes full and part time learners in the state's third level system**

Failure to award fees to part-time students is an obvious barrier to part-time education, which bears heaviest on those combining work and study. At pre-

sent full payment for third level fees is confined to full-time students, while the state refunds 20% of fees through the tax system for part-time students.

- **The establishment of an 'Open University'**

ICTU calls for the coming together of the third level institutions - universities and institutes of technology - as a single institution to provide distance learning on the model offered by the Open University in the UK. The emphasis in this institution should be on a blend of classroom, distance and e-learning, thus making it attractive for those in work.

This policy document is one of a series prepared by ICTU in advance of talks on a successor agreement to Sustaining Progress (see Cedefop Info 2/2003), setting out social objectives which the unions want addressed along with policies to maintain economic success.

(1) Irish Congress of Trade Unions: 'Lifelong Learning everybody wins'. Dublin: ICTU, 2005. Web address: www.ictu.ie/html/news/conference/BDC2005/publications/Lifelong%20Learning.pdf Further information: Peter Rigney, peter.rigney@ictu.ie

Source: ICTU

HUNGARY

Industry encourages region-specific training

The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in cooperation with the regional chambers of commerce and industry, has launched a programme aiming to develop region-specific training within the framework of the Regional Development Operational Programme.

To make the regions more competitive, what is needed is a labour force with the knowledge and skills required by the local market. Developing the skills of employees in key sectors may considerably improve the competitiveness of enterprises in this sector and thus of the region's economy.

Training programmes should reflect the varied level of development and economic sectors of each region. Identifying these key sectors and the skilling needs of

the labour force is therefore the cornerstone of human resources development in each region. Furthermore, the provision of training programmes offering up-to-date knowledge is especially important for micro, small and medium enterprises, as these suffer most from gaps in knowledge and skills that are necessary for their continued development.

Implementation of the measure in each region focuses on the key sectors defined by the development strategy of the region and is based on data regarding labour shortages and gaps in vocational education. The Regionális Fejlesztési Ügynökségek (Regional Development Agencies) have identified the key sectors for each region in which training should be provided.

The relevant tasks at national level have been assigned to the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, while others have been assigned to the so-called Regionális Konzorciumok (Regional Consortia). Within the framework of the programme, labour market needs and training needs will be assessed, and information will be provided to target groups. The project aims to ensure complete coverage of regions and an assessment of regional training needs; to adjust training programmes to changing needs by frequent updates; and to promote participation by keeping all target groups informed.

The main target groups for the project are:

- enterprises, especially SMEs and micro enterprises,

- employees,
- the self-employed.

The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry will cooperate closely with the 7 regional consortia in performing the tasks. For each region, the local chambers of commerce and industry and organisations representing employer and employee interests and special-interest groups cooperated in forming the consortium. The coordination of each regional consortium is ensured by a chamber of commerce and industry active in the region.

Source: Hungarian Chamber of Commerce Newsletter 2005/1

In brief

UNITED KINGDOM

Learning and Skills Council cuts jobs

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Britain's largest non-departmental public body, which is responsible for funding post-16 learning and skills in England, has announced that it intends to cut 1 300 jobs in an attempt to save £40m.

The LSC spends about £8bn every year funding further education in England. It is also responsible for work-based training, workforce development, adult and community learning, providing advice and guidance for adults, and creating education-business links.

Chief executive Mark Haysom said the organisation wanted to develop

'new, less bureaucratic relationships' with the LSC's partners, and 'ensure that every penny works hard for the taxpayer'.

The Public and Commercial Services Union warned that the plans 'will bring devastation to the delivery of vocational courses, apprenticeships and adult learning'. But Bill Rammell, minister of state for higher education and lifelong learning, said the cuts would redirect money from running costs to front-line services.

Source: The Guardian/ine

CYPRUS

Employment Forecast Studies cover wide spectrum

The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus recently published three research studies providing employment forecasts for Cyprus for the period 2005-2015. They are the latest in a series of research studies providing analyses for the labour market in Cyprus.

The three studies are:

- 'Employment Forecasts in the Cyprus Economy 2005 - 2015', which deals with 44 sectors of economic activity and 27 occupational groups covering the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market;
- 'Forecasts of Employment Prospects in High Level Occupations in Cyprus 2005-

2015', forecasting demand for 104 high level (university or post-secondary level) occupations for the period 2005-2015; and

- 'Forecasts of Employment Prospects in Middle Level Occupations in Cyprus 2005-2015' providing forecasts for 90 middle level occupations (such as clerks and agriculture workers) for the period 2005-2015.

Further information: Stelios Mytides, Human Resource Development Authority, Tel. (357) 22 39 03 52, s.mytides@hrdauth.org.cy www.hrdauth.org.cy/researchgr.htm

Source: Human Resource Development Authority

Study visits programme

The origins of the Community Study Visits Programme

'The best way of being a sentinel for the future is to be a link with the past as well.' These telling words of the French poet, Yves Bonnefoy, serve, as an appropriate introduction as we cast our eyes to the origins of the Community Study Visits Programme.

