

Speed up the pace of reform argues Cedefop policy report

The strategic goal set by the European Council, at Lisbon in March 2000, to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion by 2010 is achievable. However, it requires giving greater urgency to the reforms of education and training underway in Member States, which are still tackling problems identified in the early 1990s.

This is the central message of 'Learning for employment', Cedefop's second report on European vocational education and training policy.

The European Council placed education and training at the heart of the plan to achieve the EU's strategic goal. Numerous initiatives, (memoranda, communications, action plans, etc.) concerning vocational education and training have followed. The report brings them together to show how they make a comprehensive policy for the reform of both the content and organisation of vocational education and training systems. How the social partners are contributing to this process through the social dialogue at European level and in Member States is a central feature of the report.

The report looks at the situation in the Member States in the light of the employment rate targets and benchmarks for education and training agreed as part of the Lisbon strategy. These include the numbers of early school-leavers, levels of educational attainment for 22 year olds, increasing graduates in mathematics, science and technology, and

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Comparable vocational training qualifications in Germany and France

Germany and France reached an agreement on the comparability of vocational training qualifications at the Franco-German summit on 18 September 2003 in Berlin. The two countries signed a joint declaration on the transparency and comparability of a total of 40 vocational training qualifications. The profiles, ranging from car mechanic to roofer, are so informative that the relevant qualifications can be immediately identified by both German and French firms. 'This is a decisive step to support the mobility of young people between

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The Czech Republic Human resource development as national value

By adopting a national strategy and establishing a national and regional councils, the Czech government has put human resource development high on its political agenda.

The considerable changes in Czech society in recent years call for a new approach to human capital. The long-term ailments cannot be redressed with limited resources over a short period of time, without a strategic approach to the enormously complex issue of human resource development (HRD).

Hence, in spring 2003, the Czech government adopted a national strategy for human resource development. The idea is to create a co-ordinated, transversal human resources platform which will interlink the issues of employment, vocational education and training, skills and entrepreneurship. The Rada vlády pro rozvoj lidských zdrojů (National Council for Human Resources Development, established by Government Decision No. 210 of 3 March 2003) will be the coordinating body. The Council, chaired by a member of the government, has 27 members representing the state administration, the autonomous regional governments, employers' organisations and trade unions.

The national council will be responsible for a variety of tasks, such as formulating national HRD policies and priorities and co-ordinating the relevant policies of the different ministries, economic sectors and industries. To initiate targeted investment in HRD is a major concern. This requires a legislative framework and the development and promotion of fiscal incentives. To implement the national HRD priorities, the council will need to devise a number of accompanying measures. Launching new regulations, incentives or programmes as

European Training Foundation Challenges in education and training in the acceding and candidate countries

The European Training Foundation (ETF) has published a report (1) on 13 years of cooperation and reforms in vocational education and training (VET) in the acceding and candidate countries. The report assesses the situation of these countries in the field of VET in the broader context of lifelong learning. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the systems, the gaps in comparison with standards in EU Member States and, more specifically, the cohesion countries (Greece, Portugal and Spain). It also considers the trends and challenges faced at the moment of accession.

This forward looking report examines these gaps, trends and challenges in the perspec-

such cannot guarantee success. The council will also have to ensure monitoring and evaluation.

In view of regional HRD activities, it will be important to coordinate national and regional priorities, to aim at synergy between the different measures and to pursue the convergence of national and regional objectives. The council will promote lifelong learning, advocate the "learning organisations" idea and initiate and support research and development, particularly in the area of continuing education and training. All key partners will receive information and methodological assistance.

Strategic HRD management methods are also being developed at regional level - in compliance with Law no. 129/2000 Coll. on regions. Of the 14 regions, several have already established their HRD councils while others are being developed. The activities of the regional HRD council normally come under the responsibility of the vice president of the region in charge of education. Members include, in addition to representatives of the regional office, top managers of large companies and senior officials of universities, representatives of trade unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and labour offices in the region.

The regional councils are involved in the development of HRD policies and regulations within their regions. Their key responsibilities include organising surveys on existing, and forecasting in future, demand for skilled labour, and initiating the relevant changes in vocational education and training programmes in their region. While the regional councils will act autonomously,

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United Kingdom Skills strategy white paper "21st Century Skills - Realising Our Potential"

In July 2003, the United Kingdom government published a white paper(1) setting out its strategy for developing skills for the UK's labour market until 2010. Though the document has implications for the whole of the UK, its main emphasis is on developing skills in England. The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are each responsible for developing their own approach.

The white paper recognises the importance of the economic reform agenda agreed in Lisbon in 2000 and emphasises the importance of working with European partners in tackling the challenges of skills and mobility, and the need to identify best practice and share experiences.

The analysis of the challenges that the UK must face to achieve the Lisbon goals is forthright. The white paper sums up the current position stating that the UK has strengths in the way that skills, learning and qualifications are developed. For example, young people compare well internationally in their literacy, numeracy and science skills; the UK is as successful at developing highly skilled graduates as the best in the world; there is a rich range of opportunities for adult learning. The UK has a flexible labour market and low levels of unemployment.

Nevertheless, skill gaps remain stubbornly persistent. The percentage of the UK workforce qualified to intermediate skill levels (apprenticeship, skilled craft and technician level) is low: 28% compared with 51% in France and 65% in Germany. Output per hour worked is around 25% higher in the US and Germany and over 30% higher in France, than in the UK.

In particular, skill gaps in the UK still need to be tackled in:

- basic skills for employability, including literacy, numeracy and use of IT,
- intermediate skills at apprenticeship, technician, higher craft and associate professional level,
- mathematics,
- management and leadership.

To tackle these issues and to meet the objectives set, the government identifies five key arenas for action:

- put employers' needs for skills centre stage;
- raise ambition of both employers and employees in the demand for skills;
- motivate and support people to re-engage in learning;

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Cedefop has a full agenda for 2004

Cedefop has set itself an ambitious work programme for the coming year. The 2004 work programme is to be seen in the light of the medium-term priorities 2003-06 with the overarching objective of promoting a European area of lifelong learning in an enlarged European Union. In close cooperation with the Commission and the 2004 presidency countries, Ireland and the Netherlands, Cedefop will support enhanced cooperation in VET and the so-called objectives process, up to 2010 through a range of activities: publishing the outcomes of its own research, supporting networks of relevant players and agencies, participating in the specialist working groups set up by the Commission or lending support to initiatives of the social partners. The implementation of the 2004 work programme will be assessed on the basis of built-in performance indicators.

As in previous years, the focus of the 2004 work programme is clearly the further expansion of Cedefop's electronic services. The greatest challenge the Centre has set itself is to consolidate and expand the knowledge management system (KMS), a comprehensive web-based information service integrating existing data and new data from ReferNet and other sources (see also article on p. 2). The KMS is to be cross-classified by a number of themes and will provide comparable cross-country information. Many projects, such as the Cedra research platform and the Training of Trainers Network (TTnet), will be more closely connected to the KMS in the future. The short descriptions of national VET systems, of the rotating presidency countries, published in hard copy form, are now also to feature as products of the KMS. Descriptions for Ireland and the Netherlands are therefore planned in 2004.

In 2004 the network of virtual communities will be further expanded. These cooperative communities will support enhanced cooperation in VET in the wake of the Copenhagen and Bruges process, by working on specific themes (e.g. eLearning, lifelong learning) and bringing together groups of stakeholders with similar interests (e.g. a virtual Young VET Researchers platform). These communities could also be moderated by external partners.

In the field of electronic media, Cedefop operates an e-learning observatory as well as

a so-called eSkills Forum together with the Commission. The Centre is setting up a database of good practice to help disseminate and publicise established experience in cooperation with partners from the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Following the hard-copy publication of the 11-language executive summary of the second Cedefop policy report this year (see article p. 1), the full-text version is scheduled to appear at the beginning of 2004. Further publication highlights will be the third Cedefop Research Report on the evaluation and impact of education and training and a key reference publication on lifelong learning. Three editions of the Cedefop periodicals - the European Journal Vocational Training and Cedefop Info - as well as various reports in the Cedefop Dossiers and Panorama series will be published in the course of the year.

Perhaps the most important milestone in 2004 will be 1 May when 10 new Member States accede to the European Union. As candidate countries, these countries have so far been under the wing of the European Training Foundation in Turin, but as EU Member States they will come under the responsibility of Cedefop. Work in 2004 will therefore focus on the transfer of information, contacts and know-how. Cedefop naturally also expects to include new members from these countries in its networks, project work and Management Board and to extend its own reporting and networks to the new Member States.

Alongside in-house projects, EU enlargement also concerns the Study Visits Programme managed by Cedefop on behalf of the European Commission. A total of 730 grants are to be awarded to participants from all (old and new) EU Member States as well as other European countries in 2004.

Last but not least, there will be a number of changes at the Centre itself. Cedefop is to get a new director in the autumn. Colleagues and visitors will come and go. Various Agora Thessaloniki, exhibitions and other events are in the pipeline. Cedefop has a full agenda and a busy year ahead.

The Work Programme can be ordered free of charge from Cedefop in EN, FR or DE or downloaded from the Cedefop website www.cedefop.eu.int.

Source: Cedefop/CF



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Cedefop Info is published in DE, EN, FR and contains information on vocational training in Europe, in particular the findings of work carried out by Cedefop and reports from the social partners and the Member States. It is provided free of charge upon request. Cedefop Info is also available on the Internet (<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/publications.asp?section=24>). The electronic version often contains additional items for which there was no space in the printed version.

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Eurydice

The teaching profession in Europe: profile, trends and concerns

Working conditions and teachers' pay
In its third report on the teaching profession in Europe, the European network for information in education (Eurydice) presents the main components of the working conditions of teachers in 30 European countries (1). The attractiveness of an occupation depends largely on an optimal combination of the working conditions associated with it. Teaching is no exception. Good salary prospects do not in themselves guarantee that the conditions of service in a profession will be of high quality. Professional status and job security, salary and other financial benefits deriving from the professional activity concerned, working time and tasks specified in the employment contract, the various forms of in-service training available and, finally, arrangements to support teachers who experience difficulty are all significant factors that must be taken into consideration.

Defining working time as in other professions

In Europe, teachers are either public servants (meaning career civil servants in some countries (2)) or staff appointed on contracts governed by general employment legislation. Teachers generally have substantial job security irrespective of their professional status. Full job security of this kind until retirement age is formally granted to teachers who are career civil servants.

In the past, the working time of teachers was considered mainly in terms of the number of hours spent teaching. Of the two main activities expected of teachers, namely the provision of lessons and the preparation of lessons and marking of pupils' work, only actual teaching time was clearly specified. Four countries (3) have retained this statutory definition of the working time of teachers, but the concept of an overall amount of working time has been adopted in official definitions in most other countries. It takes account of all activities. It covers the time spent actually teaching as well as that earmarked for other tasks, including individual working time (for preparation/marketing). In many countries, the amount of time during which teachers should be present at school is even specified in the employment contract or collective agreements.

Three countries (4) have adopted an entirely different definition in that the number of hours to be spent teaching is not indicated: only the overall amount of working time and/or time present at school is specified in statutory terms. It is therefore incumbent on school heads to determine the tasks that their teaching staff should carry out and the time they should devote to each of them.

Relatively low basic salaries and fairly limited salary increases

When the gross basic salaries (5) of teachers at the start of their careers are compared to per capita GDP, they are often found to be lower than or equivalent to it. But in most

EU countries, teachers' salaries on retirement are over 50% higher than per capita GDP. Circumstances in this respect are least favourable in the candidate countries and some Nordic countries. Exceptions are Greece, Spain and, more strikingly still, Portugal, where basic salaries on retirement are over twice as much as per capita GDP.

In-service training increasingly regarded as a real obligation

Teachers in half of all European countries (6) are professionally obliged to update their knowledge. In a further six countries, in-service training is to all intents and purposes compulsory in that teachers who have not undertaken it cannot be promoted (7). However, few statistics are available on participation rates in this respect.

In-service training is without question still the most common means for teachers to enrich their professional knowledge and expertise. Sabbatical leave (lasting a year) remains a not very widespread alternative form of training in Europe (8). Those eligible for it are generally full-time teachers with permanent tenure.

In so far as the administration of training is fairly decentralised, no central recommendation precisely specifies the content of curricula. However, provision may be regarded as relatively diversified everywhere. Over and above the conventional upgrading of knowledge of their subjects and their teaching methods, virtually all teachers in Europe may access training concerned with the incorporation of ICT into education, as well as the development of school plans and the management of mixed groups of pupils.

(1) This study deals specifically with teachers in lower secondary education.

(2) In Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal and Malta.

(3) Belgium, Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg. In Germany, the question is the subject of discussion and committees are being set up to devise another definition.

(4) Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

(5) The gross annual basic salary corresponds to the amount paid by the employer in a year - including bonuses, increases and allowances, such as those related to the cost of living, a thirteenth month's salary (where applicable), holiday pay, etc. - less the employer's social security and pension contributions. This salary includes no other financial benefit (linked to further qualifications, merit, overtime or additional responsibilities, the geographical area in which a teacher works or the obligation to teach mixed or difficult classes, accommodation, health or travel expenses).

(6) Flemish and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Liechtenstein, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta and Romania.

(7) The six countries are Spain, Portugal, Iceland, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovenia.

(8) Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom (England), Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Poland, Romania.

Working conditions and pay in the teaching profession in Europe: profile, trends and concerns, Key topics in education in Europe, Vol. 3, Report III, Eurydice, 2003. Available on Internet: <http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/KeyTopics3/en/FrameSet3.htm>.

Source: Eurydice



Italy

Follow-up of the EU Council resolution on lifelong learning

The follow-up document to the EU Council resolution on lifelong learning, giving an overview of the various sectors of lifelong learning in Italy, has now been finalised. The report is the work of a technical working party comprising representatives of the Ministries of Labour and Education, Universities and Research. The coordinating body of the regions, the Union of Italian Provinces and the National Association of Italian Municipalities, also participated, with the technical assistance from the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training (Isfol). Each of the institutional stakeholders was consulted on their own field of competence.

Lifelong learning strategies, as part of the Italian educational and training system, tend to be transversal. Lifelong learning concerns all systems - education, training and employment. Institutional competences for the programming, management and evaluation of lifelong learning programmes or projects are shared between the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, and the regions, provinces and municipalities, as appropriate.

