

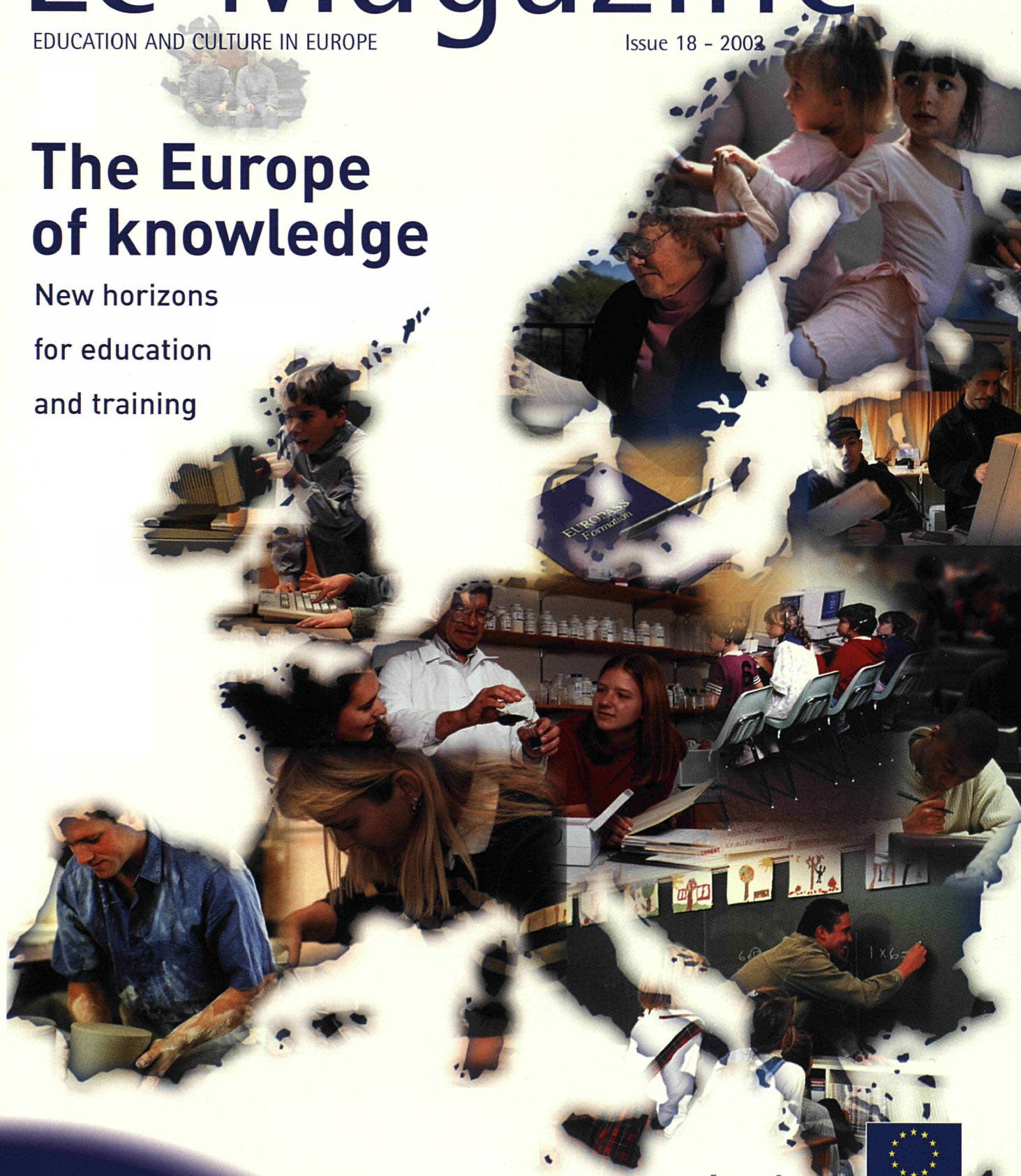
Le Magazine

EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN EUROPE

Issue 18 - 2002

The Europe of knowledge

New horizons
for education
and training





The Europe of knowledge



Directorate-General for Education and Culture

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Empowering Europeans to move faster

into the society of knowledge



The sharp acceleration over recent years in Community education and training cooperation, together with more intense research activity, are little by little building a European area of knowledge. The need to progress towards this objective was clearly asserted in March 2000 by the Lisbon European Summit.

The European Union wishes to become the world's most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based society by 2010. Consequently, starting from today, all policies, programmes and instruments must be integrated within a coherent, explicit and visible perspective. Education policies therefore have a key role to play. The Heads of State or Government meeting in Barcelona in March 2002 set the objective, within this framework, of making our education and training systems the world's best in terms of quality of performance.

How can we attain this objective? First, by defining together in Europe a political, economic and social framework – in particular for education and training systems – that gives everyone the opportunity to work, learn and live in the society of knowledge. The action plan *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* was adopted, at my initiative, to serve as the guiding principle of education and training policies. An eLearning action plan was launched to enable everyone to take advantage of the tremendous potential of the new information and communication technologies in education and vocational training. Finally, an action plan for mobility, a factor of competitiveness and efficiency, was approved by the Heads of State or Government at the Nice European Council in December 2000.

The current and future Member States will succeed in building a society of knowledge only by working together. This is much more than a competition between the different systems to try to determine which is best, because there is no such thing as a single education model that can simply be applied throughout Europe. Instead, it is a question of creating an area of coordination and the conditions enabling all European citizens to win recognition of their acquired knowledge and experiences, whatever their form and wherever they may live throughout the territory of the European Union. Thus, in the field of education, the Member States and accession countries have decided to work together on three priorities: the quality, accessibility and openness of our education systems.

The objective is to build up dialogue and systematic exchanges of information and experiences between those concerned, in short, to strengthen cooperation on a European scale.

In addition to giving an adequate response to the needs of individuals and employers, education and training systems remain the principal guarantors of the Union's most important values: tolerance, democracy and the spirit of civic responsibility.

As European Commissioner responsible for education, I intend to ensure, together with the Commissioners responsible for policies such as employment, research or innovation, that the strategies implemented are equal to the goals we have announced.

Viviane Reding

*Member of the European Commission
responsible for Education and Culture.*

The strategic issues

in education and training

Education and training are key factors for a competitive economy and the welfare of its citizens. European education and training systems rank among the best in the world. However, many challenges still have to be taken up: adapting to economic and technological changes, combating failure at school, doing away with barriers between education and training specialisations. In this context, a general mobilisation was needed to respond to the strategic goal set by the EU Heads of State or Government in Lisbon in March 2000: "to become the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy". Two years later, the Barcelona European Council made clear the scope of this goal: to make European education and training systems a world-class reference.

To put it plainly, the States need to work together in three strategic areas:

- > improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems,
- > facilitating the access of all to these systems,
- > opening these systems up to the world around them.

The common theme linking the three areas is lifelong learning, namely, giving every individual the capability of learning 'where, when and how' he or she wishes. The ambition of the project, translated into an action plan, is equalled only by the complexity of its implementation.

The key objectives of the European strategy



> objective 1:

Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems

- Improving education and training for teachers and trainers
- Developing skills for the information society
- Ensuring access to the information and communication technologies for everyone
- Increasing recruitment to scientific and technical studies
- Making the best use of resources

> objective 2:

Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems

- Creating an open learning environment
- Making learning attractive
- Supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion

> objective 3:

Opening education and training systems up to the world around them

- Strengthening links between the various education and training systems and with research and society at large
- Developing the spirit of enterprise
- Improving foreign language learning
- Increasing mobility and exchanges
- Strengthening European cooperation

Measuring the quality of education and training systems and being able to compare them presupposes the existence of clearly defined indicators of skills, both for teachers and trainers and for learners. However, 'across the EU, there is currently no common understanding of what basic skills are and of their scope', states the report⁽¹⁾ drawn up in preparation for the Barcelona European Summit (March 2002), which laid the foundations for the adaptation of education and training systems.

Certain internationally recognised indicators are already available for fundamental skills or aptitudes, such as literacy and numeracy. For example, the European average⁽²⁾ for literacy skills is indexed at 498, whereas the United States and Japan record scores of 504 and 522 respectively. Results are anything but uniform across Europe, however. The average for the top three countries is 532, and Finland ranks number one with a score of 546. This is proof that the Member States have everything to gain from cooperating and sharing their experiences to create an overall dynamic for improving the quality of education and training systems.

While implementation of the new information and communication technologies (ICT) in education and training must be stepped up (see page 9), it is equally important to ensure that there are enough teachers in mathematical, scientific and technical specialisations. Here too there are large disparities in the EU. To take but one example, information technologies and mathematics, 16.9%⁽³⁾ of students in higher education are studying these disciplines in the

best ranking EU country, compared to barely 5.9%, which is the lowest score.

Enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching/training profession, improving skills and aptitudes and expanding the use of ICT will require investments, both public and private, collective and individual.

(1) *Education and training in Europe: diverse systems, shared goals for 2010. The work programme for the future objectives of education and training systems*, COM (2001) 501, end.

(2) PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*), OECD, 2001. The statistics for the EU do not include the Netherlands.

(3) Source: Eurostat. UOE data collection 2000 – provisional figures.

Developing information society skills

Encouraging scientific and technical studies

5

#18 Dossier

	Fundamental numeracy skills (scores)	Fundamental literacy skills (scores)
B	520	507
DK	514	497
D	490	484
EL	447	474
E	476	493
F	517	505
IRL	503	527
I	457	487
L	446	441
NL	Not available	Not available
A	515	507
P	454	470
FIN	536	546
S	510	516
UK	529	523

Source: PISA (OECD, 2000)

	% of postgraduate students in the disciplines concerned, in 2000	% of postgraduate degrees awarded in scientific and technical fields per 1,000 inhabitants, aged 20 to 29, in 2000
	Sciences, mathematics and computer sciences	Design, manufacturing and construction
B	9.2	11.8
DK	10.2	10.0
D	12.7	15.8
EL	Not available	Not available
E	12.6	16.1
F	Not available	Not available
IRL	16.9	11.4
I	7.6	16.8
L	9.3	8.1
NL	5.9	10.7
A	11.6	14.0
P	9.4	17.9
FIN	10.6	25.6
S	11.4	19.1
UK	14.8	8.8

Sources: Eurostat, UOE

Towards greater flexibility

Education systems are complex and difficult to understand. Barriers often divide specialisations. The first step will be to improve information and orientation for learners. This initiative needs to be accompanied by the creation of bridges between specialisations, the adaptation of teaching methods and an effort to combat early school leaving.

This is an ambitious programme. It will succeed only if individual learners are convinced – and enabled – to continue learning as long as possible, through post-school or university education. Across the European Union, some 26,3% of 25 to 34 year olds have completed only a lower secondary education (as against 12.1% for the three Member States with the best results)⁽¹⁾. As for young people aged from 18 to 24 who have not continued their education beyond lower secondary level, 17.8% are not in any kind of training (7.8% for the three Member States

with the highest scores)⁽²⁾. Keeping young people learning is all the more important since experience shows that the individuals with the best basic qualifications are also those who will have access to the most learning opportunities thereafter. The stakes are important and the European Union has set the priority objective of reducing by half, by 2010, the number of 18 to 24 year olds having completed only lower secondary education.

Promoting
active citizenship,
equal opportunities
and social cohesion

% of the population
aged 25-34 not having
completed upper secondary school,
in 2000

B	24.6
DK	13.1
D	15.4
EL	27.5
E	44.5
F	23.6
IRL*	34.3
I	40.9
L	31.8
NL	25
A	16.2
P	67.9
FIN	13.7
S	12.8
UK	10.5

Sources: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

(*): 1997

(1) Source: LFS (respondents aged 25-34 with educational attainment not beyond ISCED 2/total number of respondents aged 25-34).

(2) Sources: LFS (Structural indicator: early school leaver). Eurostat UOE data collection.

Lisbon, March 2000

The European Union summit of Heads of State or Government adopts the objective of making Europe the world's leading knowledge-based society.

Bologna, June 1999

29 European countries adopt a declaration establishing the objective of creating a 'European Area of Higher Education'.

Stockholm, March 2001

Three strategic objectives (quality, accessibility, openness) are set by the EU Heads of State or Government. It is also decided that the applicant countries will be included in the process launched in Lisbon.

Bruges, October 2001

Representatives of vocational training ministries strengthen their cooperation with a view to increasing transparency and the competitiveness of qualifications and skills.

Brussels, November 2001

Adoption of the Commission Communication entitled *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, a reference document on the EU strategy on lifelong learning.

Barcelona, March 2002

The Heads of State or Government of 29 European countries lay down the foundations for greater education and vocational training cooperation.

Landmark decisions



Open to the wider world

Opening up education and training systems to the wider world is the principle underlying several objectives: encouraging closer relations with businesses and the social partners, mobility and mastery of languages. Here too, the European Union has set itself an ambitious objective: every European should speak at least two foreign languages on completing secondary education. Although no reliable indicator exists, certain surveys such as Eurobarometer 2001 on Youth, which showed that one in three people aged

15-24 admitted to speaking no foreign language, demonstrate that there is still a long way to go. However, the public success of the European Year of Languages in 2001 testifies to Europeans' growing interest in learning other languages.

Mobility is one of the areas where the European Union has amassed the most tangible results thanks to EU programmes like Socrates (and its flagship action Erasmus), Leonardo da Vinci and Youth (see more on pages 16 and 22). Many obstacles to the recognition of qualifications and skills acquired in another country still have to be abolished. The EU countries have made notable progress, as borne out by the European credit transfer system, Europass, and the European CV (see pages 19 and 20).



Chiefly national prerogatives

The organisation of education and training systems is first and foremost a prerogative of states, or of regions within a state. However, the subsidiarity principle enables the EU to intervene whenever an issue can be addressed more effectively at supranational level than at Member State level. Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty on European Union define the privileged areas of EU intervention: promotion of mobility for students and researchers, cooperation between educational establishments, encouragement of language learning, improved recognition processes for qualifications and skills, and the development of distance learning. The approach taken in European actions is that

of the 'open method of coordination', which consists of defining orientations for the Union, matched with timetables for Member States' achieving their objectives. In short, this amounts to establishing common indicators and evaluation criteria, in reference to world-class performances.

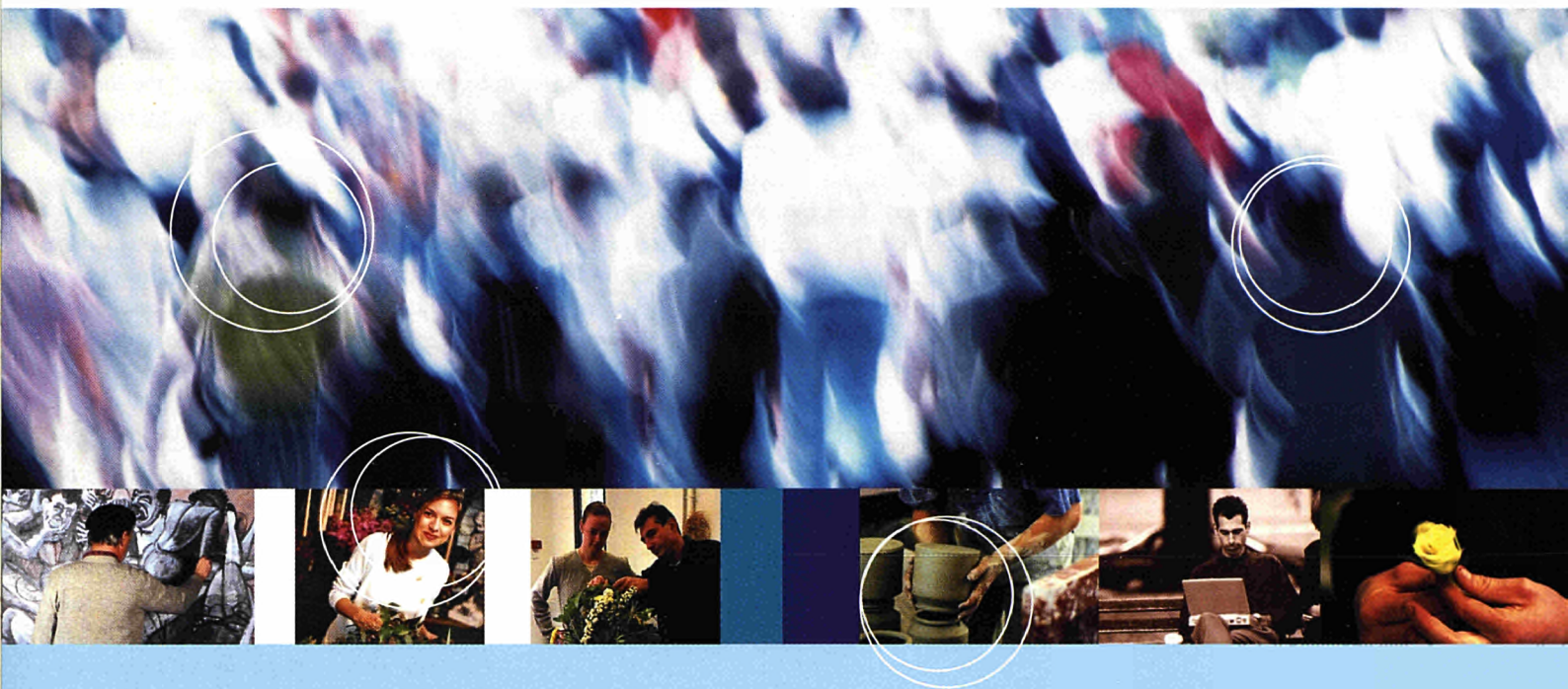
Guaranteeing the best use of resources

Public spending on education as % of GNP, in 1999

B	5.5
DK	8.0
D	4.7
EL	3.7
E	4.5
F	5.9
IRL	4.6
I	4.5
L	Not available
NL	4.8
A	6.3
P	5.7
FIN	6.2
S	7.7
UK	4.6

Sources: Eurostat, UOE

Wanted: 'hidden skills'



Everyone has 'hidden', non-formal skills, not recognised by a diploma or certificate. Lifelong learning is meant to capitalise these hidden reserves.

Lifelong learning is not limited to continuing training for adults. From pre-school to post-retirement learning, it covers all forms of education and training, whether formal in nature (in an institutional setting and based on a codified evaluation system such as an end-of-year exam), non-formal (in a defined institutional setting but not culminating in official recognition) or informal (without a framework or evaluation).

Learning wherever and whenever I like

While formal education is recognised everywhere, its non-formal and informal counterparts enjoy less consideration in terms of assessing an individual's skills on the job market. And yet, the factory, the office, the home and even places of leisure can all be environments where people acquire skills useful for landing a job or for personal fulfilment.

Several Member States have already taken initiatives. While it is still a bit early to start defining best practices that can be applied throughout the Union, these initiatives nevertheless give a fairly precise idea of education and training opportunities. In Ireland, the town of Finglas has decided to become a 'learning community'. Emphasis is being placed equally on leisure activities and work, seniors and young people, highly qualified learners and those for whom learning is more of a challenge.

In France, the Usinor Group has introduced a skills management policy that is taking its employees from a strict 'job-based' logic to one of skills, making possible a constant increase in qualifications... and salaries. In Denmark, the medical technology firm Radiometer enables its employees to participate in 'second skill' training schemes so they can transfer between departments within the company. Everyone comes out a winner: the company has a more flexible workforce and the staff receive free training during working hours.

Shared responsibilities

If everyone is to benefit from these developments, responsibilities clearly have to be shared. Individuals must give themselves every chance to take advantage of new employment and learning opportunities. Companies and training bodies must provide an appropriate learning framework. And the European Union and its Member States need to use all available means to attain their employment and social integration objectives through lifelong learning.

June 2001 saw the European Union's kick-off of the eLearning action plan to develop the use of new technologies in teaching, particularly in schools. A first appraisal in the light of the last two surveys on the Internet at school and its use by teachers.



eLearning

Tapping the potential of multimedia at school

The eLearning plan aims to encourage the Member States to step up the deployment of multimedia, primarily in schools, and systematically to train teachers in its educational applications. To attain these goals, the plan recommends strengthened cooperation between the institutional and private sectors and more exchanges of teachers and education officials in Europe.

Two dual Eurobarometer surveys, with head teachers and teaching staff, were conducted from February to May 2001 and in January-February 2002, under the eEurope 2002 action plan. The results show notable progress in the installation of Internet equipment and its educational use. They also reveal that while disparities between countries are shrinking, they are still large.

The Eurobarometer Flash 101 and Flash 118 surveys concerned the level and quality of computer equipment and Internet connections in schools in the European Union.

- More schools and classes connected. 93% of schools in the EU now have access to the Internet, up slightly over the previous year's level (89%). However, pupils have access to the Internet in only 85% of connected establishments. This also represents a slight rise over the previous year (80%).
- More computers in schools. The number of pupils per Internet-connected computer has been reduced from 25 in 2001 to 17 today. However, with variations of 4 to 40 pupils per computer (4 to 50 in 2000), the differences between Member States are still huge.
- Technical schools are the best equipped, with 4 pupils per computer connected to the Internet. This figure rises to 10 in secondary schools and to 25 in primary schools.
- Equipment is quite recent on the whole. More than half of the computers used are less than 3 years old, and high-speed Internet access has increased significantly (the average rate of ADSL connection rose from 5% to 19% in a year).

The other pair of Eurobarometer surveys, