

2/2002

The social partners define competence development as the major challenge for lifelong learning

The European social partners, that is the European Trade Union Confederation - ETUC (which includes representatives from Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee), the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe - UNICE /UEAPME - representing employers in small and medium-sized enterprises and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and Enterprises of General Economic Interest - CEEP, agreed on a "framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications". The framework agreed on 28 February in Brussels and submitted to the Social Summit in Barcelona, underlines competence development and acquisition of qualifications for all age groups as the major challenge for lifelong learning and its contribution to an inclusive society.

The framework defines four priorities, which are considered by the social partners to be essential for the lifelong development of competencies:

1. identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs,
2. the recognition and validation of competencies and qualifications,
3. information, support and guidance, and
4. resources.

The member organisations of UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC will, as indicated in the document, promote this framework in the Member States at all appropriate levels - enterprise, sectoral or national. Each year, an annual report of national actions identified under each priority will be drawn up. In 2006, after three annual reports, the impact on companies and workers will be evaluated with a view to updating the priorities.

The social partners feel that the success of their initiative will depend on shared responsibility by players with regard to the four priorities and they call for the intensification of dialogue and partnership at the appropriate levels.

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Europe

Europass gets off to a good start

Initial evaluation presented by the European Commission. Around 19 300 passes already issued by the National Contact Points of the Member States.

Europass training has got off the ground and the Council Decision on the promotion of European pathways for work-linked training, including apprenticeship, which came into force at the beginning of 2000, is running smoothly in all Member States. These are the conclusions of the European Commission in an initial evaluation.

Some 19 300 copies of the total print-run of 400 000 European training passes were issued by the National Contact Points in Member States up to November 2001. Although Europass training may in fact include up to three European training pathways, young Europeans completing and registering more than one training period in another Member State have so far been the exception so that the number of the passes issued largely reflects the actual number of European training pathways completed.

A total of 14 180 documents (73 %) were requested by France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The figures for Germany are way ahead of those for the other Member States: 9 614 passes were issued, i.e. almost one half of all the European training pathways. This can presumably be at least partly explained by the relatively high number of apprenticeship contracts in 2000 (600 000). On the other hand, the Europass documents issued by the German National Contact Points also included projects which did not fulfil all the quality criteria for European training pathways, e.g. the appointment of a mentor. Figures for Austria and Denmark were also relatively high. Overall it can be said that the greatest interest in the Europass was shown by those countries with a well-developed apprentice training system and an established tradition of transnational vocational training mobility.

English-speaking countries are the most popular destinations for the training pathways which

last on average 3 to 15 weeks. Moreover, more women than men tend to take advantage of this opportunity of a training period abroad. Although women participants were only slightly ahead of the men in France and Germany, they were well ahead of their male peers in Finland, Ireland and Sweden. The vast majority of Europass holders are aged 17 to 23 and almost three quarters of these young people are in general academic or vocational streams at secondary or upper secondary level. The most popular sector so far is hotels, catering and tourism. With the exception of educational and training institutions, the Europass is evidently a one-way street for SMEs, which seldom send a trainee abroad although relatively frequently act as hosts to foreign trainees.

A significant number of European training pathways - from 30 % to 100 % according to country - fall under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Bilateral or national initiatives also play an important role in a number of Member States, e.g. the Franco-German youth exchange programme, the Anglo-German 'Training Bridge' and the 'Nordplus Junior' programme in Scandinavia.

Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden have already presented national evaluation reports on Europass training. The Dutch position is predominantly sceptical: various educational and training institutions and trainees comment that the Europass has hardly had any impact on the labour market at all as people have never heard of it. The response is more positive in the other three Member States: in particular young people engaged in training regard the Europass as a useful indication upgrading the status of training periods abroad and improving the chances of finding a job. However it is also pointed out that the pass should be more user-friendly and more widely publicised. A European mid-term evaluation is to be presented by the Commission at the end of this year.

For more information, see: www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/europass/index_en.html

Source: Cedefop/SK

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Letter of the Director

As many of you will know, Bologna and Bruges (perhaps I should say Brugge) are very beautiful cities. By the end of the year we should know whether the Bruges process will in future years be seen as important to the development of co-operation in Europe in the field of vocational education and training, as the Bologna process has been, since 1999, in that of higher education.

During the last six months, the Commission and the Spanish EU presidency continued the initiative announced in Bruges at the November 2001 meeting of Directors General for Vocational Training. On 10-11 June a conference in which high level officials from national ministries in 29 European countries and the social partners participated, was organised by the Commission in Brussels. Participants at this meeting confirmed the need for an intensification of VET co-operation aimed in particular at enabling VET systems to respond to the challenges of a knowledge society and to promote competence and mobility. The aim is, by 2010, to enable citizens to use their qualifications and skills as a 'common currency' throughout Europe and enhance the overall status and reputation of vocational education and training. The results of the conference are available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/bruges/index_en.html. The Danish presidency has already indicated its intention of organising a meeting at ministerial level in Denmark in late November in order to give formal political expression to this agreement. Cedefop, particularly through its work on transparency of vocational qualifications and lifelong learning, has been contributing to the development of the Bruges process.

When I reported on Cedefop's work to the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, I emphasised the importance of governmental action throughout the EU to ensure that educational and training opportunities are offered to the very many workers with low level qualifications. However, initiatives by public authorities are not sufficient alone and Cedefop has always emphasised the importance of the role of the social partners. Therefore, I welcome the agreement between the social partners at EU level on 28 February on lifelong learning (see the article on pages 1 and 6).

Social partners at national and European level have in recent years taken several initiatives including sectoral actions. It is with a view to encouraging and developing this process that we will, together with the Commission and the Dublin-based European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, organise a conference in September on the development of qualifications within the social dialogue, especially on a sectoral basis (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int/events.asp#09>).

All these activities will require a more efficient and comprehensive information system on education and training. For our part, we have now launched a new network of reference and expertise (see page 2/3) and are also taking the first steps to creating a knowledge management system, which will gradually become part of our European Training Village (www.training.village.gr) and be completed fully early in 2004.

Johan van Rens
July 2002

From "documentary information" to

A meeting in Thessaloniki in mid-April saw the formal inauguration and first meeting of Cedefop's new network for reference and expertise (Refer). This succeeds the documentary information network, which Cedefop began to develop soon after its establishment in the 1970s, was gradually expanded and operated until 31 March 2002.

The functions and the membership of the new and old networks may superficially seem very similar, but in effect this meeting marked a major change in how Cedefop carries out its work and how it relates to its partners in the associated and Member States. Processing information on vocational education and training (VET) is the essence of Cedefop's work. The need to increase the speed and efficiency with which this information is gathered and shared has led to the creation of the Refer net-

work, which places European co-operation very firmly in the context of information exchange at national level.

A European network of national networks

Cedefop has always defined its subject area (vocational training) in a broad way, as including measures in education and in labour market systems, for young people and for adults, for the employed and for

unemployed. Even in the past, it found that dealing with one organisation in each Member State did not ensure that it received information covering all aspects of VET in each country, nor indeed did it lead to an effective distribution of the results of its own work to all the key partners in the country concerned.

Accordingly when Cedefop put the question of membership of the new network out to public tender, it emphasised that in each country it expected that a consortium of interested organisations would be established. If for administrative and financial reasons, there is a formal contract only with the leader of each national consortium, for Cedefop, the active participation of the mem-

What is meant by the knowledge society?

'Taking steps towards the knowledge society - reflections on the process of knowledge development' is the title of a recent Cedefop publication.⁽¹⁾ It examines the nature of the different kinds of knowledge that make up the 'knowledge society' and analyses how knowledge is developed. In particular the book looks at how vocational education and training can contribute towards building the emerging 'knowledge society'.

Even though the word 'knowledge' is used frequently in everyday conversation, the notion of 'developing knowledge' appears to be a very esoteric activity undertaken by scientists or experts in research laboratories. Similarly, although the terms 'knowledge society' or 'knowledge economy' are used regularly in political discourse and presented as matters affecting everybody, when attempts are made to elaborate on these terms, they are often explained in relation to advances in science and technology and in particular information and communication technologies. Often the 'knowledge society' is equated with the 'digital

society' that is characterised by advances in electronic communication such as e-commerce.

This book argues that there are many types of knowledge and many sources of knowledge from the world of 'practice' as well as the world of 'academia'. 'Top-down' academic thinking about the knowledge development process must give way to multi-dimensional and collaborative models. In this context, the book examines the transition from what can be called a 'skill-based' to a 'knowledge-based economy' that affects everybody. The knowledge required by the knowledge worker in the 'knowledge-based economy' must not be seen as purely theoretical knowledge but as an integration of different kinds of understanding, 'know-how' and personal attributes, including business and technological 'know-how'. The book explores ways in which education and training can support the generation of the practical 'know-how' knowledge that people require for living and working in today's world.

The special focus of the book is on the distinctive role and contribution of the research and development community in taking proactive steps to shape the form of the 'knowledge

society' coming into being. From the point of view of vocational education and training this entails the close collaboration between researchers and practitioners in the co-development of a new knowledge base that will have a real as distinct from 'hoped-for' impact on society.

The book contains a number of reflections and illustrations by those engaged in research and development work concerning the knowledge development strategies to be employed today. Although it is targeted at a research community audience, it has relevance for a wider readership in that it argues that knowledge for living and working today can only be developed through a close partnership between action-oriented researchers, creative policy makers and innovative practitioners.

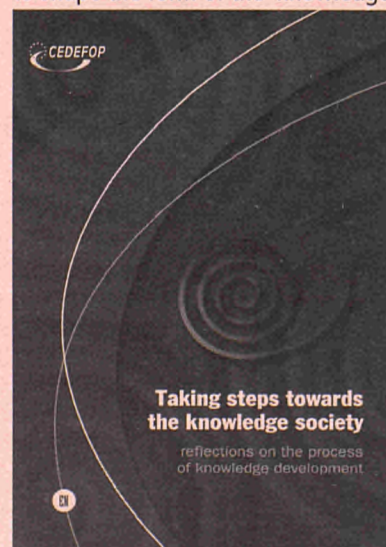
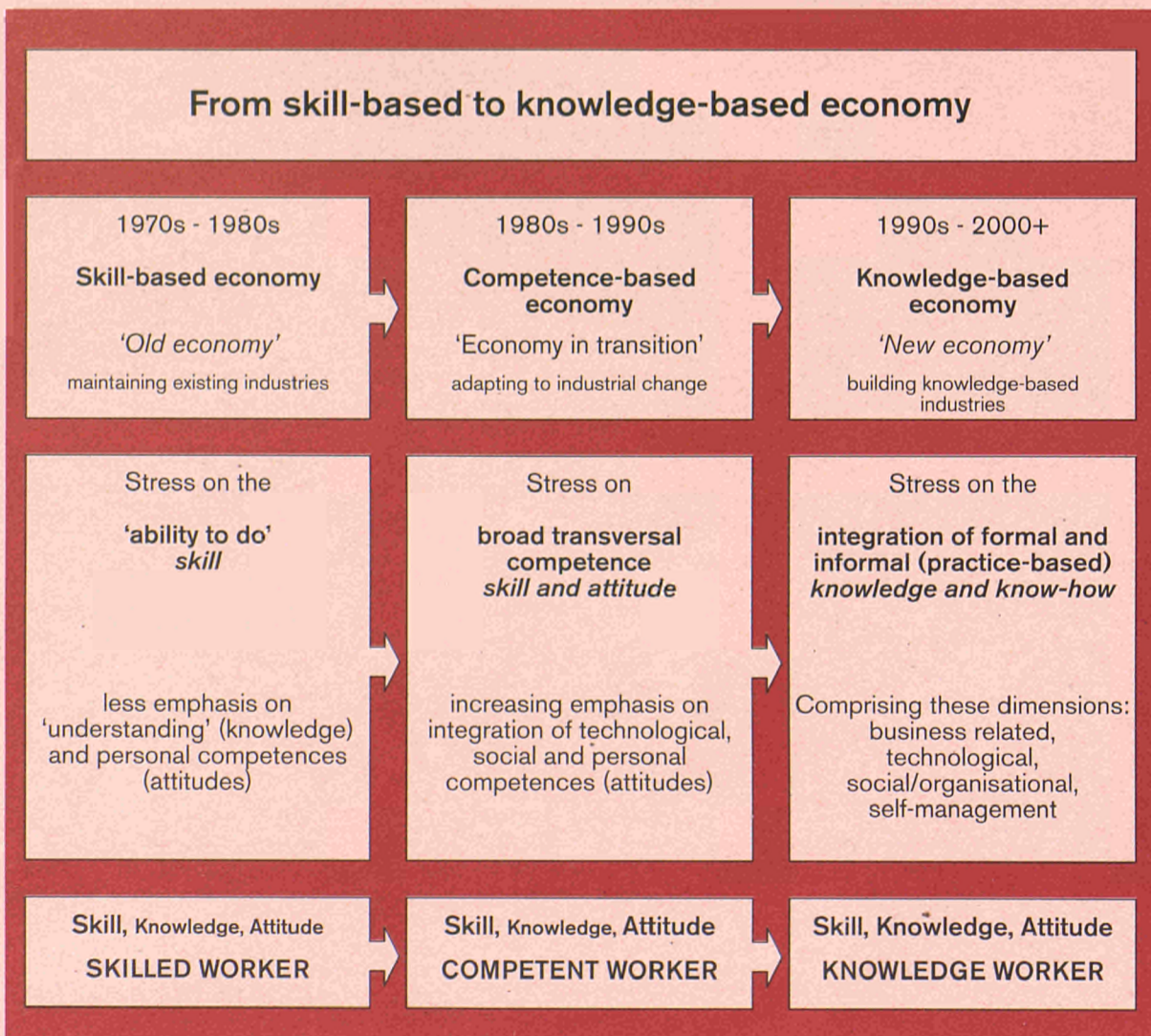
The book sets out to elucidate the meaning of knowledge development by looking at it from three different perspectives:

- providing illustrations of knowledge development actions in addressing 'real' problems;
- examining how information and communication technologies (ICT) can support knowledge development; and
- analysing a number of theoretical and conceptual issues regarding knowledge development.

The book has been produced in the framework of the Cedefop research arena (Cedra)⁽²⁾ one of whose main objectives is to explore innovative research methodologies to support collaborative knowledge development.

⁽¹⁾ More info on the book - Reference no etc
⁽²⁾ The main aim of the Cedefop research arena (Cedra) is to promote opportunities for researchers to collaborate in sharing and developing knowledge about vocational education and training. It has three strands concerned with: sharing information and resources; thematic knowledge development; and reflecting on research and knowledge development methodologies.

Cedefop/Barry Nyhan



reference and expertise" - more than a change of name?

bers of the national consortium in supplying and disseminating information is of equal importance.

Cedefop is therefore in the process of signing documents involving a commitment to exchange information with all the members of the consortia in all the countries concerned.

While the membership of the consortia will reflect the special situation in each country, Cedefop would wish it to be as broad as is practicable, including all the major partners, both governmental and social partner ones, in the field of VET development, research and practice. The main ministries (e.g. Education and Employment/Social Affairs) involved,

regional authorities or the bodies coordinating them, labour market organisations, etc. should all be members of the consortia. So as to ensure synergy in relation to information on EU and international education and VET related activities, Cedefop believes it would be natural that national bodies and structures already participating in EU level education and training activities should be involved. Accordingly the National Units of Eurydice, the National Agencies for the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance, the national reference points for the transparency of vocational qualifications, etc., should all be invited to participate in the national consortia.