The idea of looking back over the programme was sparked off by its twentieth anniversary, celebrated on 25 May 2005. Travel was the underlying theme of the day's shared debate, organised by Study Visits Coordinator

Marie-Jeanne Maurage, with a number of past participants describing the personal and professional benefits they had derived from their participation in a study visit.

The prevailing sentiment that emerged as the participants told their stories was that they were recounting a far broader history - a history of experimentation and knowledge, of journeys and encounters; of a constant process of learning about instruments and methods for the development of vocational training at European level.

But anniversaries are also a good time to map out possible future routes and to examine whether the conditions which originally justified the work still obtain. In this respect, the participants' contributions provided the ideal opportunity for looking back over the history of the programme from its very beginnings.

Originally, the Community Study Visits Programme was highly experimental. The two Resolutions of the Council

Continued on page 20

The origins of the Community Study Visits programme

Continued from page 19

of the European Communities of June and July 1983 called upon the Commission to implement a series of actions and exchanges in support of vocational training policies concerning young people; the impact of new technologies; and equal opportunities for men and women.

The Resolution of July 1983 specifically asked the Commission to implement a programme of exchange visits for training specialists. Cedefop was the first to be nominated as the reference point for the development of documentation on the training systems and innovations of Member States. In the same Resolution, with regard to measures designed to promote greater equality of opportunity on the labour market, the Commission was also asked to draw up and implement a programme of short study visits for vocational training specialists.

The Commission welcomed this invitation and, in the second half of 1983, commissioned Centre Inffo, the French information centre for the development of continuing training, to conduct a feasibility study. Its purpose, in the words of the introduction to this study, was to 'propose a programme of short exchanges and visits for vocational training specialists within the European Community'. It offered a model for the visits covering a range of specific steps such as the selection of participants, the structure and organisation of the visits (individual or group, bilateral or multilateral), and the choice of priority themes. The model proposed is still today a highly topical point of reference.

The report was produced by Inger Bruun, Adelheid Hege and Jean Marie Luttringer. It was a team - as the feasibility study project manager Jean Marie Luttringer explained on the occasion of the anniversary - whose own 'multinational' nature (Inger Bruun from Denmark, Adelheid Hege of German origin but transplanted in France, and Jean Marie Luttringer himself, a Franco-Alsatian) reflected the condition that was to determine the future success of the study visit project: multiculturalism.

Following the delivery of the feasibility study, the new programme began to be implemented.

The documents at our disposal (internal memoranda, Management Board minutes, outside reports, official correspondence between the Commission and Cedefop, all of them from between 1984 and 1985) demonstrate how painstaking was the process of preparing all the operating, management and financial aspects of the new programme. It involved a delicate organisational chain, bringing together the Commission, Cedefop and the National Liaison Officers. Communication channels between them needed to be both flexible and reliable. And although Cedefop was already at the time an important reference point for research and documentation on vocational training, in taking on the management of a Community programme it was entering an altogether new and uncertain field.

The Community Study Visits Programme became one of Cedefop's priorities for its work in 1985-1986. The first quarter was devoted to setting up the institutional structure required before the first visits could be effectively launched.

One basic aspect of the success of the programme was the choice of theme which

was to serve as subject and purpose of a series of visits.

Then as today, the theme is one of the principal factors determining the success of visits. It is the starting point for defining the target users from whom applications should be sought. It ensures that the participants and their interests are consistent and comparable, as well as serving as a pointer to current and future socio-economic trends at the European level.

The two general subject areas specified by the Commission were firstly, technological development and its implications for vocational training, and secondly, vocational training and youth employment. Both these choices were linked with the then priorities of Community policies on training and employment. Immediately thereafter these two general areas were expanded by a list of sub-themes, chosen in the light of the special concerns of each Member State and formulated by the National Liaison Officers together with the applicants for the Programme themselves. The number of proposals rose to about sixty; although they were all interesting and noteworthy, they were then boiled down to nine. Among these we might recall in-company vocational training, new technologies and their applications in training, training for specific groups such as women or disadvantaged young people, and apprenticeship training with special reference to the engineering and electronics industries.

The Programme was officially launched on 30 September 1985. Four visits started at the same time: Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Italy were the first countries to host the 'pilot group' of participants. It was Greece, then a recent member of the European Community, that hosted the final visit in December 1985, winding up the first phase of the programme. In that year a total of ten Member States were involved, with 96 participants - 80 % of them male, and most of them officials from public-sector institutions. The predominant age group was 36 to 50. Participants received an individual grant of 350 ECU, plus a variable amount based on mileage, reflecting the distance travelled by each one.

Anniversaries offer us an occasion to reflect on how past expectations have been realised; but it may also be helpful to consider the participants' own written reports, their comments and suggestions.

From the very start, their expressed views were positive. The visit had provided ideas for acting in their own occupational sphere - 'with my union I think that the Danish arrangements and alternance system can be drawn upon in order to improve and move forward our agreements and our laws'. It had opened the way to cooperation - 'I appreciated the commitment displayed by the French in tackling the problems, I feel that our two countries could benefit from an exchange on working theory, aims and methods ... my experience has been so greatly extended and deepened that I have been invited to go on a lecture tour ...'. It offered useful encounters - 'This pooling of experience has made me able to compare the various systems of vocational training and see the differences between them.'

