

CEDEFOP

Agora debates lifelong learning for older workers



Debates on the ageing workforce are receiving front-page coverage in European media, largely due to proposals on a later retirement age and increased pension contributions. But to successfully manage demographic change, other policy measures are needed as well. The Cedefop Agora conference held in Thessaloniki on 12-13 October 2006 debated a range of policy changes that are needed to promote lifelong learning for older workers.

The starting point for this Agora was the work undertaken by a Cedefop international research network on older workers and lifelong learning that has produced an anthology on the subject (T. Tikkanen and B. Nyhan, eds: 'Promoting lifelong learning for older workers: an international overview' Cedefop, 2006). The main message emerging from the anthology and the Agora is that both organisations and individuals must think of ageing as a developmental process in which people take on new challenges throughout their lives. This means adopting a holistic view of learning in the workplace: a concept encompassing individual training but also, and perhaps more importantly, collective workplace learning.

But if people are to achieve continuous development at work, workplaces should be designed in a way that allows them to 'grow older' at work. Employers together with trade unions should create age-friendly workplaces that promote learning and continual development for all employees. It should be understood that the issue of training for all ages does not just concern the individual older worker

but the entire company and in fact constitutes an important component of company culture.

The challenges for policy-makers are to promote new attitudes to ageing (active ageing) by adopting a life-course perspective, and to create partnerships with all stakeholders to address the agenda of 'age-friendly' employment and education policies. As Agora participants underscored, current demographic trends make such policies imperative, especially in the light of the counter-tendency in some industries to replace older workers rather than re-train them. Not addressing the development of older workers leads to labour shortages and therefore slower economic growth in Europe. An ageing workforce that fails to adapt to new challenges, that does not learn and acquire skills throughout life, affects not only work organisation but the whole of society. The new realities of the labour market - both the technological and the demographic challenges - have created new types of problems that need to be tackled in innovative and unconventional ways. This Agora has been a small step in this direction.

Conferences in Cedefop's Agora series seek to bring together a small number of policy-makers on the one hand and researchers on the other, in order to allow the two groups to exchange views and perspectives on a topic of importance to training in Europe.

Further information:
www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=3&read=1816

Source: bn/ine

CEDEFOP/EU

Predicting the unpredictable? The challenge of forecasting e-skills



From left to right: Aviana Bulgarelli (Director of Cedefop), Costas Andropoulos (European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry), Soumitra Dutta (Roland Berger Professor of Business and Technology, Dean of External Relations INSEAD) and Angelos Ktenas (Policy Coordinator, DG Information Society and Media).

European e-Skills 2006 Conference underscores value of e-competence framework

At the first session of the 2nd European e-Skills Conference, hosted and co-organised by Cedefop in association with DG Enterprise and an industry partner consortium on 5-6 October 2006, Professor Soumitra Datta of Insead articulated the paradox at the centre of the entire e-skills enterprise: How can human beings, whose thinking is linear, make predictions related to the development of technology, which is progressing exponentially?

Though this rhetorical question was not explicitly addressed during the conference, participants nevertheless made it clear that they believed the effort was worth the candle. There was widespread agreement among the 150 participants from 27 countries (employers' and employees' delegates, representatives of the European institutions and participants from academia and train-

ing institutions) that the e-competence framework will be a valuable means to 'find a common language'. It will have to be closely linked to the general European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which itself has become a success story within only two years. Christine Leitner, Head of the Centre for European Public Administration at Danube University, Krems, vividly described the establishment of the e-competence framework as the first step toward 'eating the elephant' of the e-skills challenge.

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, whose welcome message was delivered via video, pointed out that while demand for high-level e-skills is growing faster than supply, lower-level e-skills are under threat from technological change and offshoring. He said he counted on participants' help to ensure an effective follow-up to the conference, which will include a Policy Communication and Action

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'Closer economic cooperation calls for appropriate intercultural skills'

Peter Thiele on the priorities of the German EU Presidency

Peter Thiele, Head of Division for vocational education and training policy in the German Federal Ministry of Education and Science, is also the current Vice-Chairman of Cedefop's Governing Board, having served as Chairman in 2004-2005. Under the German Presidency of the European Union (January-June 2007), he will also be responsible for organising the conference on vocational training (Munich, 4-7 June), and will chair the government group in the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT).

CEDEFOP INFO: Germany will hold the EU Presidency during the first half of 2007, immediately after Finland. What are the priorities of the German Presidency in the area of vocational education and training?

PETER THIELE: The motto of the German EU Presidency is 'EU: Education Unites'. With this motto we wish to underline the importance of European cooperation in education

- for improving and securing competitiveness, social cohesion and common values within the EU,
- for building a citizens' Europe (through the creation of a European learning area) and
- for promoting reform in the national systems.

Making progress on European cooperation in vocational training is thus a key objective of the German EU Presidency. The German Federal Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for European issues in vocational training in Ger-



many, has already demonstrated great commitment in its involvement in the run-up, providing experts in virtually all the working groups on new EU vocational training instruments; the German EU Presidency intends to maintain this momentum. In addition to implementing the Helsinki Com-

muniqué of European Education Ministers under the Copenhagen Process, we shall, among other things, be driving forward discussions in the Council and the European Parliament on the European Qualifications Framework. Jointly with the European Commission we shall complete the consultation procedure on ECVET, the European Credit Transfer System, in conjunction with the European Commission. We also intend to combine this with a clear road map for early implementation of ECVET.

Naturally, a number of EU conferences will stress vocational training issues. Here I name only a few:

- The kick-off conference, 'Lifelong Learning', to be held on 6-7 May in Berlin,

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Letter from the Director

Dear Readers,

Networks and international cooperation lie at the heart of Cedefop's activities. It could hardly be otherwise for an organisation that aims to create communication channels between all contributors to vocational training and to make a meaningful contribution to policy-making. Besides the considerable success the Centre has achieved in forging 'virtual' links, we continue to value face-to-face collaboration and exchanges.

The conferences which Cedefop has organised or participated in these past few months are a good illustration of both the value of professional contact and of the range of issues to which the Centre contributes. These included the European e-Skills Conference and the Agora on Promoting Lifelong Learning for older workers, both organised by the Centre in October; Cedefop's participation in the 14th Annual Congress of the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Eurochambres); and, last but not least, the conferences of the Finnish Presidency on guidance and counselling (Jyväskylä, November) and on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training/review of the Copenhagen-Maastricht process (Helsinki, December) to which Cedefop has made important contributions.

The European Conference on e-Skills, held here in Cedefop on 5-6 October, was part of an ongoing effort to create a framework for the development of e-skills in Europe. The previous European e-Skills Summit (October 2002), had been instrumental in setting up the European e-Skills Forum (with the endorsement of the Council), whose report, 'e-Skills in Europe: towards 2010 and beyond' was endorsed by the European e-Skills 2004 Conference and followed up by several projects. An accurate picture of the supply and demand of e-skills is now available, and the ground

has been cleared for the development of a European e-competence framework.

Certainly, ICT and e-skills have a decisive role to play in supporting productivity and innovation. The European Commission has started working steadily in the direction of acquiring more reliable data on ICT, achieving more realistic forecasts, learning more about the kind of skills employers are looking for and helping to improve skills provision through better curricula, more accurate information, and stronger networks. Cedefop too has initiated a model to forecast skills needs on a medium-term perspective for the broad economic sectors.

In fact, Cedefop has been involved in the area of e-skills from the very beginning. We have:

- closely cooperated with DG Enterprise and Industry in the European e-Skills Forum,
- played a leading role in the CEN Workshop on ICT-skills, and
- initiated studies on ICT skills and training and on certification.

Europe still has a long way to go. The Eurostat Community Survey 2005 shows that 37 % of the European population aged 16 to 74 entirely lack computer skills. Contrary to widespread belief, the problem is not only the social groups that lag behind - i.e. the older generation (>45), people lacking upper secondary education and the unemployed and inactive; equally worryingly, there are considerable differences in performance among the Member States. The statistics are reassuring in one respect: the gender gap is gradually getting smaller. Still, participation in ICT-related education and training generally remains far too limited. The number to keep in mind is that more than half the EU population has never taken a computer course. Having started the process of developing a framework for e-skills by taking a close look at skills for ICT practitioners, we must now widen our perspective and redouble our efforts if we are to equip the general European working population with the necessary knowledge and com-

petences. We need both to continuously upgrade the knowledge of already skilled individuals, and train the groups which the market has left behind.

Our work programme for 2007 states that: 'Cedefop's strategic objective is to contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon goal'. I am pleased to report that the European e-Skills conference has clearly not only brought us closer to 'a long-term e-Skills strategy' but has also contributed to the wider endeavour of the European Union to become a knowledge-based society. This is in large part due to the presence of a wide range of participants, many of whom are the decision-makers responsible for preparing and implementing policies in the field of ICT and e-skills in the Member State governments.

The Commission is currently preparing a Communication and a new Action Plan on e-Skills. We at Cedefop are doing our best to support the Commission in this effort, not just by providing our technical expertise but also by making Cedefop an arena for debate and innovative thinking. Outside the strict limits of the education and training field there are several areas that nonetheless have a tremendous impact on education and training policy, and we are keen to engage them in debate. In my view, the cooperation between Cedefop and the Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry in the e-skills area can be held up as a shining example of such engagement. After all, vocational training, both initial and continuing, is distinct from general education: it is intimately linked to the labour market and to the wider socio-economic environment, including the challenge of achieving social cohesion.

E-skills topics with which Cedefop is currently engaged include:

1. An in-depth analysis and investigation of new ways of setting standards for, and certifying, e-Skills in Europe, and establishing transparency and compatibility - including through the transfer and accumulation of credits. The recent decision of the Commission on the European Qual-

ification Framework allows for a positive development of a reference framework for e-competence. This should be aligned with the EQF and open the door for the recognition of e-skills acquired in non-formal learning (during work, leisure, etc...).

2. Continuing work on Europass, as an important tool allowing transparency and visibility of competences and facilitating mobility. We are currently discussing with the Commission the development of a Europass module on e-skills self-assessment that will improve the visibility of ICT skills.

We hope that biennial e-Skills conferences will become a permanent forum, allowing us to accompany and evaluate policy and action, revise these if necessary, and develop new ideas and proposals for future policy. A worldwide race for talent, know-how and skills is already underway. We all need to do our utmost if we are to succeed in overcoming this hurdle on the road to a competitive and socially harmonious Europe.

Aviana Bulgarelli
Director, Cedefop

Predicting the unpredictable? The challenge of forecasting e-skills

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Plan on e-Skills for Competitiveness, Employability and Workforce Development, to be finalised in 2007.

Cedefop Director Aviana Bulgarelli pointed out that too many European citizens lack even basic knowledge in computer use. Yet competitiveness has been shown to be intimately linked with technological progress which in turn can only be achieved if the workforce acquires necessary technological knowledge, especially in a world where new competitors are being added to old. Recent statistics show that in Europe over 80 % of persons over 55 have no Internet access, only 3 % of public web-sites comply with WAI3 standards (the highest standards of access for people with disabilities), and only 13 % of the EU population can access broadband services, far behind the world's leader (25.5 % in South Korea). Getting everyone involved is crucial to achieve competitiveness, as the Riga Declaration (11 June 2006) makes clear.

The EU also needs to make Europe attractive to the best-qualified people from all over the world if it is to foster innovation, the true driving force of competitiveness.

In his closing remarks, David White, Director of Innovation Policy at the European Commission, pointed out that another limitation to innovation is the EU's 'conservatism' regarding education and training, areas which are seen, quite rightly, as components of national culture. Yet we must find a way to fit the development of e-skills into national systems. It is significant, he said, that the Member States' competence in education and training has not stopped them from pressing forward with the European Qualifications Framework. A similar spirit of cooperation is evident in the approach to e-skills. The need for such a framework, and the importance of forging close cooperation between all parties involved in both the private and the public sector was also stressed by Michael Ehrke of IG Metall (German metal workers union) and Antonio Herrera of Cisco's Networking Academy.

As Ms Bulgarelli said, to go forward we first need to establish the diagnosis, and in this we have made considerable progress. The development of foresight scenarios will be an important exercise. The next tasks for Cedefop are to bring together our transversal activities in e-skills, Skillsnet, the EQF and Europass, in order to make comparability of skills possible. Vocational training can play a significant role in the proficient use of e-skills - for better employability and career development, for active citizenship, for greater social cohesion, in promoting the accreditation of prior learning and in developing new provisions for quality, certification and training.

After two days of presentations, discussion and exchanges, the European e-Skills 2006 Conference ended with a commonly agreed draft Declaration, which sets the long-term agenda around the following axes:

- improving the availability of e-skills;
- empowering future generations;
- boosting the employability of the workforce;

Further information: 2005 Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals, in Statistics in focus, 17/2006: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-NP-06-017/EN/KS-NP-06-017-EN.PDF

- using e-learning for the lifelong acquisition of skills; and
- increasing visibility and monitoring progress.

Further information: www.e-skills-conference.org

Source: Cedefop/fgr, ine

Finnish Presidency Conference reviews guidance and counselling

The aim of the Finnish Presidency Conference on Guidance and Counselling, Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems - Providing the stepping stones, (November 5-6, Jyväskylä) is to review the progress achieved in lifelong guidance policies in Europe within the framework of Education and Training 2010, especially the implementation of the Council Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe (18 May 2004) and cross-sector issues of guidance provision in the context of lifelong learning.

The ideal of lifelong learning means that guidance is now expected to provide support on many levels. If citizens are to move seamlessly between learning and working, counselling services, for both workers and students, must follow suit. And if a conference examining the progress achieved in streamlining guidance practices in the last few years is to have practical results, all interested parties must be involved.

Accordingly, the Finnish Presidency has structured the Presidency Conference on Guidance and Counselling in a way that brings together, from each Member State, all actors involved in guidance and counselling. The delegations comprise not only the competent government authorities of each country (in both education and employment fields) but also social partners and NGOs. This structure is designed to overcome instances where collaboration among the various parties - or

even between ministries - has not been strong.