The consortia leaders

The membership of each national consortium should ensure the breadth of the new network. The contractual relationship between Cedefop and the consortia leader will ensure its depth. The consortia leader will, under the contract, provide Cedefop with a number of services. These include all those previously provided within the framework of the documentary information network (monthly indexations for the bibliographical database, contributions for Cedefop Info, up dating of the VET institutions database, information on, and participation in, major conferences and exhibitions etc.).

In addition, there is an undertaking to provide, and then update on a

twice-annual basis, a short description of the VET system in the country concerned and to provide regularly information on developments in VET research. The Refer network will be the main providers of information for a new knowledge management system, which Cedefop is now developing and which should be constructed in a way that it can cover the fields of education and training and include not only the EU member and other EEA states, but also eventually the candidate countries. The information will be made available on-line through Cedefop's interactive European Training Village (ETV) web site (www.trainingvillage.gr) Cedefop Info will report on this new information system in a future issue.

Membership of the Refer network is at present restricted to the EU Member States and Norway and Iceland, but will be extended to the candidate countries. Below is a list of the consortia leaders (arrangements in some countries have still to be finalised). All those interested in having more information on the network should contact either the consortium leader in their own country or, in Cedefop, Marc Willem, the Head of Cedefop's Library and Documentation service (mwi@cedefop.eu.int).

Source: Michael Adams, Cedefop (jma@cedefop.eu.int)

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Bi- and multilateral co-operation

Europe

AQUACULTURE: "De-Pêche Toi"

Aquaculture is a developing biotechnological industry of increasing European importance. Wild fish stocks declined alarmingly over the past 25 years. It is widely believed that this decline is caused by overfishing. In the last decade, the fishing industry shed 8,000 traditional jobs each year⁽¹⁾. Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy will mean reducing the EU's fleet size, curtailing fish catches by over a third, and rigorous inspection, control and sanctions procedures.

EU aquaculture production, with ancillary activities, is valued at EUR 1.9 billion, providing the equivalent of 60,000 full time jobs⁽²⁾. Most of these jobs are located in remote peripheral areas that have few economic alternatives.

Aquaculture, commonly known as fish farming, is the fastest growing sector in the European food production industry. For Norway and Scotland, it is the largest food-exporting sector. While over 80% of aquaculture jobs are in the marine category, most EU states produce fish from inland aquaculture, primarily trout, carp and eels.

AquaTT, established in 1992, is the recognised European network for aquaculture training and technology transfer in Europe. It co-ordinates a network of 650 member organisations in 22 European states. AquaTT participated in EU programmes such as COMMETT, FORCE, Leonardo I and II, LINGUA, PESCA, SOCRATES and TEMPUS. Recently, AquaTT was involved in developing a multilingual glossary of 3000 aquaculture terms in 7 languages. This is now incorporated into the www.aquamedia.org web site⁽³⁾ that gives up-to-date and accurate sectoral information for fish farmers, suppliers, consumers and the media.

AquaTT's current 2-year Leonardo PISCES project is developing an interactive multilingual database website on aquaculture and its potential. PISCES aims to address the sector's perceived negative environmental image and

increase the numbers of European aquaculture students and trainees. Its web site will contain information on university and vocational training courses in member and pre-accession states. The site will address 'hot' environmental issues, and demonstrate 'Virtual fish farms' to increase public awareness and understanding of this rapidly growing sector. It will also contain case studies along with discussion and posting boards for SMEs and other interested parties. AquaTT's eight partners include the Belgium based Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), universities in Spain, France and Poland, along with organisations in Greece, France, Ireland, Italy and Norway.

PISCES' site at www.pisces.tt.com will be operational from October 2002.

Information on AquaTT, its PISCES and other initiatives can be obtained from David Murphy, Manager AquaTT Ltd
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www.aquatt.ie

Source: Avril Burgess, Programme Officer, Irish Leonardo da Vinci National Agency at Léargas

⁽¹⁾ Press Release; Dr. Franz Fischler, Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy Speech to the Advisory Committee for Fisheries, Brussels, 28th June 2002

⁽²⁾ Speech: Franz Fischler, The future of aquaculture in Europe, 3rd annual conference PESCA, 5th November 1999

⁽³⁾ Aquamedia is the web site of the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP).

Austria/Albania/Bulgaria/Romania

ECO-NET: 93 virtual firms congregate at second international fair

1 200 network partners from south eastern Europe meet in Sofia. Coordination by KulturKontakt Austria.

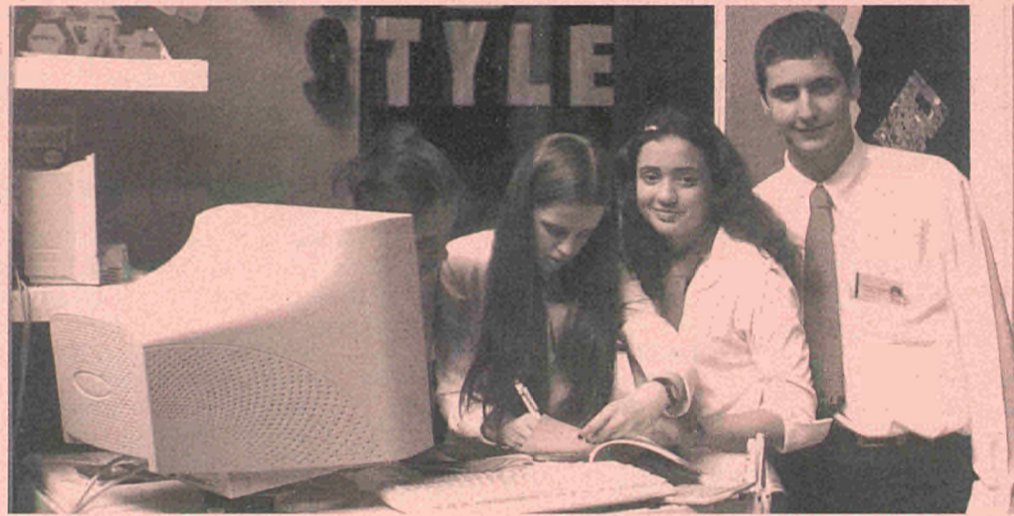
More than 1 200 students and teachers participated in the second international virtual firms fair in Sofia as part of the project entitled 'Establishing a Regional Network of Education in Economics on Policy and School Level. Partnership between Albanian, Bulgarian and Romanian Economic Schools', or 'ECO-NET' for short. The project, coordinated by KulturKontakt Austria and funded by the Austrian foreign ministry in the framework of the stability pact, was launched with 11 pilot

schools in February 2001 and was to come to an end in June of this year.

A total of 93 virtual firms were represented at the fair from project partners Albania, Bulgaria and Rumania, as well as from Austria, Croatia and Macedonia. The two-day fair gave the participants an opportunity to intensify their business relations within the newly established regional network of virtual firms and to get to know each other.

Further details from Eva Jambor, KulturKontakt Austria – Sofia Project office, Rosova Dolina 1, 1421 Sofia, Tel./Fax (359-2) 963 13 80, E-mail: eva.jambor@kulturkontakt.or.at

– Source: KulturKontakt Austria, Sofia Project office/Cedefop/SK



Austria

Springboard for astute apprentices

'Lip' is the name of a springboard for apprentices engaged in training with small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the city of Graz who wish to acquire work experience abroad. The International Young Workers' Exchange (IFA) is running the 'apprentice impulse programme' up to the summer of 2003. The IFA, set up in 1995, organises work experience abroad with financial assistance from the EU

Leonardo da Vinci programme. With its new scholarship programme, the IFA offers placements to groups of five to eight apprentices (from their second year of training onwards) in various host countries in the fields of hotels and restaurants, electricity, joinery and retailing.

Full details at www.ifa.or.at or from Susana Saez Garcia, Tel. (43-1) 545 167123, E-mail: saez-garcia@ifa.or.at

Source: IBW/Cedefop/SK

France

"Sustainable professionalisation": the first two European vocational certificates

On 20 February 2002, the minister with special responsibility for vocational training, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, presented a communication on the 'European pilot project on sustainable professionalisation' to the cabinet.

This approach, he explained, is already about to be launched in two sectors of activity: in the automotive industry, in the form of a logistics engineer diploma, and in hotel management, in the form of diploma in accommodation management, both at the level of baccalauréat + 2.

Against the background of the target set by the European Council at Lisbon in March 2000 of making the EU the most competitive knowledge-based society in the world, during its EU presidency, France proposed an initiative on the creation of European vocational training certificates to the European Commission and four other Member States. The initiative has since received the support and financial assistance of the European Commission in the form of a 'pilot project', to run for a period of 12 months (April 2001-April 2002).

The French initiative was originally joined by four other Member States, Germany, Greece,

Spain and the United Kingdom, as well as two candidate countries, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Italy joined the working party in November 2001. In addition, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands have since expressed their interest in the project.

An intergovernmental working party, comprising representatives of the public authorities, qualifications experts and representatives of the relevant vocational sectors from each participating country, has met on a regular basis since September 2001 with the participation of the European Commission and Cedefop.

A comprehensive model has been drawn up for these two first diplomas, comprising a vocational (certification model) and a training (training model) part. Drawing on the French method of design of vocational diplomas, the

working party started out from the requirements of companies at sector level and the demand for training and learning. This was followed by the definition of the basic and vocational knowledge to be mobilised. The approach in fact led beyond the originally defined sectoral framework in both cases. The certification model which is designed as a reference for the validation of informal learning is thereby a contribution to the generalisation of the validation of informal learning, identified by the EU as 'good practice' in France.

At a meeting held at the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (*Conservatoire national des arts et métiers* - CNAM), in Paris on 21 February 2002, the twelve participating States issued a joint declaration committing themselves to introduce the first two diplomas and to contribute to the setting up of an intergovernmental mechanism to continue this initiative so that it can spread to other sectors of activity. A steering group of this 'sustainable professionalisation process', comprising representatives of the participating states, is to hold its first meeting in Athens in November 2002.

The French government regards this project as part of the overall policy to upgrade and consolidate vocational diplomas and to construct a European educational and training area with a view to promoting the mobility of wage-earners.

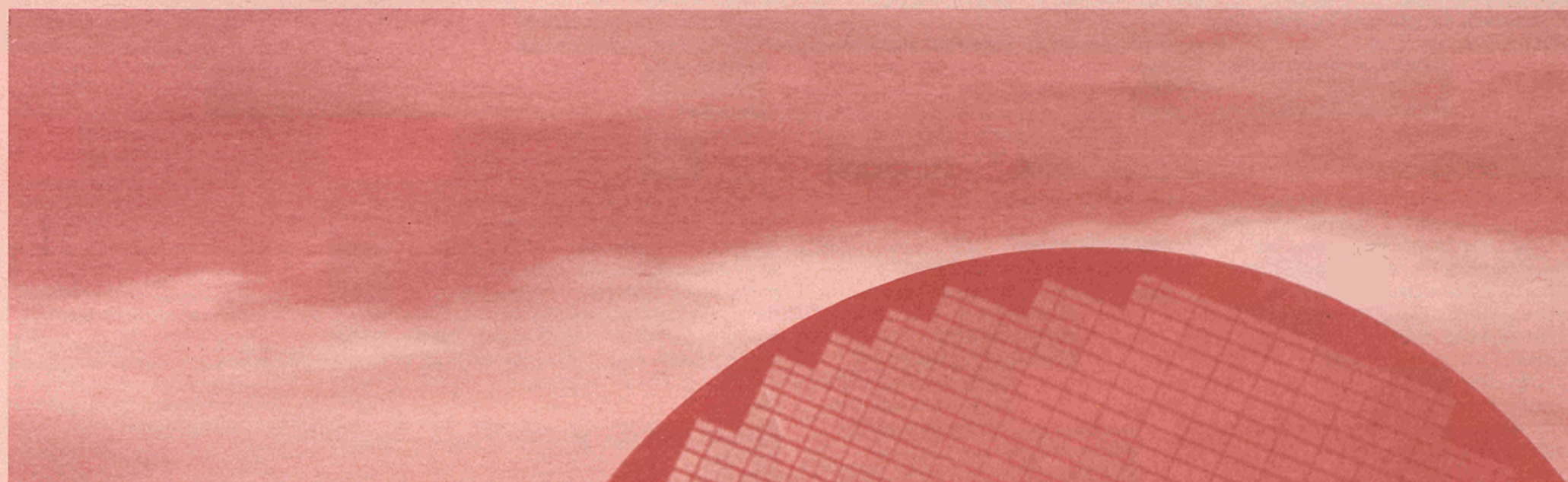
Source: Press file on the European meeting on 'sustainable professionalisation' on 21 February 2002; see the Ministry for Vocational Training website: <http://www.enseignement-vocational.gouv.fr/actualites/dossiers-de-presse/d020221/index.htm>

La Lettre de l'enseignement professionnel, No 21, February 2002 <http://www.enseignement-vocational.gouv.fr/actualites/lettre/enspro21.htm>

See the interim evaluation of the Deputy Minister for Vocational Training, dated January 2002: '78 actions pour la voie des métiers', Part 8. Une action internationale au service du modèle éducatif français, Action 69 : Vers des diplômes professionnels européens: http://www.enseignement-vocational.gouv.fr/dernier_even4.htm

Lifelong learning

NL: Changing life patterns – the element of lifelong learning; ICE: Education for everyone, everywhere; The social partners define competence development as the major challenge for lifelong learning; S: New agency for flexible learning; Trade unions, training and research at EU level; F: Online training: 'hybrid' solutions are the order of the day; A: eLearning clusters to bundle knowledge and experience; FI: New proposals for adult education and training.



Lifelong learning

The Netherlands

Changing life patterns – the element of lifelong learning

The standard life patterns of learning, working and retirement or learning and caring, are changing to new and less predictable ones. This is the point of departure in the study, *Verkenning levensloop*⁽¹⁾, published in January 2002 by an interdisciplinary committee from the four Ministries dealing with Social Affairs and Employment; Education, Culture and Science; Health, Welfare and Sport; and Housing, Spatial Environment and Planning. Several options for future policy are reviewed.

Five phases and three points for attention

New developments in the lives of both men and women have resulted in the adolescent period becoming much longer - the education period lasts longer and definite choices for work or partner are made later. Between the ages of 30 and 60, more and more activities have to be combined. A new period of early and active retirement from 60 on, marks the phase before one again becomes dependent on the care of others.

These developments influence policy for the coming years in three important ways:

1. too many burdens fall on people between the ages of 30 and 60,
2. too little use is made of the knowledge and experience of people after their retirement,
3. continuous updating of knowledge and skills throughout life is crucial.

With regard to the last aspect, education can and should play an important role in interdisciplinary policy in the coming years.

Shift from provision to demand led education

An important development in the policy on lifelong learning is the shift

from provision led to demand led stimulation. People themselves should be made responsible for their own employability, and the use of personal budgets can be an instrument to enhance their motivation and choices. Between February 2001 and February 2002, eight experiments have been realised with individual learning accounts (ILA), as one of the ways to implement the use of personal budgets.

In January 2002, a provisional statement was published as a result of an interim evaluation in late 2001⁽²⁾. After some initial hesitation by companies, the experiments with the

ILA's have been very successful. Currently, the government is reviewing the possibilities of quickly enlarging the experiments. From the current 1200 accounts being opened within the experimental framework, it is proposed that 10 000 more accounts should be opened in 2002. Another option that is proposed in the *Verkenning levensloop* (Life patterns) study is to make a personal budget (Personal Development Account) available for education to all adult citizens.