Participants expressed surprise on coming into contact with realities that had

previously been perceived as far removed from their own, as individually rooted in their respective national circumstances - 'I was very struck by the fact that France and the United Kingdom are tackling similar problems in the field of education and vocational training, including youth unemployment, the integration of ethnic minorities in the national education system, the need to increase the scientific and technological content of curricula at all levels of the national educational system, the need to develop closer links between schools and industry'. There was an even stronger feeling of being involved, through the visit, in the major changes taking place in European vocational training: 'It was only through the study visit that I came to realise the fact that most young people in training will soon be sitting in front of a screen', wrote someone who had joined a visit to France.

Right from the start, bringing vocational training practitioners up to date and disseminating knowledge of systems adopted in other Member States were seen to promote inter-Community collaboration: this effect occurred above all as the result of the initial choice of procedure for exchanges between groups of different nationalities: 'the next time I have a problem, I know that I will be able to count on my British and German colleagues'.

One of the greatest fears expressed in the feasibility study was that the visit would be treated as a touristic diversion, in other words that the motivation for the visit would mainly have to do with the entertainment derived from visiting other countries. From the very first visit, however, this fear proved groundless. As one of the participants said during a study visit to Italy, 'it is an appropriate cultural need to be concerned with this sector, in order to obtain a proper perspective on the principle that there should be understanding and absolute respect of the host country's cultural attitudes - something that is not peculiar to vocational training'.

Even the language differences, which were considered a not inconsiderable obstacle to the full understanding of the situations visited, began to be seen as an opportunity. As one participant noted, 'this helped us understand how important it is to improve one's language skills in order to derive as much as possible from belonging to the EEC'.

Since then, twenty years have passed. Ten thousand participants have benefited from this opportunity for exchange. Today the European Union has been made all the more complex by enlargement. New technologies dominate in every economic, social and cultural sector. As a result, the themes of the visits reflect a broader and richer range of options. But the essence of the Programme and its original goals remain unchanged.

Following in the path of Herodotus, an early *maitre extraordinaire* of 'educational travel' in the 5th century B.C., the spirit of these study visits remains that of exploration. They presuppose careful preparation and detailed research; they allow for significant material to be compiled from a series of observations, conversations and documents; and continue to serve as a practical tool for the development and training of European citizens.

Source: Marina Cino Pagliarello/Study Visit

Going, seeing, understanding

The history of this programme is especially enriched by 'micro-histories', experiences on a small scale which shed light on how and where the study visit has left its imprint.

Hélène Corre, an official with the National Federation of Unions of agricultural workers in Paris, took part in a study visit in Denmark in 1987 on agricultural and agri-food training.

In the individual report she wrote on her return, she recounts that the visit had given her opportunities for thought and suggestions 'at the very moment when in France we were preparing to take decisions on the training of young farmers'.

The Danish training system was seen as structured and comprehensive: a vocational qualification for farmers was the key factor in the development of this sector, and great attention was devoted to the competence of the trainers.

The end qualification for young Danish farmers was a 'Green Licence' acquired in the course of training that embraced subjects such as chemistry, biology and mathematics; this was combined with practical experience in alternance placements, in both stock farming and in agriculture.

The Green Licence was not an actual diploma, but rather a kind of skills portfolio, before that term had been coined. A compilation of results achieved and placement attestations, it also made the holder eligible for financial grants towards the purchase of farming land of over thirty hectares.

Denmark's example shed light on the needs in France. At the time, the Agricultural Ministry and farming associations in France were committed to reshaping the qualifications for the training of young farmers, which had begun in 1985 with the introduction of the Brevet de Technicien Agricole (BTA), based on a series of innovations such as target-centred education, the multi-disciplinary approach and constant monitoring during the process of training.

The visit to Denmark - as Hélène Corre explained in a recent interview with Marc Mangin - reinforced the conviction that 'the Brevet de Technicien Agricole curriculum had to be supplemented by a period of practical experience'. In 1988, a period of six months' practical training on completing the theoretical course was prescribed by decree, and in 1992 this became official, under the name of 'the six-month placement'.

The dialogue and the contacts made in the course of this visit were to have a useful sequel: in 1993 Hélène Corre was appointed rapporteur to the training group attached to the Comité Paritaire Agricole, which later became the Social Dialogue Committee at the European Commission.

The work that was done within this Joint Committee, together with the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT), led in 2002 to the signing of a preliminary agreement on vocational training at European level, which included participation by social partners in the agricultural sector.

The journey has taken 15 years, starting in Denmark back in 1987, and reinforced by cooperative actions that have helped to improve the infrastructure of agricultural training at European level. And it was the Study Visits Programme that has pointed the way.

The full text of the interviews of Hélène Corre by French journalist Marc Mangin can be found on the Cedefop study visits website: www.studyvisits.cedefop.eu.int.