Vocational training, initial as well as continuing, would benefit from more extensive guidance and counselling opportunities. In both general and vocational education it is no longer enough to display career options; the mission of guidance and counselling today is to develop citizens' ability to plan for the future - a skill that will be useful throughout their lives.

Cedefop's main task in relation to the preparation of the Conference was the production of a report highlighting the progress achieved by Member States in implementing the priorities of the Resolution, identifying key challenges that remain to be addressed and making indicative policy recommendations. The report is based on the national updates provided by the Member States.

Cedefop Director Aviana Bulgarelli chaired the workshop on 'Strengthening strategies and structures at European, national and regional level', while project manager Rocio Lardinois de la Torre was the rapporteur for the workshop on 'Broadening access to guidance across the lifespan'.

We shall be reporting on the results of this conference in the next issue of Cedefop Info.

Source: Cedefop, ine/ rlar

EURYDICE

Science teaching in schools in Europe: policies and research

Improving the effectiveness and appeal of science teaching is a dual challenge. On the one hand it must provide all pupils with enough scientific knowledge to enable them to function as citizens in a technologically advanced society; on the other, it must encourage more young people to pursue scientific careers.

This Eurydice publication provides an overview of the regulations on science teaching in Europe (teacher education, school curricula and pupil evaluation) and of science education research. Here are some highlights:

The spontaneous reasoning of pupils and the differences between girls and boys are often taken into account in initial teacher education regulations

At primary level, teachers are generalists and science teaching is integrated. At secondary level, teachers are usually specialists and subjects are taught separately (biology, chemistry, physics, etc). The content of initial science teacher education is regulated at central or top level in most European countries. These regulations generally take the form of guidelines or qualification standards.

Almost everywhere, knowledge of curricula and certain science-related competences (knowledge of the history of science and capacity to keep up to date with the latest scientific developments) are included in the training programme for as-

piring teachers at all educational levels. Education research points to three issues of key importance in allowing pupils to develop a scientific approach: taking into account any differences between girls and boys in terms of attitude and spheres of interest; the teacher's proficiency in carrying out complex experiments; and the necessity of taking pupils' spontaneous concepts and reasoning as a starting point ('common sense'). Approximately ten educational systems have not included one or the other of these areas in their recommendations.

Many countries include an introduction to all aspects of the scientific approach in the curriculum

As recommended by research, the curricula in most countries refer to the contextual aspects of science, i.e. history and contemporary social issues. Activities requiring a range of abilities, complex knowledge and communication skills are more common at secondary level: proposing and discussing experimental protocols, verifying a scientific law through experiment, and communicating results obtained when researching information.

Furthermore, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is recommended almost everywhere at secondary level for data input and presentation and for researching information. The use of ICT for simulations is less often recommend-

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ed. However, education research stresses its usefulness in helping pupils make a link between theory and experiment.

Standardised evaluation: an emergent practice

Standardised evaluation of science pupils exists in only 14 educational systems - in six of these, exclusively at secondary level. At this level, evaluation is intended for certification purposes in six countries. At both educational levels, where standardised evaluation exists it is always centred on the knowledge of scientific concepts and theories and very often encompasses practical skills and scientific reasoning closely related to the objectives recommended in the curricula.

Debates or reforms relating to the development of this type of evaluation are underway in approximately ten countries. In some cases, this involves establishing

national evaluation standards and bodies responsible for these tests, and extending existing evaluation methods to cover science subjects or implementing new ones.



Science Teaching in Schools in Europe. Policies and Research Eurydice, 2006. Available on the Internet at: www.eurydice.org/pls/portal/url/page/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=081EN

Do you use VET-Bib? You probably should.

Cedefop's bibliographic database is the largest collection on vocational education and training (VET) in Europe

VET-Bib constitutes the most comprehensive and up-to-date overview of European vocational education and training literature. It is an invaluable tool for VET policy makers, researchers, practitioners, employers and trade unions in Europe, allowing them to access not just references but in many cases the documents themselves.

VET-Bib is produced by Cedefop's library and documentation service in cooperation with its network ReferNet (European Network of Reference and Expertise in the field of VET), which comprises representatives from the 25 EU Member States and the candidate countries, plus Norway and Iceland.

VET-Bib is available in full and free of charge at <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu>.

Up-to-the-minute information about all VET issues

Information specialists use the concept of intelligence gathering for describing the process for getting the right information at the right moment. In fact, what decision-makers in the field of VET are looking for is an immediate response, and if possible a short comparative overview, on any subject they deal with. A continually updated bibliographic database is thus an essential tool for monitoring and analysing VET policies in the Member States, at EU level and internationally. A search on VET-Bib can easily summon up recent developments as a first step for formulating an understanding of a topic, such as Member State policies for disabled people, the introduction of measures for the recognition of new skills, etc.

Contents and coverage

The VET-Bib database covers topics in vocational education and training such as research, policy, practice, training systems, comparative analysis and statistics. It features extensive coverage of European material and includes a wide range of key information on the EU Member States and on the international level.

Each entry contains standard bibliographic information and an abstract in Eng-

lish, and is based on the controlled vocabulary of Cedefop's European Training Thesaurus. VET-Bib has a multilingual approach and provides references to publications that are in all official languages of the European Union. Each entry also provides information about obtaining the full text of the document. For references without a hyperlink, users can either order the publication or take a loan from the library - or perhaps, after reading the abstract, contact the author directly. But about a third of all documents from 2000 onwards have a hyperlink attached, and are thus accessible in full text.

VET-Bib includes entries for:

- EU and government publications,
- research reports,
- legal documents,
- periodical/journal articles,
- electronic documents, websites, databases,
- papers (published and unpublished),
- policy documents,
- proceedings (workshops/seminars/conferences),
- books,
- statistics

Dynamic bibliographies

The VET-Bib database can be used in several ways. One particularly useful feature, on offer since 2003, are the dynamic bibliographies on selected topics. These have been developed in response to specific bibliographic needs in VET literature.

The content of the dynamic bibliographies is updated automatically each time a new record is added to VET-Bib and thus always includes the latest publications on selected topics.

Dynamic bibliographies are currently available for the following topics:

- Early identification of skill needs,
- eLearning,
- Librarian and information personnel,
- Lifelong learning,
- Quality in vocational education and training,
- National VET systems,
- VET and enlargement: comparative studies,
- VET and sectoral qualifications.

VET-Bib statistics (September 2006)

- 60 000+ entries,

- 300+ new entries per month, 5000+ a year,
- all EU Member States,
- all official EU languages,
- 7 000+ electronic links direct to full text,
- Direct full text access to 3000+ European VET key documents,
- 500+ organisations linking to VET-Bib from their own websites

Background to VET-Bib

Cedefop's library has been collecting and disseminating information about vocational education and training (VET) in the European Union, both from the Member States and from European and international organisations, since the Centre was founded in 1975.

VET-Bib is produced with the assistance and support from ReferNet, the European Network of Reference and Expertise in the

field of Vocational Education and Training. ReferNet was set up by Cedefop in 2001 (replacing its forerunner, the Documentary Network) in order to meet the growing demand for information that allows for comparisons between EU Member States, developments and policies. One of ReferNet's main tasks is to collect bibliographic information on the most recent documents on VET policies and developments. Constant efforts are being made to improve the quality of VET-Bib, which is a ISO 9000 certified product.

Source: Cedefop Library and Documentation Service

Quick start to VET-Bib

Access VET-Bib

- Go to libserver.cedefop.europa.eu.
- Click on VET-Bib.

Basic search

Type word or phrase	<input type="text" value="non formal learning"/>
Field to search	<input type="text" value="All Fields"/>
Words adjacent?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
<input type="button" value="Go"/>	<input type="button" value="Clear"/>

- Basic search screen displays by default.
- Enter your search term or phrase in the text area.
- Use the drop down menu to select where you would like to search.
- Click 'Go' to submit query and the next screen will display the search results.

Advanced search

Field to search	Type word or phrase	Words adjacent?	No. of docs
<input type="text" value="Corporate Source"/>	<input type="text" value="Cedefop"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes	1473
<input type="text" value="Descriptor"/>	<input type="text" value="lifelong learning"/>	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	2661
<input type="text" value="All Fields"/>	<input type="text" value=""/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes	
Total: 89			

- Enter search term(s) and select index using the drop-down menus.
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- Click on 'Total' to view search results.
- Limit search by language, publication date and document type.

Display of results

#	Author	Title	Year	Access
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Ministère de l'emploi, du travail et de la cohésion sociale	Décret no 2006-166 du 15 février 2006 relatif au comité de développement de la validation des acquis de l'expérience.	2006	<input type="button" value="→"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Azzopardy, Anthony	A European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning / Azzopardy, Anthony	2006	MT M 22
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Konrad, John	A European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning / John Konrad.	2006	<input type="button" value="→"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Krichewsky, Maris	Former Les professionnels à accueillir des populations en risque d'exclusion dans les dispositifs VAE : une étude dans le cadre d'EuroguideVAL / Maris Krichewsky.	2006	FR M 1854
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oblike neformalnega učenja pri nas.	2006	

- Search results appear in a numbered list of brief records.
- To view an item in full, simply click on the number in the first column.
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How to find...	Search in...	Search for...
Documents published by Cedefop	<input type="text" value="Corporate Source"/>	<input type="text" value="Cedefop"/>
A report entitled 'ICT skills certification in Europe'	<input type="text" value="Title"/>	<input type="text" value="ict skills certification europe"/>
Books and articles by Barry Nyhan	<input type="text" value="Author"/>	<input type="text" value="nyhan, barry"/>
Articles from the European journal of vocational training	<input type="text" value="Journal/Series"/>	<input type="text" value="European journal vocational training"/>
Lifelong learning as the main subject	<input type="text" value="Main Descriptor"/>	<input type="text" value="lifelong learning"/> Words adjacent? <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
Globalisation, globalising, etc.	<input type="text" value="All Fields"/>	<input type="text" value="globali?"/>
Training system of Austria	<input type="text" value="Main Descriptor"/>	<input type="text" value="training system"/> Words adjacent? <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
	<input type="text" value="Geographic Term"/>	<input type="text" value="Austria"/> Words adjacent? <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes



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'Closer economic cooperation calls for appropriate intercultural skills'

Continued from Page 1

will focus on the new EU education and training programmes and will be accompanied by a festival.

- The EU vocational training conference 'Making the European Learning Area a Reality' will focus on the Copenhagen Process and will take place in Munich on 4-5 June 2007. This conference is to establish the steps for implementing the initiatives under the Copenhagen Process and the Helsinki Communique of the EQF on the permeability of vocational training and the creation of sustainable European mobility structures. The conference will also mark the end of the consultation process in Europe on ECVET. For this we shall also be working closely with Cedefop. In fact, we plan to hold a joint Agora conference on the Copenhagen Process in Thessaloniki, from the perspective of vocational training research, in the spring.

- The EU Conference 'Knowledge for Action' will take place in Frankfurt on 28-31 March 2007. It will aim through new strategies to interlink research and policies and to find the means for better evidence-based policy development.

CEDEFOP INFO: EQF has progressed very quickly in two years, but there has been resistance from some quarters (EU and Germany). How far do you think the framework should go in order to be successful?

PETER THIELE: The European Qualifications Framework has met with much approval in Europe and in Germany. But it's true that a few quarters have expressed fears that the EQF could lead to changes in national education and training systems, or might not classify them properly, or might even interfere with collective agreements within sectors. I think these fears are largely unfounded. The EQF is simply a way of 'translating' various qualifications at various stages between countries. The competent national bodies are still responsible for classifying national qualifications, so the EQF does not directly interfere in national systems. Of course it's also true that in practice it may lead national systems to set up corresponding national qualifications frameworks (NQF) to make classification in the EQF easier. In Germany, deliberations on how to develop a NQF are making progress. Ms Annette Schavan, Federal Minister of Education, will coordinate decisions on the German NQF with a high-level advisory group, on the basis of a study already commissioned.

But the more general point is that if the EQF is to be successful, Member States must take it seriously and put it into practice. The experience of the earlier European five-stage plan for vocational training qualifications - which was almost unknown outside academic circles - has made it clear that the EQF will not be a sure-fire success unless it is implemented by the Member States. Apart from an appropriate test phase, what the EQF needs above all in order to succeed is quality-assurance measures and, if necessary, further fine-tuning of the descriptors with reference to national classifications. If this is combined with European monitoring of implementation in the Member States, with the principle of mutual reliance built into the EQF, I am certain that it will be successfully accomplished.

CEDEFOP INFO: What would you say is the most important thing to get right about the ECVET?

PETER THIELE: The ECVET is a difficult and interesting tool in both political and technical terms. It should not be underestimated, as it's connected not only to promoting cross-border mobility, but also to national reform processes - for instance, improving transitions between education and training and the workplace.

In terms of policy, the ECVET is sensitive because not all systems include structured part-qualifications. To some extent, the ECVET will introduce into various systems, for the first time, a common European education and training currency entailing obligations on those responsible for VET. In technical terms the ECVET is sensitive because VET systems are fundamentally more heterogeneous than higher education systems, so we need to take account of a large number of different education and training organisations and learning venues. Moreover, the tradition

of cross-border cooperation enjoyed by higher education simply does not exist in the VET sector. There are also some technical details that have yet to be teased out, such as how to measure learning outcomes. It also seems to me that we should try to minimise the bureaucracy required to apply the ECVET. But I expect that we'll find solutions to these issues in the European consultation process.

Incidentally, in the Federal Ministry of Education and Research we are currently setting up a pilot programme for a national VET credit transfer system, in support of ECVET. This will begin before the end of 2006. This too shows what a strong influence European discussions and developments have on national decisions.

CEDEFOP INFO: In what way does the German Presidency propose to use the expertise of Cedefop?