It is proposed to open a temporary expertise centre, initiated by the three Ministries of Economic Affairs,

Social Affairs and Employment and of Education, Culture and Science, on the theme of lifelong learning. This centre should stimulate the debate on lifelong learning, assemble and exchange good practices on national and international level, stimulate new developments and set up (educational) networks between local and regional actors. In the study, the authors proposed linking this lifelong learning knowledge centre to the Kenniscentrum EVC (Knowledge Centre for the Accreditation of Prior Learning)⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Forecast study *Verkenning levensloop* (Life patterns), Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment,

Den Haag, January 2002. The report can be downloaded (in Dutch only) from the following URL: http://home.szw.nl/actueel/dsp_persbericht.dfm?jaar=2002&doc_id=2025&link_id=2619
⁽²⁾ Doets, C. and Westerhuis, A., *Experiments with Individual Learning Accounts (ILA's): A provisional statement*. January 2002, 's-Hertogenbosch. CINOP. This document can be downloaded, free of charge, in English from the ILA-website: <http://www.cinop.nl/leer rekening>
 Doets, C., Schilder, D., Westerhuis, A., *Eindverslag van het experiment met de individuele leer rekening* (Final report of the Experiments with the Individual Learning Accounts) in Dutch (English version to follow), May 2002, 's-Hertogenbosch, CINOP. ISBN: 90-5003-372-5. Price: 12 Euro (excl. VAT, can be ordered at: verkoop@cinop.nl).
⁽³⁾ For more information on the Kenniscentrum EVC, visit the website <http://www.kenniscentrumevc.nl/> (only in Dutch)

Further information: <http://www.minszw.nl/actueel> (click on 'persberichten', date 22-1-2002, in Dutch only)

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment / CINOP

Iceland

Education for everyone, everywhere

Distance learning with the help of computers, the Internet, teleconferences and "snail-mail" has revolutionised the educational opportunities for people living on farms, in small villages or towns. It also enables those in small countries to avail more easily of opportunities abroad. Iceland, with its small and thinly distributed population, is a case in point. Distance learning has boomed during the last few years and doubled between 2001 and 2002.

Data from the traditional correspondence schools has shown that there is less likelihood of dropping out of distance learning if students also have someone to work with in person, preferably both their co-students and their teachers. Hence a new concept, termed dreifmenntun (combined learning), has been developed. It implies a combination of

distance learning and traditional class work. In the word lies the connotation that learning can take place wherever one is any time, night or day.

"Combined learning for everyone, everywhere" was the title of the fourth conference on information technology held in Iceland in March. Some 1 200 people, including teachers, students, principals, policy makers and other interested people from all over the country and abroad, participated. Several suppliers of the latest technology displayed their goods and the interactive database mennt.is (see Cedefop Info 1/2002) was launched.

The main lecturer was Wim Veen from the Netherlands who talked about a new species he called Homo Zappiens. These are (mainly) young people who communicated through

electronic media rather than face to face. For them, learning through the Internet is the most natural thing in the world.

In the field of vocational education and training, an issue was how the hands-on side of the studies might best be taught. Demonstration videos might be a great help and so could teleconferences. But even with these, VET students need to spend more of their time near to their teachers than do general students. The main solution has been to try to move the practical part of the studies closer to the students, while the general part is taught through distance education. From the University of Akureyri, the general subjects of nursing are for instance taught all over Iceland through the Internet and teleconferencing, while the hands-on part is taught in several places close to where the students

live. They will thus have to travel shorter distances and be away from home for shorter spells than if they took all of their studies at the University itself. The popularity of dreifmenntun in Iceland is growing and it might gradually become one of the key solutions to the problem of accessibility to VET.

For further information (in Icelandic) on the conference: <http://www.menntagatt.is/ut2002>. By contacting sigrung@simi.is a link to individual documents can be provided.

For information on Wim Veen see: <http://www.didotb.tudelft.nl/Medewerkers/wimv/>

Source:
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The social partners define competence development as the major challenge for lifelong learning

Continued from page 1

Actions speak louder than words

There is ample evidence on the ground that the social partners are promoting employment and competence development of staff. The following are some examples.

In **Spain**, achievements at the level of national agreements are contributing to building a global lifelong learning system.

In **Denmark**, the system works at three levels:

- tripartite general frameworks at national level,
- bipartite sectoral framework agreements defining general principles and common features of competence development in enterprises,
- at enterprise level, various tools such as interviews and learning plans are employed to support individuals. For example, in Radiometer, a company known for its medical products, low-skilled workers are targeted and training and non-formal learning are combined in the approach. Involvement by tripartite boards in education and training institutes has a further positive impact on implementing learning and competence development plans, and creating partnerships which also enable training institutes to anticipate needs.

In **Germany**,

- A collective agreement is enabling Volkswagen to hire 5000 employees, the majority of whom were unemployed. The selected employees will acquire key skills in public training institutions before being employed on a six-month fixed contract, during which they participate in on-the-job learning for up to three hours per week, in addition to their 35 hours working time. This is part of the company's business strategy.
- In collaboration with the social partners, Deutsche Telekom developed a competence development strategy to address and fill skill gaps in the IT sector. After a few years work experience, employees are invited to participate in project-oriented learning activities on a voluntary basis. The emphasis is on virtual learning using different tools, such as tele-teaching, Internet, learning partnerships.

As part of its new strategy, Usinor (**France**) negotiated a framework agreement on competence at company level to develop the qualification level of their employees, to enable their smooth career progression and to keep them up to date with technical and environmental developments.

In the **Netherlands**, social partners at Gasunie (1450 employees) agreed the funding of EUR 1600 per employee for personal development, supplementary to existing study facilities. The aim is to stimulate participation and to motivate employees to take responsibility for their competence development.

In the chemicals and pharmaceuticals industry in Italy, social partners at sectoral level are jointly carrying out an experimental project to develop continuing training in companies. It comprises analysis of training needs and evaluation of competence acquired. Costs are shared between the state (80%), companies (14%), and participating workers (6%).

Birds Eye Wall's (**United Kingdom**) runs a programme of information, support and guidance to would-be learners among its workforce, in order to motivate them to learn and improve their competence. Individual learning plans are an important tool. At its own assessment centre, the company offers recognition of acquired competencies. Trade union representatives are involved at different stages and are trained as learning representatives. Participants are encouraged to take qualifications, and NVQ level 3 is rewarded financially by the company.

Developments are not confined to large enterprises. The **Swedish** SME organisation, Företagarnas Riksorganisation, is running joint

projects with the University of Upsala to offer employees (at the level of the secretariat) a law course through online distance learning, in anticipation of emerging customer needs

For more complete information on these initiatives, together with contact details, see: <http://www.unice.org/>

Active spring for the social partners

Apart from their strong current engagement in the field of lifelong learning and approving the framework for actions which was their first joint statement since 1995, social partners at EU Level have had a busy time this spring in the wider sphere of employment, labour markets and the economy.

UNICE

Prior to the Barcelona Summit, UNICE, the voice of business in Europe, declared that Barcelona must revitalise the Lisbon process, if Europe is to become the world's most competitive economic region. On 25 March, UNICE published its twice-yearly assessment of the economic climate in the EU - Economic Outlook, March 2002, ([http://www.unice.org/unice/docum.nsf/all+by+description/2E1B624E56C42EBDC1256B8700559203/\\$File/020325EconOut.pdf](http://www.unice.org/unice/docum.nsf/all+by+description/2E1B624E56C42EBDC1256B8700559203/$File/020325EconOut.pdf)). It predicts that 2002 will be a year of low growth. The EU must, therefore, take 'more serious steps to becoming its own motor of growth', which will require genuine commitment to the Lisbon reform process. UNICE hopes that the decisions taken at Barcelona will be a turning point.

Further, UNICE has published views on the need to agree on well balanced EU wide data protection laws, which do not pose unnecessary barriers to the use of Internet by businesses. It has also uttered its approval of 'EU enlargement based on merit'. See the UNICE web-site pressroom for more.

ETUC

In its preparation for the Barcelona Summit, the ETUC cautioned that the positions of a number of governments on liberalisation, structural reforms, and the flexibility of labour markets represent a rather biased and worrying interpretation of the Lisbon strategy, which the Summit should consolidate while maintaining its balance. ETUC, on the other hand, insists on the fact that the competitiveness of

the European economy has to go hand in hand with more and better jobs.

In February, ETUC signed an agreement on setting up a contact group with four civil society organisations, representing the social sector, environmental, developmental and human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This group will meet regularly in order to promote the concerns of civil society, and might continue its works until the Intergovernmental Conference 2004. For more see <http://www.etuc.org/>.

Eurocadres

In response to what it terms the 'positive but too varied proposals' in the European Commission's Action plan on skills and mobility, Eurocadres (which represents white-collar workers) calls for a European platform for recognition of qualifications and diplomas. Academic recognition cannot be isolated from professional recognition, nor, depending on the country, can regulated professions be separated from the less regulated ones. Therefore, Eurocadres requests the Commission to

gather the various interested partners together into a European platform, using national experiences, for the mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas. For its part, Eurocadres continues the "EUROCADRES mobil-net" network set up in order to provide trade union advice to mobile professionals and managers. (see <http://www.etuc.org/EUROCADRES/act/1f-01.cfm>)

Further information sources on social partners' involvement Active strategies for older workers (Maria Jepsen, David Foden and Martin Hutsebaut (eds.). ETUI, Brussels, 2002, ISBN: 2-930143-96-7, EUR 24.90). To order, contact Kristel Vergeylen at etui@etuc.org, tel.(32-2) 2240470, fax (32-2) 2240502.

This book sets out to describe how, in nine EU Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands), social partners and governments have been successful in increasing the employment rates of older workers, or have failed to do so. Different paths have been tried out in different countries, some with more success than others. The book highlights good and bad practices in the field of employment, training, social protection and taxation policies. Current policies are evaluated and proposals are made for further successful action. Amongst major reforms discussed, the book refers to the development of systems of partial, phased, progressive or flexible retirement. For a summary see <http://www.etuc.org/ETUI/Publications/Books/ActStrat/ActStrat.cfm>.

Source: Martina Ní Cheallaigh, Project Manager, Cedefop - Fax (30) 310 490117 - email: mnch@cedefop.eu.int

Who are the social partners at European level

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe, employing over 106 million people. <http://www.unice.org>

UEAPME is the employer's organisation representing the interests, at European level, of crafts, trades and SMEs in the European Union and countries applying for accession to the European Union. <http://www.ueapme.com/en/index.html>

CEEP is an international association consisting of enterprises and organisations with public participation or carrying out activities of general economic interest, whatever their legal or ownership status. <http://www.ceep.org/>

ETUC currently comprises 74 member organisations from a total of 34 countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as 11 European industry federations, making a total of 60 million members. <http://www.etuc.org>

For more information on the ETUC and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) see separate article on page 7).

Eurocadres - Council of European Professional and Managerial staff - is recognised as a European social partner by the European institutions. Set up under the auspices of the ETUC, it regroups 5 million professional and managerial staff in Europe, organised in a variety of forms, in all private and public sectors of industry, public services and authorities. <http://www.etuc.org/eurocadres/>

There are many sectoral bodies at EU level

Sweden

New agency for flexible learning

The new Swedish Agency has been established to further flexible learning. It supports communities, folk-high schools (Folkhögskolor), local education providers and centres for adult education in their development of new education forms and methods.

Its main responsibility is to promote the development and utilisation of

flexible learning in municipal upper secondary education and adult education, liberal adult education and at work.

The agency, created on 1 January 2002, is responsible for the allocation of funds to general and adult education that aim at distance education and flexible learning. It is also to disseminate knowledge and the results of flexible learning methods

and to provide training for teachers and other key people in the field of flexible learning.

More information about the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning from: Mr Hans-Inge Persson, Director General Tel. (46-451) 14250 E-mail: myndigheten@ssv.se Homepage: www.ssv.se

Source: Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning

Trade unions, training and research at EU level

With the European Union playing a greater role in areas of interest to working people, trade unions can no longer confine their work to national level. To retain their collective bargaining power, they need to speak with a single voice and to co-ordinate at European level. This was the reason for the establishment of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1973. Today, membership in ETUC spans 74 national trade union confederations from 34 countries and 11 European industry federations totalling 60 million members.

The ETUC seeks to influence the European Union's legislation and policies by making direct representations to the various institutions. ETUC coordinates trade union participation in a number of EU-level advisory bodies, such as the Economic and Social Committee and the EU agencies for vocational training, living and working conditions, and health and safety. In addition, ETUC aims to establish relations with employers' organisations at EU level, in particular, the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP). A recent result of this European cross sectoral social dialogue is the framework of actions for lifelong development of competences and qualifica-

tions, which was agreed by the European social partners on 28 February 2002 (see separate article on page 6). Previously four framework agreements had been negotiated, dealing with parental leave, part time work, fixed term contracts and telework.

In areas of social research, trade union training, and health and safety at the workplace, the ETUC has set up special bodies, which have their own administrative organs and benefit from financial support from the EU. The European Trade Union College (ETUCO) is ETUC's training body. Its main tasks are to provide support for the training activities undertaken by member organisations and to hold training courses at

European level. The Trade Union Technical Bureau (TUTB) provides expert support in the fields of health and safety and the working environment, in the context of European standardisation. The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) is ETUC's study and research centre in the fields of socio-economics and industrial relations.

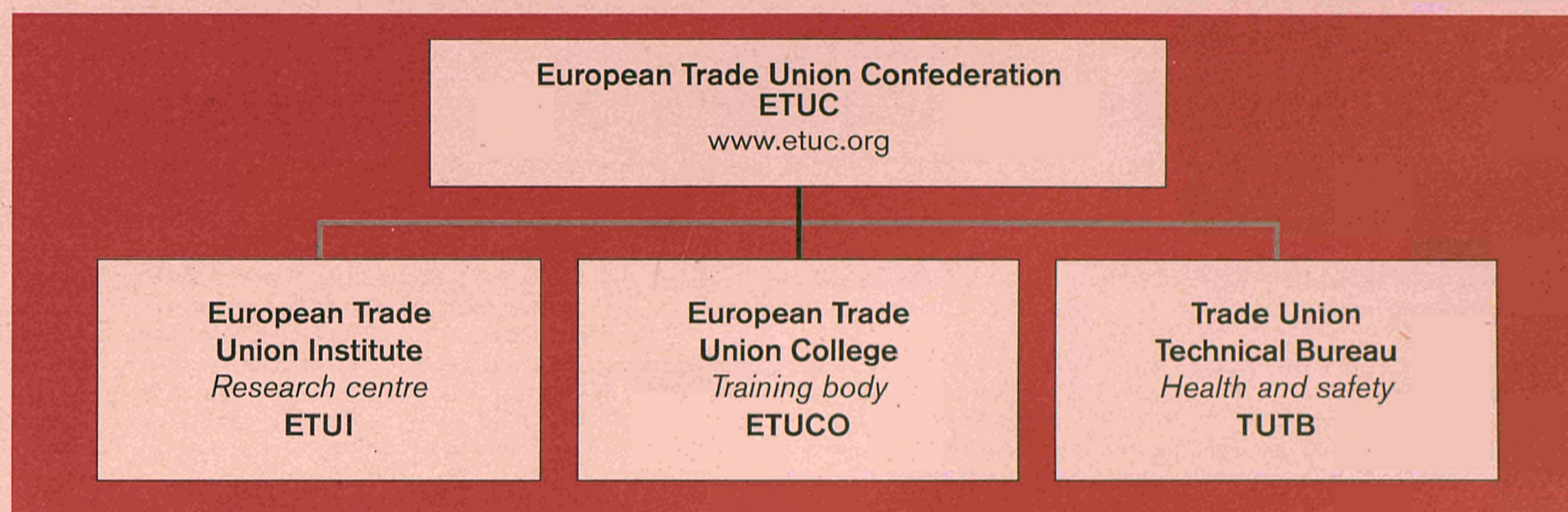
ETUI works, via networks of universities and trade union research institutions, in various countries and organises conferences and seminars on subjects of interest to the trade union movement. ETUI's regular publications include the European Trade Union Yearbook, the annual report on collective bargaining in

Europe and the quarterly journal 'Transfer'. The reports on Benchmarking Working Europe, include a chapter on education, continuing training and lifelong learning. They are down-loadable from the Internet (www.etuc.org/etui). Further information on ETUI research projects, activities and publications can be found at the same internet address.