The follow-up document draws special attention to the substantial contribution of the European Social Fund (ESF), not only to funding but also to programme quality. It has made it possible to launch new types of action reaching heretofore excluded segments of the population. Furthermore, the quality of the system has been improved by the creation of integration, consultation and reskilling instruments.

Today lifelong learning is noticeable in that it primarily reaches young people in terms of financial investment, number of actions and target group. In all Italian regions, the ESF youth measures are the ones with the best results.

For the adults targeted it is necessary to distinguish between continuing training, imparting technical and transversal skills inside the workplace, and adult education, which offers basic skills within settings both formal (in regional centres for adult education and in evening courses in level II schools) and non-formal (e.g. popular universities and senior citizen colleges).

Poland

A package to promote lifelong learning

With a view to accession to the European Union in May 2004, the Polish authorities have decided to intensify lifelong learning activities.

To implement lifelong learning (LLL) on a broad scale, social partnership is a must. This is the assumption underlying a Phare (*) project carried out in Poland with the aim of promoting a lifelong learning strategy. The project, National Vocational Training System, implemented by the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy, will be completed by the end of 2003. Within its framework, a working group, which brought together representatives of government authorities, employers' organisations and trade unions, was established. This forum discusses issues related to training for employees and the unemployed. The group's work is expected to help stimulate social dialogue in the sphere of lifelong learning and to propose accompanying measures and is supported by Polish and EU experts.

Awareness raising activities are important to make continuing education and vocational

development more attractive to potential learners. Funding from the state budget and the European Social Fund as well as other financial incentives, such as the Labour Fund and the future training fund, could motivate employers to invest in staff development programmes.

As a result of the group's work, a proposed new law to promote employment and labour market institutions has been formulated. This includes a number of innovative elements, including a training fund, training leave, job rotation during training leave, training allowances and a register of training institutions, which will co-operate with the employment services.

The Phare project also sets out to improve the quality of educational services. This part of project contains three components: improvement of statistical researches concerning LLL, development of vocational qualifications standards and the introduction of modular training programmes, based on the International Labour Organisation's Modular Employment Skills (MES) approach.

Continuing training actions have shown good results in the period 2000-2002, with some 600 000 workers participating in courses funded under Law No 236/1993 and over 10 000 in courses funded under Law No 53/2000. A total of 735 000 persons were involved in training, apprenticeship and linked work/training contracts in 2002.

Adult education has seen a considerable expansion of the in regional centres (CTP), from 375 in 1998-99 to 546 in 2001-02. In the same period, CTP enrolment numbers climbed from 152 020 to 387 000. Similarly, the number of participants in evening courses organised at level II schools, geared mainly towards the acquisition of a certificate or formal qualification, increased from approximately 32 000 in 1998-99 to 52 000 in 2001-02.

In the non-formal sector, lifelong learning courses have been a considerable success. 741 popular university centres and senior citizen colleges are operational throughout Italy, with a total of 180 132 registered in 2000-01.

Lifelong learning strategies have also provided a strong impetus to the development of local partnerships in the field of adult education and training. Regional and local committees have been set up to integrate local training provision under the umbrella of permanent education. The follow-up report gives an overview of activities in the various Italian regions.

Further information at: <http://www.welfare.gov.it>

Source: Isfol (Maria Elena Moro)

Editorial note:

The national reports of all the Member States, Acceding and Candidate countries are available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lll/lll_en.html



Norway

www.utdanning.no - the gateway to education

A gateway for education has been established in order to gather net-based information, resources and services related to education. The gateway comprises information for both vocational and general education in a lifelong perspective, from basic education to adult further education.

Utdanning.no has been set up by the Ministry of Education and Research, and reflects the national focus on net-based training and information. The gateway is part of the Ministry's launch of a framework called *Nasjonalt Laeringsnett* (NLN). The framework was established to create a net-based platform for lifelong learning, and focuses on important issues related to net-based education and information, such as infrastructure and common technical solutions, standards for digital content, network for educational innovation, skills development, exchange of experience and digital services.

The gateway has links to important and national and international related websites, (e.g. Eurydice, Ploteus, European Schoolnet).

In order to achieve the high quality that is required for such a gateway, twelve quality criteria in which content, resources and information are key words have been established.

The target groups for the gateway are private persons, students and their parents, adults, as well as companies and institutions within various sectors. The structure of the gateway is simple, making both comprehension and navigation very easy.

More information: www.utdanning.no

Source: Teknologisk institutt, Norway



Appropriate new methodologies of statistical research and analysis of the relevant results, and recommendations for future research on continuing education are currently being put in place. The new methodology applies to research on adult training activities, vocational training of staff in enterprises and training institutions.

As regards vocational qualification standards, research in companies has been completed. The description of standards for 40 occupations in different sectors has been prepared (e.g. painter, welder, CNC operator, nurse, SME manager). These standards will be disseminated through publications and on the Internet.

Recently, 120 tutors received the necessary training to create and implement modular training curricula, based on MES. Seminars for 600 participants were also conducted to promote the MES approach and the new modular curricula. 88 modular curricula and relevant training materials have already been designed for different areas, such as weld-

ing, building, ICT, marketing, tourism and administration. They will also be available on the Internet.

To provide access to the vocational qualification standards and the modular training schemes, databases have been developed and set up.

(*) The Phare programme is one of the three pre-accession instruments financed by the European Communities to assist the applicant countries of central Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union. <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/intro.htm#11>

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at present only a short information is available (in Polish), but more information will be available after completion of the project

Source: Polish Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy/National Observatory

Human resource development as national value

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communication between them and the national council will be assured.

The shift in the approach to human resource development raises hopes that human capital management will become a true priority of social and economic development policies in the Czech Republic.

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Source: National Observatory of Employment and Training -
National Training Fund

Cyprus

Boosting vocational training capabilities

Encouraging and supporting lifelong learning as a strategic goal has led the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA in Cyprus), to develop the "Training Infrastructure Support Scheme".

Lifelong learning will be better served when companies invest in their own training capability. This should include both the system and mechanisms necessary for identifying training needs and the appropriate learning activities to meet them. As many companies, especially smaller ones, cannot cater for their own needs, the new scheme also targets training institutions that cater for needs, which will not be covered through company in-house training.

The HRDA sees this scheme as one pillar of a comprehensive four-pillar approach to boost the demand for, and supply of, training, and the recognition of learning and competencies. Its aim is to encourage enterprises and training institutions to create new or upgrade existing, training capacity in order to meet priority training needs. Other pillars are the HR Consultancy and the Training Support Schemes and the System of Vocation-

al Qualifications. The scheme provides financial support for training equipment (e.g. machinery, tools, ICTs), the development or purchase of training material and teaching aids and the training of trainers and managers of training centres.

Enterprises and training institutions are encouraged to include modern information and communication technologies in their proposals. The financial support on offer covers 45% of costs in the case of enterprises and 30% in the case of training institutions.

The criteria for assessing the proposals include:

- the viability of the proposal,
- the training needs that will be satisfied,
- the quality of training that will be provided,
- the location of the proposed centre,
- the utilisation of the proposed training facilities,
- the existence of training facilities covering similar needs in the same geographical location.

In order to stimulate companies and training institutions not only to develop, but also to utilise, their training facilities on a sys-

tematic basis, the HRDA requires that any training centre developed under this scheme should be utilised for a minimum duration of training per year, for a period of three consecutive years. If an organisation fails to meet these minimum requirements, the total subsidy will be reimbursed to the HRDA.

The response from enterprises and training institutions is, to date, very encouraging. In order to sustain continuous training activity, the assisted organisations will have to introduce planning and control mechanisms and improve their HR practices.

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Source: Human Resource Development Authority

Educational policy

Norway

From a post industrial to an international knowledge society for the school

The Norwegian Minister of Education and Research, Ms Kristin Clemet, wants to bring the Norwegian school from the post industrial to the international knowledge society.

The Committee for Quality in Primary and Secondary Education in Norway, appointed by Royal Resolution 5 October 2001 submitted its main report to the Minister of Education and Research in June 2003 "This is a golden opportunity for an open and unprejudiced debate about the content of the school", stated Ms Kristin Clemet at the presentation of the report pointing out four main issues:

- 1) the school is moving from a post industrial to an international knowledge society;
- 2) the need for training adapted for all, regardless of social and cultural differences;
- 3) a focus on quality, both in a wide perspective as well as in relation to basic competences;
- 4) lifelong learning should be given a broad definition, starting in the kindergarten.

The report lists 117 suggestions on how to improve the quality and standard of the present school. The document was open for public comment and discussion, including regional conferences and discussions, until 15 October 2003. A white paper will be drawn up in spring 2004.

The social partners, politicians and the teachers' trade unions are positive and this broad unity shows that most of the suggestions are likely to be implemented.

At the upper secondary level, the system will be more flexible, with a smoother transition between the different elements within the educational system. There

will be a grouping of the present fifteen subjects into eight educational programmes, of which seven will have a vocational focus. The aim is to have more flexible transitions between training in-company and in-school.

General focus at all levels:

The most important aspect of the report is the emphasis on foundation skills, such as literacy and numeracy, as well as English, digital competencies and motivation and endurance. Social competence is also strongly underlined in the report.

Mandatory mathematics will be increased, as will physical exercise, and a stronger focus on Norwegian and foreign languages. A second foreign language (in addition to English) will be mandatory from the age of 13. There will also be a stronger focus on ICT at all levels, and the basis competence in ICT will be as strongly focused as Norwegian, mathematics and foreign languages.

The Committee underlined that primary and secondary education must never fail their role as places for studying basic knowledge, skills and attitudes. They must live up to the expectations that they contribute to social development and nation building through the creation of identity.

It is crucial that pupils and apprentices acquire the basic skills needed to acquire new skills and knowledge.

More information - in English:
<http://www.dep.no/ufd/norsk/satsingsomraade/kvalitetsutvalget/045071-990226/index-dok000-b-n-a.html>

Source: Teknologisk institutt, Norway



Challenges in education and training in the acceding and candidate countries

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education and training systems as they are now. It looks at how countries have had to adapt their systems in order to respond to the challenges of the enlarged Europe, a process largely supported by the dedicated and diversified EU assistance delivered mainly through the Phare Programme. It considers the social and economic dynamics brought about by the political changes, and how they have created considerable demands on the education and training systems at both company and individual levels. These considerations are made whilst taking into account the recent shift from command to market economies and how far social, economic and cultural habits continue to affect reforms and changes.

In conclusion, the ETF report claims that few of the accession countries already meet EU standards in the fields of general and higher education, although the appropriate legislative frameworks are being developed and initiatives to prepare for lifelong learning are flourishing in the formal education system. As a

result, most countries also still face considerable difficulties with the VET components of the education and training systems. The report reveals that overall the labour force is still not adequately qualified, labour market training is under-developed, continuing vocational training for employees is progressing slowly, social partnership in VET and inter-ministerial coordination are insufficiently developed, many old curricula are still in use, the status of teachers is low, teacher training is underdeveloped and school technical equipment is often obsolete.

(¹) *Thirteen Years of Cooperation and Reforms in Vocational Education and Training in the Acceding and Candidate Countries*, Jean-Raymond Masson, ETF, ISBN: 92-9157-347-7
The publication can be downloaded in English, free of charge, from: www.etf.eu.int. French and German versions will be available soon.

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Editorial note:
Cedefop Info 1/2004 will contain a dossier on enlargement and the acceding countries. It will be prepared jointly by Cedefop and the ETF.

Source: ETF



Latvia

All schools finally under one roof

The process of reorganising Latvian vocational schools under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science has finally begun. The idea had been brought up, and analysed, but rejected, many times. Time and again country reports had identified the administrative fragmentation as a weak point in the vocational education system, but until recently, no decisions had been taken to achieve real institutional change.

Although the problem had been recognised in the mid-nineties, vo-

ational education establishments remained under the authority of several ministries, i.e. those of Education and Science, of Welfare, of Health, of Culture, of Agriculture, and of Defence. All these ministries acted independently, allocated financial resources, planned and set up their own institutional networks, organised curricula development groups, set up quality monitoring mechanisms and dealt with student enrolment issues. Obtaining consistent information on education and training and unified

decision making proved quite a challenge. Overlaps and irrational use of financial and human resources were not uncommon.

A concept for the development of education in 2002-2005, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in November 2002, foresees a reorganisation of all vocational education institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science within the next four years. The only exceptions are those institutions where training programmes

are subject to the regulations of the defence forces.

In July 2003, the Government decided that schools under the authority of the Ministries of Welfare, of Health and of Agriculture should come under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science as from July 2004. The implementation of this decision will make it easier to instigate the vocational education development programme and to realise a consistent vocational education policy. The new

structure will also help to optimise the network of vocational education institutions and to distribute funding more evenly among the institutions.

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Source: Academic Information Centre- Latvian National Observatory

Hungary

Revamping apprenticeship school programmes

A new apprenticeship schools development programme is to improve the education and training of future skilled workers and to remedy the serious and increasing mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market.

Vocational qualifications recognised by the state have strong traditions in Hungary. The certificates held in proof of such qualifications have a substantial influence on the chances of employees in the labour market. To acquire skilled workers' qualifications, (e.g. to become a bricklayer, joiner, locksmith, waiter, cook, hairdresser etc.) young people attend four-year apprenticeship schools. Since the second half of the 90s, there has been an increasing mismatch between the demand for skilled workers on the labour market (some 55%) and those attending apprenticeship schools. This shortage of reliable skilled workers cannot be remedied through retraining programmes.

While the numbers in apprenticeship schools have been plummeting, participation rates at secondary level schools preparing students for higher education have been on the rise. Thus, apprenticeship schools increasingly have had to cater for young people with learning difficulties and low motivation. As many as 30-50 % of them do not meet the general education target levels in the first

two years, i.e. in mathematics, history, Hungarian language and literature. 14-20 % drop out of the programme.

The majority of these students come from the most disadvantaged groups. 10% of the 16 year-olds with multiple disadvantages are Roma. Given the current demographic development, this proportion is expected to rise. Thus, up-dating training content and/or teaching and learning methods alone will not suffice to remedy the situation. Schools increasingly need more financial and human resources. Abstract teaching methods and educational content in general education that is not even remotely related to the relevant vocational area, cannot motivate students at apprenticeship schools.

Apprenticeship schools need highly qualified and committed teachers and trainers. However, fluctuation of teachers and trainers constitutes a fundamental problem, because of better job opportunities elsewhere, inadequate teaching resources and job dissatisfaction. A large number of schools offer a variety of training programmes to small groups of students. This results in inefficiency and financial problems.