PETER THIELE: For us, Cedefop is an important partner of long standing. It has a highly motivated and committed staff with whom we cooperate closely and in trust. We have already held discussions with Cedefop on closer cooperation during the Presidency, and are delighted that this will involve not only the Agora conference in Thessaloniki on issues of priority for both sides, but also the technical preparations for the major EU VET conference in Munich. We shall also be working closely with Cedefop within the ECVET consultation process, and in reporting on this as well as in the area of research.

CEDEFOP INFO: Germany has been a guiding light in VET for a long time. Most Member States do not have such a strong emphasis on training. Do you think this will continue or change, and in what way?

PETER THIELE: Germany remains strongly committed to its dual system of vocational training - for good reasons! These include not only its close connection to practice and to the workplace and the fact that it leads to comprehensive vocational capabilities, but also the very high rates of transition from dual training to employment and the comparatively low level of youth unemployment. Admittedly the dual system needs to be further modernised so that it remains useful in the future. This means not only modernising the system itself, but, more to the point, improving the transition between the dual system and other educational sectors. This is why the new German Government, under Minister A. Schavan, has established a high-level VET innovation group, with the participation of the Federal Government, the *Länder*, the social partners and VET researchers. This group is to draw up, within one year, proposals for reform on the basis of a work plan with four priority topics. These are: modernisation of regulatory VET policy, improvement of the management of transition between preparing for training and vocational training, the interchangeability of VET and the higher education sector, and opening up national VET systems to the European level.

Our aim here is to further improve the dual system and to make it a guiding principle for VET, and secondly, to break down divisions between the dual system and other VET pathways which have grown in Germany and to achieve greater equivalence between various VET qualifications.

CEDEFOP INFO: Where should policy on disadvantaged groups focus in Germany and in the EU?

PETER THIELE: Supporting the disadvantaged in vocational training is an important and powerful instrument for integrating young people into education and the labour market. Because responsibility in Germany is shared between many bodies, support for disadvantaged groups in VET has led to the creation of many different development tools by a wide range of government, *Länder* and local authorities. Yet the annual expenditure of billions of euro on support for disadvantaged groups has had little effect in terms of successful transitions in vocational training. We urgently need to improve financial support tools and align support for disadvantaged groups more closely with company practice - at the same time, we should involve companies more directly than we've managed to do so far. Incidentally, we are currently discussing part-qualifications, used as a basis for ECVET, as a way of taking into account skills training for disadvantaged groups and to make a staggered transi-

tion to regular training easier. This, by the way, is also a key theme for the VET innovation group in Germany mentioned earlier.

I believe that we need to develop further the issue of support for the disadvantaged at European level. It is true that many mechanisms are funded by the European Structural Funds, but we must give greater priority to European and transnational cooperation in issues relating to the content and quality of support mechanisms.

CEDEFOP INFO: How much demand is there for mobility?

PETER THIELE: As a nation at the centre of Europe that is geared to exports and has few raw materials, Germany, with its nine neighbouring states and its geopolitical position in relation to Central and Eastern Europe, has particular concerns in terms not only of economic policy, but also of education policy. Closer transnational economic cooperation calls for appropriate intercultural skills, and for a knowledge of neighbouring markets and sales opportunities. So it makes sense for us to substantially develop skills training outside Germany under the heading of vocational training for our young people. Consequently, the reformed German vocational training legislation now explicitly allows longer-term phases of skills training outside Germany, within dual training for up to nine months. We now need to put these new opportunities into widespread practice, and this is another goal of the VET innovation group. It is true that in quantitative terms Germany already leads the EU in mobility. We promote many bilateral exchange programmes in addition to EU programmes, and in border areas even tend to gear our purely national training programmes towards cooperation. But there is still a great deal to be done - compared to higher education the number of participants is still much too low.

We need to create better conditions for long-term exchange measures, and this also calls for further advances at European level. For lengthy cross-border VET exchange programmes we need appropriate networks, allowing several years of planning security and long-term use, just like Erasmus in higher education. I am delighted to see that the Commission, in structuring the conditions for financial support in the new EU-VET programme, is already moving in this direction.

CEDEFOP INFO: Thank you for answering our questions. We wish you every success for the German Presidency.

The interview was conducted by Sylvie Bousquet of Cedefop Info, on 9 October 2006.

CEDEFOP

Modernising vocational training

A preview of the Fourth Research Report

'Modernising vocational education and training' will be the overarching theme of the upcoming 4th Research Report. The report will address the issues raised by the Copenhagen Declaration (2002) as well as in the 2004 Maastricht Communiqué, in which Education Ministers, the European social partners and the European Commission set priorities for reforming vocational training in a direction that will allow the sector to make a substantial contribution to the Lisbon process.

As in the previous editions, the Research Report relies on contributions by Cedefop researchers, both internal and external, who are experts in the various fields of VET-related research. The final meeting to prepare the 4th Research Report, held at Cedefop in 9-10 October 2006, allowed contributors to present the outcomes of their work and draw implications for policy and further research. Some of the themes included image and attractiveness of VET, qualification frameworks, workplace learning, older workers and lifelong learning and a host of transversal and contextual issues such as geographical and social mobility and skill shortages.

These contributions to 4th Research Report are scheduled to be published in 2007 by Cedefop.

Source: Cedefop/pde



CZECH REPUBLIC

Education as common European currency: students gain experience abroad

Experts from seven European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and the United Kingdom) took part in Towards an ECVET Model: - New Approaches to Transparency, Mobility and International Recognition of Competences, a conference held in Prague in September 2006, to showcase the results of the VQTS project (Vocational Qualification Transfer System). The aim of this project is to enable secondary technical and vocational school students to complete part of their study or practical training abroad by allowing students' qualification to be mutually recognisable.

A document was developed to describe a student's competences and level of qualification, allowing schools to identify the knowledge and skills gained during the student's sojourn abroad. The experts chose mechanical engineering (the study fields mechatronic and mechanical engineer) as a pilot sector for the development and testing of new procedures.

The VQTS project was funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, and is coordinated by the 3s research company (Austria). The Czech Republic is represented by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education. Project results can be used in a European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET) which is now being developed under the auspices of the European Commission. In the future, the credit system should remove barriers between school and out-of-school education and between national education systems. In addition it should increase VET permeability. Students will be given a chance to use acquired qualification as a 'common European currency'.

More information about VQTS project: www.vocationalqualification.net

Source: Zoja Franklová, NÚOV
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Lifelong learning

IRELAND

Building learning organisations through networking

What should organisations do to sustain and improve learning in the workplace? This is one of the main questions posed in a recent action research project⁽¹⁾, which aimed to identify and promote effective learning in public and private sector organisations in Ireland.

The impetus for this project was the need to provide more informed descriptions about learning in Irish organisations, as suggested in an earlier report on the Workplace of the Future.⁽²⁾ The project, which involved collaboration between researchers and practitioners, concentrated on the establishment of a practitioner network which was to serve as the basis for 13 organisational case studies included in the report. The findings of the project have been examined in the light of the real-life issues and concerns facing Irish organisations.

The report identifies a number of key actions that support and improve the effectiveness of learning within organisations. These include:

- Developing a more communicative and collaborative environment: The case studies highlighted the importance of open and flexible communication in effective learning. This type of communication is closely associated with strong teamwork and a willingness to share knowledge, expertise and information.
- Links with accreditation and standards bodies to provide validation of the learning effort and as a useful benchmark of standards within their area of work.
- Making learning explicit in human resources (HR) systems. Participants noted the importance of integrating learning within complementary HR systems, such as performance management, recruitment and selection, and rewards structures.
- Adopting a systematic approach to learning enables organisations to create a

tangible link between their strategy and the design and delivery of training and development.

- Promoting organisational commitment to learning by making it more visible throughout the organisation, by recognising special individual and organisational achievements that have a learning connection.

The report reinforces the case for learning by outlining the practical benefits and positive outcomes experienced by participant organisations and individuals. It illustrates how organisations can develop and enhance the role of learning as a force for competitive challenge as well as personal and career development. A systematic focus on workplace learning can produce a wider range of solutions for organisational problems and can also help to achieve a better balance between long-term effectiveness and short-term efficiency in the organisation. The report highlights the wide-ranging nature of informal learning and the opportunities it presents to influence a culture of learning throughout the organisation. It also outlines specific practice guidelines, based on the learning experience of the network participants.

The report concludes that the network can continue to provide an important testing ground for many of the ideas and work projects that are emerging as a result of the recommendations of the Forum on the Workplace of the Future (see Cedefop Info 3/2005).

(1) FÁS/NCPP: Building learning organisations through networking: final report of the NCPP/FÁS Learning Network project. Dublin: NCPP, 2006. www.ncpp.ie/dynamic/docs/LON_Analysis.pdf

(2) Forum on the Workplace of the Future: Working to our Advantage, a National Workplace Strategy. Dublin: NCPP, 2005. ISBN 0-7076-9110-9. Download address: - www.ncpp.ie/dynamic/docs/NationalWorkplaceStrategy.pdf

Source: FÁS

GERMANY

Foreign businesses actively committed to providing training places

Foreign-owned companies are becoming increasingly important to the German economy, and this is expected to have an impact on the training market in the near future. The Aktiv für Ausbildungsplätze initiative, set up jointly by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry and joint associations of German and foreign businesses, has set itself the aim of creating some 10 000 training places by the year 2010. The initiative, launched in Berlin on 25 September, plans to start its work by holding eight regional conferences in cities with a large immigrant population.

One of the goals of the initiative is to devise a concerted approach for all regional participants likely to contribute to greater participation of foreign-owned enterprises in training. This will require agreement regarding concrete arrangements and common regional plans of action.

The number of foreign-owned enterprises has doubled since the 1990s to some

300 000. Foreign-owned businesses are an important pillar of the German economy and as such are equal - and equally good - partners in vocational training. For foreign as for German youth, these companies set an example for economic and social integration. But participation in training within the company lies - depending upon nationality - only between 6 to 15 per cent.

The Federal Government believes in the importance of consultation and support, which is provided by the Federal Ministry's training structural programme, Jobstarter. In the first phase of this programme the Ministry plans to commit 2 million euro for 8 projects that are aimed to create additional training places in foreign-owned enterprises.

Further information can be found on the Internet at www.jobstarter.de/de/114.php

Source: BMBF; Press release of 19.9.2006

FRANCE

A strong new impetus for the validation of experience

On 27 June 2006, Gérard Larcher, French Minister for Employment, Labour and the Occupational Integration of Young People, announced the foundations for the plan to develop the VAE (Validation of acquired occupational experience). Its principal points are: assistance to the unemployed who are not receiving compensation, financial assistance to facilitate employee participation in validation committees, simplification of procedures, and communication campaigns.

'The VAE has existed for four years now; its evolution has been rather slow. With this plan, we will give it fresh impetus', Gerard Larcher stated, pointing out that the objective was to reach 60 000 participants in VAE in 2006, i.e. nearly three times more than in 2005 (20 452).

The principle of exempting job-seekers receiving compensation from payment for the steps leading to a VAE was contained in the new convention on unemployment insurance of March 2, 2006 signed by both sides of industry. On the other hand, 'nothing has been done for those who receive no financial support'. Mr Larcher committed his ministry to a budget of 10 million euro to deal with the costs of funding 20 000 certification procedures for this particular target group, from now to the end of 2007.

'Today we are experiencing difficulties, or even resistance, in mobilising the employees needed to make up the validation committees', Mr Larcher underlined. To overcome this difficulty, negotiations should take place with the two sides of industry in order to unblock vocational training funds intended to compensate and reimburse the expenses of those taking part in validation committees.

Today 14 ministries are able to validate a VAE; a specific file exists for each

one. To simplify the procedures, a single, simpler form is given to the candidates, as of September 2006. 'This provision should help reduce the time for dealing with the files to six months, as against the current average of nine months', the Minister stated. The form will be available on a planned Internet site 'vae.gouv', one of the two information services now in the pipeline.

In addition to this form, an Internet portal will inform the general public about the certification delivered by the VAE (as of October 2006) and will include also the advice centres (Points Relais-Conseils). This will be supplemented by a call service (3939 Allo service public). A national communication campaign, aiming at informing the public at large, will be also launched in the autumn.

Lastly, this plan aims to mobilise and bring together the regional actors in the VAE: the two sides of industry, the regions, the public employment service and advisory chambers. According to Mr Larcher, 'a major campaign will be carried out by the autumn to develop the VAE in companies'.

Further information:

- original article: 'Gérard Larcher dévoile le plan VAE', by J. Lepeytre in: INFO Flash, N° 683, July 2006, p. 3

- press release of 27 June 2006 'Validation des acquis de l'expérience: cinq mesures pragmatiques pour simplifier la procédure' www.travail.gouv.fr/actualite/dossiers-presse/validation-acquis-experience-cinq-mesures-pragmatiques-pour-simplifier-procedure-3407.html

- Information flyer on the VAE available on the web site of the Ministry of Employment

(www.travail.gouv.fr/informations-pratiques/fiches-pratiques/formation-professionnelle/validation-acquis-experience-vae-1074.html)

- the VAE section of the national Internet portal on guidance and training (www.orientation-formation.fr/)

- the VAE section of the Centre INFO web site (www.centre-info.fr/article.php3?id_article=120)

Source: Centre Inffo

Full speed ahead toward establishing an LLL strategy

The elaboration of a comprehensive Life Long Learning (LLL) Strategy for Cyprus by December 2006 is one of the prominent measures contained in the National Lisbon Programme. The Planning Bureau of the Republic of Cyprus has been assigned the responsibility to coordinate the elaboration of the strategy, which is foreseen to have a 7-year time span, covering the period 2007-2013. This coincides with the time span of other important national planning documents. To elaborate the strategy, a Coordination Committee was set up which has already appointed a drafting team comprising representatives from the

Planning Bureau, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Cyprus Productivity Centre and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus. The drafting team prepared an overview-structure of the strategy in mid-July 2006; the first draft report of the strategy is expected by the end of September 2006.