Earlier this year, Peter Kerckhofs from ETUI, who specialises in the field of European Works Councils (EWC), was guest researcher at Cedefop. During this period, he looked at the European social dialogue on lifelong learning at cross-sectoral, sectoral and multinational

company levels. An inventory of the approximately 1 900 multinational companies falling under the scope of the EU directive on European Works Councils and the English texts of more than 650 EWC agreements are available on CD-ROM. A further analysis of the functioning of EWCs, and in particular, those factors helping or hindering the development of EWCs, is being prepared in a longitudinal case study project. More information about, and results from, this study will be included in a future issue of Cedefop Info.

Source and more information:
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France

Online training: "hybrid" solutions are the order of the day

The congress of the French Forum for Open and Distance Learning (Forum français pour la formation ouverte et à la distance - FFFOD) on 5 and 6 March 2002 provided a platform for national and international experts, practitioners and researchers in the field of online training to take stock of current developments in this field.

FFFOD focused its third congress on 'hybrid solutions', i.e. those combining online training and on-the-spot learning, currently in a phase of expansion, particularly in the United States. According to Jacques Bahry⁽¹⁾, FFFOD President, 'American producers of e-learning solutions are now adapting a distance training model identical to that envisaged by the French. The Americans have taken an about-turn towards hybrid solutions which are in fact no different to the French model of open and distance learning (ODL)'. The French are therefore now making up for the time-lag which gave rise to so much criticism some time ago.

The FFFOD president explained the growing deployment of hybrid training solutions by the fact that they

are 'high performance' solutions which 'use information and communication technologies and the personalised approach specific to online training, while at the same time drawing on the experience of conventional modes of learning'.

The adoption of hybrid solutions calls for the re-design of conventional training mechanisms. As emphasised by J. Bahry, 'this introduction of ICTs (new information and communication technologies) to training must lead to changes integrating the newly created structures into the wider context of knowledge acquisition'. But how can the costs of such a system be estimated? This was a subject of intensive discussion in the course of the congress.

The adoption of hybrid solutions in the field of open and distance learning (ODL) does not simplify the answer to this question. As pointed out by Michel Diaz, CEO of the Diaz group, this 'throws up the question of the result, which is always difficult to evaluate', adding that 'we do not have enough experience in France to draw a general conclusion'.

Indeed, the percentage of firms which have already introduced online training remains relatively low. According to a survey conducted by Préau, the monitoring centre for training, employment and occupations (*Observation de la formation, de l'emploi et des métiers - OFEM*) of the Paris Chamber of Trade and Industry (*Chambre de Commerce, et d'Industrie de Paris - CCIP*), along with Algora and PricewaterhouseCoopers⁽²⁾, only 27 % of large-scale enterprises in France already use e-learning and three quarters intend to integrate it into their training efforts. The imple-

mentation of e-learning depends on the 'infrastructure (network, intranet, etc.) and the necessary computing facilities, with a good software structure which considerably reduces the initial investment', explained Monique Benailly, head of training design with the BNP-Paribas group. The necessary investment is often very high, especially as cost structures are still very much impacted by the hardware costs. However, as pointed out by Philippe Joffre, Director-General of Génération Formation, while 'e-learning calls for massive investment upstream, the unit cost per trained person falls as a function of the number of trainees. It is an inversion of the economic model compared to the on-the-spot mode of training. Costs can be cut, in particular as a result of shorter training periods and face-to-face time, as well as lower accommodation and travel costs, economies of scale achieved in the case of large-scale training efforts, and the homogenisation of messages in real time'.

However, as illustrated by the aforementioned study, industry not only wishes to cut the costs of online training (19 %); but is also interested in 'quality improvements' (18.4 %) and 'saving time' (13.6 %). However, almost 15 % of the French firms surveyed 'do not know what to expect from e-learning', and 75 % indicate 'that they have not evaluated the overall cost of e-learning, or are not in a position to do so', which makes it difficult to gauge the training's return on investment.

⁽¹⁾ FFFOD president Jacques Bahry, is also Director-General of the Centres d'études supérieures industrielles - (CESI) group, President of ALGORA and vice-president of Centre INFFO.

⁽²⁾ The study on 'industry and e-learning in France: costs and return on investment' was conducted among a total of 193 firms and training agencies and published in June 2001. More information on the Préau website under 'Coûts et e-formation': <http://www.preau.asso.fr/>

Source: INFFO Flash, No 586, 15-31 March 2002, p. 26, article by Billy Knock

eLearning clusters to bundle knowledge and experience

Regional networks of schools with a similar specialisation cooperate with universities to form centres of excellence for media development.

There is a wide scope for activities in which eLearning can be deployed. University and academy centres are in the process of developing eLearning platforms, learning management and author systems for schools and universities of applied sciences. The students and teachers of the 140 notebook classes at 66 schools use the new media as tools for self-directed learning with an increasing level of competence, even if obstacles remain at the level of school organisation and a lack of high value learning content. The

'Quality in Schools' initiative with its school development programme is now expanding its quality network to include aspects of content and innovative methods such as eLearning. Austria now intends to bundle and reorient these initiatives, and integrate them into an interdisciplinary concept.

Groups of 10 to 15 institutions are to form regional networks, so-called 'eLearning clusters'. Schools with similar specialisations, e.g. technology, commerce or tourism, are to

jointly develop didactic models, staff development seminars for teachers, and technical solutions for eLearning with the assistance of university institutes acting in an advisory capacity. The results and products of this cooperation, e.g. user services, are to be offered by the clusters to industry and private education and training institutions following corresponding test phases. Five to eight clusters are to be formed in Austria and supported by a number of centres of excellence in the development of media. Alongside their sup-

port for the schools, the task of these centres of excellence lies in research in the fields of media and eLearning pedagogy.

In the current phase it is above all a question of school development and management. The eLearning projects have to involve teachers as fully-fledged partners, and develop with them a new learning culture and new learning areas. The priority is on constructivist learning and teaching methods, the joint design of learning environments and joint staff devel-

opment for teachers. As learning organisations, the schools are in the foreground. In the future, they are to be equipped with eLearning programmes of a high technical, organisational and didactic standard, as well as IT-supported materials for all curricular disciplines. All the cluster schools are to provide distance learning in their corresponding occupational fields.

For further information on the eLearning clusters, contact Dr Christian Dorninger, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, E-mail: christian.dorninger@bmbwk.gv.at.

Source: BMBWK/Cedefop/SK

New proposals for adult education and training

A parliamentary committee on adult education and training, appointed by the Ministry of Education, published its findings in early spring 2002. Its point of departure is that adult education and training should be based on the principle of lifelong learning.

The committee has grouped its proposals under three headings:

1. In the next ten years, basic adult education and training resources will be focused towards continuing vocational training and adult education in universities and polytechnics. The aim is that all citizens have opportunities for one to two weeks of training each year and for more through upgrading every 10 to 15 years. Liberal education also plays an important role

in adult education and training. Measures will be taken to improve adults' opportunities for utilising virtual learning environments. These measures will support development work and encourage education and training providers to use virtual learning and teaching.

2. The committee proposes a separate action programme offering opportunities to the untrained active adult population to acquire secondary level qualifications. This five-year programme will cater for 8 000 to 12 000 full-time equivalent students annually. In addition to increasing volume, the programme will also be geared to motivate the target group and encourage outreach activities. The training will be supported by general studies and modules improving learning skills. Some of the pro-

gramme funds will be allocated to education for the information society.

3. Measures will be taken to increase cooperation between organisations in adult education and to develop the accreditation system in order to create conditions for this cooperation. The aim is that the providers of adult vocational training will evolve into versatile and strong operators, in terms of the needs of the labour market and regional development. The adult education and training system will be organised so as to enable adult education and training to be monitored, evaluated and developed as a whole, and examined separately from young people's education. Educational institutions will implement and develop their basic tasks. All education providers will con-

tinue to offer adult education. With a view to clarifying the provision of secondary vocational training, the financing of continuing vocational training will be targeted at vocational institutions and some liberal adult education institutions with established vocational provision. The status of adult vocational education centres and national private institutions will be clarified in legislation as providers of secondary vocational training geared to the adult population and as developers of working life.

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Vocational training policy

Austria

Success of dual qualification vocational education streams

Dynamic development of the specialised colleges of higher education (Fachhochschulen) brings movement into post-secondary vocational preparation

In the opinion of the Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (*Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft - IBW*), the Austrian vocational training strategy of strong diversification has proven a success. Thanks to the provision of three alternative paths of initial vocational training - apprenticeship, vocational middle school (BMS) and vocational upper-secondary school (BHS) - over 60 % of Austrians held a vocational training certificate in 2000.

In the opinion of IBW expert Arthur Schneeberger, the success of this vocational training system is confirmed by the results of a long-standing OECD research programme which draws an international comparison of basic data relating to enrolment in general and vocational education at upper secondary level. Although the OECD programme showed that only 22 % of young people opted for general education streams in Austria in 1999, as many

as 71 % of young scholars were enrolled in vocational education streams, half of these in dual modes, placing Austria in top position among all the countries in the OECD study. Schneeberger believes that the relatively high popularity of Austrian vocational education streams is due not least to the fact that they do not necessarily block access to the tertiary level. On the contrary, the higher vocational schools in effect lead to dual qualifications, not only preparing students for an occupation, but also opening the door to higher education. It is precisely this permeability, he stresses, which has had a positive impact.

Commenting on Eurostat data, Schneeberger notes a 6 % rise in the percentage of higher education graduates among 25 to 64 year-old Austrians to a total of 14.2 % in the period 1996 to 2000. This is the second highest increase in the EU after Finland (11.5 %), but still some

6 % below the EU average (21.3 % in 2000). The IBW expert is convinced that the increasing provision of courses at the level of the specialised colleges of higher education (*Fachhochschulen - FHS*) will generate a substantial rise in the number of graduates in the medium term.

Schneeberger describes the FHS system, introduced some seven years ago alongside universities to raise the percentage of those going on to higher education, as an 'extraordinarily dynamic development with a broad regional base'. Over 90 courses are currently delivered by Austrian FHS. Schneeberger is confident that the European educational area advocated by the Bologna Declaration 'will include a largely modernised Austrian post-secondary education system, offering different paths of transition from school to employment for 30 % to 40 % of an age class as its integral component', whereby the 'traditional role of higher education of turning out

academics' will be just one of these paths in the future. Higher-education vocational induction and higher-education learning phases in parallel with employment are gaining momentum, he points out.

The survey among Austrian enterprises conducted in 1996 by the public employment service, AMS, shows a close correlation between area of study and sectoral employment. It confirms previous technical training and vocational experience as the most important criteria in a company's decision to take on academics. Of the 5 320 new students to enrol at FHS in winter semester 2001/02, 95 % opted for courses in the fields of technology, business or tourism. In Schneeberger's opinion, this new stream of higher education marks an overall shift in course provision towards preliminary training with a business or industrial bias, the technical leaning of courses and short periods of study guaranteeing a high degree of labour-mar-

ket orientation. Moreover, Schneeberger points out that the FHS indirectly play a modernising role. As the competition from the FHS to attract new students increases, the traditional universities will sooner or later have no alternative but to introduce changes in the business-related faculties, whereby the introduction of consecutive courses of study could have far-reaching consequences. Schneeberger regards the introduction of a three-cycle system of higher education with consecutive courses of study (Bachelor's - Master's - Ph.D.) in accordance with the Bologna Declaration as an opportunity not only to increase the flexibility of the labour market by a better linkage between higher education and the VET system, but also to improve conditions for greater transparency and the recognition of qualifications.

Source: IBW/ABF Austria/Cedefop/SK

Sweden

Advanced vocational education

From 1996 to 2001, a pilot project involving advanced vocational education (AVE) was carried out in Sweden (see Cedefop Info 2/2001). Due to its success an agency for AVE, with headquarters in Hässleholm has now been established. Already many thousands of people have participated in several hundred courses and a considerable number of schools and teaching organisations have organised AVE.

AVE is a form of post-secondary education in which one third of the time of study is spent in advanced application of theoretical knowledge at a workplace. This implies that

there has to be a close relation between school and the work places, to plan, carry out and certify the courses. AVE is not a traditional apprenticeship period where students follow the daily work and learn by doing, but an active workplace learning and problem-solving assignment in an overall educational context. This means that students learn a certain part of the schools' curricula at the places of work. This demands sophisticated advanced supervision. A requirement is that the workplace itself should be so organised as to make learning feasible. Although the aim of the training is to increase familiarity

with an occupation or a vocational area, it must not be so narrow, as to be in essence a form of in-house company training.

The programme is based on a close cooperation between enterprises and various course providers (higher education, upper secondary schools, municipal adult education and companies) and is intended to correspond to real needs in the labour market. There are no restrictions in terms of sectors or the enterprises in which AVE is to be provided. The programme is open to those coming directly from upper secondary school and those who are already gainfully

employed and wish to develop their skills within a defined area.

The purpose is to build up a bank of experience relating to new courses, new educational forms and new course providers. Concurrently an opportunity is provided to investigate the interest in this type of vocational education from the employment market and the students involved.

A course provider applying for permission to arrange AVE must have an overall syllabus for the programme, in which objectives are defined. Since the workplace-train-

ing element of AVE is so important, active participation by employers in designing the courses is a requirement. Labour market representatives are therefore also required to be in the majority of the management group for a course.

Further information from:
 Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education,
 Tel. (46-451) 454 80
 E-mail: ky@ky.se
 Homepage: www.ky.se

Source: Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education

Survey underlines divide between training "haves" and "have-nots"

A survey⁽¹⁾ by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) shows a substantial gap between the "training haves" and the "training have-nots". Those working in smaller businesses are less likely to receive training than those in large companies or the public sector. So are part-time employees and people with lower educational qualifications, whatever the sector or size of employer.

The survey of 743 people in employment shows that this is not because these groups do not seek training, or because they turn down training opportunities. In the groups receiving less training, a higher proportion felt that their employers did not provide them with enough training opportunities. For example, a quarter of university graduates surveyed said that they had been offered training by their employers in the past 12 months, but had turned it down. In contrast, only 8 % of people with no or very basic educational qualifications had not taken up offers of training. So graduates are three times more likely to reject training when it is offered, perhaps precisely because they have more training opportunities.

Respondents who had undertaken training in the last 12 months were asked how successful it had been in helping them to do their jobs better. Over 90 % thought that it had been very or quite successful. The survey also asked learners about the best and least appealing methods of learning. It showed that "being shown how to do things and practising them" – the working definition of on-the-job training used in the interviews – is by far the most popular, with just over half of all respondents finding it the best method. A further 16 % rated "learning from colleagues and people you work with" – an informal form of on-the-job training – the best method. Hardly anyone found on-the-job training and learning from colleagues the least appealing method of learning.

Only 16 % rated classroom training as their best way of learning. Here, there was a notable difference between graduates and those with no, or minimum, qualification. When asked how they learned best, the less qualified overwhelmingly chose on-the-job training. Only 7 % said classroom training was their

preferred method, compared with 22 % of graduates.