In January 2003, the government adopted an apprenticeship school development programme proposed by the Ministry of Edu-

cation. The key objectives of this programme are to increase access to VET training programmes, to enable VET students to acquire the necessary skills and competences for active citizenship and to help them make informed career choices. Special emphasis is laid on targeting the disadvantaged groups.

The development programme aims at attaining the following social objectives:

- Reduce and prevent school failure and reintegrate drop-outs into educational programmes so as they complete compulsory schooling. Students should acquire the basic skills required for their personal life, as well as adequate vocational qualifications.
- Ensure that vocational qualifications of those entering the labour market meet the labour market needs for skilled workers, so as to reduce unemployment and its social implications.
- Provide specifically targeted training opportunities for disadvantaged students and students with disabilities.

New curricula, which link general education elements to the relevant vocational areas, are being drawn up. Innovative pedagogical methods are to be introduced in vocational schools. Teachers receive intensive training to acquire or improve their foreign language skills, upgrade their skills in the relevant vocational field and enhance their skills in methodology

and quality assurance. Some 133 vocational qualifications are expected to be modernised.

The implementation of the apprenticeship school development programme will be supplemented by the development of linguistic and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and the development and improvement of vocational and career counselling and of quality assurance and self-evaluation mechanisms.

The 90 apprenticeship schools that have so far been selected to participate in this programme have committed themselves to applying new teaching methods, engaging in self-improvement, modernisation and the provision of a broader range of pedagogical services. The development programme is expected to be completed by 2006, at a cost of about EUR 50.5 million.

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Source: Hungarian National Observatory/Köpeczi Bócz

Continuing vocational training



Portugal

Provisions for training local government officials

The low qualification level of its officials is one of the most striking aspects of public administration in Portugal. This has an impact on the way it functions, especially at the local government level. In order to remedy this situation the Portuguese government, acting through the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the municipalities, the Office for the Regional Planning of Territories and the Environment, has established two vocational training support systems specifically for these officials: distance training (1) and action training (2).

Distance training (1): In this system of training

ing the fact that attendance is not required implies the existence of a tutorial system which can be synchronous - i.e. the trainers and trainees can be mobilised at the same time - or asynchronous - the periods of mobilisation alternate and do not coincide. The minimum training requirement for access to this scheme is Level 2; its contents are generally divided into modules whose duration never exceed 100 hours.

Action training (2): This system is adapted to the development of training geared to the production of vocational skills essential-

ly linked to modernisation and organisational development processes. Its main objective is to concentrate on resolving actual organisational problems and to use a dynamic methodology which will upgrade apprenticeship training through an analysis of concrete work experience and personal life experience.

These two systems have been developed within the framework of regional operational programmes which envisage the financing of vocational training for local administration, as advised by the Institute for the Ad-

ministration of the European Social Fund (IGFSE) and the social partners.

(1) Joint Resolution No 609/2003 - 'Diário da República' No 118 22/05/03 - II série, O regime específico dos apoios à formação profissional desenvolvida à distância p. 7785, 7786 and 7787. Available from the Internet: <http://www.igfse.pt/legislacao/60920031.pdf>, <http://www.igfse.pt/legislacao/60920032.pdf> et <http://www.igfse.pt/legislacao/60920033.pdf>

(2) Joint Resolution no 694/2003 - 'Diário da República' No 154 07/07/03 - II Série: Regulamento da modalidade formação-acção a desenvolver no âmbito das medidas do eixo nº1 dos programas operacionais regionais destinados a financiar a formação profissional para a administração local, p. 10 160 and 10 161. Available from the Internet: <http://www.igfse.pt/legislacao/69420031.pdf> et <http://www.igfse.pt/legislacao/69420032.pdf>

Source: CID - Information and Documentation Centre -

Training for small and medium enterprises - a successful network

Additional funding of Euro 15m has been pledged to extend the highly successful enterprise-led Training Networks Programme. The pilot programme, which ran from 1999 to 2002, was established to address the problem of low investment in training in small and medium enterprises in Ireland. It was administered by Skillnets (see Cedefop Info 1/2002 and 3/2002), an organisation which represents employer, employee and government organisations, and was funded under the National Training Fund. Up to 58 networks involving up to 4 000 companies were developed in the period. The main features of this first training networks programme are presented in the final report on its operation. (1)

The report finds that a majority of networks (65%) chose sector-based approaches as a primary basis for the network operation. This indicated a demand for sector-specific training and a view that this was a gap in current provision. Many networks were established on a regional basis especially outside the Eastern region. This highlighted the low level of locally available training in these areas and the limited range of training available generally in peripheral areas, as key training providers were located mainly in large urban centres.

While a number of networks were formed with small or micro businesses most networks involved a mix of large, medium, and small companies. This was a departure from the usual practice of providing funding for small companies exclusively within the context of small business activity. Networks decided to involve a range of companies in order to establish a more comprehensive experience and practice base. It also highlighted the demand for small companies to tap into the more developed expertise and systems of the larger members.

Many networks began the development of strategic certification systems at sectoral level. These systems often

- were based on competence rather than on instructional models,
- included a high level of recognition of prior learning,
- were either fully work-based or flexibly adopted a dual approach of on- and off-the-job learning,
- generated enthusiasm by enterprises for progression opportunities for employees, and
- increased the skills base across all firms in a sector.

The willingness of companies and trade bodies to take the lead in an area that has been traditionally delegated to education and state support bodies opens a new area of high potential for increasing industry and sector-wide participation in strategic upskilling and lifelong learning systems within the context of the emerging framework for national qualifications.

The size and types of companies that flowed into networks highlighted the demand for training within sectors, which have been deprioritised by key state agencies. Equally those sectors, which do have access to support from other agencies, also found that

the formation of training networks was a complementary activity to other types of support.

Skillnets has observed that firms, which are supported in meeting basic skills needs such as health and safety, hygiene and ICT skills, continue to move up the value chain of skills improvement. Only after firms have met basic operational skills needs are em-

Germany Learning for enterprise

"An entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial skills should be encouraged in VET programmes, regardless of whether trainees envisage a business start-up".

This is the opinion expressed by a majority of entrepreneurs in the retailing and tourism trades, who were surveyed on how VET can prepare for self-employment. The survey was carried out in the framework of a research project conducted by the Federal Institute of Vocational Training (BIBB).

The surveyed entrepreneurs were in favour of offering relevant skills within VET but expressed the opinion that business start-up or take-over, i.e. direct entrepreneurial training, should not be directly addressed by initial VET but feature in continuing training.

Spain The new continuing training system retains and expands the general principles of the previous model

A royal decree regulating the continuing training sub-system, operational as of 1 January 2004, was adopted by the cabinet at the beginning of August. The new model will give firms more flexibility in managing personnel training. It also allows the possibility of automatic benefits in terms of social contributions. The new system retains and expands upon the

Belgium Partnership agreement on vocational training

On 13 June 2003, the Walloon Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Marie Arena, and the representatives of the Economic and Social Council of the Walloon Region signed a partnership agreement on training.

The general objective of this agreement is 'to optimise the implementation in Wallonia of the objectives of the Inter-Branch Agreement (*Accord Interprofessionnel - AIP*) which allocate 1.9% of the payroll to training, by adapting these objectives to the actual situation in Wallonia and by broadening them'.

In order to achieve this objective, the partners agree to follow three operational ob-

jectives and to pool and share the resources for implementation.

Finally, the leadership processes that emerged were an interesting feature of many of the networks, whether from existing enterprise organisations at sectoral and regional level or from an individual or group of firms investing time and energy in bringing other firms into the process.

The BIBB has used the survey outcomes to develop concepts for the integration of "entrepreneurial learning" into VET.

An entrepreneurial attitude and relevant skills could, for example be, encouraged or developed by work in a junior or students' firm, or in the form of temporary management of a department within the training company. Trainees could thus learn to carry out specialised tasks independently and assume economic responsibility. Business creation should furthermore be addressed as a career alternative to dependent employment, while course content should address the opportunities, risks and requirements of self-employment. Finally, the special business perspective should be made clear, particularly within management training. Additional qualifications or optional

Skillnets will continue to administer the new programme which will run until 2005.

(1) Skillnets: Final report of the Training Networks Programme 1999-2002. (2003) Available free of charge from Skillnets Ltd., Wasdale House, Rathfarnham Road, Terenure, Dublin-6W, Ireland. Tel. 353-1 490 1543, Fax 353-1 590 1543. E-mail: info@skillnets.com, <http://www.skillnets.com>

Source: FÁS

training modules, e.g. preparing a business plan, could also be envisaged.

The skills acquired in the framework of initial training should be built upon in further training programmes imparting business start-up, management and take-over skills.

The potential to create, via training, entrepreneurs motivated and able to set up their own companies or enter the franchising business could thus be tapped in a timely manner.

Further information on the project results may be obtained from Anita Krieger (E-Mail: krieger@bibb.de) or Hannelore Paulini-Schlottau (E-Mail: paulini@bibb.de).

Source: BIBB/Cedefop/CF

Further information on the websites of the Spanish Prime Minister: <http://www.la-moncloa.es/web/asp/min04.asp?Codigo=c0108030#FormaciónContinua> and the Tripartite Foundation for Training in Employment: <http://www.fundaciontripartita.org/>

Sources: ETV News/Presidency of the Spanish Government /INEM

iting committee. Representatives of the Studies and Statistics Section of the Walloon Employment Observatory, of the Directorate-General for Economics and Employment of the Ministry for the Walloon Region of FOREM (the Walloon office for vocational training and employment), of the future Walloon public interest body for alternance training, of the self-employed and SMEs will regularly participate in this work as experts.

For more information: <http://www.cesrw.be/nouveautes/actualitesduconseil.htm> (Complete text of the agreement).

Source: FOREM



Slovenia

"Working for myself" starts with teachers

Slovenia has developed training modules and teaching aids to integrate entrepreneurial spirit and skills into vocational education and training.

Setting up new enterprises is essential for job creation. To this end, entrepreneurial awareness throughout society needs to be promoted, with particular attention being given to young people. This is why, in recent years, the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training has been cooperating with the Foundation for Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Development at Durham University (UK) to develop and integrate entrepreneurial spirit and skills in vocational education and training (VET) curricula. This has resulted in the introduction of an entrepreneurial small business start-up programme called "Working for Myself".

"Working for Myself" targets VET teachers. The idea is to develop and produce entrepreneurial teaching and learning resource

materials and to disseminate them to all Slovenian VET schools. Training is offered to teachers to familiarise them with the content and to give them the opportunity to acquire the necessary confidence to introduce a small entrepreneurial programme into the curricula of VET schools.

The structure of the resource materials is based on the entrepreneurial start up process. Eight modules have been developed:

- Preliminary module
- Will my skill make a business?
- Can I make a living?
- What resources do I need?
- Can I convince everyone that I can succeed?
- Selling myself and my business proposal.
- How do I maintain control in my business?
- Dealing with officials and government regulations.

Each module tackles the major issues in question and also provides ideas for effective so-

lutions. The latter is considered valuable support for the teachers. The Slovenian National Centre for Vocational Education and Training expects this material to be a useful tool for teachers and to support the move towards competence based learning. The materials reflect the four "success factors" of entrepreneurship (namely idea, motivation, abilities and resources), which constitute the main themes of the modules.

In May 2003, the Centre for Vocational Education and Training conducted a workshop in Ljubljana to introduce the "Working for Myself" programme to participants from the Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro). The workshop informed participants about the results so far and discussed the stages of its development in the Slovenian VET system. Participants identified a number of opportunities to develop and integrate enterprise educa-

tion within the VET curricula in their countries. A discussion on the selection criteria for teachers who should offer these modules lead to a consensus that they should demonstrate creativity, an innovative approach to problem solving, flexibility, a willingness to learn from mistakes, motivation and enthusiasm, and the ability to work in groups and teams.

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Source: Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training



Initial vocational training



France

Planned reform of apprenticeship training

During the meeting of the French Cabinet on 27 August 2003, Renaud Dutreil, Minister for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), Commerce, Crafts, Liberal Professions and Consumption, presented a communication on the reform of apprenticeship training. He has been requested by the Prime Minister to study this question in order to make this line of training 'more attractive' and to improve the legal status of the apprentice and the master responsible for the training (1).

The reflections carried out in consultation with François Fillon, Minister of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity, and Luc Ferry, Minister of Youth, Education and Research led to two findings. Firstly, small and medium-sized enterprises in France are facing great difficulties in recruiting qualified staff and, what is more, finding buyers. These difficulties will become more acute when existing staff begin to retire in the coming years. Secondly, apprenticeship training seems to be a particularly well-adapted response to recruiting needs. In fact, 'it will enable enterprises to find qualified and immediately employable labour and will offer young persons training, which will lead to a certificate, a job or, in the course of time, to entrepreneurial responsibility. However, this line of training seems to be lacking momentum and suffering from a negative public image'.

The first objective of a reform should be to 'upgrade this line of training in the eyes of the public'. Three lines of action have been identified to achieve this objective.

First of all, it is necessary to renew the image of apprenticeship training and to guide more young people to it, by launching information campaigns addressed to young people and their families, and by making a serious effort to raise the awareness of school teach-

ers and vocational guidance bodies. An opinion survey was conducted among enterprises and the general public to identify the key factors which play a role in making apprenticeship training an attractive proposition.

The second line of action is to meet the expectations of young people. Different levels are being envisaged. Firstly, an improvement in the material conditions of apprentices, e.g. transport, housing and remuneration. But also changing the contents of training and building several bridges to other lines of training by adapting the apprenticeship training cycles to young people with very different profiles, levels of knowledge and skills.

Finally, the third line of action is to make sure that apprenticeship training gives an effective response to the realities and needs of enterprises. 'Apprenticeship contracts should be on a sound economic footing, particularly for the very small enterprises: to this end, an analysis of the problems of assessing the training role of the enterprise is being undertaken'. Parallel to this, the training role of the enterprise should be linked to a quality approach which means better training of the trainers of apprentices. Furthermore, the introduction of a mediator who will support the young trainee throughout the course could lead to more effective integration between the training in the apprentice training centre and in the enterprise.

(1) On the subject of the mission entrusted to Mr Dutreil, see the article 'The reform of apprenticeship training', in INFFO Flash, No 616, 1-15 July 2003

Source: Stéphane Héroult, Centre INFFO, based on the Internet site of the Minister for SMEs, Commerce, Crafts, the Liberal Professions and Consumption, press kit on the reform of apprenticeship training: <http://www.pme.gouv.fr/>

Norway

New educational act on vocational higher education institutions

A new act on vocational higher education institutions (*Fagskoleloven*) will increase the status and attractiveness of vocational education at the level above upper secondary school and below university studies. According to the new act, vocational and/or professional education of good quality - lasting from five months to two years - is now fully recognised.