The attainment of the overarching strategic objective of providing access to LLL for all would entail promoting pertinent actions and measures, such as: access of all to education, more opportunities to enter and re-enter the labour market, more

opportunities for employees (and to this end providing appropriate support to enterprises, especially SMEs) and the expansion of lifelong learning in the public sector. This would help upgrade the content and structure of all levels of education and training and promote the gradual introduction of a National Qualifications Framework and National Vocational Qualifications System.

Social partners and other prominent stakeholders are to be involved in the development of the Lifelong Learning Strategy. The precise ways in which consultations will be held have not yet been de-

termined, but is scheduled to begin immediately after completion of the draft report. The LLL Strategy for Cyprus is expected to receive the approval of the Council of Ministers by December 2006 and its implementation to be pursued from January 2007 onwards.

Further information: Artemis Theophilou, Planning Officer A, Directorate for Macroeconomic Policy, Research and Studies, Planning Bureau, 29 Vironos Avenue, 1096, Nicosia, Cyprus, Tel. (357-22) 60 29 30, Fax (357-22) 22 66 68 10, E-mail: atheophilou@planning.gov.cy, www.planning.gov.cy

Source: Human Resource Development Authority

Educational policy

ITALY

Reform suspended, dialogue with regions begins again

In its policy programme, the Ministry of Education set out what is to be achieved from a review, (together with the Regions, and respecting the autonomy of schools) of the school reforms drawn up by the previous Minister. In a letter sent on 31 May 2006 ⁽¹⁾ the Regional Coordination Unit was informed that trials of the reform of upper secondary education had been suspended as so many of the appeals brought by the Regions were pending before the Constitutional Court, and because of the climate of uncertainty and insecurity among schools, teachers, students and parents. The trials of the eight types of upper secondary school set out in the 2003 reform and the handover of vocational education to the Regions will not go ahead in the 2006-2007 academic year.

On 25 July, the Minister of Education, Giuseppe Fioroni, went on to issue the General Directive on administrative measures and management for 2006, which sets out 50 objectives for the action that the Ministry intends to take. This will chiefly

involve 'deregulation', i.e. giving priority to dialogue with the Regions and unions, while applying existing provisions on school autonomy. While informal working groups are to be set up nationally, a policy of concerted action will enable all parties to have their say. What will make this possible is a further 18-month extension ⁽²⁾ for the amendment of the legislative decrees relating to the 2003 reform.

At its session of 12 July 2006, the Conference of the Regions adopted (with Lombardy and the Veneto voting against) a document setting out a regional initiative for concerted action on education and training issues within the framework of federal solidarity and paving the way for a precise definition of the role and powers of the Regions and local authorities in order to open the way to incisive and consistent government action. Ministry action will focus on raising compulsory education to the age of 16, in keeping with the Lisbon objectives for 2010. It is felt that this will require unitary and progressive ed-

ucation from the age of three and throughout the first cycle of education, taking into account the core skills every school is required to provide.

The Ministerial Circular on the start of the academic year, issued on 31 August ⁽³⁾, comprises three connected documents: a briefing note, 'Autonomy and innovation 2006-2007: a year of transition' sent to all schools, a circular for schools and regional schools' offices and a letter for school teachers and principals. The documents issued by the new Minister are reviewed and clarification offered on the problems raised by the previous reform. While confirmation of the notion that any reform of education and training must be based on consultation will bring further uncertainty and instability given that the reform process was launched as far back as the mid-1990s, the benefits will be an adaptable reform that sets out guidelines, paving the way for cultural and professional autonomy.

The elements of the 2003 reform which are not to go ahead include the 'portfo-

lio', which will now be optional for schools. This is a form of registering training without providing certification, attestation or evaluation; these will continue to be provided solely by the 'old' evaluation record. Another major change which will now not go ahead is the profile of the teacher-tutor agreed by the social partners, following clashes with the unions about the organisational and contractual methods governing this innovation.

⁽¹⁾ Ministerial Decree 4018/FR of 31 May 2006 suspending implementation of Ministerial Decree 775/2006.

⁽²⁾ Law 228 of 12 July 2006.

⁽³⁾ Memorandum of 31 August 2006, No 7265/FR. Measures and issues of significant interest connected with the start of the 2006/2007 academic year.

Further information: www.istruzione.it

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL ReferNet Italia

FINLAND

Using labour trends to forecast education and training demand

The recent report *Education, Training and Demand For Labour in Finland by 2015* ⁽¹⁾ aims to provide information on quantitative needs for vocational upper secondary and higher education and training, based on long-term employment forecasts. The report deals with developments in the demand for labour and in attrition (natural wastage) over the period from 2001 to 2015. Based on these developments and projections it forecasts educational needs for the latter half of the current decade. These refer to three levels of education: upper secondary vocational education and training; polytechnic education; and university education.

The long-term demand for labour is examined under different perspectives: in terms of changes in labour demand by industry, new job openings by occupational group (labour market demand), intake required to meet labour market demand (numbers of people to be trained in order to fill job openings) and intake needs adjusted according to the average 16-21 age group. In parallel with work on the national level, all 19 regions have prepared regional forecasts of labour and educational needs in a consistent manner.

Intake needs will increase in technology, transport, and health and social services

In this forecasting exercise, educational needs derived from the demand for labour are adjusted to the size of the age group being trained. The calculation was based on the average 16-21 age group (65 300 people) for the period from 2006 to 2010.

The key objective of education policy is to provide all young people with an opportunity to apply for vocationally/professionally oriented education and training. The intake number corresponds to the requirement to provide for the whole age group. Calculation results suggest that this objective can be achieved in the latter half of this decade with an intake of about 91 000 entrants, provided that the targets set for the efficiency of education and training in the Development Plan for Education and Research are also achieved. The total intake needs will decrease by 6 000 entrants compared with the current level.

Taking all fields of education into account, intake (e.g. in upper secondary vocational education as well as in university

education) needs to be reduced, though polytechnic intake needs appear to remain stable. Upper secondary vocational education and training is expected to cover half of total intake needs, whereas the remaining half should be covered by higher education (30 % by polytechnics and 20 % by universities).

Intake needs will increase in the fields of technology and transport, and in health and social services. In technology and transport, there is a need to increase intake at all levels of education. In health and social services, increase needs focus on upper secondary vocational education and training and university education. Conversely, educational needs would appear to decrease both in quantitative and relative terms within the fields of natural resources, business and administration, tourism, catering and home economics, culture, and humanities and education. In these shrinking fields, intake needs will especially decrease in upper secondary vocational education and training.

Training young people is not enough

The labour force now leaving young people's education and training and entering

the labour market will be sufficient to satisfy the demand for new labour envisaged in the basic development scenario, provided that educational efficiency can be improved in line with targets and that unemployed people can be employed, as assumed in the calculations. But demand for new labour projected in the target development scenario cannot be fully met just by training young people. In order to achieve the target development scenario, the population currently outside the labour force should be brought into the labour market. This will be achieved, among other things, by delaying retirement and increasing immigration.

⁽¹⁾ This publication is an abridged version of a wider-reaching Finnish-language report entitled *Koulutus ja työvoiman kysyntä 2015* ('Education, training and demand for labour by 2015') produced by the Finnish National Board of Education.

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Welsh Bac evaluation delivers positive messages

The external evaluation of the post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate pilot qualification was published in August 2006. In general, it has confirmed the overall positive emphasis of the Bac's increasing success in broadening the curriculum and providing recognition for a wide range of achievements.

The report's main recommendation is that the Welsh Bac is 'suitable for roll-out to all schools, colleges and work-based providers in Wales'. Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) will be discussing the potential roll-out with the Welsh Assembly government, and endorses the evaluators' conclusion that a phased roll-out is preferable. This is particularly so as evidence suggests that the provision of additional resources for schools and colleges has been a major contributor to the project's success, and that early and adequate planning is essential.

'We are particularly pleased about the evaluators' conclusion that the support provided by WJEC's project team has earned the approval of schools and colleges' said Gareth Pierce, WJEC Chief Executive. 'If the Baccalaureate is rolled out, there are

important ways in which WJEC would wish to develop its role, and this includes enhanced support and advice, building on the emerging best practice.'

The Welsh Assembly government is to decide in 2006 whether the Welsh Bac should be offered in other schools and colleges across Wales from September 2007 following the recommendations of the external evaluation. The Welsh Assembly Government has set the target that 25 % of students in Wales will be following the Welsh Bac by 2010.

The evaluation report reflects on increasingly positive developments in the recognition of the Welsh Baccalaureate by Higher Education Institutions in England and Wales, and the allocation of UCAS tariff points. The Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma is worth 120 UCAS tariff points, the same number of points as an A grade at A level.

'We are confident that the Bac can be promoted even more effectively if it moves forward from its current "pilot" status', commented Gareth Pierce, 'and we agree with the evaluators that promotion amongst

students, parents, employers and HEIs is a major priority which will need to be addressed jointly by the Welsh Assembly Government, WJEC and centres in Wales.'

Background and structure

The first Welsh Baccalaureate students started their programmes in September 2003 in 18 pilot schools and colleges. 6 more schools and colleges are offering the Bac from September 2004, and 7 more from September 2005; making 31 schools and colleges in total to offer the Bac during the pilot stage.

The Welsh Bac is formed of two parts:

Core - consisting of four components i.e. Key Skills, Wales, Europe and the World, Work-related Education and Personal and Social Education.

Options - courses/programmes currently offered e.g. GCSE, VGCSE, AS/A levels, VCE (Vocational A levels), GNVQ, NVQ, BTEC.

Together, the Core and Options make up the Welsh Baccalaureate Diploma.

The Welsh Baccalaureate Diploma is nationally approved and currently offered at

either Intermediate or Advanced level. The Welsh Bac Project Team is currently developing a Foundation level.

The report from the External Evaluators, based at the School of Education in the University of Nottingham, can be found on the Welsh Assembly Government's website.
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/presreleasearchive/110806bacc;jsessionid=1AC2B822FAB53DF5B7451D1988964DF7.www1?lang=en>

Source: QCA

SLOVAKIA

Internet access project gives rise to controversy

After years of passivity in the face of comparative studies on digital literacy showing Slovakia among the lowest performers in the EU, especially in the use of ICT for learning purposes, the country is now trying to catch up with more developed countries. The first such policy, involving the introduction of PCs in the school system, was reported in Cedefop Info 2/2004 ('PCs for schools: from rhetoric to reality'). The latest one seeks to make Internet access more affordable to citizens.

The 2003 SIBIS project, Statistical Indicators Benchmarking the Information Society, which is closely linked to the eEurope and eEurope+ initiatives of the European Union, revealed a clear digital divide between Slovakia and the EU 15: Slovakia scored 0.4 in the Digital Literacy Index (DLI) in comparison to 0.8 for EU15 and 0.7 for Estonia and Slovenia, the leaders among EU newcomers. The 2005 data of the Institute for Public Affairs survey commissioned by the Slovak government confirmed the digital divide with the DLI 0.33 for Slovakia. What the score means is that Slovaks' average ability stands at 33 % of complete digital literacy. The low penetration of PC and Internet access in households provides evidence that the high prices demanded for high-speed connections - especially in relation to purchasing power - have limited digital literacy.

The National Lisbon Strategy Action Plan on the Information Society, approved by the government on July 13, 2005, included a measure to counter this trend, Action 19 - Internet for All. In April 2006, the government launched a project backed by this Action Plan to increase access to high-speed Internet (minimum speed 512/128 kbps) by providing SKK 240 million (EUR 6.398 million) in subsidies to users.

However, the subsidies, of SKK 6 016 (EUR 160.4) per person over a two-year period, were aimed at only 5 000 users from each of Slovakia's eight regions. This

meant that instead of the announced 100 000 new users, by the end of 2006 there were only 40 000 projected new applicants across the country. This was partly due to the fact that only families that included 15 to 25-year-olds had been deemed eligible, instead of all families declaring an interest.

Not surprisingly, the measure was widely criticised. To some, the conditions violated the principle of equal treatment; others wondered whether the real aim of the project was to attract young people about to vote for the first time in the parliamentary elections scheduled within two months of the project being announced, rather than its stated aim of assisting access to Internet services. To small Internet providers, this project was an attempt on the part of the government to back Slovak Telecom (T-Com), the former telecoms monopoly - 49 % of its shares are now owned by the state. Others believed that the policy missed its target by excluding those who had already purchased access to Internet; they pointed out that in this way the government punished the more forward-looking of the poorer strands of the population, while subsidising rich families with a heretofore weak interest in the Internet.

The objections that the policy is discriminatory must be taken seriously. There were 135 860 and 180 145 households wired to the Internet without subsidy in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Thus, without any subsidy, at least 40 000 new clients (regardless of age) could have been expected in 2006. While it is true that it is 15 to 25 year olds who show the greatest interest in the Internet - and that the project is called Internet for Education, not Internet for all - questions remain: what about young families with children under 15? And why impose an equal quota for all regions, regardless of population?

As to the charges of discrimination in favour of Slovak Telecom, the company (xDSL) took 47.4 % of subsidised clients; the affiliated T-mobile (Flash-OFDM) took 7 %. Nevertheless, alternative providers and even small local player managed to win a respectable market share (e.g. the second best provider Slovanet (xDSL and microwave) 14.3 %, fourth Wimax (wireless) 5.3 % and fifth CondorNet (cable and microwave) 3.7 %.

Having discovered that the money earmarked for the project will not be entirely spent, the government has now decided to subsidise clients irrespective of age.

Nevertheless, the regional quota will be adhered to, which is bad news for young families or older people in regions where most of the budget has already been committed. A new wave of complaints is thus expected - though it is worth pointing out that such complaints and criticisms have already proven to be constructive.