The findings imply that there is a demand for training among the lower-skilled which is not being met by employers – and that employers would benefit from meeting it. The survey also confirms that the most used forms of training by employers are, more or less equally, classroom training and on-the-job training. But on-the-job training is by far the most popular form of learning with trainees, particularly those in lower-skilled jobs and the less well educated. Although on-the-job training will not always be a viable option, the findings do raise the question of whether more resources might be put into on-the-job training (a more cost-effective form of learning) at the expense of classroom training.

The survey also shows that on-the-job training is more popular with small companies, partly perhaps because it is less expensive and more immediately relevant. Current government initiatives such as New Deal (the welfare-to-work programme) (see Cedefop Info 1/2001)

and Learndirect (the national network of centres providing access to online learning) (see Cedefop Info 1/2000) are aimed at least partially at the long tail of under-achievers, but the survey suggests that there is a long way to go before such schemes make any real impact.

Blending on-the-job training with other forms of training could be an important way to improve basic skills. It may also be a way of encouraging small businesses to carry out more training. Re-thinking how training is best delivered could prove to be one of the biggest challenges facing government agencies in the field of VET, as well as employers.

⁽¹⁾ Who Learns at Work? Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Available at http://cipd.co.uk/download/learn_survey.pdf

A version of this article written by Mike Cannell, CIPD Adviser, Training & Development, appeared in the 7 March 2002 issue of the CIPD magazine People Management

Source: CIPD

Initial training policy

Finland Students demonstrating their skills

In Finland, an experiment has been launched with the aim of incorporating skills demonstrations into vocational education and training. Pupils in the (mainly) school-based vocational education can thus demonstrate their competence. The skills demonstrations are modelled on the system of competence-based qualifications.

The pilot projects involve about 40 education providers, but the number of schools involved is much higher, because many education providers have more than one school. In addition an education provider who manages a project co-operates with other education providers or schools. The experiment thus involves approximately 2 500 to 3 000 students a year.

Over the next few years, skills demonstrations will be incorporated into all qualifications completed in upper secondary vocational education and training. Students will show how well they have achieved the objectives of their vocational studies and acquired the vocational skills required by the labour market. The skills demonstrations will be scheduled to run throughout the entire period of education and training and they will be organised in co-operation with workplaces. The objective is to organise skills demonstrations in work situations that are as realistic as possible, for example in connection with periods of on-the-job learning. Skills demonstrations will however only form part of the students' assessments; the school part will still be three years.

The pilot projects run until 2006 and are supported by the European Social Fund. They utilise both experiences from Finland and from similar projects in other countries. Skills demonstrations are used in students' assessments in vocational education and training in countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Skills demonstrations aim to improve and assure the quality of vocational education and training. Representatives of the labour market are involved to ensure that the vocational skills obtained by the students match the requirements of the labour market. Teaching arrangements are being developed to support learning as well as student-counselling and guidance services. Skills demonstration projects produce also skill demonstration materials for nation-wide use to facilitate the work of education providers and to standardise the assessment of students.

Trial projects show that skills demonstrations improve the quality of education and training by:

- steering instruction and assessments to conform to the relevant core curriculum,
- increasing the practical and labour market orientation of education and training,
- reinforcing the labour market's contacts with educational institutions,
- increasing students' motivation and
- bringing a more focused approach to on-the-job learning.

For further information: seija.rasku@oph.fi
Source: Seija Rasku, National Board of Education

Denmark Electronic educational planning

Students must now plan their vocational education and training (VET) on the Internet. In January 2002, the Ministry of Education launched a comprehensive system called the *elevplan* (the student plan) an electronic portfolio system obliging students plan, monitor and adjust their VET programme on an ongoing basis.

The *elevplan* is an important instrument with a number of essential functions. It must

1. ensure that students have a good overview of their education and training;
2. constitute a tool to document what has been achieved in the various parts of their programme;
3. enhance students' and companies' awareness of the specific role of in-company training as an integral part of VET;
4. form a platform for a better content-related coordination of school and in-company teaching.

Vocational schools are responsible for handing over the *elevplan* to each student. It is his or her property and only used during the course of education.

The aims of the new system are to support:

- the students in planning their individual VET programme;
- vocational schools in the implementation of *Reform 2000* (see box) and its key concepts of individualisation, flexibility and personal educational planning;
- the quality development of teaching at vocational schools by making the local educational plans public; and
- the guidance counsellors in lower secondary education (*folkeskole*) by providing access to information about learning activities within VET programmes.

The system is structured around the idea of giving information on possible learning options. The students sign up for a programme and on completion they are accredited for the

objectives attained. A personal scorecard provides the students with an overview of obtained credits and which subjects still have to be covered.

Elevplan and the information about learning activities at vocational schools are available to the public on <http://www.elevplan.dk>. One of the ideas is to provide vocational teachers with a website where they can find inspiration for new learning activities and which guidance counsellors can use as a tool in the guidance of pupils from the *folkeskole*.

The *elevplan* was implemented in five phases from October 2000 to January 2002. In April 2002, 35 technical colleges, 7 combi-schools, 4 commercial colleges and one labour market training centre had become users of the system. The aim is that all vocational schools should become so.

For further information, a Danish description of the *Elevplan* is available at <http://www.uvm.dk/nb/nb0402/06.htm> or contact

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Source: DEL/Cirius

The educational plan and book
The educational plan and -book were introduced with the reform of the VET programmes (Reform 2000) in 2001. The aim of the educational plan is to make the student reflect on his or her educational choice and the qualifications needed in order to complete a VET programme, and to increase trainees' awareness of their learning process. While the personal education plan contains intended learning pathways, the educational book ties together and documents students' achievements.

Ireland

Educational progression for craftspersons

The educational progression of craftspersons in Ireland was the subject of a recent conference⁽¹⁾ which drew together key government, educational and training stakeholders. The impetus to lifelong learning, progression and access generated by the Qualifications Act (see Cedefop Info 3/2001) brought the continuing education of apprentices into focus. A working party established by the Institutes of Technology Apprenticeship Committee (ITAC) to consider progression issues affecting craftspersons presented its findings to the conference. Mr Roddy Molloy, Director General of FÁS-Training and Employment Authority, welcomed the conference debate as a means of agreeing pathways in partnership with the Institutes of Technology and other key stakeholders.

Dr Sean McDonagh, of the Skills Initiative Unit in the Department (Ministry) of Education & Science, spoke of the economic imperative of finding ways of satisfying the skill needs of the economy in the light of a major decline in the 15-19 age group, the cohort from which higher education and apprenticeship en-

trants are drawn. He identified two responses. The first would maximise the achievements of young persons in relation to their participation and success in education and training, while the second puts a new emphasis on adult learners enabling them to meet their professional development needs. Apprenticeship and post-apprenticeship progression can play a major role in both these responses. There are an estimated 100 000 craftspersons in the country at present, the majority of whom are under 40 years of age. Enabling some apprentices and craftsmen national access to higher qualifications in technical, multi-skilled and advanced craft areas should become an urgent priority, he stated.

There are at present about 25 000 apprentices registered with FÁS. There is an on-going review of the standards-based apprenticeship system (SBS) curricula by the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee (NAAC) comprised of FÁS, social partner and government representatives.

FÁS identifies three aspects to progression for craftspersons:

- upskilling/cross-skilling - acquisition of craft skills (at the same level) from other trades or relevant skills related to new technology to facilitate flexibility and craft mobility;
- mastercraftsperson training which develops skills and knowledge in business and human resource development as well as further training in the trade area;
- technician training, normally in the Institutes of Technology.

The conference heard that the extent to which craftspersons take up progression opportunities is subject to many influences. Although 88% of electrical apprentices expressed an interest in progression, they were not fully aware of existing progression routes. Plans for progression will have to be clearly mapped. Flexible modes of delivery, options for the accreditation of prior learning and encouragement for employers to

take an active interest in promoting progression options all need to be considered.

⁽¹⁾National Educational Progression of Craftspersons conference held in Sligo Institute of Technology 15th February 2002. Full details on website at: <http://staffweb.itsligo.ie/staff/bmccormack/> Contact person: Mr Michael Casserly, Tel. (353-71) 55 353. Email: casserly.michael@itsligo.ie

Source: FÁS

Germany

From specialists to professionals

New continuing vocational training system gives a boost to the careers of budding IT specialists

The Federal Ministry of Education and Training and the social partners have now developed a continuing vocational training (CVT) system for the information and communication sector which stipulates qualification standards for 29 specialist profile in particular demand. The 'Regulation on further vocational training in the field of information and telecommunications technology' is soon to come into effect for six CVT certificates. The new regulation of the IT

continuing training field creates a transparent permeable system for qualifications ranging from specialist to professional levels. It is planned to link up practical in-company training with scientific training at the level of higher education. The new CVT system offers young IT experts an opportunity to brush up their knowledge, specialise in a given field or acquire higher-level training qualifications.

Germany is therefore one of the first countries to implement the 1999 Bologna Declaration of the European ministers for education on European credit transfer. Moreover the Federal Ministry of Education and Training has invested EUR 2.3 billion in the creation of a framework for e-learning courses and curricula as well as EUR 3 billion in the development of IT continuing training learning software.

Further information on the IT continuing training system at www.apo-it.de.

Source: BIBB/Cedefop/SK

Denmark

Education institutions encouraged to merge or cooperate

In March 2002, the Minister of Education, presented a bill aimed at creating a unified structure of institutions providing vocational education and training. After 41 years in the Ministry of Labour, labour market training (AMU) moved to Ministry of Education in November 2001. Therefore vocational schools and labour market training centres are encouraged to enter binding cooperation or to merge their activities.

The bill constitutes the second phase of a governmental policy to strengthen continuing vocational education and training (CVT). The first phase took place last year, when the former government established

the Labour Market Training Fund (Arbejdsmarkedets Uddannelsesfinansiering - AUF), to which all employers contribute with a certain sum per full-time employee and from which they are compensated for employees' participation in training activities. The third phase of the CVT reform, which will come into force late this autumn or in 2003, will focus on how transparency and coherence between initial, continuing and further vocational education and training in regard to content and management can be strengthened.

The bill proposes a unified institutional structure and four different

models are drawn up. Co-operation, or mergers between the following types of institution, is anticipated (in order of priority):

1. technical colleges and labour market training centres in the same local area;
2. technical colleges and labour market training centres in the same region;
3. commercial colleges in the same region;
4. different local or regional schools and centres e.g. agricultural schools, technical colleges and labour market training centres.

As both vocational schools and labour market training centres are

independent organisations, their collaboration will be on a voluntary basis. Experience from the recent merger at the level of further education into Centres for Further Education (Centre for Videregående Uddannelse - CVU) shows that many educational institutions choose to collaborate in order to benefit from economy-of-scale and to be better positioned in an increasingly competitive market for education and training.

The bill provides the framework and incentives for institutions to establish a more binding collaboration or merger. Furthermore, a common legislative framework for both voca-

tional schools and labour market training centres will be set up. The schools now operate under different laws, and one of the aims is to standardise the regulations for institutions within the VET-system.

Further information from: The Danish Ministry of Education, Frederiksholms Kanal 21, DK-1220 Copenhagen K, Tel. (45-33) 92 50 00, Fax (45-33) 92 55 47, E-mail: uvm@uvm.dk

Source: DEL/Cirius

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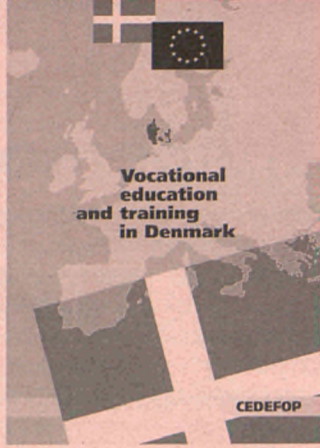
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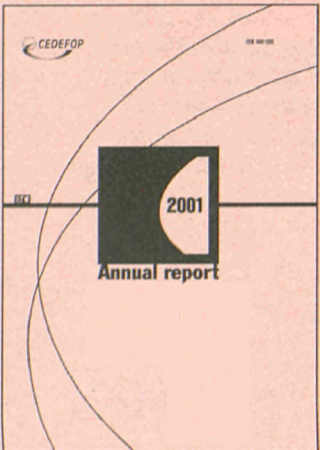
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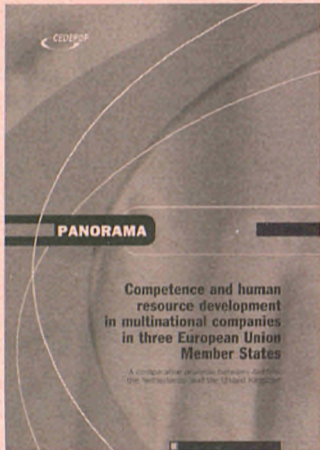


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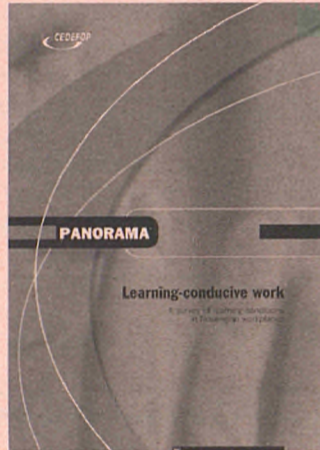


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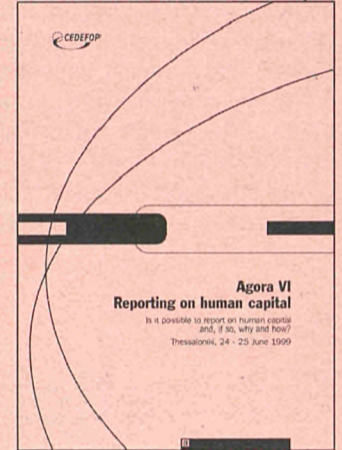
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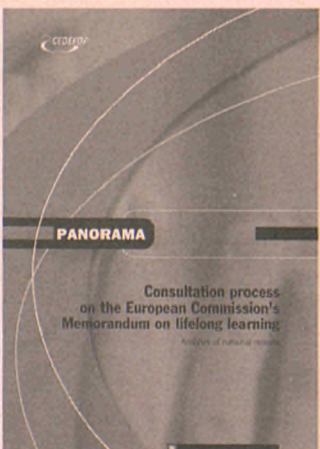
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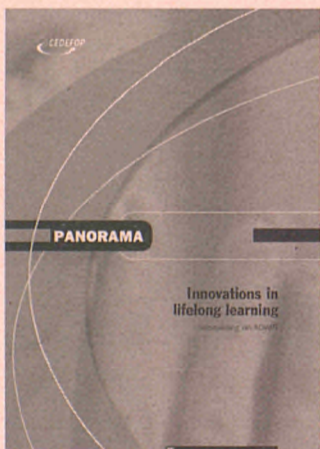
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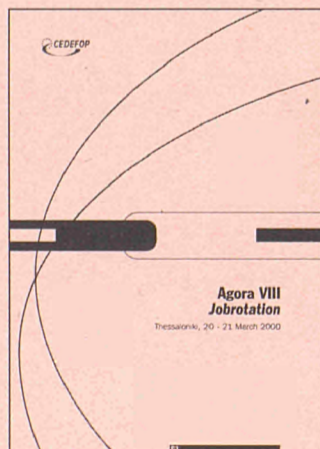
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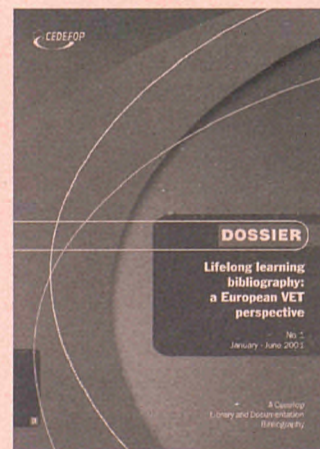
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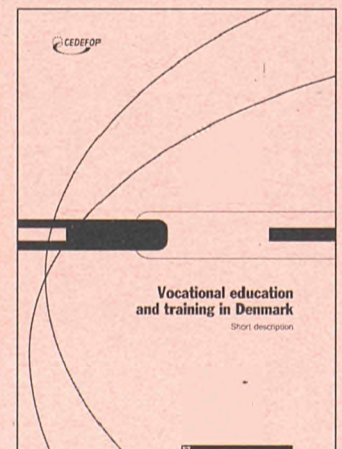
Agora VIII Jobrotation
Thessaloniki, 20 - 21 March 2000
Cedefop panorama 5129
Languages: DE, EN, ES, FI, FR
Cat. No: TI-43-02-301-EN-C

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January - June 2001
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Employment policy

France

Impact of employment measures in the non-commercial sector: a mixed review

A report on 'measures to assist the creation of jobs in the non-commercial sector' drawn up by the evaluation agency of the government central planning agency whose President is Yves Robineau⁽¹⁾, gives a positive evaluation of the new 'Youth Employment' services⁽²⁾, but a mixed review of the other programmes, which in its opinion do not meet the set objective of moving the beneficiaries into regular employment.

The so-called employment solidarity (*Contrats emploi solidarité* - CES)⁽³⁾ and the consolidated employment contracts (*Contrats emploi consolidé* - CEC)⁽³⁾ have failed to fulfil their objective of transition into regular employment. The report notes that without sufficient guidance and support in seeking alternative employment, access to a job in industry remains very difficult. Even if these targeted jobs largely fulfil their primary objective (integration of those who would not manage to find a job without this type of contract, bringing them out of their isolation), they do not principally benefit 'those who are most in need of them'.

The priority indeed appears to be on considerations of management. The candidates are selected by employers on an ad hoc basis according to their skills and their own requirements, in particular as a means of offsetting a lack of manpower or

'structural deficits'. These measures are therefore not sufficiently directed towards the real needs of the individuals on a case-by-case basis.

Moreover, the authorities have used the CEC and CES formulas in an 'anti-cyclical' function to contain unemployment figures in times of weak economic growth, leading to the conclusion of a considerable number of assisted contracts and abrupt cyclical adjustments. 'This has been prejudicial to the capacity of local players to coordinate their interventions in the medium term, in order to deliver sustainable and diversified actions for those at risk, effectively facilitating their access into regular employment' (such as external guidance actions and training placements). This situation seems to be the result of a lack of human and financial resources to guarantee the fulfilment of the objectives of these two programmes.

However, on the basis of these conclusions, the evaluation body does not propose the abolition of the CEC and CES contracts, but that they be merged 'into a measure which is more flexible in its utilisation', based on personalised support and the redefinition of the role of the employer.

The period of contract validity could be extended, with a regular re-examination of the advisability of

extending the measure in question. In the long term, working time should be in excess of half the regular working hours, with a view to improving the financial situation of CES beneficiaries.

Moreover, the assisted jobs in themselves should be given consideration and their status clarified against 'employment under common law'. A number of measures are to be developed to this end, including recognition of informal learning, which calls for the 'formalisation of job content', as well as the involvement of the social partners and associations promoting integration. Finally, the CEC and CES contracts should be dovetailed with the plan to assist return to employment (*Plan d'aide au retour à l'emploi* - PARE) and the individual action project (*Projet d'action personnalisée* - PAP) programmes, to prevent the emergence of two systems, one for the so-called 'most employable' and the other for social welfare recipients with little prospect of employment.

The evaluation agency of the government central planning agency also examines the youth employment programme in the context of its report. Although qualified as a 'success', the programme is nevertheless subject to a certain degree of criticism. The report points out that the programme is expensive and the action plan which envisaged the

transfer of the activities to the market cannot be applied to all the jobs created. The evaluation agency therefore raises the question of the final impact of the programme. If the objective of budgetary control continues, the consolidation of jobs is at risk of being at the expense of other public sector jobs or recruitment in the field of existing employment.

The programme must now 'open up to other perspectives because it is not intended to be permanent'. This new stage must be one of ongoing adaptation of services of a public interest to the real needs of the French population. The overall success of the programme depends on the deployment of 'ambitious' sectoral and territorial approaches, in which the trade unions and skills recognition agencies must be involved. Extended training provision and the extension of the validation of informal learning are similarly essential.

⁽¹⁾ The Robineau report, published on 7 March 2002, can be consulted in PDF format (449 pages) on the website of La Documentation Française (including a summary and synopsis): <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/brp/notices/024000140.shtml>
 The report comprises a total of nine chapters divided into two parts. Part 1 places measures to assist the creation of jobs in the non-commercial sector in an historical perspective and highlights specifically French aspects by means of a comparison with other national situations. Part 2 examines the actual impact of non-commercial employment policies, both from the macro-economic and the organisational angles. The report concludes with an

evaluation, along with a series of recommendations and concrete proposals.

The report is presented on the government central planning agency website: <http://www.plan.gouv.fr/publications/robineau-64.html>

Press release: <http://www.plan.gouv.fr/presse/communiqu07-03-2002.html>

⁽²⁾ Further information on the new 'Youth Employment' services at the following dedicated site: <http://www.nsej.travail.gouv.fr/> (Detailed information on regulatory and administrative aspects, description of contracts, statistics, training, experience acquired, etc.)
 [in English: <http://www.nsej.travail.gouv.fr/etranges/anglais.html>]
 [in German: <http://www.nsej.travail.gouv.fr/etranges/allemand.html>]
 [in Spanish: <http://www.nsej.travail.gouv.fr/etranges/espanol.html>]
 [in Italian: <http://www.nsej.travail.gouv.fr/etranges/italien.html>]

⁽³⁾ For more information on the CES and CEC employment contracts, the 'Youth Employment', the PARE and PAP programmes, see the relevant information pages on the site of Ministry of Employment and Solidarity: http://www.travail.gouv.fr/infos_pratiques/infos_e.html (see Demandeur d'emploi - Accès à l'emploi - Indemnisation du chômage et aides au retour à l'emploi; Jeune)

Sources: INFFO Flash, No 586, 15-31 March 2002, article by Sandrine Zadunayski, page 2

Turntable function for VDAB in the electronic job market

Public services are indeed in a position to deliver quality services in the electronic marketplace. This has been proven by the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service, (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding - VDAB*). The VDAB site is in fact the most successful player in the online job market. Moreover, its databases containing information on jobseekers, job vacancies and training programmes are prized by all the players in the job market. VDAB intends to continue in this direction and is currently developing a type of *Jobsys*, a private limited company similar to the electronic payment system, *Banksys*.

For the administrator general of VDAB, moving into the electronic age has been a real *tour de force*. He had to struggle with the management committee of the public service for many years before he was finally given the go-ahead to invest in an information and communication technologies (ICTs) system and related software packages. Today this investment stands at EUR 25 million and although this may seem an enormous amount, all the database and Internet applications which this sum represents are the daily working tools of the 4 400 members of VDAB's staff and the tens of thousands of its clients, that is jobseekers and industry.

The VDAB website is a resounding success. A survey conducted by the Centre for Media Information registered 16 697 hits per day in the month of February 2002 alone. Commercial job sites lag far behind this figure: Monster registered 11 602 hits and Stepstone just 10 839 in February 2002. The job vacancy pages of the VDAB site recorded 8.3 million hits in the course of last month. The site provides information

on the 17 000 VDAB registered job vacancies as well as the CVs of over 55 000 jobseekers.

Thanks to the Internet, VDAB is now following in the footsteps of its earlier success with the *Wis* terminals, a job information system with 450 kiosks offering job vacancies, which was so successful in the 1990s following its introduction within the local VDAB offices, but also in shopping centres, town halls and libraries. Today, all the information stored in the *Wis* terminals is directly available on the Internet, with no intermediary. These information resources are also useful for other job market players via database or e-zine (electronic magazines) access. These activities have helped

to improve VDAB's image. Although it is a public service, VDAB is not regarded as a mere administration but as the turntable of the electronic job market.

However VDAB's e-activities extend beyond the Internet. The staff at local VDAB agencies and the VDAB call centre are also supported by e-technologies. Last year the call centre received a total of 145 000 calls, three times more than in 2000. Although the telephonists were inexperienced in job placement, thanks to the VDAB database they were able to answer routine questions correctly. Thus VDAB personnel had the necessary time and energy to provide specific and customised assistance in the local agencies. The

employee at the counter has thus become an expert consultant. Similarly, classroom monitors have become trainers, even outside the classroom. 10 % of the total training hours delivered by VDAB are currently organised outside its premises. Although only 1 % of the population currently opts for Web-based learning, this mode of learning is in full expansion. Since 1994, VDAB has been using an ORACLE support, the world leader in this field, for the development and management of software applications for databases and its website, on the basis of a client/provider relationship.

The Flemish government has given the VDAB administrator general a remit to create a 'job market

Banksys (electronic payment system)', known as *Jobsys*. The head of the VDAB envisages the creation of a private limited company, with not only VDAB but also temping and recruitment agencies and ICT enterprises as its shareholders. This new limited company will be close to the 'T group', the independent public limited company, fully subsidised by Flemish public funding, which will incorporate all VDAB fee-paying services (e.g. the T-Interim temping agency⁽¹⁾) from 1 July. The name of VDAB is however to remain unchanged.

⁽¹⁾ More information on T-Interim: in Flanders: <http://www.vdab.be/t-interim/> in French-speaking Belgium: <http://www.tinterim.com/html/Genese.html>

More information at: <http://www.vdab.be>
Source: Gestion Média et bibliothèque VDAB/Idocod

Ireland

Forecasting occupational trends

A significant rise in total employment is envisaged over the period 2000-2015, even if this is expected to be at a slower pace than in the economically buoyant years of the 1990s, predicts the latest manpower forecasting study⁽¹⁾ published by the Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This study differs in taking a longer-term view than previous reports which covered periods of five years.

Data in five broad occupational categories is examined. It shows that employment in the broad group covering managers and professional workers is forecast to rise most rapidly, by nearly 45% between 2000 and 2015. Those engaged in mainly semi-skilled sales and service work are also expected to increase significantly, by nearly 42%. Employment in manual activities generally is predicted to expand at a slower rate of 15%. The trend for clerical workers is somewhat similar, being fore-

cast at 11%. The substantial decline in agricultural employment will continue, at a rate of 24%. Forecasts are also presented for fourteen sub-groups of the broad occupational categories listed.

Female employment is forecast to increase from just under 40% in 2000 to 44.7% in 2015. This represents a continuation of a longstanding trend. For Irish women in the 25-30 age group participation rates are now among the highest in the EU. It is

among the older age groups that Irish rates remain low by EU standards.

The educational implications of the forecast are discussed in detail. The main implication of the occupational projections for educational qualifications is that the jobs created in the future will require a more highly educated workforce. Persons with degree level or diploma-type third level qualifications will in future form a much greater proportion of the numbers in employment. In contrast, employment opportunities for those with a Junior Certificate (usually undertaken at 15 years of age) or lower levels of education will expand more slowly or even decline. Nearly 45% of the projected numbers at work in 2015 will have third level qualifications, compared with less than 30% in 1997.

To the extent that existing policies relating to educational supply may not produce enough third level graduates to respond to changes in demand, action may be needed to bring educational supply and demand into reasonable balance. Existing policies relating to the supply of workers with different levels of education need continuous monitoring to ensure that they will deliver enough third level graduates with the right qualifications to avail of opportunities over the next fifteen years to broaden and deepen the skills of the workforce.

⁽¹⁾Sexton J. J., Hughes, G., Finn, C. Occupational Employment Forecasts 2015. Dublin 2002. ISBN 0-7070-0207-9. Price: EUR 15. Available: ESRI, 4 Burlington Road, IRL-Dublin 4. Tel. (353-1) 667 1525, Fax (353-1) 668 6231. Email: admin@esri.ie. ESRI website: <http://www.esri.ie> / FÁS website: <http://www.fas.ie>

Source: FÁS

New training organisations and programmes

United Kingdom

New Sector Skills Councils are launched

The first five of the proposed new network of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) were launched in March. The SSCs are employer-led sectoral bodies whose role is to provide leadership for targeted action to meet their sector's skill needs. They bring together employers, trade unions and professional bodies and will work with other government agencies. They replace the National Training Organisations (NTOs), the previous network of 72 employer-led sectoral training bodies. These had been

established in the 1990s with a brief, which included clarifying skills needs, improving performance within their sectors and helping employers find employees with the right skills. However, the effectiveness of the NTOs and their ability to reach out to employers, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises, were widely questioned. Following a review and consultation, Government proposals⁽¹⁾ for a new and stronger network were published in late 2001.

The new SSCs will operate within a more streamlined structure across wider sectoral areas. The exact number is not yet finalised, but they will be far fewer in number than the NTOs. The development of the SSCs has involved the Department for Education and Skills, but also other government departments in order to underline the link between skills and productivity. Government ministers have stressed the need to boost the visibility of the SSCs in order to win employer support and awareness.

The role of the SSCs includes developing an action plan for their sector and securing commitment to it from all stakeholders including employee representatives. They will be required to define key sector skill requirements and to develop comprehensive national occupational standards, apprenticeships and other sector-based learning frameworks.

At national level, the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) has been established to fund and sup-

port the work of the SSCs, and to ensure quality and consistent standards across the network. The SSDA will have a budget of EUR 32 million in 2002/2003 and almost EUR 50 million in 2003/2004. The SSDA is a UK-wide body working within the distinctive arrangements of each of the UK nations.

⁽¹⁾Meeting the sector skills and productivity challenge, Department for Education and Skills, Sheffield, 2001. Internet: <http://www.ssda.org.uk/pdfs/meetsschal.pdf>

Source: CIPD

Portugal

Portuguese Ministry of Youth aims to teach 60 000 young people to surf the Internet

The aim of the Generation Millennium 2.0 programme is to teach 60 000 young people, aged 10 - 18, to surf the Internet by the year 2003. A total of 2 500 computers are to be distributed nationwide. A total investment of EUR 6 million has been allocated to the project, whereby the most substantial tranche (EUR 4 million) is earmarked for training. The Generation Millennium 2.0 programme, implemented by the Foundation for the Dissemination of Information Technologies, has two principal objectives: to create a national public network for Internet access and to deliver decentralised training provision for young people in key IT skills. It is designed to bridge the digital gap and promote the strategic development of Portugal in the context of a united Europe and a globalised information

society. This explains the strategic choice of the institutions to be equipped with the hardware. They are mainly situated in the most

disadvantaged zones of urban areas and, above all, outside the big urban centres. The symbolic fee charged for the training courses

in the Millennium centres reflects the will of those responsible to democratise access to the Internet.

Source: the 'Público' newspaper, 22 February 2002
DEPP/CIDES

Portugal

European training award

The solidarity and social security training programme PROFISS, which delivers executive-level training in the field of management and knowledge with a view to improving the efficiency of the Portuguese solidarity and social security system, has received an award in the context of the European Training of Trainers Network (www.ttnetportugal.online.pt). The project was set up in January 1998 at the

initiative of the ministry of solidarity and social security, in collaboration with the Portuguese Social Security Association.

The PROFISS courses have provided initial vocational training for more than 450 young people with specific social security-related skills, 75 % of whom have been successfully integrated into the system. Continuing training

has been provided for a total of around 2 000 course participants, including, among others, the pedagogical training of PROFISS trainers, tutors and counsellors. The courses delivered in the context of this programme are free of charge and the minimum entry requirements are 12 years of schooling or a university degree, depending on the course in question.

More information at: <http://www.segsocial.pt/profiss>.
Source: 'Jornal de Notícias' - March 2002
DEPP/CIDES

Austria

Expansion of international training pathways

Enhanced cooperation between education and training and industry increases young peoples' chances of finding their way in the modern working world. This is demonstrated by the extraordinarily positive experience of the 600 cooperation projects which have already been set up between Austrian schools and firms. At a first round table discussion, the Federal Ministry of Education and the confederations of

Austrian industry and commerce have therefore agreed to step up their cooperation. In a joint declaration, the participants affirmed their intention to encourage existing cooperation, to collaborate more closely in the field of vocational training and to expand the system of international training pathways by supporting the economic programmes of the European Union.

Source: BMBWK/Cedefop/SK

Austria

Girl's Tuesday provides technical orientation

'Girl's Tuesday' is the name of a special project in Tyrol which is to design a structured programme for girl mentoring in training for technical occupations. The implementing body of the project, supported by the alliance for employment and business and the Department of Women's Affairs of the Land of Tyrol, is *Mentoring Plattform*, an association which supports girls and women in career planning. Girl's Tuesday develops, tests and analyses

standards, methods and materials for mentoring as an individual mode of continuing training. The starting premises for girls when making an occupational choice and for personnel managers are discussed at round table sessions. This is followed by taster days in industry and the formation of mentorships. For further information on the project see the women's online magazine 'Ceiberweiber' at www.ceiberweiber.at.

Source: Ceiberweiber/Cedefop/SK

Spain

Forum for the educational support of disabled people

The educational integration of pupils with special educational needs is one of the priority areas of current educational policy. The personal, social and career development of those living with disabilities depends on their having received an education which, underpinned by the principles of integration, individualization and mainstreaming, empowers these persons to a maximum degree, so that they can achieve full integration.

With a view to these objectives, the educational authorities, in conjunction with nationwide non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have set up the Forum for the educational support of those living with disabilities. The Forum is designed as a channel of consultation and dialogue with the objective of incorporating initiatives serving to improve educational strategies and planning of the most adequate responses to the real educational needs of this target group.

The Forum is a collegiate body of an advisory capacity, attached to the Ministry of Educa-

tion, Culture and Sport. Its operations will not imply an increase in public expenditure. Its mission statement includes:

- to facilitate communication and exchange between shareholder agencies;
- to receive information on the programmes and activities delivered by the various public administrations in the field of support targeted towards this target group;
- to formulate proposals designed to promote the educational and social integration of students living with disabilities;
- to monitor the follow-up of this integration; etc.

It should finally be pointed out that the Forum will operate on the basis of the publication of reports, proposals, recommendations and agreements and is to draft an annual report on its activities and the situation of people living with disabilities.

Source: INEM, Official State Bulletin, No 37, Tuesday, 12 February 2002

Germany

New support strategies for the disadvantaged

EUR 53 million planned for new concepts up to the year 2005, half of which financed by the European Social Fund.

The federal government is forging ahead with the skilling of disadvantaged groups under the slogan 'Training for all'. Among other activities, it has been testing a new support structure providing clients with comprehensive, customised assistance since September 2001. Moreover, a total sum of EUR 53 million has been set aside for the skilling of target groups with special needs up to the year 2005. Half of this amount is financed through the European Social Fund. According to the federal government, approximately half a million youngsters

are in need of assistance in preparing for vocational training every year. Federal Minister for Education and Training, Edelgard Bulmahn, expressed her alarm that educational opportunities in Germany were so dependent on social origin.

VET experts have also called for long-term support concepts starting at school level to specifically prepare disadvantaged youngsters for working life and offer them guidance throughout the training phase up to the transi-

tion to the workplace. The Federal Institute for Vocational Training (*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung* - BIBB) asked 2 000 VET experts to put forward proposals for future areas of VET research. Their proposals included activating the training potential of migrant children, as up to 40 % of this group fails to acquire a vocational training certificate.

As for the question of special training occupations for under-achievers, the social partners are still divided on the issue. Whereas the

experts on the employers' side welcome this approach, it is totally rejected on the union side. In contrast, it is generally agreed that efforts to promote the integration of under-achievers cannot be at the expense of talent promotion.

The results of the expert survey are published in issue 1/2002 of the BIBB journal, 'Berufsbildung in Wissenschaft und Praxis', available at a price of EUR 7.60 from Bertelsmann Verlag, Postfach 10 06 33, D-33506 Bielefeld, Tel. (49-521) 91101-11, Fax (49-521) 91101-19, E-Mail service@wbv.de.

Source: BIBB/Cedefop/SK

Antwerp creates jobs for lowly qualified

10 years of positive action in favour of training projects have generated 5 600 jobs and demonstrated the advantage of a training project laboratory

With the support of 300 firms and the local Flemish authorities, the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce and Industry has created 5 600 jobs in recent years for young persons with a low level of education, thereby becoming a laboratory for Flemish projects.

'Learning and working in alternance', 'Dutch in the workplace', 'Islands of learning', the 'Flemish temping bridge', are just a few examples of the dozens of projects launched by the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce and Industry since 1992 under the heading '**Positive Action**'. The projects, set up in the context of public-private partnership with employers' organisations and other public agencies, e.g. VDAB, *Stedelijk Onderwijs* (Municipal education) and the *Sociaal*

Impulsfonds (Social impulsion fund), and generally involving trade union participation, are State-funded. As the objective of these projects is always to match the interests of industry with the needs and interests of society as a whole, the needs of Flemish firms are catered for by asking what the unemployed and young people really need, a formula which has generated dozens of projects and led to the creation of 5 600 jobs in 300 enterprises, mainly SMEs.

The most successful project of all is the 'Learning and working in alternance' project, a second chance scheme for school drop-outs based on part-time employment linked with training, launched in collaboration with TISO (*Tewerkstellings Initiatieven Stedelijk Onderwijs* -

Employment initiatives at the level of Municipal education). The project, launched in 1992 with around 400 youngsters, now has an annual intake of 1 200 youngsters, distributed among all the training networks and the 300 participating firms. The '**Learning and working in alternance**' project successfully implements the two essential objectives of the '**Positive Action**' programme: building bridges between industry and education and promoting public-private partnership with State funding. Education and industry must be brought closer together.

The SIS database, an information system on training places to which both schools and industry are connected, establishes a different type of link between education and industry. The SIS has now acquired a

regional dimension as the Flemish Minister for Education recently adopted this approach in early 2002. This interaction between the Flemish region and the local level makes the system of considerable interest to the chambers of commerce. What is important in this context is not necessarily to extend or expand the Antwerp project but to guarantee that successful initiatives can be continued, becoming even more successful, so that projects can be launched addressing the needs of both industry and young people with a low level of education which can then be transferred to the entire Flemish region.

The final example of the '**Dutch in the workplace, language learning at work**' project in fact only got off the ground thanks to the

collaboration of a number of committed heads of enterprise convinced that a project of this kind is not only of advantage in economic terms, but also in terms of integration and in favour of a multicultural society.

Most of the school drop-outs who find a job thanks to the '**Positive Action**' programme remain within the world of work, having increased their market value within the programme. The essential aspect is to reduce the gap between the end of education and the first job.

Source: Gestion Média et bibliothèque VDAB/lcodoc
More information at: <http://www.vdab.be>

Conferences/seminars/exhibitions

Brussels/B

23 to 24 September 2002
Social partners and the development of competences and qualifications in Europe
International conference
European Economic and Social Committee
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions/Cedefop
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Paris/F

29 to 30 September 2002
The Prometheus Conference
Improving learning through technology: Opportunities for all
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<http://www.prometeus.org/index.cfm?PID=304>

Brugge/B

10 to 11 October 2002
Exemplo Conference
Sharing Management in the world of Vocational Training - serving the Lifelong Learning Society
European Vocational Training Association - EVTA
Contact:
info@evta.net
<http://www.evta.net/exemplo/conference.html>

Villach/A

25 to 27 September 2002
5th International Workshop "Interactive Computer aided Learning"
Fachhochschule Technikum Kärnten
Carinthia Tech Institute
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<http://www.icl-workshop.org/>

Florence/I

11 to 12 October 2002
First International Conference on the History of Vocational Education and Training in Europe in a Comparative Perspective
State University of Florence (Università degli Studi di Firenze), European University Institute, Florence, Cedefop
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Copenhagen/DK

17 to 18 October 2002
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European Commission, The Danish Presidency, eSkills Summit Industry Consortium
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29/09/2002

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info@beraterkompetenz.de
http://www.change-management-toolbook.com/training_2002.html

Berlin/D

27 to 29 November 2002
Online Educa Berlin
8th International Conference on Technology Supported Learning & Training
Contact:
ICWE GmbH - Leibnizstrasse 32
D-10625 Berlin
Tel. (49-30) 327 61 40
Fax (49-30) 324 98 33
info@online-educa.com
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2 to 5 December 2002
Berufsbildung 2002
8. Bayerischer
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Fachausstellung für
Aus- und Weiterbildung
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Internet: www.stmas.bayern.de/arbeit/bildung/berufsbildung2002.htm

Certification systems

F: Combating sects – a report denounces sect incursions into certain health-related training programmes; S: Improved quality of vocational education and training; NL: A new national qualification structure for secondary vocational education; IRL: Emerging qualifications framework; D: Consumer watchdog to vet VET programmes; Impressum; FI: Polytechnic post-graduate degrees; NO: Professional bachelor and master degrees introduced;

Financing of VET

B: Training vouchers introduced in Flanders; Selected bibliography.

Certification systems

France

Combating sects – a report denounces sect incursions into certain health-related training programmes

The interministerial mission responsible for measures to combat sects (MILS) published its annual report on 19 February 2002. The document, which reviews three years of MILS operation, includes a chapter on vocational training. It observes that sects are reinforcing their methods of infiltration, in particular in the health and medico-social sector.

The MILS report describes the training programmes in the health and medico-social sector which it believes show signs of sect incursion. Under the guise of courses leading to vocational qualifications and certificates, certain programmes create confusion by giving their

courses names which draw on occupational registers: e.g. practitioner in psycho-relaxology, physiology, sophrology, the 'awakening touch', etc.

In the field of initial vocational training, MILS draws attention to the risks evident in certain bibliographies recommended to student nurses which sometimes include works relating to therapy devoid of any scientific basis.

In the field of continuing vocational training, MILS quotes examples of cases offering 'trainees' very costly 'study tours', video resources or publications. Other 'disciplines' also

pose problems since they offer training courses based on other qualifications, but with a complementary 'speciality' (e.g. educational sophrology).

The exorbitant cost of courses which are actually devoid of content or a learning dimension but offer the so-called 'spiritual' dimension of certain medical practices (childbirth in particular) is a further indication of sect incursion, although these examples are admittedly extreme cases. MILS also recognises that a training course may pose a problem in terms of its content without, however, being in any way related to a sectarian movement.

In the opinion of the interministerial mission, it is incumbent upon the buyers of continuing training programmes to practice caution when deciding whether or not to accept a given study module, to modify its conditions or to reject it.

The problem has already been brought to the attention of the authorised joint collection agencies (*Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés* - OPCA) which are to be kept abreast of the 'indications' characterising sectarian practice:

☐ courses focused on personal development or therapeutic or spiritual approaches,

☐ study modules organised at weekends during the summer,
 ☐ accommodation conditions tending to influence emotional factors (isolated locations, ashrams, etc.),
 ☐ qualifications unrecognised by the profession or the administration,
 ☐ courses with no specification of the target group, personal tests and evaluations.

For further details see the MILS report on the French Prime Minister's website at: <http://www-org.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/ressources/fichiers/MILS2002.pdf>

Source: INFFO Flash, No 585, 1-15 March 2002, p. 5

Sweden

Improved quality of vocational education and training

A two-year project called YKSA (Yrkesutbildningarnas kvalitét or "Quality in vocational education - cooperation between schools and the labour market") finished in spring 2002. It was carried out by the National Board of Education (Skolverket). The main objectives were to disseminate good examples of pedagogical methods and the fulfilment of national objectives in vocational education and training. The projects involved different categories of people, the main actors being teachers and staff.

The project consisted of three parts: development, exchange of experience and competence development.

☐ New development projects in schools were started. These were carried out in certain schools where regional and local needs were emphasised. According to Government priorities the schools were to focus on links between vocational subjects and basic skills as well as between the school and the labour market. They were to show how to deal with these issues in practice and how to

solve problems that might occur. The cooperation between schools and the labour market was essential. For instance a representative from a company participated during lessons where he/she gave a view of the present subject from the company's point of view. This resulted in better contacts with the companies, which helped in the planning of on-the-job training. Researchers' networks were closely connected to the projects for better dissemination and to gain knowledge and understanding of the issues and the possibilities of development.

☐ Examples were gathered, described and disseminated in different ways, such as meetings with teachers in vocational education, through different networks and over the Internet.

☐ The National Board of Education, the Teachers' Training College in Stockholm, the University of Göteborg and Malmö High School offered a course for vocational teachers. The aim was for teachers to strengthen their competence as far as student support, cooperation

within schools and cooperation with the labour market were concerned. In order to improve the quality of vocational education, local development initiatives are also a part of this project.

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 Homepage: www.skolverket.se

Source: National Board of Education

A new national qualification structure for secondary vocational education

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences has asked Colo, the association of national bodies for vocational education (now called Vereniging van kenniscentra beroepsopleiding bedrijfsleven), to develop a new qualification structure for vocational education and training. Colo is working with other players involved in the field⁽¹⁾. A development plan was adopted with the following objectives:

- a) to make the qualification structure more flexible,
- b) to make the qualification structure more transparent,
- c) to switch from thinking in terms of qualifications to thinking in terms of competences, and

d) to clarify and strengthen the role and responsibilities of all parties involved.

In the development plan, the following issues are being elaborated:

- 1. Promotion of the transparency of the qualification structure. The qualification structure has now over 700 qualifications, with overlapping of more or less similar qualifications. All parties involved recognize the need to develop a more transparent structure, with fewer qualifications.
- 2. Promotion of flexibility in the qualification structure. The qualification structure needs to be made more flexible and dynamic by introducing broad qualifications and

developing the existing modular system.

3. Innovations and changes on the labour market and in society require continuous adaptation of the qualification structure. Developments and trends on the labour market happen quickly, but the development process for qualifications often takes too long for them to remain up to date. To reduce the need to change, the qualification structure should be more global, less detailed and based on competences.

4. Strengthening partnership between national bodies and educational institutions. Cooperation and harmonisation between the various players in the field can be improved.

The division of tasks between national bodies (developing qualifications) and educational institutions (teaching and training) must be clear to the parties involved.

5. Strengthening dialogue between social partners and educational institutions within the national bodies. In practice social partners and educational institutions meet in the national body and should be heard on an equal basis.

All players involved have reached total agreement on the current switch from thinking in terms of qualifications to thinking in terms of competences. On the consequences for the qualification structure they

agree on the main points. The goal was to have agreement on the changes, so that after the summer a start could be made on implementing them.

Further information: Judith Geraedts, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, j.h.m.geraedts@minocw.nl

⁽¹⁾ These players are the BVE Council (Association of VET colleges), PAEPON (Platform of Accredited Private Educational Institutions), social partners, ACOA (Advisory Commission Vocational Education and Labour Market) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences.

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences/CINOP

Emerging qualifications framework

Consultations on the establishment of a qualifications framework for education and training awards in Ireland are drawing to a close. The recently established National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (see Cedefop Info 3/2001) undertook an extensive consultation process that culminated in a Forum of key stakeholders in February 2002. The process began with the publication of a discussion document⁽¹⁾ on a new framework of qualifications. Then submissions were invited on the issues raised. Over eighty were received from learners, education/training providers, awarding bodies and social partners.

The submissions and subsequent Forum centred on

- the principles to underpin the development of the national framework of qualifications;
- the policies to be determined by the Authority for the development of this framework;
- how it might differentiate between further education and training and higher education and training;
- how to perform the task of setting the standard of awards and,
- how the Authority would facilitate and promote access, transfer and progression.

Mr. Seán O'Foghlú of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), commenting on the submissions, indicated that 'standards' and 'access, transfer and progression' were the dominant policy issues. There was general acceptance that together these two pillars form an appropriate basis on which to construct the framework. "The concepts of access, transfer and progression are critical if the framework is to be organic and have meaning for the learner in the context of promoting lifelong and life-wide learning", stated the FÁS-Training and Employment Authority submission. A measure of its success, it said, will be the participation rates of adults in both further and higher education and training. Adult learners have uneven access to learning opportunities, with the least educated participating least. Flexible delivery and assessment mechanisms will need to be fostered and extended if higher participation of this group is to be

achieved. In general, participants felt that the progression options proposed for the framework should not only be vertical but also horizontal and that pathways from all awards and award types should be clearly defined.

Participants at the Forum felt there was a need to ensure that knowledge, skill and competence explicitly include diverse forms of learning especially in the affective domain. The framework needs to accommodate other programmes that do not focus on economic sectors or specific occupations e.g. pre-employment or pre-vocational programmes where personal and practical skills are integrated. The need to plan for recognition of workplace learning and for other "non-standard" learning situations or formats such as e-learning was emphasised.

There was a strong feeling that there should be parity of esteem for levels of awards across sectors and modes of provision and in regard to further and higher education and training. The difficulty in differentiating between further education and training and higher education and training without leading to a two-tier system was debated. It was felt that the distinction should be on the basis of the nature of different awards and not on the basis of the institutions.

Developments in Europe and internationally in the area of qualifications frameworks evoked much interest. Linkage of the new framework to external frameworks was debated. The new framework, participants felt, should have a key role in ensuring portability and marketability of credits and awards, both nationally and internationally. It should adopt commonly accepted international terminology around frameworks and awards and there should be provision for some international benchmarking of the framework and of the processes. There was much discussion of European developments in the area of qualifications, in particular the Cedefop initiatives in respect of vocational awards and the Bologna Declaration on the creation of a European higher education area. Following further examination of European and international

frameworks, the NQAI will publish the national qualifications framework in summer 2002⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾National Qualifications Authority of Ireland: Towards a national framework of qualifications, a discussion document. Dublin 2001. Available: NQAI, 4th Floor, 6-9 Trinity Street, IRL-Dublin 2. Tel. (353-1) 612 7080, Fax (353-1) 612 7095. Email: info@nqai.ie. Download address: <http://www.nqai.ie/NQAI%20Framework%20Report.pdf>
⁽²⁾The full text of submissions and Forum deliberations are available on the NQAI website at <http://www.nqai.ie>

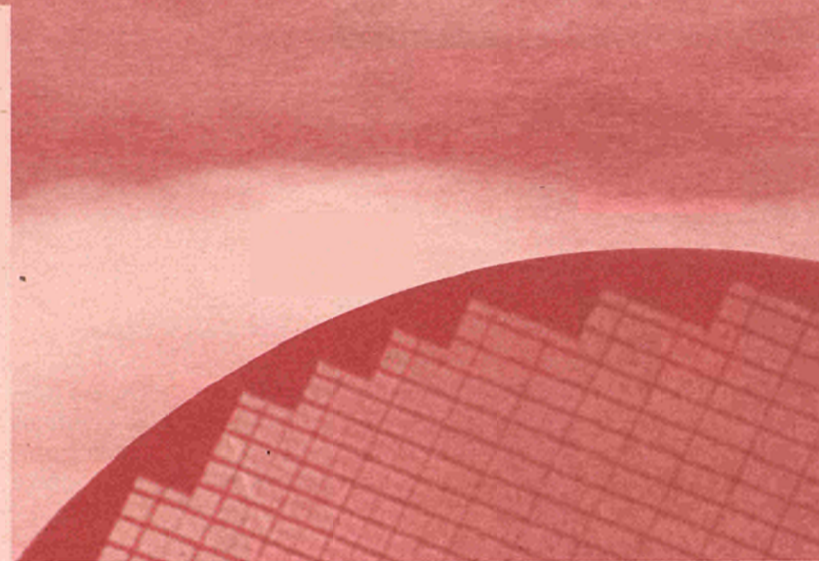
Source: FÁS

Consumer watchdog to vet VET programmes

Programmes to be tested by special department of German consumer organisation 'Stiftung Warentest'. Continuing vocational training (CVT) portal in the pipeline.

The German consumer organisation *Stiftung Warentest's* special department with responsibility for education and training '*Stiftung Bildungstest*' is to vet CVT programmes from July 2002 onwards on behalf of the federal government. The tests mark the beginning of a campaign to assure and upgrade the quality of training in Germany. According to the federal Minister for Education and Training, Edelgard Bulmahn, the department may develop into an independent foundation, which would then also inspect the course provision of schools and universities. Some EUR 6 million has been earmarked by the federal government for this project over the next three years.

Independent evaluation is intended firstly to provide consumers with reliable advice through the maze of provision: over 35 000 providers delivering more than 400 000 programmes. Secondly, the tests are designed to sharpen the quality awareness of CVT providers. German Industry's Trade Advisory Board for Vocational Education argues that this is not necessary, pointing out that CVT providers have a vested interest in optimising and improving the transparency of their course



provision. The Advisory Board regards the creation of an independent foundation for education and training as superfluous, in particular on the grounds that the diversity of programmes catering for different target groups cannot be seriously evaluated, and instead proposes CVT databases as an effective instrument for achieving greater transparency.

It is precisely with a view to this aim of creating greater transparency that the Federal Ministry of Education and Training intends to set up a portal to CVT databases on the

Internet. Through this, it is to gradually become possible to consult the entire range of provision via a central address by 2004. EUR 1.3 million have been set aside for this project. Thirty leading German CVT databases intend to link up their programmes to this new '*InfoWeb Weiterbildung*' so that users will be able to access the information they require immediately.

Further information at the following websites: Federal Ministry of Education and Training: www.bmbf.de; Federal Institute for Vocational Training, BIBB: www.bibb.de

Source: BIBB/Cedefop/SK

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Polytechnic post-graduate degrees

In 2001 the Finnish Parliament passed a bill concerning experimental higher, i.e. post-graduate, studies at polytechnics. The experiment will be in force from January 2002 to the end of July 2005, allowing post-graduate studies to start in August 2002. 21 polytechnics have obtained permission from the Ministry of Education to start these new degrees. The student volume has been set at 300 new places each year.

Polytechnic post-graduate degrees comprise 40 to 60 credits. They will be launched gradually in certain fields where the labour market has particular needs, i.e. in technology, business and administration, and health care and social services.

The post-graduate degrees are a new form of adult education intended for graduates already in working life. The entry requirements are as follows:

- a degree at polytechnic or another suitable higher degree
- at least three years working experience in the corresponding field after the degree.

The assessment of applications for participation in the experiment was based on the quality of education provided by the polytechnic, the objectives set for the experiment, relations with the labour market, research and development support for the project and educational and labour needs in the field. It was also required that the experiment contributes to a balanced whole at national level in terms of both regional development and opportunities in the two national languages (Finnish and Swedish). The studies will be arranged so that they can be

followed by a full-time job and will have a strong working life orientation. The final thesis will deal with a research or development project closely tied to the needs of the student's own work environment and employer.

So far, polytechnics have been able to offer professional specialisation courses as well as degree programmes. However, because the former do not lead to a higher degree, polytechnic graduates have often moved on to do further studies at university. The new polytechnic post-graduate degrees, designed to meet the needs of both the individual and the labour market, are expected to reduce this pressure on the universities.

In the preparation for the postgraduate polytechnic degrees, some labour market organisations have aired their doubts about the need for such degrees at this stage and about the demand for holders of such degrees. On the other hand, several representatives of the labour market have expressed the view that these new degrees are most welcome and highly needed.

The Ministry of Education is going to appoint a coordination and follow-up group for the experiment. This group can propose the diversification of the experiment, covering new fields of education or extending it to those polytechnics which are not yet included. The Higher Education Evaluation Council will evaluate the results of the experiment in 2003 or 2004. Decisions on the future status

of, and policy concerning, post-graduate polytechnic degrees will be made by the Government and Parliament on the basis of the experience gained.

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Source: NBE

Polytechnics in Finland

The Finnish tertiary education system comprises two parallel sectors: universities and polytechnics. The polytechnics were established during the 1990s, as a response to views that the education and training structure did not respond to the rapidly changing needs of the labour market and the international environment. A network of 29 polytechnics now covers the entire country. Polytechnic degrees are at bachelor level with a professional emphasis, and take three and a half to four years to complete. Both universities and polytechnics are obliged to pay special attention to developing cooperation with local businesses and industries and to facilitating the transfer of expertise to the labour market.

Norway

Professional bachelor and master degrees introduced

The government recently presented a white paper on the quality of the degrees system of tertiary educational institutions. With the aim of increasing efficiency and transparency, parliament passed a law introducing a system of bachelor degrees after three years of study and master degrees after a total of five years of professional as well as general studies.

The background for this reform is the need to simplify the variety of existing systems. In professional education there are over 30 different educational systems and about 50 tertiary

level degrees, complicating the communication between learning institutions and companies. With the introduction of the bachelor and master degrees it will be easier for the companies to evaluate the candidates' competences. Furthermore communication and cooperation between individual learning institutions and between learning institutions and companies will be made easier in the national and international arena.

The fact that the degree system will be the same for general and vocational education will facilitate the

possibility of building on a professional education in order to follow more theoretical studies. Promotion of international mobility and collaboration is another important objective and the reform will bring the Norwegian system closer to those of other European countries.

The new system will be introduced first in professional studies at university colleges (*høgskolar*). From autumn 2002, the University College of Bergen will introduce the bachelor – master system for studies in nursing, physiotherapy, bioengineering, ergotherapy, radiography, social

services, pre-primary tuition, tuition in vocational schools and engineering.

For further information:
http://www.hib.no/siste_nytt/bachelor.asp
<http://odin.dep.no/ufd/norsk/publ/stmeld/045001-040002/index-dok000-b-n-a.html>
<http://odin.dep.no/ufd/norsk/publ/hoeringsnotater/045061-080002/index-dok000-b-n-a.html>

Source: The National Institute of Technology - www.leonardodavinci.no

Financing of VET

Belgium

Training vouchers introduced in Flanders

Training vouchers designed to promote the education and training of workers were introduced by the Flemish authorities in February 2002⁽¹⁾ along virtually the same lines as the Walloon model (introduced in 1998)⁽²⁾. A voucher costs EUR 30 but the price paid by workers is only EUR 15. Employers may purchase a maximum of 200 vouchers. The vouchers can be used to settle the invoice of a training agency authorised by the board of experts which has still to be appointed.

In the context of its employment policy, the Flemish government wishes to further stimulate the organisation of training within Flemish industry. The ministers responsible for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) wish not only to encourage training programmes, but also to expand training provision. This is the background to the introduction of the training vouchers. Only firms with their operations established in the Flemish region are eligible for the vouchers. Public initiatives and measures to promote training have never been very successful in the past. For example, the hourly credits (*crédits d'heures*) introduced in 1973 were hardly used at all. Similarly, the introduction of paid educational leave in 1985 left little impact on SMEs and was further adapted to the needs of this sector in 1998.

Both these formulae fall under the framework of the **European *de minimis* rule for State aid**⁽³⁾ which sets a **ceiling of EUR**

100 000 on public assistance to undertakings over a three-year period. This means that the ceiling of EUR 100 000 cannot be exceeded in the purchase of the training vouchers. A firm can purchase training vouchers (in sets of ten) to the value of EUR 30 at a price of only EUR 15 per voucher, the remaining EUR 15 being paid by the Flemish Region. Companies may purchase a maximum of 200 vouchers per year (400 in Wallonia) to the total value of EUR 6 000. The vouchers, valid for a period of 12 months, can only be purchased via the Internet at: www.opleidingscheques.be.

The training courses for which the vouchers are used must be concluded by the date of voucher expiry. The Flemish government has earmarked a budget of EUR 45 million (corresponding to 30 million vouchers) for this scheme for the year 2002. As no further vouchers can be purchased once this budget is depleted, if demand exceeds supply, interested enterprises will be placed on a chronological reserve list and will be the first to receive the vouchers next year. Employers must inform the works council or the trade union delegation of the number and value of vouchers purchased. Moreover, the training costs must also be indicated in the overview of social measures. The vouchers may only be used for training courses delivered by training agencies authorised by the board of experts. At the end of the training course, the trainee is awarded a training certificate and the

training agency invoices its services. The invoice is issued exclusive of VAT and the enterprise can either fully or partially settle the bill with training vouchers.

The **training agencies** must be approved by the board of experts set up by the Flemish government. This condition is designed to guarantee the quality of training under the voucher system. Recognition of the individual training agencies, valid for a three-year period, is to be obtainable on the basis of an operational evaluation questionnaire and a selection process carried out by an auditing office, which is to submit its audit report to the board of experts (at a cost of between EUR 900 and EUR 2 700). Training agencies holding a certificate of approval or EFQM recognition will automatically be registered on the list of approved training agencies upon request. Two types of training programme may be financed by the vouchers: **general** and **specific** training programmes.

General training programmes are those which are not exclusively or principally geared towards the worker's function. In this context, the objective is to increase the general employability of the worker and to dispense skills which are transferable to other firms.

Specific training programmes, on the other hand, are directly and essentially geared towards the worker's function.

Both types of training, general and specific, can be followed either during or after working hours. Workers must in any case (continue to) receive their wages. Utilisation of the **training vouchers** cannot be combined with other forms of public assistance or subsidies if they cover the same training costs. This does not seem to be the case for the 'social promotion benefits' which are directly granted to the worker. Similarly, the training vouchers cannot be combined with **educational leave** paid by the federal government for which the employer can claim for part of the wages paid during training hours.

Further information at: <http://www.vdab.be>

⁽¹⁾ More information on training vouchers in Flanders can be found at:
http://pers.portal.vlaanderen.be/NASApp/opch/info_opleidingscheques.jsp

⁽²⁾ More information on training vouchers in Wallonia can be found at:
http://www.hotjob.be/francais/Entreprises/espace_e/aides/cheque_formation.htm

⁽³⁾ The *de minimis* rule for state aid: According to the European Commission's Communication of 6 March 1996, aid covered by the *de minimis* rule is aid granted by a Member State to an undertaking 'where the amount of aid is small'. Such aid is therefore exempted from the application of the competition rules. The ceiling for aid covered by the *de minimis* rule stands at EUR 100 000 over a three-year period.
Cf.: <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/fr/lvb/l26065.htm>

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You are free to browse or download on line EU publications. Alternatively, you can obtain hard copies of these publications by contacting the local sales agent for the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. <http://eur-op.eu.int/general/en/s-ad.htm>

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E-mail: info.info@opoce.cec.be,
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E-28071 Madrid,
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Tel.: (32-2) 2383011,
Fax: (32-2) 2306562,
E-mail: eurydice.uee@euronet.be,
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