

**FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH WORKPLACE LEARNING:
LINKING INNOVATION AND TRAINING POLICIES**

**Cedefop workshop
29 November 2012
Thessaloniki**

BACKGROUND PAPER

Workshop

Cedefop's workshop *Fostering innovation through workplace learning: linking innovation and training policies* will bring together European and national policy- and decision-makers, representatives of governments and enterprises, social partners and research. It is an invitation-only event.

The main objectives of the workshop are to present the outcomes of the Cedefop study *Learning and innovation in enterprises*, to discuss concrete implications for policy-making and practice, and to provide a forum for networking and the exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise, with a view to inspire future policy and strategy action. In particular, discussions will focus on why innovation and training policies should be linked, and how this could be done. The following questions will be discussed:

- **The impact of learning-intensive forms of work organisation and learning on innovation in enterprises:**
 - What is the relationship between learning and innovation?
 - Which are the benefits of linking learning and innovation policies?
- **Policy initiatives and publicly-funded innovation programmes:**
 - Which types of initiatives and approaches are used in the different EU member states, and which impact do they have on the innovative ability of enterprises?
 - What is the role of initiatives and programmes that explicitly link innovation and training policies? How are / can they be designed and used? What are potentials and challenges?

The workshop will contain presentations and interactive sessions, allowing participants to actively participate and to share their knowledge, experience and expertise.

Background to the workshop**European policy background**

The EU's prosperity depends on the skills of its workforce and the innovativeness and competitiveness of its enterprises. The global competition for innovation and economic development is fierce, and the EU seems to face a significant innovation gap compared to

other world economies such as the USA and Japan.¹ To stimulate innovation and to address this innovation gap, a broad approach to innovation policies that includes various measures has been taken at European level.

The initiative PRO INNO Europe has been set up as the focal point for innovation policy analysis and policy cooperation in Europe, with a view to contribute to the development of new and better innovation policies.² Within the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU flagship initiative “Innovation Union” has been implemented, outlining a strategic approach to innovation.³ It emphasises the role of education and training and the need to raise skill levels to foster innovation. The need to stimulate learning and to increase skill levels is also mirrored in the Education and Training 2020 (“ET 2020”) target of reaching a 15% average participation rate of adults in lifelong learning by 2020. The Bruges Communiqué on Enhanced Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) calls for action to enhance the contribution of VET to lifelong learning, especially by increasing access to and participation in continuous VET.⁴ Further, it calls for innovation in VET and encourages partnerships for innovation. At EU-level, a VET / Business forum that focuses on the role of VET in the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation) has been set up.⁵ The awareness that innovation, learning and skill development are closely linked and reinforce each other seems to be growing.

Cedefop’s research

A number of Europe-wide analyses have emphasized the importance of investing in human resources to support future economic growth, innovation and business performance in response to the fast-rising challenges of business environment. Cedefop’s study *Learning while working* (Cedefop, 2011) calls for stronger synergies between policies for innovation, enterprise development and training, highlighting that innovation performance and the development of knowledge, skills and competences reinforce one another. The introduction of new products and services, the adoption of technological developments and major changes in work processes and organisation stimulate enterprises’ awareness for training needs and demand for training. Increasing employees’ knowledge, skills and competences makes it easier for companies to adapt to change and to compete in new markets. Employees might be more likely to stimulate and implement innovation. As innovation and training mutually support each other, **innovation and training policies should be brought together**. There is a need for increased synergies between strategies that support innovation and business development and policy measures that promote learning in enterprises, even in its most informal forms, for example learning while working through workplace learning. The importance of workplace learning and its potentials are increasingly recognised.⁶ Learning while working implies that the work environment is learning-conducive e.g. organised in a way that encourages workers to take some degree of responsibility to solve problems by themselves, to carry out complex tasks, to work in teams, etc.

¹ European Commission (2011): Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS). The Innovation union's performance scoreboard for Research and Innovation.

² <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/>

³ European Commission (2010): Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions [SEC(2010) 1161.08.2011].

⁴ European Commission (2010): The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/forum_en.htm

⁶ See for example: Cedefop (2011). *Learning while working: success stories on workplace learning in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3060_en.pdf]; European Commission (2010): The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020.

Acknowledging the importance of the topic, Cedefop carried out a study on *Learning and innovation in enterprises* (Cedefop, forthcoming 2012). It is embedded in Cedefop's work on adult learning and workplace learning. The study covers the 27 EU Member States and Norway and aimed at:

- exploring the impact of learning-intensive forms of work organisation and learning on innovation in enterprises, as reflected in innovation performance at national level;
- identifying and reviewing policy frameworks and publicly-funded programmes that foster innovation in enterprises. It also examined what types of programmes are used in the different EU member states, and looked at the impact they have on the innovative ability of organisations, analysing effects on human capital (knowledge, skills and competence development of employees), structural capital (learning-intensity of workplaces and work organisation) and relational capital (external relations). The general review of policy initiatives and programmes is completed by a more in-depth analysis of 10 examples of programmes in different countries (case studies).

Further information

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