Further information:
Proceedings of the 6th International Conference Virtual University 2005 at http://virtuni.eas.sk/rocnik/2005/data/program/54_31_Vantuch.pdf
Internet for Education project:
www.telecom.gov.sk/index/go.php?id=2546

Source: Juraj Vantuch at sno@netax.sk

2004 Internet penetration data and results of the project as of September 4, 2006

Region	Households with Internet in 2004		Population*		Population aged 15-24*		Clients served		Free places from Quota		Drawing from Quota
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	%
Bratislava	39 544	29,1	599 015	11,1	96 672	10,7	2 987	12,3	2 013	12,8	59,7
Banská Bystrica	12 333	9,1	662 121	12,3	109 092	12,0	2 242	9,2	2 758	17,5	44,8
Košice	21 355	15,7	766 012	14,2	130 457	14,4	2 915	12,0	2 085	13,2	58,3
Nitra	14 942	11,0	713 422	13,3	116 364	12,8	2 793	11,5	2 207	14,0	55,9
Prešov	10 409	7,7	789 968	14,7	139 990	15,4	4 284	17,7	716	4,5	85,7
Trenčín	11 622	8,6	605 582	11,3	102 253	11,3	2 791	11,5	2 209	14,0	55,8
Trnava	14 333	10,5	551 003	10,2	92 835	10,2	2 389	9,9	2 611	16,6	47,8
Žilina	11 322	8,3	692 332	12,9	118 668	13,1	3 841	15,8	1 159	7,4	76,8
Slovakia	135 860	100,0	5 379 455	100,0	906 331	100,0	24 242	100,0	1 5758	100,0	60,6

* Census 2001



GERMANY

Young people very committed to finding training places

The more difficult the training market situation becomes, the more young people are likely to want to change regions and adapt their training ambitions. In areas where training offer is low, many young people are applying for several placements and different occupations far from home. This is shown by the latest survey of young people seeking training, which was jointly carried out by the Federal Institute of Vocational Training (BIBB) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA) at the end of 2004. The survey covered a random sample of 5 000 young people seeking training with the Employment Agency (BA) in 2004.

Regional Mobility

Young people are sometimes criticised for not showing readiness to move to where the jobs or training placements are. Statistics from the Employment Office (BA) seem to back this up: in 2004 only 3 % of all young people seeking training took up an offer outside their area. This figure only covers those young people who have completed a training course successfully away from home. When asked about their willingness to move - regardless of whether or not they had found a placement - about 25 % of the people surveyed stated that they had applied for placements more than 100 kilometres away from home.

Regional training opportunities are a determining factor in young people's readiness to move. In regions where the training offer is low, such as Brandenburg or

Sachsen-Anhalt, up to 51 % of applicants were willing either to commute substantial distances or to move. In Hamburg this has led to a situation where some 16 % of new training contracts involve young people from other regions.

Occupational mobility

Young people are ready not only to apply for placements in different locations but to re-think their 'dream job' and consider other alternatives. The majority sending off their applications (some 70 %) have

applied for two or more occupations. There were also numerous applications for the same placement in different areas. Almost half (44 %) of those surveyed had applied for at least four different training placements.

To summarise: The poorer the training offer in the area, the greater the number of occupations young people apply for. Moreover, the smaller the training offer in a particular region, the more willing young people are to move away in search of training. Taking into account the fact that lack

of satisfaction with the training situation is often seen as the reason for dropping out, the tendency toward regional mobility for young people seeking training should be seen as a positive development.

Source: BIBB, Press release of 3. 8.2006
www.bibb.de/de/26553.htm

BELGIUM

New training bonuses introduced

Start-up bonuses and traineeship bonuses have been introduced by a Royal Decree of 1 September 2006 (published in the *Moniteur belge* on 7 September 2006, 2nd edition).

This new measure, taken by the Federal Government as part of its 'solidarity between generations' contract, is targeted at employers and those under-18s who are continuing their compulsory education part-time on an alternance training course.

The start-up bonus refers to an allowance for under-18s who, through an alternance training course that forms part of their compulsory education, follow practical training or receive vocational training from an employer. The training contract or work contract involved must last at least 4 months.

The start-up bonus will be awarded for a maximum of three years for one alter-

nance training course. The young person who has successfully completed a year's training will have the right to access a start-up bonus.

The start-up bonus will come to EUR 500 for the first and second year of training and EUR 750 for the third year.

The traineeship bonus is an allowance employers can claim for training or employing, under the alternance training scheme, a young person in compulsory education via a training contract or employment contract that lasts at least four months.

Just like the start-up bonus, the traineeship bonus will be awarded for three years for one alternance training course.

Employers who train or employ young people during their year of training will, in principle, be entitled to receive the trainee-

ship bonus at the end of that year (regardless of the young person's results). Should the work/training contract be terminated prematurely, the traineeship bonus will only be awarded if the contract ran for at least three months of the training year completed.

The same amount is awarded for the traineeship bonus as for the start-up bonus: EUR 500 for the first year and second year of training and EUR 750 for the third year.

Further information: IFAPME website - www.ifapme.be

Source: Sigrid Dieu, Département des Relations Internationales, Le FOREM - sigrid.dieu@forem.be



GERMANY

Minister appoints Innovation Circle for vocational training

Federal Education Minister Annette Schavan wants to introduce new structures in initial and continuing training that will ensure a lasting positive impact on the German labour market. The foundations will be laid by the Innovation Circle for vocational education. This committee consists of high-ranking representatives from enterprises, science, trade associations, trade unions and the federal regions (*Länder*).

'The Innovation Circle is the think tank for the advancement of the flagship of our education system', said the Minister. By the summer of 2007 proposals are to be drafted and implemented in the current legislative period. The readiness to cooperate in vocational education and training is a good sign of a new commitment, the minister said. 'We need results which give our young people real employment opportunities.'

She advocated far-reaching reforms in vocational education. This includes bringing about economic structural change on the vocational training market and embedding in Europe the dual training system as well as better linkage between schools and enterprises. 'The interfaces between general education, vocational education and employment should be as smooth as possible for career development', Schavan said.

The themes on which the Innovation Circle is to work are:

- I. *Modernisation:*
 - New qualification requirements due to structural changes in industry and the service economy, and to demographic changes;
 - the creation of a new training culture in innovative, growth and research-related sectors;
 - a calibrated training system and employability.
- II. *Transition management*
 - Improvement of the cooperation struc-

tures of vocational schools and in-service training;

- linkage and validation of prior learning and training;
- improvement of structures that aim to help the disadvantaged;
- increased overall participation in training by migrant workers and companies;
- provision of qualification opportunities for young adults who have not completed school or training.

III. *Further training/permeability*

- Links between initial and continuing vocation training;

- opening pathways from vocational training to university studies.

IV. *Opening towards Europe*

- National education reforms in line with European developments. This includes the national and European qualification frameworks, the credit transfer system in vocational education and training and occupational concepts.

Source: BMBF, Press release of 7.4.06
www.bmbf.de/press/1765.php

GREECE

Orthodox Church gets involved in training

A new law, 3432/2006 has been voted to establish and regulate Institutes of Vocational Training (IEKs) providing ecclesiastical training. These institutes will function autonomously, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and will be financed by the State budget. The subject of study is Ecclesiastical and Cultural Training, with courses spread over two semesters.

This course will run for the first time in the 14 cities which already have ecclesiastical lyceums (including Athens, Thessa-

loniki, Xanthi, Ioannina, Patmos, Corinth and Chania).

Ecclesiastical and Cultural Training is open to men and women, clergy or laypeople, who wish to minister to the Orthodox Church in Greece as priests or administrative staff. People of other faiths who wish to get acquainted with the history, organisation and function of the Orthodox Church are welcome to enrol. Priests who wish to be promoted to high office or to a senior scale of payments are also entitled to attend courses.

Graduation from the ecclesiastical IEKs can lead either to ordination or to work within Orthodox Church Metropolises, organisations, institutes, parish centres and camps.

Source: OEEK

Regions open up new possibilities for apprentices

Following the regional laws on apprenticeship adopted in other Regions (Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Marches, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Sardinia and Apulia) (¹), on 10 August 2006 the Lazio Region approved a new regional law on apprenticeship aiming to forge closer links between young people and the working world, provide them with the qualifications and occupational skills that they need to gain a foothold in the working world and make a better use of the national and Community resources earmarked for training.

In the other Regions, occupationally qualifying apprenticeship profiles are temporarily being governed by the national industry-wide collective agreement until the relevant regional laws have been approved, as set out in Legislative Decree 276/2003. The law has been adopted under the enacting terms of the delegations on employment and the labour market and governs both training for occupationally qualifying apprenticeship leading to a qualification and apprenticeship leading to a certificate or entry into further education. (²)

Under the new law, apprentices sign a mixed - employment and training - contract with businesses under which they can, under the supervision of a tutor, obtain a vocational qualification, a certificate or even a degree and attend lower and higher level masters courses run by the Region's universities. The training plan, drawn up by the business in line with the reference occupational profile, is intended to ensure that the young person's training is as effective as possible, specifying the content, times and places of formal training, with a yearly review.

An important feature of the new law is the provision of financial incentives for businesses which convert apprenticeship contracts into permanent contracts bearing in mind that in the construction sector, which takes the largest number of apprentices, contracts have up to now not been converted into permanent contracts of employment. The Lazio Regional Law will make it possible to promote, especially in some sectors strategic for the region's development, employment opportunities for young people aged from 18 to 29. Training for apprenticeship leading to a certificate or entry into further education will be decided by the Region fol-

lowing agreement with the schools, training establishments and universities which will issue the qualification covered by the contract, with the agreement of regional associations of employers and work providers.

(¹) Emilia Romagna, Regional Law 17 of 26 July 2005; Tuscany, Regional Law 20 of 1 February 2005, amending Regional Law 32 of 26 July 2002; Marches, Regional Law 2 of 24 January 2005; Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Regional Law 18 of 9 August 2005, Apulia, Regional Law 13 of 22 November 2005, Sardinia, Regional Law 20/2005.

(²) Articles 49 and 50 of Legislative Decree 276/2003 (Implementation of the delegations on employment and the labour market, as set out in Law 302 of 14 February 2003). Further information: www.sirio.regione.lazio.it

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL ReferNet Italia

BELGIUM

A sectoral framework agreement that's vital for employment

Once again the construction sector has demonstrated its dynamism by signing, on 22 August, the first framework agreement between a professional sector and the Walloon Region.

This is the result of agreements concluded with the Walloon Minister of Training, the Walloon Minister of the Economy, Employment and Foreign Trade and with both sides of industry as represented by the Construction Training Fund.

Collaboration will focus on 11 main areas of interest ranging from promoting and improving the status of trades in the sector to assistance in finding employment, taking in along the way an analysis of pressures and shortages, increased vocational training for job seekers and workers, and traineeships in firms.

Agreements have been drawn up with several organisations entrusted with getting this collaboration underway (FOREM, IFAPME, bodies involved in full-time training leading to a qualification and with block release training). FOREM and the construction training fund have set ambitious targets for 2006-2009, including the creation of a task force for each region that will facilitate relations between FOREM and the firms, plus increasing the amount of training on offer, providing assistance with finding jobs in the sector, and working with the education sector via skills centres.

Further information: FORUM - FOREM's in-house magazine, No 44, September 2006, and the website of Confédération Construction Wallonne - www.ccw.be

Source: Sigrid Dieu, Département des Relations Internationales, Le FOREM - sigrid.dieu@forem.be

Continuing vocational training

BELGIUM

A platform to boost entrepreneurship

On 20 July 2006, the Training for Business Managers Platform was set up as part of the overall employment plan, with an aim to extend and highlight training options for future and current business managers. As a consequence of this project, an additional 1 300 training places will be created in 2006/2007. By boosting and improving the entrepreneurial spirit the Ministry of Employment, Education and Training is aiming to boost employment. The Ministry is allocating a budget of 600 000 Euro to this project for 2006.

Stimulating entrepreneurship is a prerequisite for increasing employment opportunities - and training is an essential component in building an entrepreneurial spirit. Yet business training in Flanders has had certain weaknesses: it is very fragmented and unstructured and needs to do more to reach certain target groups, such as immigrants.

The Ministry is seeking to address these problems through the creation of the Train-

ing for Business Managers Platform. This will part of the Flemish agency for business training (Syntra Vlaanderen), which already has a wealth of experience in this area. Syntra Vlaanderen will work closely with the Ministry of the Economy, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy.

Developing entrepreneurship

The Platform has three main aims:

1) to reverse the fragmentation of available training options and identify gaps by creating an on-line knowledge centre by the end of 2006.

2) to develop, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of the Economy, Science and Innovation, an action plan on training for entrepreneurs. This plan aims to give pupils and students both a taste for the entrepreneurial spirit and a realistic picture of business, and to provide them with the

necessary skills. Entrepreneurship should become, much more than it is today, a viable career option.

3) to arouse the interest of groups at risk (e.g. job-seekers and immigrants) in entrepreneurship by adopting specific initiatives. Examples are:

- the VDAB evaluates the managerial skills of job-seekers; those who succeed in the test then receive free training in business management at Syntra Vlaanderen;
- Several bodies - the Union of Independent Entrepreneurs (Unizo), Syntra Vlaanderen, the municipalities, the VDAB, etc. - will combine efforts to reach out to immigrants. The point is to do everything possible to make training accessible. Specially-adapted information sessions and language training will also be offered.
- Syntra Vlaanderen wishes to include in its managerial training those sectors/professions which currently lack

skilled personnel. Thus, it has launched a course of network management for job-seekers. More such projects will follow shortly.

Improving entrepreneurship

Activity here will focus on small businesses: continuing training should, in fact, not be confined to the managers and highly-skilled staff of large companies. Syntra Vlaanderen will focus on initiatives of social importance, rather than those that the market proposes spontaneously.

Thus, in agreement with the cultural sector, among others, tailor-made courses are being developed to create a strong link between creativity and business success.

Further information: R. Van Weydevelde, VDAB, Head of Library Services

Source: Frank Vandenbroucke, Press Service of the Ministry of Education and Employment. (Press release: www.ministerfrankvandenbroucke.be/)

BELGIUM

More money but fewer hours for training

A Royal Decree enacted on 20 July 2006 is causing a great stir in the adult education world. Published in the *Moniteur belge* on 7 September, and backdated to take effect on 1 September, it cuts considerably the number of hours employees in the private sector can spend on training under the paid educational leave scheme.

Adopted in 1985 to replace the system whereby hours for training were credited to employees, the law on paid educational leave suffered its first cutback in 1995. Every year 70 000 private sector employees are affected by this law. Financed by a government grant (25.4 million euro in 2006) and by a contribution from employ-

ers (27.6 million euro in 2006, or 0.04% of the wage bill), the paid educational leave scheme has, for the past five years, been something of a victim of its own success since the funds provided no longer sufficed to meet the demand. So in 2006, following 10 years without any indexation, the conclave meeting on the budget approved a large increase in the amount the State contributes to the scheme. In return for which, the Federal Government insisted on the scheme being reorganised, which has led to a reduction in the maximum number of hours an individual worker may take.

Consider this brief summary of the limits set by the controversial decree: financ-

ing for vocational training organised during working hours will decrease from 180 hours in the 2005/2006 academic year to 105 hours in 2006/2007 while financing for other vocational training courses will fall from 120 hours in 2005/2006 to 100 hours in 2006/2007. Combined training courses (vocational training plus general training), have been reduced from 180 hours to 100, or possibly 105. As regards university training courses or similar, the hours involved change from 180 in 2005/2006 to 120 now.

These reductions will have appreciable consequences for training providers (and in particular the social advocacy sector): in

the long run, these organisations will probably be forced to restructure the services they offer while, in the immediate future, they run the risk of losing a large number of their current customers.

Further information: Alter Echos No 214 of 7 September 2006 + the website of the Service public fédéral emploi, travail et concertation sociale (<http://meta.fgov.be>)
Clés ...pour le congé éducation payé, SPF Emploi, travail et concertation sociale, Direction générale Emploi et marché du travail, September 2006 <http://meta.fgov.be/pa/paa/framesetfrbb03.htm>

Source: Sigrid Dieu, Département des Relations Internationales, Le FOREM - sigrid.dieu@forem.be

Two-way mentoring scheme addresses multiple concerns

Sometimes it can seem that people working in the same company are doomed to misunderstanding. What could new employees in their twenties, who are familiar with the new technologies since childhood, have in common with long-serving employees over fifty, who typically don't know their way around a computer? Yet precisely these disparities can lead to common interests. At least so claims the partnership implementing the Mentoring through IT project.

The project, implemented in the framework of the EQUAL project, is led by Krajowa Agencja Informacyjna Info, in Olsztyn-Gutkowo. The other members of the partnership are: Warmia and Mazury Association of Private Employers, 'New Media' Foundation and Zeto Olsztyn (*Zakład Elektronicznej Techniki Obliczeniowej* in Olsztyn), one of the biggest employers in the north-eastern region of Poland, specialising in developing computer software.

'We identified two main groups who we believe are discriminated against in

similar ways', says Marek Dornowski, international cooperation coordinator. 'The first group consists of young and well-educated people now entering the labour market. Full-time studies have not allowed them to accumulate much professional experience, and this tends to make their first work experience difficult. The second group consists of employees over fifty, with long professional experience, who often hold responsible positions in their companies but are not very knowledgeable about IT tools. Yet economic development is inextricably linked to new technologies. If older people do not keep up, they risk becoming irrelevant at work, or dropping out of the labour market altogether.'

The conclusion is simple: these two groups can help each other. Workers over fifty can improve their IT skills thanks to the young; similarly, young people can gain valuable experience through mentoring, thus improving their transition into the labour market.

But how to overcome the psychological barriers? Older employees fear that helping young people, and passing on their expertise, may end up threatening their own position within the company. The partnership found an innovative solution to this conundrum. 'We planned the project a bit wickedly', Dornowski explains. 'First, young employees will help the over-fifties familiarise themselves with the use of IT tools. Only when the older employees acquire the coveted new IT skills, and thus stop worrying about losing their jobs, will classic mentoring start - and then we expect it to be really effective'.

The computer software created within the project will consist of four modules: a recruitment, educational, mentoring and administrative module. The recruitment module has been introduced in order to match mentoring couples well, i.e. to take compatibility of character into account. 'We are building the recruitment module on the basis of a study on final beneficiaries', says Dornowski. 'This is a group of

150 people, i.e. 75 mentoring pairs. Building on this study we would like to create logic matrices, that is, sets of character qualities, which will enable us to create character diagrams for each individual and thus match people successfully'.

The education module will be used for transferring IT knowledge. The mentoring module will focus on feedback, i.e. will allow employees over fifty to pass knowledge on to their younger colleagues. The administrative module is intended to help human resource managers to plan individual courses and analyse their effectiveness.

Source: Task Force for Training and Human Resources (BKKK), Cooperation Fund Foundation, www.bkkk-cofund.org.pl

Further Information: Krajowa Agencja Informacyjna 'Info' Sp. z o.o. Warkaty 18 lok.18 11-041 Warkaty, Poland, tel/fax (48-89) 527 56 12, e-mail: biuro@kai-info.pl

UNITED KINGDOM

Millions of workers being denied training

Britain's workplaces are facing a skills crisis: more than one in three employers are refusing to train their workers, despite government incentives. This leaves nearly 8.5 million workers (8 377 200) without training, according to a new report, entitled 2020 vision for skills issued by the Trades Union Congress in September 2006. Of those who do receive training only 11.5 per cent receive a nationally recognised qualification.

The West Midlands have the worst record in the country with nearly 1 million (44 per cent) of the region's workforce not being trained. But the North East has the best record with only 30 per cent (288 000) going without training. The improved position in the North East is attributed to the high trade union membership density in the region and the consequent higher number of union/employer training agreements that have been signed.

According to the TUC report, Britain's workplace skills crisis can be solved if em-

ployers and the government invest more in adult skills, provide statutory paid time off for workers to train, and give workers a stronger voice in workplace skills bargaining. The report and its demands are targeted at the review of skill needs for 2020, called for by Gordon Brown in his 2004 Budget and conducted by the businessman Lord Leitch (See Cedefop Info 1/2006 on the initial consultation undertaken in 2005). The review's final findings are expected to be released in November 2006.

Upon release of the publication, TUC Secretary General Brendan Barber said: 'Employers should stop complaining so much about the skills levels of their staff and spend more on training them. Despite many government incentives one in three employers are denying training to millions of workers who need it most. And the government must legislate to make sure that workers get paid time off to train. Britain's unions are already working in partnership

with large numbers of employers, through their army of 14 000 union learning representatives, to re-skill their workforces. Government investment has helped this process and it must be increased.'

Tackling the skills crisis as the TUC suggests will not only improve Britain's productivity and competitiveness but also address issues such as poverty and social mobility. To promote such issues of social justice the union body calls on the government to work with partners through the Sector Skills Councils (see Cedefop Info 1/2005) to tackle skills discrimination among women, black workers, the disabled, and older workers.

The TUC's report argues that much more attention has to be given to improving the skills of Britain's current workforce, as 70 per cent of the country's 2020 workforce have already completed their compulsory education. The report points out that six million working-age people have severe literacy problems, and many more

have problems with numeracy. In the next 15 years some 20 million people will need higher skills levels than at present. The report declares that such skills levels are essential if Britain is to close its productivity gap with France and Germany.

The TUC points out that unions are in a unique position to tackle the workplace skills shortage and have already made strides in encouraging workers back into training and education. The TUC's learning and skills project, unionlearn (see Cedefop Info 2/2006) helped over 100 000 people to access courses last year by recruiting over 14 000 union learning representatives. Unions aim to increase that figure to 22 000 by the end of the decade, supporting over a quarter of a million learners.

The report can be downloaded in full from www.unionlearn.org.uk/extras/UL/reports/2020VISION_SKILLS.doc
Media enquiries:
Mike Power (44) 2070796942. E-mail: mpower@tuc.org.uk

VET quality

BELGIUM

New to Flanders: launching competence certificates for six occupations

The Flemish government is introducing competence certificates for individuals who lack certificates despite having a wealth of professional experience. These will allow people to prove what skills they have acquired on the job. For the prospective employer, as the Flemish Minister of Education explained, this certificate will provide a guarantee akin to a diploma.

Many people learn on the job, but are unable to prove this as they have been unable to certify their professional skills. This is why the Flemish government is launching the competence certificate. For the pilot phase, the certificates will be issued for six occupations. Further occupations will be covered in the course of 2007. Applying for a certificate will not be difficult, and employees will be able to cover half the cost through their training accounts. The

project is co-financed by the Flemish government and the European Social Funds.

To set up this system, an inventory was made of acquired skills for professional bus and car drivers, extracurricular school activity assistants, call centre operators, decorators, and gantry crane operators. Candidates are offered the opportunity to demonstrate their skills at an interview and by practical tests. Starting in 2007, certification centres will be set up for furniture removers, packers and transporters. Hairdressers, managers of hairdressing salons, bakers and weavers will also follow.

The tests are directly related to the specific occupation. For example, for painters and decorators of buildings, the candidate could be asked to clean down a room and prepare it for painting. The driver would be judged following a test on a simulator.

Those who are successful receive their individual competence certificates in their letter boxes a few weeks later.

The competence certificate is tangible evidence of work experience and an official testimony to individual's professional skills. Recognised by the Flemish government, it is drawn up by the Economic and Social Council of Flanders (SERV). This guarantees both the expertise and the support.

Above all the competence certificate is a bonus for employees and those seeking employment. There will no longer be a need to take numerous tests when applying for a job. For the employer, the competence certificate is a very useful instrument, as it is not usually easy to evaluate the skills of a potential employee. As the tests are drawn up in collaboration with employers in each sector, the latter can

have no doubts about the value of the certificate. Thus, the labour market gains transparency, with proof of skills written in black and white.

An information campaign was launched on 13 September 2006 to make the initiative better known to the public at large. More information on the competence certificate can be found at www.ervaringsbewijs.be. There is also a Flemish information line, free of charge, at 0800 302 01.

Information: R. Van Weydevelde, Library Manager, VDAB.

Source: Frank Vandenbroucke, Press Service, Ministry of Education and Employment
Press release: www.ministerfrankvandenbroucke.be/



ESTONIA

E-learning networks aim to revitalise sectoral learning

The Estonian e-Vet consortium (www.e-vet.ee) was established by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian IT Foundation on 16 February 2005. The consortium consists of 31 VET schools and 7 applied higher education institutions, with the team of the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre managing activities. The main objectives of the consortium are to support cooperation between VET schools and applied higher education institutions at their own level or between different educational levels; to support implementation of innovative interactive tools in VET schools and applied higher education; to help improve trainer skills in implementing e-learning methods; and to improve the standing of Estonian vocational and applied higher education in the international market.

The establishment of the consortium can be seen as the starting point for coordinating in e-learning in Estonian vocational education, with activities initially based on an application for funding from the European Social Funds (ESF) to implement e-learning within its schools. With a budget of 2.2 million Euro, the project is to run until 30 June 2008.

The objective of the project is to achieve a high-quality, sustainable system for e-learning development in VET schools and applied higher education institutions. The specific activities undertaken involve:

- the systematic creation of e-learning content. By the end of the project, 615 study weeks of e-courses and 640 digital learning objects will have been created. In

addition, quality requirements for e-courses and their implementation plan will be set up.

- the development of a training system for teachers/trainers. 11.5 ECTS of new e-learning training courses will be set up and 27 ECTS of existing courses will be updated and enhanced. In total 2310 teachers, IT specialists and educational technologists will be trained.
- the implementation of the e-learning support system. Schools will employ 33 educational technologists.
- the creation and maintenance of thematic networks. 10 long-term interinstitutional networks of teachers in the same subject areas will be set up.
- research in the field of e-learning, in addition to which an internal evaluation will be carried out.
- effective and user-friendly e-learning infrastructure. Centrally administered learning management systems IVA and Moodle are installed in the Estonian e-Vet servers; a virtual learning portal with a courses database and learning objects repository is also being developed.

One of the key results of the project is expected to be the thematic or cooperation networks, which have generated considerable enthusiasm. Their aim is to enhance dialogue in different subject areas, involving people from as many institutions as possible who are working in the same field. The focus of this dialogue is not just on e-learning development but also on modernising the entire learning process in the subject area. It is rewarding to see that people are constantly searching

for new ideas on the better use of e-learning. The thematic networks are the best example of good cooperation between vocational institutions, as they show how necessary and useful joint initiatives in e-learning can be. Currently seven thematic networks are operating successfully: information technology, tourism, accommodation and catering, arts and handicraft, healthcare, technology and educational technology.

Another important aspect of the project is the implementation of the e-learning support system where currently 35 educational technologists have been employed in the schools belonging to the e-Vet consortium. The main tasks of an educational technologist include: dissemination; content creation; training teachers how to set up e-courses; management and coordination of e-learning projects; and participating in the work of thematic networks. As the driving force for e-learning in each institution they have particularly contributed to content creation (e-courses, learning objects and organising training for teachers).

The central issue in planning activities in the e-VÖTI project is the quality of e-learning and its implementation scheme. We find that improving the quality of vocational and applied higher education through e-learning is one of the best ways to support the development of both individuals and regions.

Source and further information:

Ene Tammeoru, Head of the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre
Kerli Kusnets, Project Manager of the Estonian e-Learning Development Centre

Vocational guidance

FRANCE/EUROPE

Guiding the unemployed: different structures, common logic

Three researchers at the Research and Studies Centre on Qualifications (Céreq), Coralie Perez, Elsa Personnaz and Philippe Cuntigh, have just published a study on 'the vocational guidance of the unemployed in Europe' (1). Their thoughts on guidance are based on the European strategy for employment, on the incentive to seek employment and on the promotion of lifelong learning. 'The generic concept of guidance, used by the international authorities to define these services, takes little account of their diversity', the authors note, also mentioning that the primary recipients of these services are the unemployed.

This prevalence of job-seekers influences the structuring of the offer of services, even if guidance in Europe is provided by bodies which are 'of very diverse kinds and dimensions'. Nevertheless, public structures such as ANPE (National Agency for Employment) play a central role in France through their activities of 'initial diagnosis' for the unemployed and sometimes even take on the role of guid-

ance body, as in Slovenia. In Spain, on the other hand, such bodies subcontract guidance to the two sides of industry, or to the municipalities.