The law [Besl. O. nr. 81 (2002-2003)] was approved on 27 May 2003, and entered into force in autumn 2003. Act No. 9 of 28 January 2000 will be repealed from the same date.

There has, during recent years, been an increase in the need for short courses that are custom made to one specific sector and/or occupation. However, they have not been legally approved. Investigations show that there will be a strong need for persons with a vocational education in the years to come, and that the interaction between working life and the educational sector should be improved.

The aim of the new act is to establish a system for approval of vocational education that is short, limited to and custom made-for

one occupation and/or sector. Students will have to have completed their upper secondary education or have relevant experience before entering.

Publicly and privately owned educational institutions are treated equally in the new act. The owners of the present public technical schools, the counties, will lose their present financial support. The new act encourages all schools - both private and public - to offer appropriate and adequate options according to the needs in the region. The institutions can apply for national funding, which they will be granted, according to the number of students they enrol.

One of the important aims of the new act is to strengthen students' rights. Each institution must have a board of directors, including student representatives. Students taking part in that programme qualify for approval under the new act and can apply for funding from the and Norwegian State Loan Office (*Statens lånekasse for utdanning*).

More information:
<http://odin.dep.no/ufd/norsk/publ/otprp/045001-050009/index-dok000-b-n-a.html>

Source: Teknologisk institutt, Norway



The Czech Republic

Does staff development in small and medium-sized enterprises matter?

The approaches of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to human resources development (HRD) were examined in an analytical study undertaken in the Czech Republic. The aim was to present the state-of-the-art and to identify the principal barriers to implementing HRD in SMEs.

A comprehensive survey of 900 companies and organisations across the country, conducted by the National Observatory of Employment and Training in 2002, focused on their approaches to HRD. The findings of the study, presented in April 2003, indicate considerable differences between SMEs and other companies, in particular in terms of investment in training, coherence of processes applied and availability of skilled labour.

The gap widens as the size of the company decreases. In addition, better results in HRD activities can, on average, be seen in companies with favourable performance and qualitative indicators - growing productivity, in-

volvement in research and development and exports. Companies with foreign capital also show a better approach to human resources.

Only a small number of SMEs view the quality of their human resources as one of the key factors of their economic performance and competitiveness. For example, a mere 8.9% of them rank the quality of their employees among the major sources of competitive advantage. Hence, they seem to have an incoherent and rather short-term approach to staff development.

According to the survey, 42.7% of the SMEs do not organise any training and development activities. 27.4% consider training an investment that does not lead to adequate returns and 48.4% believe training is a private matter for each employee.

Over the last three years, the scope of training has increased in less than half of these companies (41.7%). Only 31% of the com-

panies expect to increase their investment in training as a proportion of their total labour costs after the country's accession to the EU. Where training is organised, short internal on-the-job courses predominate. There is only limited training that aims at enhancing flexibility of SME staff. Only 34.7 % of companies train their employees for two and more jobs (multi-skilling) and only 14.4 % have organised retraining courses.

Another characteristic SMEs have in common, is a significantly less active approach to addressing their problems. For example, though SMEs more often face difficulties related to the recruitment and turnover of workers with appropriate skills, only 8.5% increase their training activities to address skills shortages, 9% establish links with schools and 5.8% look for prospective employees and train them.

In addition to the analytical report, a database has been set up to provide an overview

of approaches, measures and projects across Europe. The intention is to raise awareness among Czech SMEs and to motivate them to invest in staff development. HRD in enterprises will also be dealt with in the framework of the national strategy launched earlier this year (see article on p. 1).

The "Database of Good Practices in Human Resources Development in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Inspirational Examples" and the report are available in Czech at www.nvf.cz/observatory/cz/dokumenty/rlz_smes.pdf

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Source: National Observatory of Employment and Training - National Training Fund

Netherlands

School leavers suffer from economic recession

Youth unemployment requires action

The percentage of school leavers from senior secondary vocational education without a job has doubled over the last year to 8%. This is the conclusion of the yearly research (1) from the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (*Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt - ROA*) regarding the chances of school leavers in the labour market. The aim of the research was to follow the perspectives of 35 000 school leavers until one year after their graduation.

Youngsters having finished a short lower level training course in senior secondary vocational education suffer most. They form the group with the highest risk of not finding a job within a year (8%), while only 4% of students who have completed a 3 or 4 year training course in senior secondary vocational education, have not found a job after one year.

These figures require a prevention policy. In May 2003, the government drafted main lines of policy, and followed this with a Youth Unemployment Action Plan (2). This has been formulated with input from various actors involved, ranging from city councils, centres for work and income to educational institutions and social partners. The main aims are to limit the percentage of youth unemployment to a maximum of twice the total unemployment rate, and to prevent long term unemployment by ensuring that every unemployed young person gets back to work/school within half a year.

These aims contribute to the realisation of the Lisbon objective to halve the number of people up to 24 years old without a qualification and of the national objective to reduce the number of early school leavers significantly (in 2010 a reduction of 50% in comparison to 2000).

The action points formulated by the government, involve cooperative measures by various actors, such as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Justice, in the areas

of early school leaving, counselling and guidance towards work or back to school, and cooperation for risk groups between justice, education and companies. Other measures involve active cooperation between the centres for work and income, the (sectoral) expertise centres for education and training and the labour market, and companies, for a good realisation of dual trajectories (learning and working) and the application of procedures for accreditation of prior learning. The government will review certain (financial) measures in order to stimulate the introduction of tailor-made education and training courses, especially for those with lower levels of education.

(1) *Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt van de Universiteit Maastricht* (ROA - Research Centre for Education and Labour Market, University of Maastricht). *Schoolverlaters tussen onderwijs en arbeidsmarkt 2002* (School leavers between education and labour market 2002), in Dutch. ISBN: 90 5321 369 4 (ROA-R-2003; 9A) Statistical annex: ISBN 90 5321 370 8 (ROA-R-2003; 9B). Maastricht, 2003.

(2) De Geus, A.J., Van der Hoeven, M.J.A. *Hoofdlijnen Plan van aanpak jeugdwerkloosheid* (Main lines of youth unemployment action plan), in Dutch. Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The Hague, May 2003.
http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/34/2003/34_2003_3_3653.pdf

Plan van aanpak jeugdwerkloosheid: Een uitwerking van de hoofdlijnen notitie dd. 9 mei 2003 (Action Plan youth unemployment: an elaboration of the main lines publication of 9th of May 2003). Drafted with input from various actors involved. June 2003.
home.szw.nl/navigatie/dossier/dsp_dossier.cfm?view=ratio&set_id=1101

Further information:
www.fdewb.unimaas.nl/roa (Research Centre for Education and the Labour market - ROA); www.minszw.nl (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment).

Source: ROA / Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment / CINOP

Skills strategy white paper "21st Century Skills - Realising Our Potential"

Continued from page 1

- make colleges and training providers more responsive to employers' and learners' needs by creating a demand-led approach;
- achieve better joint working across government and the public services through a new Skills Alliance based on a partnership between government, trade unions and employers.

As part of the strategy to meet these challenges, the government is, for example, committed to strengthening the Modern Apprenticeship framework and to increasing uptake across the different sectors. Relating to apprenticeship, the White Paper commits the government to:

- provide targeted support to individual learners for higher level skills at technician, higher craft or associate professional level;
- provide better information, advice and guidance on skills, training and qualifications, so that people know what is available, what the benefits are, and where to go;
- strengthen Modern Apprenticeships by, for example, removing the age cap so that adults can also participate and involving employers more closely.

More broadly, the government is reviewing separately the vocational routes available to young people, focusing on employability skills and enterprise for young people and supporting the development of e-learning. Other sections of the white paper set out measures for improving continuing training.

The response of employers' organisations is positive. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has said that the government 'is right to recognise the role of employers and is giving them a greater say in the content and delivery of training programmes'(2).

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) has also welcomed the white paper, saying that 'the establishment of the Skills Alliance is a significant step forward in developing an effective policy framework to raise the skill levels of the UK workforce' (3).

(1) 21st Century Skills Realising Our Potential - Individuals, Employers, Nation, ISBN No 0101581025 Price £24 (EUR 32).
Published by the Stationery Office: available on line <http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop>
Fax (44) 870 600 55 33
E-mail: book.order@tso.co.uk
The White Paper is also available at the Department for Education and Skills website at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/index.shtml>

(2) More could be found at <http://www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/38e2a4440c22db6802567300067301b/bdb2d56d50eca92780256d5c004f2825?OpenDocument>

(3) For further details, please refer to <http://www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-6926-f0.cfm>
Source: QCA

Turkey

Progress towards the European employment strategy

The World Bank supports privatisation and mitigation of its economic and social side effects

To support Turkey's economic reform, a project has been designed to reach targets in the privatisation programme and to alleviate its economic and social effects. The so-called 'Privatisation Social Support Project' is funded by the World Bank. The law establishing the Turkish Employment Organisation (İŞKUR) was agreed in July 2003 by Parliament.

İŞKUR replaces the previous Employment Brokerage Agency and is one of the agencies implementing this project. Labour redeployment services have been designed specifically to help workers displaced by the privatisation of state-owned enterprises and the unemployed to quickly re-enter the labour force. İŞKUR started to implement counselling, training, and temporary community employment programs initiated in March 2002.

İŞKUR's counselling services cover a wide range of activities and use various methods (e.g. vocational and social counselling, provision of labour market information, aptitude/interest assessment, job search/job club programmes, placement and relocation). The training programmes offer vocational, general education and literacy, entrepreneurship training for small and micro-enterprises. The training and temporary community employment programmes (TCEP) are organised jointly with public, private or non-governmental organisations and İŞKUR procures the services from them. The unemployed, registered with İŞKUR, attend the courses. The partner organisations have to employ at least 50% of those who completed the training courses and

at least 10% of those who received counselling and participated in TCEPs for a certain period of time.

In July 2003, approximately 7500 participants were receiving support, with nearly 2000 in guidance and counselling measures and more than 5000 participating in training programmes. The total budget is Euro 4.4 million. Activities to provide training and to promote the programmes in provincial directorates, as well as information activities geared towards the service providers, are ongoing. İŞKUR has 117 offices located throughout the country, but its number of staff (around 1800) is very low, when compared with its counterparts in the EU. The annulment of an earlier Governmental Decree by the Constitutional Court delayed its formal establishment, but the law, which came into force in July 2003, will make it possible to recruit new staff up to a new ceiling level of 3100.

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Source: National Observatory/Turkish Employment Organization



Portugal

Temporary employment and vocational training measures

A number of temporary employment and vocational training measures incorporated in the employment and social protection programme (PEPS) adopted on 24 April 2003 were introduced at the end of July 2003.

The PEPS demonstrates a person-centered view of society, seeking to strike a balance between economic competitiveness and social cohesion with respect to the organisation of enterprises, vocational training, education, job security, conditions for investment and research. In the fields of employment and vocational training this programme seeks particularly the following: to encourage the creation of new jobs and mobility; to reinforce mechanisms which promote vocational training; to enhance employability by giving priority support for enterprises which recruit and train unemployed people; to promote mechanisms to encourage enterprises to convert fixed-term contracts into open-end contracts; to combat inequality which undermines the recruitment of certain categories of worker; and to simplify existing procedures so as to improve and facilitate access to employment and vocational training schemes.

The temporary employment and vocational training measures included in this programme are the following:

- training of skilled unemployed people;
- training for skilled work;
- employment-training;
- extension and increase of assistance for recruitment;

Portugal

Technological innovation and employment: the case of Portugal

The study which is about to be published (1) entitled 'Technological innovation and employment: the case of Portugal', was sponsored by the Institute for Innovation in Training (INOFOR) and produced with the assistance of external experts. It has the aim of making a contribution to the formulation of innovative policies.

The empirical nucleus of this study is an analysis of the relations between technological innovation, competitiveness and employment in Portugal during the 1990s.

A sectoral analysis covering the manufacturing industry and the services sector was carried out in order to clarify the relationship between the re-structuring of production, on the one hand, and the different procedures to follow for the creation/suppression of employment or to bring about the required changes in qualifications, on the other. Innovation is considered to be an important factor for improving the international competitiveness of existing sectors and creating entirely new sectors. The distinction between innovation in products and innovation in procedures is crucial, especially for employment.

- encouragement of geographical and occupational mobility;
- reduction in social security contributions in part-time work, tele-working and work at home;
- assistance for unemployed people and those threatened with unemployment in enterprises which are being re-structured, renewed, re-organised or modernised;
- household jobs;
- development of aid for handicrafts and natural, cultural and urban heritage;
- contribution to the costs of maintaining jobs in the case of acquisition of enterprises which are closing down or are in a serious financial situation.

It is also planned to set up a 'cyber-employment' service in every employment agency. This service will provide access to up-to-date databases of vacancies and 'situations wanted', opportunities for education/training and active employment schemes. It will also include a number of services addressed to job-seekers, persons seeking training and employers.

Source:

Decree Law no 168/2003 of 29/7 - 'Diário da República' no 173-I Series A, accessible on Internet at: <http://www.dr.incm.pt/pdf1s/2003/07/173a00.pdf> p. 4398

Ministry of Social Security and Labour

CID - Information and Documentation Centre

Decree Law No 84/2003 of 24 April 2003 establishing PEPS is available on Internet at: <http://www.dr.incm.pt/pdf1s/2003/04/096a00.pdf> p.2660

The study also dealt with some traditional sectors of industry in Portugal and started with the identification of corporate strategies - mainly in the technological field - and tried to determine their main repercussions on the volume and structure of employment. It also tried to identify the decisive profiles for the development of innovation in companies.

A theoretical examination was undertaken of the social and organisational effects of technology and their impact on employment, vocational re-training and skills. Amongst other aspects taken into consideration were the technology transfer process and the role played by highly skilled human resources and policies for promoting technological innovation.

For the purpose of comparison, a European macro-economic survey was conducted with the accent on the fundamental problems surrounding technological change and its repercussions on employment.

(1) The final report is planned for the end of 2003. At the time this Cedefop Info No 3/2003 goes to press a working document available: Valente, Ana Cláudia (Co-coord.) (2001), Inovação Tecnológica e Emprego, INOFOR, Lisboa (working document).

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Extract from Inofor in Notícia, June 2003, p.4. Available on Internet at: http://www.expressoemprego.pt/Studio/companysites/inofor/imag/INOFOR_0703.PDF
See also the opinion of Ana Cláudia Valente in Fórum Empresarial Ciência Tecnologia e Inovação No 73 of 7 April 2003: http://www.forum-empresarial.pt/73_ana.htm

Source: INOFOR/Isabel Salavisa



Estonia

European structural funds boost human resource development

The Estonian government is giving priority to human resource development. Co-financing by the European Social Fund (ESF) will help to implement the envisaged measures.

The whole of Estonia, where GDP per capita is currently 42% of the EU average, falls under Objective 1 of the EU Structural Funds - development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind.

To enhance competitiveness and to ensure a sustainable development of the economy, a well educated and flexible labour force is crucial. In general, Estonians value education and attainment levels among the adult population are relatively high. However, their qualifications do not necessarily match with today's labour market demands. Unemployment rates are high, while, at the same time, companies are lacking qualified labour.

Strategies and action plans aimed at improving education and employment have helped to ease the situation. But more needs to be done. The quality and esteem of vocational education and training (VET) still need to be boosted. Employment prospects for young people are not particularly promising. Continuous education and retraining opportunities are still limited.

Human resource development (HRD) is thus one of the priorities of the "Estonian National Development Plan (NDP) for the Implementation of the EU Structural Funds - Single Programming Document 2003-2006" (1), which was coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and approved by the Government in March 2003.

The HRD priority, co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), will complement the different strategies and action plans that have been launched in the context of the "Joint Assessments of Employment Priorities (JAP) in Estonia" (signed by the Government and the European Commission in view of Estonia's accession to the EU) and the National Action Plan for Employment.

To reduce school drop-out rates is one of the objectives of the HRD priority. This makes it necessary to bring education up-to-date. VET and VET-oriented higher education need to provide qualifications and skills that are useful for the labour market. In-service training and retraining opportunities need to be accessible for all, if people are expected to embark on lifelong learning.

The Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Research, and of Economic Affairs and Communications have jointly prepared four

measures. Changing the educational system to support employability and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all is top of the list. To make enterprises more competitive, the second measure aims at encouraging them to invest in HRD, while the third focuses on the prevention and alleviation of unemployment and, thus, eliminating poverty and social exclusion. To implement the wide range of action plans, programmes and initiatives as intended, smooth cooperation between the different actors in the public and private sector is required. Public sector training is called for and the fourth measure will therefore aim at familiarising civil servants with the procedures necessary to administer EU funds.

52% of the ESF funding allocated to the HRD priority has been assigned to measure 1. It will help fund in-service training of teachers and lecturers, teaching materials and teaching aids, as well as the development and implementation of VET curricula. Career guidance and counselling and activities that encourage drop-outs to re-enter education will receive support.

The end of 2003 and the beginning of 2004 are being dedicated to finalising the implementation procedures and organisation - publishing the project implementation manuals, organising training for project promoters

and potential applicants, as well as dissemination activities throughout Estonia.

(1) Alongside a number of objectives that are addressed on a horizontal basis, the NDP outlines the following priorities: Human Resource Development, Competitiveness of Enterprises, Rural Development and Agriculture, Infrastructure and Local Development, Technical assistance.

Web-pages on Estonian National Development Plan for Implementation of the EU Structural Funds - Single Programming Document 2003-2006:
<http://www.fin.ee/index.php?id=5119> (English version)
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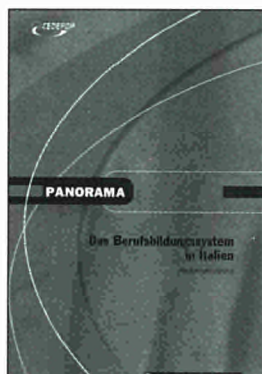
Source: Foundation for Vocational Education and Training Reform in Estonia



Vocational education and training in the Netherlands

Monograph 7008
Languages: en, nl
Price: EUR 18.50
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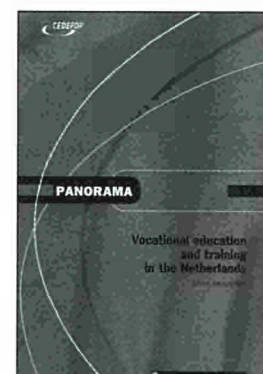


Vocational education and training in Italy

Short description
Cedefop Panorama series 5139
Languages: de, en, fr, it

Cat. No: TI-54-03-388-EN-C

Free of charge on request from Cedefop



Vocational education and training in the Netherlands

Short description
Cedefop Panorama series 5142
Language: en

Cat. No: TI-54-03-211-EN-C

Free of charge on request from Cedefop

New organisations and programmes

Ireland

Competencies development programme for small and medium-sized enterprises

While the leading Irish companies have long recognised the requirement for workforce training, there is extensive evidence showing that such companies are in a minority and that most Irish companies are operating with skills levels, which are not as advanced as best international practice. This skills gap applies in both the services and manufacturing industry. The recent national social partnership agreement 'Sustaining Progress' (see Cedefop Info 2/2003) proposed addressing this gap in a Competencies Development Programme "focused on the prioritised needs of people in employment".

The aim of the programme is to raise the competency level of targeted employees in particular occupations and within specific sectors, to ensure that the national stock of skills matches the national human resource requirements for continuous growth.

These skills will be identified by research and/or consultation with the relevant industry/business representatives and other agencies. The programme will provide financial subsidies to companies to enhance the competencies of specific members of the workforce, thus enabling those employees to cope with frequent and ongoing changes in work practices.

The programme, which will be administered by FÁS-Training and Employment Authority, replaces the Training Support Scheme (TSS). Under the TSS, grants were given directly to companies to train. In the Competencies Development Programme, grants are given to training organisation to run programmes in specific sectors. The training organisations must be on the FÁS-approved national register of trainers. The programme will, within the limits of funds available, be open to employees in firms whose employ-

ment level is 250 employees or less, in the private sector.

Ten key sectors have been selected. Within these, priority will be given to those industrial employees, especially in the general operative category, who require upskilling, cross-sectoral skilling and portable skills development. The ten sectors include construction, chemicals, printing, paper and packaging, contract cleaning logistics, food and drink, and business-related services, for which courses are currently being provided in software development, customer service and good hygiene.

Funding of EUR 4.5 million for the programme will be provided by the Irish Exchequer and the European Social Fund. There is a maximum grant of EUR 4 000 in respect of any single employee per programme in any one year. The rate of financial support

for certified programmes leading to a recognised qualification will be 60% of training costs, and for uncertified programmes 40% of training costs. An extra 10% of funding is available when training takes place in a designated disadvantaged region of the country. Proposed programmes must be designed and developed to allow for access and transfer, and for progression. Training must be longer than three days, but there is no maximum length.

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Source: FÁS

Germany

17 000 new training places a year thanks to the 'training place developer' programme

The Federal Ministry of Education Training and Research (BMBF) is to reinforce the work of 'training place developers'. BMBF State secretary, Wolf-Michael Catenhusen announced in October 2003 that the programme, which has already scored considerable success in eastern Germany, is to be extended to problematic regions of western Germany in the course of the coming year. "The federal government supports firms creating new training places in accordance with their specific requirements".

The BMBF-sponsored 'training place developers' advise firms on the creation of new training places, e.g. relieving them of red tape, drawing up training plans and establishing cooperation with vocational schools and inter-company training centres. This initiative has spawned the creation of some 17 000 new training places annually in eastern Germany in recent years. From 2004 onwards, the BMBF is to promote a further programme for training place developers in western Germany in conjunction with the ESF, pushing up the total funding for the national deployment of training place developers to some EUR 10.5 millions per annum over the next two years with a total of 215 training place developers operating - 155 in the east and 60 in the west. Catenhusen explained that the extension of the programme was in response to the deteriorating situation, especially in the west German training market. "Whereas the situation has largely stabilised in eastern Germany, fewer firms in the western part of the country now participate in the training effort". The state secretary recalled that "the many small and medium-sized companies in our country (are) prepared to make a special training effort if they are afforded support."

Source: BMBF/Cedefop/CF

Netherlands

Integral approach - a guarantee for success

Multiannual programme competence based learning and training started

CINOP (the Centre of Innovation of Vocational Education and Training) has, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, started a major programme of pilot projects to develop during 2003/4 competence based learning and training in senior secondary vocational education. Projects are being carried out together with regional training centres, institutions in the vocational education and training field, companies offering on-the-job training and other partners. The aim is to develop a 'practice-theory' link with various examples of approaches to the design of competence based (vocational) education.

How could competence based learning and training be defined? Various elements can apply to this broad concept. In the programme, two things are essential:

- competence based education is explicitly aimed at the key issues or problems in occupations and careers, and prepares the learner to deal with them;
- the accent is put on an optimal competence development of the learners, tailored to their personal wishes and possibilities.
- The aim of competence based education is to train people to become competent citizens and professionals. Competences and competence development are the pivot around which content, programming, organisation and pedagogic-didactical

design of the educational process should be developed.

Experiences have shown that this development touches upon all these different aspects of the educational organisation and the relation between school and company. Therefore, the integral approach is the key to success. All projects in the framework of the multiannual programme take into account all aspects of the educational process and look at the relationship between:

- the structure of the courses (both the structure itself and the relation between the courses in senior secondary vocational education and those in preparatory secondary vocational education and higher professional education),
- the programming of the courses,
- assessment and examination,
- organisation of the primary process,
- didactics,
- guidance and counselling.

Additional aspects such as cooperation with companies in the region and within implementation teams are also taken into account. In 2002, pilot projects started in sectors such as construction, metal, ICT, retail and health and welfare. In 2003, new projects were to be launched in adult education.

Another part of the multiannual programme is dedicated to specialised stud-

ies. The results of these studies will be used as input in the projects. Examples of studies carried out in 2002 are:

- competence based examination with the use of ICT,
- competence based learning material using ICT,
- guidance of students in an e-learning environment,
- portfolio as an instrument in competence based learning and training,
- development of the role of teachers and professionalisation of teachers and trainers,
- responsibilities in the process from qualifications to courses.

This programme places the innovation and development of vocational education in the framework of a lifelong of learning. The aim is to define learning trajectories directed at the development of the (professional) identity of the learner, the transfer to higher levels of vocational education and continuing learning during employment.

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CINOP has published various books and articles on this topic. For more information, contact info@cinop.nl

Source: CINOP



VET quality - certification systems

Netherlands

Yearbook qualification structure

Moves towards a competence based qualification structure have been taking place in the Netherlands for some years now (for example, see Cedefop Info 2/2002). The 2002 qualification structure yearbook ⁽¹⁾, deals with questions relating to the design and implementation of a competence based qualification structure in initial senior secondary vocational education.

The publication refers to two important reports that were published in 2002:

a) the report ⁽²⁾ from Colo (Association of expertise centres for vocational education and labour market): 'Samen werken aan leren' (Working together on learning), presented to the Minister in July 2002, and b) the advisory note ⁽³⁾ from ACOA (Advisory Committee for Education and the Labour Market) on the Colo report: Van kerncompetenties naar een toegankelijke, valide en effectieve kwalificatiestructuur (from core competences towards an accessible, valid

and effective qualification structure), published in autumn 2002.

With these reports in mind, the authors reflect in the first part of the yearbook on a variety of issues dealing with the development and implementation of a VET competence based qualification structure.

- How attractive is the qualification structure for the actors in the labour market? After examining the progress made on this topic between 1998 and 2002, one article asks how the options for the individual and the options for the labour market and professions can be interlinked in a meaningful way.
- What are the possibilities to develop qualifications in three situations, firstly, in the process of formulating occupational profiles based on competences; secondly, in the integration of occupational-, learning- and citizenship- competences in the career

perspective; and thirdly, when using the profiles for the design and programming of education? The conclusion is that much more creativity can be applied!

- The article on the courses at level 1 - that is the assistant level, below start qualification - argues that this level should be radically redefined into broader (not sector-specific) qualifications. The courses should be designed at regional level by educational institutions and regional employer bodies. This implies that the expertise centres for education and labour market (formerly known as national bodies for vocational education) would have to give up their coordinating role when talking about qualifications at this level.

The second part of the yearbook discusses the mono- or multi-functionality of the qualification structure for senior secondary vocational education. It deals with issues around initial and post-initial education and train-

ing, guidance counselling and career development, accreditation of prior learning and assessment.

⁽¹⁾ Blokhuis, F., Visser, K., *Jaarboek Kwalificatiestructuur 2002* (Yearbook qualification structure 2002), publication in Dutch. CINOP, November 2002. ISBN: 90-5003-391-1. (mail to verkoop@cinop.nl to order this publication).

⁽²⁾ *Samen werken aan leren: naar een competentiegerichte kwalificatiestructuur voor het middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* (Working together on learning: towards a competence based qualification structure for senior secondary vocational education), in Dutch. ACOA (Advisory Committee Education and Labour Market) / Colo, *vereniging kenniscentra beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven* (Association of expertise centres for vocational education and industry). Zoetermeer, 2002. (No ISBN number).

⁽³⁾ *Adviescommissie Onderwijs-Arbeidsmarkt* (ACOA - Advisory Committee Education and Labour Market). *Transparant beroepsonderwijs, perspectievolle loopbanen: de ontwikkeling van een valide, effectieve en toegankelijke kwalificatiestructuur voor competentiegericht middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* (Transparent vocational education, careers with perspective: the development of a valid, effective and accessible qualification structure for competence based senior secondary vocational education), in Dutch. 's-Hertogenbosch, 2002 (no ISBN).

Further information: info@cinop.nl

Source: CINOP

Belgium

Validation of prior learning and skills

Flanders: Validation of skills acquired through experience

From now on employees or job-seekers can obtain 'validation of skills acquired through experience' if they can prove that they have acquired certain skills necessary for the exercise of their occupation. These skills can be obtained through apprenticeship or training or, quite simply, through experience at the place of work, in daily life or through work in clubs and societies. This measure has been inspired by what is happening in France today.

The Flemish Government has approved the draft decree on the validation of skills acquired through experience. Through this validation of skills acquired through experience, the Flemish Government aims to enabling thousands of Flemish people to obtain a vocational qualification because of the experience they have gained. This validation ensures social advancement for employees, and a qualification upgrade for thousands of people who left school without a certificate. Recognition of skills acquired outside

the education system can, for some people, lead to a better paid job; for others, it means an evaluation of their knowledge and their aptitudes; for yet others this recognition will facilitate their search for a job because they will now be able to show the employer evidence of their competences.

Each person has the right to start a recognition procedure for a vocational certificate free of charge. The recognition of skills will always be linked to an occupation or a specific specialisation, e.g. mason, multi-skilled employee or travel agent.

The skills will be assessed on the basis of occupational profiles developed by the Economic and Social Council of Flanders (SERV). These profiles describe all the tasks which have to be performed by the employee and the skills required for this purpose. Any employee or jobseeker who wishes to acquire this recognition of his skills should take three steps. Firstly, all the skills and competences which a person has will be compiled in a dossier. After this, these skills and competences

will be assessed. The outcome can be the immediate acquisition of a certificate. But this will not always be the case and additional training may be required. Thus, if a person does not receive the certificate automatically, he or she will be informed of the additional skills needed to obtain the certificate.

The Flemish authorities have to designate the bodies which will be responsible for assessment and recognition. If everything proceeds as planned, the system will be launched at the beginning of 2004 for some fifteen occupations.

For more detailed information:
<http://www.vdab.be>

Source: Gestion Média et bibliothèque VDAB

French-speaking community in Belgium: Establishment of a common system for skills validation (1)

On the initiative of the Minister for Higher Education, Courses for Social Advancement and Scientific Research, Madame Françoise Dupuis, the Government of the French-speaking Community has approved, at final reading, a draft decree approving the cooperation agreement of 23 October 2002 concluded between the French-speaking Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission on skills validation in the field of continuing vocational training.

This cooperation agreement sets up a common system for validation of skills acquired outside the school systems. From now on, low-qualified workers or jobseekers can get recognition of the skills acquired through experience of life, work and vocational training. A 'skills certificate' will be proof of these vocational qualifications and can be used when seeking employment.

Various public-sector adult training providers (FOREM, Bruxelles-Formation, IFPME) and those providing courses for social advancement will be 'linked' by a single system of validation. Thus, the cooperation agreement will facilitate and simplify work entry approaches.

This will also provide better access to education thus promoting democratisation. Skills validation also has the aim of encouraging more people to take up their studies again by joining the courses for social advancement.

The main beneficiaries of this cooperation agreement will be people who have not always had the opportunity of beginning or completing studies.

(1) Cf. Cedefop Info No 3/2002 page 19 and online:
<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/download/Cinfo/Cinfo32002/C32M3FR.html>
For more detailed information:
<http://www.cfwb.be/actu>

Source: FOREM

Norway

Apprentices to assess their own training on the Internet

Apprentices will, from this autumn, be able to influence and assess their practical training period in the companies. The Norwegian Board of Education has, at the request of the Ministry of Education and Research, developed a tool Apprentice Inspectors. This is a net-based questionnaire, where the apprentices can assess their own teaching and learning situation. All aspects related to the training are touched upon, including the well being of the apprentices.

"It is important that we take all aspects of the apprentices' teaching environment seriously and simplify the conditions for improving their learning and teaching environment", says Mr Jostein Osnes, Chief Executive Officer of the Norwegian Board of Education.

The aim of the service is to give the responsible party, the county administration, a practical tool for self-assessment, but it is also a development of the existing "pupil

inspectors" tool introduced in 2001.

The assessment is carried out during the apprentice's practical training in a company, but the results can be used by all parties involved in the teaching and training of the apprentices, the company, the training office, and the county council, as well as the national authorities.

The assessment form consists of seven parts; motivation, well being, involvement, guidance, teaching aids, curricula, health and safety and environmental issues.

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Source: Teknologisk institutt, Norway

Bulgaria

The priority: setting standards

Developing national standards is a priority in Bulgaria's efforts to upgrade the vocational education and training system.

Today's labour market requires a more flexible vocational education and training (VET) system. Bulgarian training institutions have realised the pressing need for unified criteria to ensure the comparability and quality of vocational qualifications. Introducing national standards thus constitutes an important step towards enhancing the quality of VET. This will help align Bulgarian qualifications with those in other European countries. It will also constitute an important element for the accreditation of vocational qualifications acquired outside the higher education framework.

After a two-year debate at national level, it was decided to develop the national VET standards on the basis of occupational competences. This approach puts an emphasis on identifying activities, which are typical of a given occupation at different work places. For this purpose information is gathered in two ways. On the one hand, employers, employees and trainers have to fill out questionnaires. On the other, prominent specialists in the given occupational field monitor practices at the work place. This method was chosen because it brings VET closer to the world of work, and also provides the opportunity to reflect complex economic activities and social reality in the design of training programmes.

In line with this approach, the national VET standards are to outline training objectives and results, as well as the basic key and specific vocational competences required for each training programme, regardless of its form or duration. The common framework provides a unified structure and content of the standards for all occupations, which include the following elements: occupational profile, train-

ing objectives, training content, evaluation and certification of vocational competences, requirements for trainees and those that the training facilities have to meet.

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, which was set up on the basis of the Vocational Education and Training Act adopted in 1999, is the body responsible for the development of the national standards. Its tripartite board of directors and expert committees comprise representatives from ministries and other state institutions as well as employers' and employees' organisations.

Developing standards for around 180 occupations started in 2001. By August 2003 the standards for 25 occupations were ready to be approved, with another 25 still in the pipeline. The aim is to complete the work for all the remaining occupations by 2006. This might seem a somewhat cumbersome process. However, it is an important one in order to ensure that the vocational qualifications acquired at Bulgarian educational institutions (and the certificates issued) will be recognised at international level.

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Source: National Agency for Vocational Education and Training/National Observatory

Towards recognition and transparency of vocational qualifications



With the implementation of the Act on mutual recognition of qualifications passed in 2002, Malta responds to the challenge of increasing mobility

The Malta Qualification Recognition Information Centre (QRIC), established as the official national body to deal with recognition and comparability of both academic and vocational qualifications, coordinates the different agencies and authorities which are entitled to evaluate and award credentials and licenses.

As part of its commitment to support and promote co-operation in the field of vocational education

and training (VET), the Malta QRIC is in the process of setting up a National Reference Point (NRP) as part of the European Network of reference centres for vocational qualifications. The Malta QRIC is also a member of other relevant networks, namely the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and the European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC).

This ensures making the best use

of resources and the development of an integrated approach to education and training. It also enables the timely dissemination of information from the EU, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe, related to the issues of recognition of academic and vocational qualifications.

The Malta QRIC is currently working on a legal framework aimed at strengthening the administrative system, which processes requests for recognition of academic and vocational qualifications and which promotes transparency instruments, such as the European CV format and the common certificate and

diploma supplement. A website has been designed to give more information on the CV and how to use it. It has been disseminated to the chief government employment office and it has been adopted as a tool, which must accompany applications for some public service posts.

The Malta QRIC recognises the advantages that the Certificate Supplement has to offer. It is now hoped that stakeholders concerned, (social partners, employers, guidance services, colleges) will join in efforts to launch and develop these transparency instruments, which give an added dimension to voca-

tional qualifications and enhance their credibility.

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Source: QRIC

Financing of training

Italy

Continuing training: joint multi-sectoral funds launched

The Italian continuing vocational training system, financed through public and Community funding, such as the European Social Fund and measures stipulated by Laws No 236/93 and No 53/00, is to be endowed with a new financial instrument in the form of the joint multi-sectoral funds. The funds are to be managed by the social partners under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies. As the inter-ministerial decree (D.I. 23/4/2003) defining the terms and criteria for the allocation of the resources already envisaged under Article 118 of Law No 388/00 has been registered by the Court of Auditors, the decree for the distribution of the resources, which provides for a total of EUR 96 million for the launch of the activities of the joint multi-sectoral funds, has now come into effect.

The Italian continuing vocational training system covers all post initial training programmes for re-training or updating the training of adult workers. Law No 236/93 identifies as continuing training "any action addressed to employed or jobless adults in which workers may engage on the basis of their free choice. The activities include those implemented by companies with a view to the re- or upskilling of the workforce in response to technological innovation".

The measures implemented by the Ministry of Employment in the framework of Law 236/93 from 1996 up to the present date have involved a total spend of over EUR 690 million, more than 600 000 private-sector employees and some 51 000 firms. Company, sectoral and territorial training plans promoted by the social partners have been financed in the areas of quality assurance, technological and organisational innovation and health and safety. The law moreover introduced an experimental voucher system to cater for individual training demand, used by over 10 000 workers in the framework of measures funded under Law 53/00 (over EUR 30 million to date).

Starting up the system was largely possible thanks to European Social Fund funding (Objective 4) under 1994-99 programming. Moreover, a total of EUR 1.5 billion has been earmarked for the development of continuing training under the current regional and national operational programmes (OP) for 2000-2006 and the specific measures (section D) envisaged by the Community Support framework (CSF).

However, the data point to a low continuing training effort in SMEs. Only medium and larger firms adopt training plans with actions that are implemented in internal or external training structures. It is hoped that the introduction of the joint multi-sectoral funds, financed by an employers' contribution, will secure a more active role for SMEs. The funds are to be managed by the social partners, operating through bilateral bodies that have been set up, in conjunction with the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies and with the regions. This will occur in the context of the Continuing Training Observatory established by the finance act of 2003. The social partners will therefore play a key role in defining a new system of rules for access to funding, with the Observatory setting the general guidelines to guarantee the universal involvement of Italian workers.

Further information at www.welfare.gov.it

Source: Isfol (Alessandra Pedone)



Austria

Training vouchers as a motivation for continuing training

Continuous price hikes could mean the exclusion of the low-skilled from necessary continuing vocational training. The Austrian Chamber of Labour has scored some success in its efforts to counteract this trend.

Despite the ever-increasing need for continuing vocational training - preferably as lifelong learning - those engaging in continuing vocational training (CVT) are not evenly spread throughout society. Across Europe, those with higher-level qualifications tend to engage in CVT more than people with lower-level qualifications, although it is the latter group which is in greatest need of acquiring new skills.

In Austria, inadequate continuing training and the lower motivation of those with lower-level qualifications has been further aggravated by the continued price hikes for CVT provision in recent years. While low-level qualifications mean exclusion from company continuing training strategies, high costs make CVT prohibitive; as a result, the low-skilled remain low-skilled. Training vouchers offer a possible means of breaking through this vicious circle. Although the effectiveness of training vouchers is undisputed, it had not been clear whether vouchers also reached the educationally excluded. Studies conducted by the Austrian Chamber of Labour (*Arbeiterkammer*) have now shed light on this issue.

The Chamber of Labour is concerned by this issue insofar as it is the statutory representative of Austrian employees. In this capacity, it introduced a system of training vouchers in 2002 to bring training within the reach of its members and thereby motivate them to take up further learning. The vouchers can be requested by members by telephone, fax or e-mail and can be exchanged for

approx. 1 700 adult training courses within the period of a year.

Evaluation of this system has shown that the motivation strategy has paid off: 18 % of respondents had participated in a course on the basis of a training voucher, but 45 % of these indicated that they would not have undertaken this training without the voucher system.

A new and surprising finding emerging from the study is the sustainability effect triggered by the training vouchers: 71 % of respondents replied that they definitely intended to participate in a further course.

The Austrian experience shows that a combination of unbureaucratic access, financial support and a wide range of training provision is needed to make training vouchers efficient tools in combating educational exclusion, inequality and social disadvantage. Perhaps this experience will revitalise the ossified debate on the funding of training in Austria.

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Source: Refer - abf Austria/Helmut Hafner





Belgium

An estimate of public vocational training expenditure

It is not an easy exercise to identify the financial appropriations allocated to vocational training policies by a particular country. The more sources consulted, the greater the realisation tends to be that a plethora of definitions and accounting methods are applied in this field at the level of specific measures, expressed in different units, sometimes other than financial. Against this background, the Walloon public authorities have commissioned a study to take stock of the available data and to serve as a pilot project for the construction of global financial indicators.

The Research Centre of the Walloon Economy of the University of Namur, which has been working in this field since 2001, has put forward an estimate of Belgian public vocational training expenditure on the basis of budgetary provisions with the support of the research and statistics department of the ministry.

A detailed examination of the methodology is particularly important to clearly delimit the realities measured.

Certain criteria for decision-making are applied systematically, regardless of the level

of authority involved. They range from the selection of the budget to be considered and the sources consulted to the type of appropriation listed.

Although in Belgium, a federal state composed of regions and communities, vocational training falls under the competence of the regions, appropriations in the community budgets were nevertheless examined and entered into the accounts, under the assumption that they are to be regarded as training expenditure. Accordingly expenditure for the re-training of the personnel of the Walloon administration is entered under the same heading as expenditure for the re-training of teaching staff, covered by community budgets. Not to forget are federal appropriations, which appear as vocational training expenditure in the labour market policy databases.

The type of expenditure to be included in the estimates was established gradually by successive choices taken as the various headings were identified. With no claim to being exhaustive, the following schemes and fields were taken into account: vocational training for jobseekers, the self-employed,

persons with disabilities, literacy programmes, certain integration schemes leading to the acquisition of work experience, 'social promotion' measures and alternance training. On the other hand, other types of expenditure were excluded, e.g. items linked to cultural training programmes, full-time technical and vocational education, as well as debt servicing and capital expenditure, and higher (university or non-university) education.

On the basis of this method, the vocational training expenditure of the Belgian federal entities is estimated at EUR 866.3 million in 2001, EUR 202.7 million of which in the Walloon Region. This is the figure indicated in two official Walloon reports, the first addressed to the European Commission on the follow-up of strategies and policy guidelines in the field of lifelong learning, and the second to Cedefop in the framework of a recent collection of data.

The estimates for the years 2002 and 2003 are being prepared according to a typology that is as detailed as possible so as to serve as a basis for international comparison using Eurostat and OECD figures. These two

bodies have been (and will continue to be) consulted with a view to methodological discussions. In the interest of the ongoing development of the work at hand, the author welcomes any comments or exchanges of views on the assessment of vocational training expenditure.

Source: FOREM
Weickmans, G. *Une estimation des dépenses publiques régionales de formation professionnelle en 2001, située dans une perspective internationale*. In: *Contribution au 15ème Congrès des Economistes Belges de Langue Française, Commission 2*, p. 109-121, November 2002.

A summary of this article is published in the September 2003 edition of Wallonie (this journal can be ordered on the website www.cesrw.be). Electronic versions are available from the author on request: geraldine.weickmans@fundp.ac.be.



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Special target groups



Germany

Integration through qualification

Why do only a small proportion of young people of foreign origin living in Germany undergo vocational training? And, on the other hand, why do foreign-owned firms tend to offer fewer training places than German companies? These were some of the issues discussed at a media conference held at the press and information office of the federal government in summer 2003. The conference was attended by publishers, editors and journalists of the Greek, Italian, Russian, Croatian and Turkish media in Germany. These, as highlighted by Federal Minister for Education and Training, Edelgard Bulmahn, "reach the eight million or so residents of foreign origin in Germany and the approx. Five million citizens of migrant origin on a daily basis",

The fact that only 35% of youngsters of non-German origin engage in in-company vocational training (compared to 65% among

German youngsters), that 73% of jobless foreign citizens are unskilled and that only 6% of foreign-owned enterprises participate in the training effort, clearly points to an enormous information deficit at this level.

The minister stated that "if, together with all stakeholders, we can manage to achieve both goals - an increased training effort among foreign-owned firms and a higher motivation for training among young migrants - we will be on the right path". She estimated that there is scope for the creation of approx. 11 000 additional training places in foreign-owned firms.

The President of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), Ludwig Georg Braun, emphasised the necessity to integrate immigrants at an earlier stage, pointing out that employees of migrant origin were usually fully integrated

in the workplace, unlike in their private life. Describing foreign youngsters' bilingualism as "an incredible advantage", he expressed his conviction that youngsters with these skills and relevant educational qualifications were highly welcome in industry. "However it still appears to be necessary to tell companies that there is a potential out there which has yet to be tapped". At the same time the DIHK President called upon citizens of migrant origin to get more involved and make use of existing means of co-determination.

In her concluding statement to the conference, Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, State Secretary Marieluise Beck, stressed young migrants' need for support. Confirming that in the wake of the results of the PISA study, the Länder ministries of education were now prepared for structural changes in pre-school

and school-based education, she recalled the importance, not only of starting off with language coaching as early as kindergarten level, but also of providing instruction in German as a second language throughout schooling, and possibly also in parallel with vocational training. "We have still got to make society understand that immigration is a stimulant for the economy, for culture and for demographic development in Germany", remarked Beck.

Further information is available on the Kausa (national coordination centre for traineeships in foreign-owned companies) and Pro Qualifizierung websites. Both of these Cologne-based programmes operate nationally and aim to encourage the participation of migrants in training and to motivate foreign-owned firms to participate in the training effort: www.kausa.de and www.proqua.de.

Source: BIBB

Romania

Think globally, act locally

Prioritising educational measures on the basis of geographical areas and tailoring intervention programmes to local needs

During 2003 and 2004, the Bucharest Institute of Educational Sciences, is piloting an intervention programme to address social exclusion problems related to low school enrolment and high drop-out levels, especially by Roma children. It draws on the model of educational priority areas developed in other European countries (e.g. zones d'éducation prioritaires in France and education action zones in the UK). The pilot project is financed by UNICEF Romania and has local community support.

The aim is to devise and support education programmes and projects in geographical areas that have been identified as socially disadvantaged. The purpose of these educational priority areas is to improve educational achievement in schools through a comprehensive approach that comprises a combination of different strategies. Mobilising local action is a key instrument.

Programmes are launched to ensure basic skills and a minimum of vocational training for young people, particularly young Roma, who have dropped out of school before completing compulsory education in order to enter the labour market. Other initiatives aim at increasing access to secondary education and job insertion.

The underlying philosophy of all the initiatives and programmes is that positive reinforcement is required to create favourable learning conditions. Hence, they aim at triggering positive change in children and young people, at a cognitive, attitudinal, behavioural and motivational level. Removing barriers from people's minds and thereby improving relationships between the majority population and the Roma ethnic minority, are key features of the overall approach.

To do this, the institutional capacity of schools needs to be developed in order to raise the quality of education. To attract more people into education and to create the conditions for effective partnerships, a school needs to diversify its functions. By turning into a resource centre for students, parents and other members of the community, it can play a more significant role in the community and thus positively influence the image of education and training.

The pilot project is being carried out at a school in Giurgiu, a town situated south of Bucharest, which is socially and economically disadvantaged and has a high concentration of Roma population.

To improve the learning environment, the school infrastructure is being up-graded. A specific alternative curriculum, based on the objectives of the national curriculum has been designed in the spirit of the philosophy outlined above. The school manager and teaching staff have received training in how to apply the alternative curriculum, in school and class management, intercultural education, and establishing and fostering school/community relationships.

A vocational education and training module addressed to 13 to 16 year-olds, who have never been enrolled in school, will be designed. Two specially equipped workshops and a resource centre for providing vocational counselling and guidance for students and parents, have been established.

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Source: Institute of Educational Sciences, Evaluation Department

France

Occupational integration of the disabled

In its plenary meeting on 28 May 2003 the Economic and Social Council (CES) adopted an opinion on 'the occupational integration of people with a disability into an ordinary environment' (1). At the end of its deliberations, the CES stated that 'the efforts undertaken by the nation to bring about the social and occupational integration of disabled people remains unsatisfactory'. It called for a vote on a multi-year planning law which will 'rationalise and improve the established aids with enhanced institutional coherence'. A fresh impetus was also 'indispensable so that the nation can guarantee people with a disability full participation in society'.

While looking at the current situation, the opinion recalls that the objectives laid down in the Law of 1987, encouraging the recruitment by enterprises and administrations of disabled people, so that they make up at least 6% of their total staff, are far from being attained. 'The employment rate has levelled off at 4%'. More than one-third of private-sector enterprises subject to this employment obligation prefer to pay contributions to the *Association de Gestion du Fonds pour l'Insertion Professionnelle des Personnes Handicapées* - Association for the Administration of Funds for the Occupational Integration of Disabled People (AGEFIPH) (2) rather than actually recruit disabled people. For its part, the State, as employer in all areas of the public sector, does not have a higher employment rate for disabled people than the private sector.

For the CES, initial and continuing vocational training is one of the ways of promoting integration in the working world. However, successful integration pre-supposes overall commitment and customised support for the projects of individuals. Agefiph should therefore be backed up in its efforts.

In so far as current provision for the training of disabled workers does not cover all identified needs, the opinion proposes that specific training courses should be assessed and linked with other schemes organised in an ordinary environment. Without going as far as to lay down a quota for training places, the CES underlines 'the benefits of reserving places in training organisations or vocational training' for disabled persons.

As for access to a qualifying training, it is often hampered by the lack of the necessary entry level. 'It would be useful to think of an arrangement which links previous training

and on-the-job training. Here the enterprise has a central role to play'. Vocational training should be a priority included in the training plan of the enterprises and administrations. The CES opinion recommends the implementation of personalised guidance and follow-up measures with suitable arrangements for training (part-time or block) and the validation of the training received.

Finally, it is necessary to go further than the law of 1987 and to think of developing collective bargaining. The legal obligation to negotiate would then be extended to cover the working and employment conditions of disabled people in both industrial sectors and enterprises and in the public sector.

(1) The preparation of this opinion and a report on the subject followed the Government referral dated 15 November 2002. *L'insertion professionnelle en milieu ordinaire des personnes en situation de handicap*: Report presented by Marie-Claude Lasnier, Labour Section of the CES - Economic and Social Council

Journal Officiel: avis et rapports du Conseil économique et social, No 10-2003, June 2003, 145 p. (ISSN 0429-3841)
ISBN 2-11-120560-5
Available on Internet at:
<http://www.ces.fr/rapport/doclon/03052810.PDF> ou <http://www.ces.fr/rapport/rapzip/03052810.zip>

(2) The Agefiph administers the funds for the occupational integration of disabled persons. Created by the Law of 10 July 1987, it has the aim of promoting vocational training, access to employment and job security for disabled people by using the contributions of the enterprises.

Additional information on Agefiph and its publications:
<http://www.agefiph.asso.fr/>

Also read:
- *Handicap et formation: dossier*, in: *Actualité de la formation permanente*, No 185, July-August 2003
Information in the journal 'Actualité de la formation permanente' on the Centre INFFO site: <http://www.centre-inffo.fr/maq100901/produits/ouvrages/afp.htm>

- The fact sheet 'Formation des handicapés' on the Internet site of Centre INFFO, heading 'Dispositif de formation', sub-heading 'Droits et démarches': http://www.centre-inffo.fr/maq100901/dispositif/droits_demarches/formation_handicapes.htm

- *La vie avec un handicap: rapport au Président de la République suivi des réponses des administrateurs et organismes intéressés / Cour des comptes*. Paris: Direction des journaux officiels, 2003, 309 p.
Document available at:
<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/brp/notices/034000382.shtml>

Source:
based on the article by Philippe Grandin, published in INFFO Flash, No 614, 15-31 May 2003

Belgium

Available for training thanks to a day-care centre

An integrated day-care project enables mothers to undergo training and/or re-training while their children are looked after. This day-care project has been nominated for a prize by the Ministry for Social Assistance because of its cooperation with different services active in other fields.

At Onki in Heusden-Zolder (province of Limbourg), children are looked after by a day-care service while their mothers undergo training at Agora (training centre), at the VDAB, at Stebo (an independent and innovative organisation which develops and implements projects which are socially very innovative). The scheme focuses on underprivileged areas in Limbourg. This initiative is very useful because, without this day-care centre, many mothers would not be able to go in for training. But this possibility of attending training is essential in a municipality like Heusden-Zolder which has a large number of unskilled women jobseekers, mainly immigrants who now have the possibility of learning Dutch in order to find a job while their children are in good hands.

This social concerted action to establish day-care centres was launched six years ago. The first stage: a small magazine distributed to all inhabitants which listed the whole range of possibilities of obtaining day-care services for children aged 0 to 12 years, from host families to playgrounds. In this local scheme all involved parties were invited to the negotiations, i.e. day-care centres, schools, parents, the Public Centres for Social Aid (CPAS), the persons responsible for the playground initiatives. By getting together it was possible to get to know one another better, to discuss the problems and to find a solution. All the partners meet three times a year, but a working group meets every month. The partners are now looking for a means of providing facilities for adolescents and for the Onki day-care centre - launched as an experiment with the support of the European Commission and which could continue thanks to the concerted action. The plan is a simple day-care centre with a certain number of places where the children of persons attending training can be looked after. The day-care centre gets a subsidy of EUR 18 000 every year. The Flemish Ministry for Social Aid believes that the establishment of this day-care centre is an important measure to overcome the compartmentalisation between the different day-care facilities and to encourage the different services to collaborate with one another.

For more information: <http://www.vdab.be>
Source: Gestion Média and VDAB library



Mobile technology and learning

Mobile phones are the most popular technological devices among the younger population and are considered by many to be an essential lifestyle accessory. Perhaps young people's enthusiasm for these technologies can be harnessed to encourage them to take part in lifelong learning in a way that fits with their lifestyles.

Many young adults, particularly those who are unemployed or in low-skilled jobs, have poor literacy and numeracy and do not take part in learning after leaving school. For some, school was not an enjoyable experience and many are disillusioned with traditional education. Others are unwilling, or unable, to travel to educational institutions. Using mobile phones and other hand held devices, plus an informal or games-based approach, may be a way of motivating young people, making learning fun and encouraging participation in lifelong learning.

The m-learning project, supported by the EC Information Society Technologies (IST) pro-

gramme, is carrying out research into mobile learning. The project involves commercial and research organisations in the UK, Italy and Sweden. The m-learning project aims to involve young people in enjoyable learning activities via mobile phones, and other hand-held devices, and hopes to encourage some of them to progress to more substantial lifelong learning. The m-learning materials are designed to help learners to improve their literacy or numeracy and thereby to enhance their self-esteem and life changes. Learner research and prototype product trials, co-ordinated by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), start in autumn 2003 involving learners in the three countries.

The research activities within of the project include investigating the features and capabilities offered by current and future mobile devices and networks. For example, the project is assessing the potential of these devices as vehicles for delivering aspects of lifelong learning. Research also explores the behaviour and

attitudes of young mobile phone users, how mobile learning can be blended with existing learner approaches and how mobile learners can be supported and encouraged.

Prototype learning materials are being developed and designed to be particularly attractive to the target audience of younger learners, e.g. through learning themes focusing on football or music.

Designers of mobile applications are currently exploring ways in which mobile phones and other palmtop devices can be used for learning. Examples include:

- SMS or 'text' messaging - a very familiar and popular method of interactive communication via phones which is also very economical in terms of screen space;
- verbal and audio communications, including verbal command recognition activating pre-recorded responses from a server, and delivery of recorded material;

- voice-to-text and text-to-voice technologies, these also have potential for supporting literacy development and language learning as well as enabling people with eyesight or hearing difficulties to participate in mobile learning activities;

- mobile phones as two-way communications devices, in the normal way, but as part of a collaborative activity or game.

The m-learning project is investigating how these technologies in the hands of these young people, now and in the near future, might be used to engage them in learning activities, start to change their attitudes to learning and thereby contribute to improving their skills, opportunities and lives.

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Source: QCA

Vocational guidance

Finland

Skills 9 competition supports adolescents' awareness and choice of occupations

Skills 9 is the most recent national competition in education and training in Finland. Its main aim is to get adolescents, who are about to finish their initial upper secondary vocational education and to make decisions about their future, acquainted with the variety of existing occupations available and to encourage them to select vocational training. One essential goal is to develop local cooperation between vocational schools, comprehensive schools and companies. *Skills 9* is also intended to become a new instrument in comprehensive school counsellors' toolkit.

Skills 9 is a team game which offers positive experiences and information about occupations and vocational schools. In 2003, it is being organised for the third time. Participating teams have three members, both girls and boys. Every team completes many tasks, which are then evaluated. Evaluation criteria can be time, quality, numbers, etc. Team work and cooperation are evaluated every time and a team cannot succeed without involving all its members. Learning and obtaining information by experience is the main theme in the arrangements.

The competition structure is at three levels. There are local school games, regional games and national finals, which are held at the same time as the national skill competitions. The finals are large-scale events with music, speakers and many other smaller happenings. The best teams are rewarded with mopeds, CD players and mobile phones.

All involved partners have given a positive evaluation of *Skills 9* processes and its effects. For example, it dou-

bled the number of visitors during school open-door days and increased motivation both among school personnel and pupils. In schools that have already participated, pupils actively ask about the games and possibilities to participate in them.

Skills 9 is carried out as a European Social Fund (ESF) project guided by a project management team with representatives from technical and elementary school teachers, counsellors, educational administrative organisations and both employer and employee organisations.

Skills 9 games are organised by *Skills Finland*. *Skills Finland's* mission is to promote vocational training with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of skills development. It does this by organising national vocational competitions, developing and training young people and competition specialists and participating in international vocational competitions. *Skills Finland* was established in 1993 with the backing of the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education. In addition to organisations representing the educational sector, the central employer and employee organisations and organisations representing professionals in training and education have also been involved in the work.

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Source: NBE

Finland

Educational guidance and counselling evaluated

Following the publication (*) in autumn 2002 of an evaluation of educational guidance and counselling in Finland, guidance has become central to education policy development. The National Board of Education has launched a project for educational guidance and counselling at all levels and forms of education. The aim of this project is to develop guidance and counselling services in different educational settings so that local plans for providing counselling in schools follow the new national curriculum guidelines. The other goal is to identify good guidance practices so that these could be implemented more widely.

The 2001/2002 evaluation covered initial education, general and vocational upper secondary education and transition from one level to another. Evaluation criteria were drawn from the goals defined in curriculum guidelines, educational legislation and other documents that set targets for education and educational guidance and counselling. One reason for carrying out the evaluation was the many changes in the 1990s, which increased the flexibility of the school system and the scope for student choice, and thus stepped up demand for educational guidance and counselling.

The survey was carried out by addressing some 13 000 questionnaires and interviews to pupils/students in general upper secondary education and vocational education and training, guidance/counsellors, schools principals, education providers, provincial state offices and parents. The sample was statistically representative.

The evaluation revealed serious shortcomings in access to educational guidance and counselling. In vocational upper secondary education and training, full-time study counsellors were each responsible for, on average, 510 students. This means that the objective - adequate and sufficient provision of personal guidance and counselling for all students - cannot be achieved. In over one third of the vocational institutions, the upper limit of 300 students per counsellor, was exceeded. Students reported difficulties in getting appointments for individual guidance and nearly 43% of them considered that they had not been given enough guidance and counselling.

As a result, of those who had started vocational education and training, only 15% believed that they had made the correct occupational choice, while 30% were uncertain, and 55% said that the field they had chosen was not really what they wanted.

Guidance and counselling in study skills in vocational education and training also need to be improved. 25% of students thought that they had not received any help with their learning, with setting their study goals and developing their study methods. They found it particularly difficult to get help for learning difficulties and to obtain information and guidance for further studies.

Study counsellors lack training

The qualification level of guidance counsellors is not adequate, even though there has been guidance counsellor training for vocational institutions since the 1980s. Training is based on vocational teacher training and the majority (79%) of full-time study counsellors are qualified. However, of all those providing guidance and counselling (i.e. teachers and full-time counsellors), over a half lack formal qualifications. The situation is particularly worrying among recently appointed study counsellors, of whom 80% were unqualified.

In the survey, school heads rated the functioning of the guidance and counselling system considerably higher than did students. This can be explained by insufficient monitoring and feedback systems in the institutions, which means that the inadequacies of educational guidance and counselling do not get the notice of either the school head or education decision-makers.

(*) Numminen, U., Jankko, T., Lyra-Katz, A., Nyholm, N., Siniharju, M. & Svedlin, R.: *Opinto-ohjauksen tila 2002. Opinto-ohjauksen arviointi perusopetuksessa, lukiossa ja ammatillisessa koulutuksessa*. [Evaluation of Educational Guidance and Counselling in Finland] Arviointi 8/2002. Helsinki, Opetushallitus. For English summary, see: http://www.edu.fi/julkaisut/eng_opo_2003.pdf

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Source: NBE



United Kingdom

Building opportunities through workplace learning

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) Learning Services received a grant of £2.25 million (EUR 3.30 million) from the European Union's Equal programme⁽¹⁾ to develop and test new approaches to workplace learning. The objective is to support participation by those in the workforce who are not currently taking part in learning, particularly those with basic skill needs. The three year project started in May 2002.

Equal forms part of the EU strategy to create more and better jobs and make sure that no one is denied access to these jobs. The project addresses the pillar of the European Employment Strategy, which promotes life-long learning and inclusive work practices.

A number of national studies published in 2001, including a review of workforce learning carried out by the UK government and the TUC/Confederation of British Industries (CBI) productivity report, highlighted the need for new approaches. They also showed a direct relationship between investment in learning and competitiveness. The project aspires to play an important role in delivering agreed national priorities.

The project's rationale is the need to address two interlocking issues:

- Significant numbers in the workforce have low levels of skills and are the least likely to take part in learning. There will be a particular focus on the barriers faced by women and minority groups.
- Low skills, including poor basic skills, directly damage productivity and competitiveness.

Since May 2002, the TUC, Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), the national Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Basic Skills Agency and the University for Industry (Ufi)/learndirect have worked together within the Equal programme to develop a number of new products. These relate to systems and materials, including information and communication technology (ICT), to support learning through work, widening participation, and developing progression routes through workplace learning. These initiatives are meant to empower the union, the learning representatives (see box) and the learners themselves, thus achieving benefits in terms of earnings and job security for individuals and productivity returns for enterprises.

Union learning representatives

As of May 2003, union learning representatives have a statutory right to reasonable time off with pay to carry out their duties to promote the development of learning and skills in the workplace and to undergo training themselves for the job. Union learning representatives are in a position to know who is up for training at work and who perhaps needs a little persuading before they sign up for learning. Union learning representatives can also help their employers plug skill gaps in the workforce.

The new rights for these learning specialists help to reinforce this role, boost their

numbers (more than 4 500 union learning representatives have been trained to carry out these duties since 1998, mainly through the Government's union learning fund) and enable them to open up new learning opportunities to many thousands of workers who need them. By 2010, there could be as many as 22 000 in place helping over 250 000 workers a year back into learning.

Union learning representatives are particularly effective in reaching low skilled workers and those with basic skills needs in literacy and numeracy - these are the very people who so often miss out on existing opportunities for training and development.

The sectors in which the models are being developed are print and graphics, transport, retail, low-paid workers in local government and its suppliers, and hospitality and leisure. Each pilot is first being carried out in one region and then rolled out nationally. Local partnerships have been brought together to run the pilots.

The powerful partnership, the close fit with policy issues, an evaluation programme and research studies guarantee that this project will achieve considerable national impact. Partners in Germany and The Netherlands and the European Trade Union College (ETUCO), will also help to ensure the direct impact of the project on national and transnational practice.

⁽¹⁾ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.html

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More information on the UK Equal projects can be found at <http://www.equal.ecotec.co.uk>.

For general information about the project partners see
TUC - <http://www.tuc.org.uk>
STUC - <http://www.stuc.org.uk>
LSC - <http://www.lsc.gov.uk>
Ufi/learndirect - <http://www.ufild.co.uk/>

Source: QCA

Slovakia

No longer waiting for Godot

The rapidly growing automotive industry is tuning up vocational education and training

Slovakia's economic performance heavily depends on its automotive industry. And the sector is expanding, with production rates expected to triple by 2010. In June 2003 the cornerstone of a new plant was laid 50 kilometres northeast of Bratislava. By 2006 it will provide direct employment for 3 500 people and indirectly over 6000 jobs with suppliers. Another giant investor from the automotive industry is expected to enter Slovakia soon.

No use to keep complaining about insufficient education and training. Július Hron, the Head of the Motor Vehicle Dealers and Services Guild (MVDSG) invited all the key players to establish a steering committee and a special task force to redesign VET curricula from scratch.

The first step was to draw up job and school leaver profiles, based on international experience. The guild provided funding for study visits to relevant countries, e.g. Germany, France, the Czech Republic and Hungary. According to a survey conducted by the guild, the Slovak automotive industry will by 2010 need at least 15 000 people (28 000, if potential new investors implement their plans), who have attained at least ISCED level 3.

Curricula redesign started in October 2002 in co-operation with the State Institute of VET (SIOV). The guild set the standards and more than 40 teachers were invited to review the old curricula. In January 2003 a group of experts (teachers, representatives of the guild etc.) started to develop curricula. In March 2003, the group completed its work. "We did it in a 'conclave manner', said Stanislav Pravda, responsible for educational issues within the MVDSG, "the group remained locked up for three days until a re-

sult had been reached". Subsequently, the Ministry of Education approved the new curricula for ISCED level 3 in three occupational areas - (auto/car electrician, vehicle body (re) finisher/vehicle painter and passenger car mechanic).

The guild using a list of over 100 criteria, has selected 12, out of 124, vocational schools, spread all over the country. These will create a special network aimed at meeting the labour requirements of the guild members. The guild and the regional self-governing authorities will co-finance the equipment of the schools, but also hope for additional funding through European projects, which the guild has started to prepare. In one of these schools a training centre for educators will be set up. New textbooks are being prepared and will be funded by either the Ministry of Education or the guild.

These developments represent an important new departure in terms of co-operation between the education system and employers in Slovakia. The input by both sides into the development of curricula was substantial. In effect, a growing economic sector was faced with a gap between skill demand and supply and joint action has been taken to remove the mismatch.

In other VET sectors, the traditional debate continues. The schools are unaware of the labour market needs within a changing economy and do not understand the employers' complaints. The employers think that schools are simply reluctant to change. And they are still waiting for Godot, although it is quite easy to embark on an alternative strategy.

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Automotive Industry Association of Slovakia
<http://www.zapsr.sk>
Source: National Observatory



Lithuania

Chambers assessing qualifications

The Chambers are in charge of the final examinations for students at vocational schools.

Since independence in 1990, in Lithuania it has been the responsibility of the state to regulate initial vocational education and training (VET) by setting qualification requirements for different occupations. Curriculum design has been delegated to the school level. Teachers design the programmes and external experts then evaluate them. This allows quality control of the input parameters. To ensure quality and comparability of the learning output, students' qualifications need to be assessed in a proper way.

Previously, schools themselves conducted the assessment according to general regulations set by the Ministry of Education and Science. This system made it difficult to ensure the comparability of qualifications awarded. To ensure a more consistent approach, The Ministry of Education and Science decided to involve the employers' organisations, and in

1998 a reform was launched. The responsibility to organise the final exams at VET schools was transferred to the two chambers, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts and the Chamber of Agriculture. In 2003 the modified exam system has been implemented throughout the country.

A decree of the Ministry of Education and Science regulates the organisation of the final examinations for VET students. The decree stipulates the responsibilities of the Chambers, which decide on the place and time for the examinations. They prepare and approve, in agreement with the vocational schools, the questions for the theory exam and the practical skills assignments. They also approve the composition of the exam committees. In every school, a different exam committee is set up for each of the occupation-specific programmes. Each committee has three members, an employee representative of the relevant occupation, a vocational teacher and an employer in a related field. The employer representative, who chairs the committee, is selected by the

Chambers, which also nominate the employee representative following agreement with the relevant trade union organisation. The vocational teacher is delegated by the school principal. The chambers organise the examinations and designate an appeals committee.

This new way of conducting assessment has made schools become more committed to meeting the qualification requirements set by the state and to pay more attention to labour market needs. The participation of all the interested parties - employers, employees and school representatives - in the process stimulates further development of the social dialogue.

Within the labour market training system, first steps to transfer the responsibility for the final assessment to the Chambers have also been taken. The separation of responsibilities for training and final assessment is to enhance the effectiveness and quality of vocational education and training. This should help develop a mechanism to recog-

nise and validate informally acquired competencies.

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Source: Ministry of Education and Science/National Observatory

Internationalisation of vocational education and training



Slovenia

Leonardo as change agent?

The Leonardo da Vinci programme is often referred to as a 'laboratory of innovation', where 'innovation' is anything that has proven to be a useful development. So what is the innovative dimension of this programme in Slovenia?

This has been one of the subjects of a national analysis and intermediate evaluation of the Socrates II and Leonardo II Programmes. The report covers the period 2000-2002 and was carried out by the Educational Institute in Ljubljana in 2003.

Blurring boundaries between different institutions and new forms of co-operation between enterprises and educational organisations has been one of the side effects in most of the Slovenian Leonardo projects. Cooperating with partners from other countries has provided added value: the cultural differences in working methods and actions constitute a learning process and a contribution towards internationalisation.

The survey showed that internationalisation has become an integral part of everyday VET activities in Slovenia, with the Leonardo da Vinci

(LdV) programme as an important tool in this process. More than 70% of Slovenian participants experienced an immediate improvement in their occupational and intercultural skills and competences, their creativity and readiness to participate in new European projects. Over 85% of participants gained additional professional self-confidence and social skills, and substantially improved their ability to acquire new knowledge and to work in teams as a result of their co-operation in international project environments.

All Slovenians who participated in mobility projects, improved their occupation-related language skills and gained self-confidence. About three quarters of the young people involved became acquainted with new methods and systems of working in different companies, while for over 60% their training abroad opened up new employment possibilities.

But have the Leonardo projects actually influenced the contents and teaching methods of VET in Slovenia? Evaluating their impact and their sustainability after only four years is not really pos-

sible. However, the impact will soon be visible, as over two thirds of all Slovenian participants believe that the projects also affect those staying at home.

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Source: CMEPIUS/National Observatory

Comparable vocational training qualifications

Continued from page 1

Germany and France', stated Wolf-Michael Catenhusen, State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Education, Training and Research. Comparability of German skilled worker qualifications and their French equivalents, the baccalaureats professionnels and brevets professionnels, was commensurate with rapidly changing occupational profiles, said Catenhusen. He also pointed out that the comparability of qualifications strengthens the confidence of firms in the quality of the vocational training of the neighbouring country, thus increasing the motivation for employers to take on employees from across the Rhine.

Source: BMBF

Germany

UNEVOC now firmly established in Bonn, centre co-funded by the federal government

A national ordinance adopted by the federal cabinet on 6 August 2003 has firmly established the seat of the International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Bonn. UNEVOC is allocated an annual funding of EUR 200 000 from the budget of the Federal Ministry of Education, Training and Re-

search (BMBF). With this it should establish a worldwide vocational education and training network.

UNEVOC is to compile and disseminate material on the development of vocational education and training and act in an advisory capacity. Alongside BMBF funding, the UNESCO Centre is also supported by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooper-

ation and Development for the implementation of projects in developing countries.

UNESCO's International Centre has been operational since the end of 2000. Its staff is now being gradually expanded to some 20 employees. UNEVOC is one of the twelve UN agencies on the UN campus in Bonn. Over 200 UNESCO vocational education and

training agencies worldwide are UNEVOC partners.

Further information at www.unevoc.unesco.org.

Source: BMBF

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