Guidance is not only a means of support for those seeking it, 'it is also a constraint: it falls under a 'pro-active' logic of not just financing people who have been involuntarily deprived of employment, but of making this funding - unemployment benefits - dependent upon follow-up services that aim to help in the search for employment and for occupational reintegration'. This is also the rationale of the Community strategy for employment. The unemployed have a right to guidance which takes into account their aspirations - but guidance is also a duty, with the search for employment being monitored by the authorities.

Thus, guidance, according to the three authors, simultaneously becomes prevention and cure: prevention, because it mobilises individuals considered capable of foreseeing their risk of exposure to unemployment, and

cure, because it obliges authorities to assist the people who risk exclusion from the labour market. 'This state support comes with strings attached: it expects the unemployed to modify their behaviour in the active search for a return to work', the three researchers conclude.

(1) Cf. revue Bref Céreq, N° 232, July-August 2006, p. 1-4 www.cereq.fr/pdf/b232.pdf
Further information: Stéphane Héroult, Centre INFFO, 4, avenue du Stade de France, F-93218 Saint Denis La Plaine Cedex, Tel. (33-1) 55 93 91 91 (switchboard), Tel. (33-1) 55 93 91 04 (direct line), Fax (33-1) 55 93 17 25
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Source: article by J. Lepeyre in Le Quotidien de la formation, N° 496, of 11 September 2006

FRANCE

A national career guidance portal for everyone

On 30 June 2006, Gérard Larcher, Minister of Employment, Labour and Occupational Integration of Young People, launched the national training guidance portal [www.orientation-formation.fr/].

The project is run by the State, represented by the General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training, the social partners through the Joint National Committee for Vocational Training, and a number of regions.

The portal aims to provide useful information for guidance in training for everyone - students, employees, job-seekers - and to provide answers to questions concerning their career throughout their working lives. The portal also aims to encourage Internet surfers to take action: it guides them towards the competent bodies located near them, i.e. provides data and links to the Internet sites of local bodies.

The project has been set up by Centre Inffo with the collaboration of many partners: ONISEP (National Of-

fice for Information on Teaching and Professions), ANPE (National Employment Agency), CNFPT (National Centre for Regional Public Services), sectoral bodies, regional councils and the CARIF-OREF (motivation and resource centres for information on training - regional employment and training observatories).

The portal, which aims to promote cooperation, is an ongoing activity which will grow up to and including 2007. Other similar resources will provide new data on certification, occupations, training on offer, career guidance, employment perspectives by sector and region, etc. Activities are planned, particularly with the sectors, to provide guidance to young people who have not yet decided on an occupation.

The portal in figures:

- 917 pages (excluding databases);
- 1000 fact sheets on occupations corresponding to 12 000 'types' of professions;

- 132 600 training activities and 24 600 addresses of institutions;
- 6 000 useful addresses;
- 530 fact sheets on agreements with 132 professional sectors on occupational advancement and the DIF (individual right to training).

Information: Stéphane Héroult, Centre INFFO
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Source: Le Quotidien de la formation et INFFO Flash, published by Centre INFFO.



LATVIA

Trainers embrace national TTnet

The launching of the Latvian Training of Trainers network (TTnet), in a conference held in Riga on 16 June, was warmly welcomed by the Latvian training and education community.

The main goals of the conference were to set up the Training of Trainers network (TTnet) in Latvia, to create the steering group and to draw up the action plan for near future. Thanks to the participants' enthusiasm, these goals were all met in the short time allocated.

The main actors of the VET system were all represented in the conference: policy makers from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Trade Unions, and representatives of important companies, universities and VET schools. Members of TTnets across Europe gave a clear view of how TTnet has been functioning since its foundation. Invited speakers informed the participants

about TTnet's history, mission, objectives and main achievements in Europe, explained the main principles of TTnet functioning, and mentioned the major problems the network has faced. Professor Ronald Sultana, TTnet co-ordinator for New Members States identified the important prerequisites for a successful network: purpose, people, process and planning. His answer to the question: 'Who makes a TTnet successful?' informed and guided the establishment of the Latvian TTnet.

The host lecturers analysed the Latvian situation, accentuated the main problems and marked out activities needed to achieve synergy. Gunars Krusts, Director of Department of Vocational and Continuing Education and Ilze Brante, Director of Vocational Education Centre, both of the Ministry of Education and Science, spoke about VET teacher qualification requirements in Latvia. According to the Law of Vocation-

al Education, the right to hold a teaching position at a vocational education and training establishment may only be conferred on persons who hold an appropriate qualification and who have received teacher training.

Anita Lanka, TTnet coordinator in Latvia, stressed that much has changed since the reform of vocational education and training system. But despite the steps taken toward modernisation, many issues and problems remain to be identified, understood and resolved. Weak points include the lack of information on VET teacher training activities and related research; the weak cooperation with social partners; low cooperation among vocational teacher education and training institutions; insufficient dissemination of innovative experience and good practice; and the dearth of publications (especially collections of articles) related to this sector of education.

The role of universities in VET teacher training was also highlighted. Universities must be able to inform, guide, motivate and organise VET teacher training program needed nationally or locally. But do they actually have the competence to do so? Trainers need to be trained according to new concepts of learning and teaching and in response to the demand for new skills.

Tasks for TTnet set by the three workshops can be divided into three groups: information; the professionalisation of VET teachers and trainers and research.

Further information: Anita Lanka, TTnet coordinator in Latvia, E-mail: anita@bf.rtu.lv

Source: TTnet Latvia

HUNGARY

Survey and workshop explore adult trainer skills

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of the Government of the Republic of Hungary (2005) and the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP) of the I. National Development Plan governing the use of EU Structural Funds assistance have identified the content and methodological development of education and training as one of the main strategic directions of the development of LLL in Hungary. A related priority supported by the HRD OP is the training of adult trainers. MELLearn - the Hungarian Higher Education Lifelong Learning Network has just completed a survey on the competences of adult trainers in higher education.

MELLearn is a network of Hungarian universities established in 2002. It currently has 24 member institutions, including the Lifelong Learning Centre of the University of Debrecen that has recently joined the Hungarian ReferNet Consortium. The survey conducted by MELLearn was based on

an adapted questionnaire sent to every higher education institution in Hungary (altogether 73 institutions) requesting information on the current situation, and the needs of higher education in terms of human resources. Data provided by the 16 questionnaires filled out by 3 institutions from Budapest and 13 institutions from the countryside (all being members of MELLearn) serve as the basis for an analysis of the national situation, structured around three main questions:

- training of adult trainers today, at the national level,
- institutional situations, and
- training programmes available to instructors working in higher education.

In addition, the survey collected and summarised the comments of institutions on the subject and made conclusions and recommendations concerning strategies and action plans to be followed. Though not comprehensive the survey succeeds in

describing the situation and suggesting generic or innovative processes in the field.

The training of adult trainers will gain importance in the near future thanks to the government's Lifelong Learning Strategy. Here higher education institutions can pioneer changes. The issue should be framed not just in terms of need, but also as an opportunity: MELLearn can help develop an integrated higher education institutional strategy for human resources and training, and offer it to every higher education institution. It can also initiate the definition of the competence map and professional requirements demanded from higher education instructors, as well as the development of a unified training programme and related materials. For teacher training, modular training programmes should be developed to improve adult trainer skills (e.g. communication, group management, etc.). For (further) training, individual learning can be supported by e-learning materials.

In addition to disseminating its recommendations, MELLearn is able to provide professional support to its member institutions and - under certain conditions - to all higher education institutions. In this way, it can become the prime promoter of the development of adult trainer competences at national level.

Further information: Dr Anikó Kálmán, Secretary-General of MELLearn and Director, Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Debrecen. kalmanak@lifelong.hu

Special target groups



LITHUANIA

New law promotes employment on several fronts

The Law on the Promotion of Employment that entered into force on 1 August 2006 provides completely new policies to assist employment seekers in Lithuania.

From now on, unemployed persons who manage to find a job in a company shall be paid a subsidy for six months that shall not exceed the minimum monthly salary (MMS) approved by the Government (600 LTL = EUR 173.77); at the same time, their employers shall be partially compensated for expenses related to developing work skills. Within the programme on the introduction to professions, young unqualified personnel will get a study grant amounting to 0.7 of the government-approved MMS and will thus enjoy the opportunity to develop professional skills.

The law also offers greater support to employers who provide work for the disabled. The subsidy shall reach 22 times the country's average monthly wage (average monthly gross wage equals 1519.7 LTL or EUR 440.14). Until now compensation comprised 1 MMS for a 12-month period and 0.5 of MMS for 6 months, and covered wage payments only.

The law thus represents a change to subsidised employment schemes. The wage subsidy, in case of employees receiving special employment guarantees, shall be paid for up to 12 months (up to 3 months in case of fixed-term contracts). Employment of the disabled will be supported during the entire working period by paying for

their actual work period on the basis of the MMS.

Another novelty, employment rotation, promotes professional mobility for employees and provides necessary workers for employers. When workers are absent on holidays or for other reasons established in collective agreements, employers will be able to replace them with unemployed people, who will be paid 0.5 MMS for every month of work.

Beyond promoting employment, the new law also encourages entrepreneurship. Formerly unemployed persons who set up new companies and hire the registered unemployed under open-ended agreements shall be entitled to a subsidy for a period of 36 months, starting from

the day on which the company is officially registered. The subsidy will be equal to that provided to employers who create new workplaces or employ the disabled.

Further information: Albertas Jekys, Head of Labour Market Division, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, A.Vivulskio str. 11, LT-03610 Vilnius, Lithuania Tel. (370) 5 266 42 57, E-mail: ASlekys@socmin.lt, www.socmin.lt

Report recommends measures for greater social inclusion

Despite an economy which has enjoyed over a decade of rapid growth and a dramatic reduction in employment, there remain vulnerable groups - people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers - who experience difficulty finding work. Ireland has a high level of early school leaving and a higher proportion of low-skilled workers in the workforce than other best-performing countries.

To address this issue, the National Economic and Social Forum has recently published a report (1) setting out its recommendations for measures to create a more inclusive labour market. It argues that current structures for promoting labour market policies and social inclusion are too complex and that the current EUR 1 000 million expenditure on labour market measures could be more effectively spent.

The report reviews funding mechanisms for workplace training and considers various options, including the FÁS-Training and Employment Authority's proposals for paid learning leave. It points out the ne-

cessity of developing a formula that will allow workplace training costs for low-skilled workers to be shared between the State, employers and trade unions, and discusses various funding initiatives in Europe, Canada and the United States - including Individual Learning Accounts (ILA), training vouchers and training leave schemes.

The initial focus of additional State support for worker training, the report says, should be on early school leavers in employment. The Department of Enterprise, Training and Employment should fund four weeks' formal off-the-job training for 5 000 of these young people each year over a five-year period. Each young worker would receive up to EUR 2 000 into his or her own Individualised Learning Account. Other financing instruments, such as training vouchers and grants, should also be considered.

Training providers should offer more flexible courses, accredited within the National Framework of Qualifications, at times and locations to suit both employers and em-

ployees. Workers in part-time, temporary and other atypical forms of work should not be neglected. In particular, FÁS and other bodies are asked to provide more flexible training opportunities to meet these needs.

To help all low-skilled workers develop their skills, the report recommends the introduction of 'Personal Development Plans' and 'Mentoring', with the mentoring role played by the National Employment Service for up to six months in the case of new workers. For all other low-skilled workers, the report underlines the role of unions, employers and consortia in organising such services.

According to the report, a review should be carried out of the EUR 60 million per annum directed at measures for people with a disability. The main issues here are why so many are on specialist rather than in mainline training provision, why the main employment support for disabled people is not open to those seeking part-time work, and why employers' uptake of avail-

able grants to support reintegration is so low.

A National Strategic Framework is proposed to provide vulnerable people with better opportunities to get and keep a job. The main aim is to improve the coherence of the 1 000 million per annum spent on current economic, social and employment measures, and its operation should be reviewed on an annual basis.

(1) Creating a more inclusive labour market / National Economic and Social Forum. Dublin: NESF, 2005.

Further information:
www.nesf.ie/dynamic/docs/No%2033%20Creating%20a%20More%20Inclusive%20Labour%20Market.pdf

Source: FÁS

ROMANIA/CEDEFOP

Living between two cultures: migration and training policy

A ex-Cedefop trainee explores migrants' networks of knowledge

In December and January 2003 I collected the raw material for a study on migration and social protection. The resulting study (1), International migration and social policy, explores the informal social protection offered by the ethnic network to illegal migrants. The focus is on personal experience of geographic and demographic mobility, rather than on the institutional and legal framework of migrant and host countries.

The main question the study sought to answer was: 'How do economic migrants organise informal social protection in their ethnic network?'. Information was collected by in-depth interviews, conducted with migrants to Italy (in one case, Spain) who originally hailed from Fagaras, a small town in central Romania.

Whether informal social protection strategies prove efficient for migrants depends on the risk they are intended to deal with. The ethnic network is usually successful in finding solutions to unemployment or accommodation problems. But available employment usually does not reflect the pro-

fessional qualifications of the migrants. This may have lifelong consequences: working for many years below qualification level jeopardises the migrants' chances of returning to their chosen field, even if they decide to return home. So how can training improve the living conditions of migrants?

Keeping people at home. As unemployment is one of the main pull factors, reducing it is a good starting point for keeping potential migrants in their home country, or even for helping emigrants return. The challenge is to identify the sectors offering the greatest potential for development. In the region of my study, considering its location and infrastructure, that sector is tourism. One step in this direction has been already made, in the form of training under a PHARE project for unemployed women who wish to work in tourism or start their own business in this or a related field.

Keeping people informed. Another useful activity would be to disseminate information about the living and working con-

ditions of migrants in a host society. Such a campaign should be geared toward young people from regions with a high incidence of migration and should be provided through schools, unemployment offices and local newspapers.

Helping migrants settle back home. The European Union, through SAPARD, funds new agro-tourist resorts, small plants for processing and marketing agriculture products, and farms that follow European standards. As many migrants typically already have starting capital and some agricultural land, with a good business plan they could be eligible for SAPARD funding - but being away from their country they lack precise information about these opportunities. Opening information centres in the host country (with the help of the ethnic network) showcasing available opportunities, and offering practical training on how to make a business plan, receive and supplement funding, seek business partners, etc., could raise migrants' interest in starting a business back home. In fact, returning migrants could help stanch

emigration by creating jobs for people who would otherwise consider leaving.

Training people for the host society. This can be done through NGOs and through the ethnic community. For registered unemployed migrants who have been employed in the past the Italian State offers free training, which is, however, unavailable to illegal migrants. Besides language classes, all migrants should have access to basic legal training: they should learn what their rights are, and how they can go legalising their status in the host country.

(1) The study is part of my Bachelor's thesis for Babes-Bolyai University, entitled 'International migration and social policy' (February 2004). The text was revised in 2006 when Lumen Publishers announced a contest for young researchers, thanks to which my thesis was published as a separate book. While revising this work, I was a trainee in Cedefop.

Source: Cedefop/Camelia-Georgeta Toanchita

Social partners

HUNGARY

Chamber of Agriculture focuses on teacher training

Continuing its vocational training activities is a priority for the Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture. Its cooperation with organisations representing economic interests, its work on content development, which is based on employers' demands, and its focus on improving practical learning through promoting contract-based student training, all contribute to the development of a knowledge society, as defined in the Lisbon strategy, and to the creation of a lifelong learning culture.

In the past year, the Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture has regularly provided

continuing training for teachers, trainers, and members of examination boards, as well as to its own experts and to the consultants of the local chambers, who supervise practical student-contract-based training. The Chamber also promotes e-learning and e-business applications in vocational and practical training, on the one hand, and in the everyday work in agriculture - a sector where use of ICT tools lags behind that of other sectors - on the other.

For vocational training in agriculture, the importance of quality practical train-

ing cannot be overstated. One of the challenges facing sectoral training is that while in-company trainers typically are masters of their profession, having already had a career of several decades, most do not possess a teaching qualification and thus may have a limited ability to transfer their skills and competences to their students. It is thus imperative to provide trainers with pedagogical and methodological training of good quality and adequate content.

To address this issue, the Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture has developed a two-level pedagogical training programme,

organised regularly by the 20 local chambers. In the past few years, several hundred trainers offering practical training to VET students at the workplace have been able to benefit from these programmes and improve their teaching skills.

Further information: Dr. András Laczkó (laczkoa@agrarkamara.hu)

Source: Omai

Towards 2016 - a new social partnership agreement

Social partnership is recognised as an important element in creating and sustaining the conditions for the strong economic growth Ireland has enjoyed over the last decade. Towards 2016 (1) the latest in a series of partnership agreements between Government and the social partners, provides a strategic framework for addressing the economic and social challenges over the next ten years.

Each of the previous social partnership agreements has had a particular focus and has contained significant innovations. Towards 2016 develops a new framework to address the major social challenges facing the individual at each stage of life. This 'Lifecycle Framework' places the individual at the centre of policy development: public services will need to be designed around individuals and their requirements, rather than based on different administrative boundaries.

The agreement, in addition to sections on pay, pensions, and workplace relations, contains a number of provisions related to training and employee development. The parties are agreed on a concerted effort to increase the levels of workplace learning and upskilling and welcome the planned publication of a National Skills Strategy which will map out the skill needs of the economy to 2020.

The social partners call for a review of the workplace learning and upskilling initiatives currently available, especially from the point of view of user friendliness/modularisation; the provision of generic, transferable, as well

as company and sector specific skills; future skills requirements; geographical accessibility; cost; and means of activation.

They are also agreed on the need to examine in particular the availability of workplace learning and upskilling to lower skilled and vulnerable workers, including those working in manufacturing, as well as to workers from overseas. The involvement of employer and trade union representatives in the activation of workplace learning will be of particular importance, they state.

The agreement proposes the development of a targeted guidance, learning and training programme, particularly accessible to the manufacturing sector, to include coaching and mentoring for workers in vulnerable employments where appropriate; the introduction of measures for the promotion of take-up of apprenticeships by older workers; and the mainstreaming of the Knowledge Economy Skills Passport (KESP), focusing on computer literacy, science and technology fundamentals, basic business skills and innovation and entrepreneurship. KESP is currently being piloted in the third level National College of Ireland with funding from FÁS-Training and Employment Authority. It is intended that these initiatives would be launched in 2007.

In addition, the existing programmes such as Skillnets and One-Step-Up, administered by FÁS, will be expanded to include pilot initiatives to focus on the lower skilled workers; the One-Step-Up initiative will be given

increased financial support as will the Workplace Basic Education Fund, aimed at increasing numeracy and literacy skills in the workplace.

A targeted fund will be put in place to alleviate the fees in public institutions for part-time courses at third level by those at work who have not previously pursued a third level qualification. Currently all third level part-time students have to pay course fees.

The agreement also considers the lifelong learning agenda. Provision is included for enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognized qualifications and progression to higher-level qualifications. Mention is made in this area also of the National Skills Strategy which will have a particular emphasis on qualifications up to Level 7 (ordinary degree level) of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The website is available at: www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/TheFramework/.

(1) Government of Ireland: Towards 2016, ten-year framework social partnership agreement 2006-2015.
ISBN 0-7557-1684-1.
Download address: www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Towards2016PartnershipAgreement.pdf
Source: FÁS

HUNGARY

Sectoral dialogue committees help develop lifelong learning

The involvement of sectoral social dialogue committees (SSDC) in developing vocational education and training and lifelong learning in Hungary has increased by leaps and bounds since they were set up in 2004. In the past year a series of studies and surveys has explored and analysed sectoral employment situation and training needs for the first time.

Sectoral social dialogue committees were the outcome of a Phare project and were established by an agreement signed between the social partners and the government. Bilateral SSDCs have opened a new door for social dialogue and established a new forum that had long been missing from Hungarian industrial relations. The committees ensure consultation among employers' and employees' organisations, promote collective agreements and enable intensive interest representation on a sectoral level. Since the long-term functioning of the committees is the common interest of the government and actors of the world of work, the government finances the functioning and the cost of the permanent support staff of the committees while respecting their independence. Since January 2005, such support functions are performed by the Centre for Sectoral Social Dialogue public company.

Each of the currently operating 35 sectoral, part-sectoral and sub-sectoral committees consider issues related to VET and adult training on a regular basis and several of them have even formed special sub-committees or working groups dedicated to their development in accordance with the labour market needs of the sector. The restructuring of the qualification structure and the modernisation of the content of VET in accordance with the needs and demands of the economy are important current educational policy objectives in Hungary highlighted also in the VET Development Strategy accepted in

2005. The SSDCs can contribute to this development process and the enhancement of lifelong learning through the special expertise of the social partners in identifying and promoting the special needs of their specific sector.

In the past year several SSDCs - such as, for example, in the communication, construction, thermal bath services or metallurgy sectors - commissioned studies analysing the current situation, the means of improving VET in the sector and the potential role of the committee in vocational and adult training. More committees (e.g. road transportation, agriculture, public waterworks, etc.) discussed such questions at conferences and workshops with the participation of experts and representatives of the government. SSDCs have also contributed to the continuing modernisation of the vocational training system by preparing position papers and making recommendations to the educational administration, and through the participation of their own experts in the work of the sub-committees in charge of assisting the regular review of the National Qualifications Register.

New initiatives within the SSDC of Agriculture include the establishment of the Bilateral VET Foundation in the Wine Sector, within the framework of Striking Deals, a Hungarian-Dutch project (2003-2006). The Foundation, established in 2005 by the Trade Union Alliance of

the Agricultural, Woodcraft and Water Conservancy Employees and Tokaj Trader Plc., aims to develop a new model of adult training based on a bipartite organisation in order to meet the sectoral skills and training needs of both employers and employees. This training model is to be enshrined in collective agreements. The website of the Foundation is available at: www.kszaba.hu/strikingdeals.php.

Further information: Dr. Zsolt Gonda, director of the Centre for Sectoral Social Dialogue (gonda.zsolt@apk.org.hu)

Source: Centre for Sectoral Social Dialogue public company (Dr. Zsolt Gonda)





GREECE

Progress on accrediting occupational profiles

Occupational Profiles: an effective resolution

Decision no 110998, recently signed by the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Finance and published in the Official Journal, has now clarified the issues related to occupational profiles. The decision offers a definition of occupational profile (the total of occupational functions that constitute the line of an occupation or a specialty as well as the respective knowledge, skills and competences necessary to meet the requirements of those functions). These are the aims of the accreditation of occupational profiles:

- to directly link the contents of vocational education and training programmes with occupational profiles;
- to highlight the reliability of vocational education and its close links to the needs of the labour market;
- to clarify and improve the occupational qualifications of Greek human resources, and to pave the way for smoother integration of unemployed people and socially vulnerable groups into employment;
- to bolster the role of social partners in the vocational training training and lifelong learning.

The decision names the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS) as the responsible agency for the needs of accreditation of occupational profiles. EKEPIS will work alongside the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK), the National Employment Observatory Research-Informatics SA (PAEP A.E.) and the Social Partners to define the required knowledge, skills and competences. The purpose of this collaboration is to avoid potential overlap in the development of occupational profiles. Implementation of the decision is already underway, with a call for tender to draw up the first profiles.

Source: OEEK

SPAIN

Training finds new place within education system

To complement the Organic Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training (Cedefop Info 3/2005) and the recently voted Organic Law on Education (Cedefop Info 2/2006), the Spanish Ministry for Education and Science is now preparing a Royal Decree which develops these laws further and establishes the general working plan for vocational training within the education system. The aim of the proposed Royal Decree is to establish the structure of new professional titles in vocational training, including training that corresponds to the national list of professional qualifications, and to incorporate learning content, as established in EU directives.

Professional titles are structured by sector; the corresponding training takes the form of cycles composed of professional units. The Decree regulates supply, access, admission and graduation requirements, and allows adults to improve their professional qualifications by combining the variables of work, personal responsibility and lifelong learning.

Source: INEM

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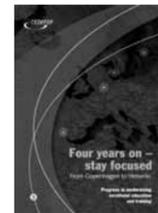
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The Study Visits corner



Study Visits look at sports in school and at play

It has already been two years since the European Year of Education through Sport (2004). Yet judging this year's Study Visits Programme, interest in exploring sports-related issues within VET shows no sign of abating.

The original campaign - which featured the slogan Move your body, stretch your mind - aimed to develop the social and educational dimension of sports; to use sports as a means to teach social skills and fair play and to develop competitiveness and a sense of self-worth. But the interest and scope of the topic has grown to encompass many related fields, such as recognising qualifications and developing training options, as well as making use of sports within the education and training systems.

In effect, interest in training in the sports sector takes two main approaches: on the one hand, a focus on qualifications in teaching sports and physical education within the education and training system; on the other, a

focus on sports and leisure outside the formal education and training system. By way of example, a study visit held in Austria this year (5-7 April 2006) on sport and exercise in the Austrian vocational training system, underscored the pedagogic and methodological priorities of vocational schools in physical education and how training for sports teachers is organised. Other school-related questions that have been raised in this year's Study Visits include discussions on how to include sports in curricula but also, in the spirit of the original campaign, on how to develop other competences through sports.

A study visit organised in the Netherlands (26-30 March) covered a wide spectrum of issues - the policy and structure of the Dutch sports sector, how qualifications for the sports sector are obtained in the Dutch system, and the social values of sports in education - while still focusing on the education and training systems. Other visits chose to deal with sports within tourism and leisure. In Ireland

(8-11 May) much attention was devoted to how sports training can contribute to the development of activities in tourism and how relevant qualifications can be acquired.

Recognising qualifications is in fact a major concern in this field. In Sweden (13-17 November 2006), the study visit focused on qualifications in sports per se, whereas in France (16-20 October 2006) discussions on the recognition of sports-related qualifications encompassed more than what would traditionally be thought of as physical education and focused on the development of qualifications for the leisure industry.

In short, the range of sports-related training is growing. The European Year of Education through Sport has opened up a whole new range of possibilities, which the Member States seem keen to continue to explore.

Source: ije/ine

Disseminating the outcomes of study visits in France

On Friday 8 September 2006 the Ministry of Employment, Social Cohesion and Housing, which is responsible for the Study Visits Programme in France, organised a working group on disseminating the outcomes of study visits. The purpose was to raise awareness among French participants about the need to pass on what they had learned in study visits abroad, and to provide them with the means of doing so in their working environment.

Preparatory work for the meeting, which was chaired by the Ministry, was carried out by Racine⁽¹⁾. The session was the culmination of a year's work, part and parcel of implementing the Study Visits Programme in France. This had started by launching a survey among 400 par-

ticipants in 2005 and was followed by forming a working group in 2006. The group was composed of some twenty individuals, chosen on account of their role and presence in the programme. Thanks to everyone's active participation the group devised methods for monitoring participation in a study visit, including tools that allow for the transfer of the knowledge acquired by participants.

At a morning session held at Maison de l'Europe, Paris, the results of this collective work, including the specific tools, were presented to a panel composed of representatives of vocational training policy in France and in Europe. The workshop also helped to consolidate cooperation between Centre Inffo, the French ReferNet

partner, and Racine through a formal protocol of understanding between the two bodies.

As a follow-up to the workshop, participants in the study visits in the second half of 2006 will meet to be provided with the tools created for knowledge transfer.

(1) Network supporting the application of European innovations. Racine helps implement European programmes and projects in France in the fields of employment, training, competitiveness and the promotion of diversity. Further information: Racine- Marika Cuby, (33) 1 44 08 65 10 44 08 65 10 - cuby@racine.fr, www.racine.fr

Source: Racine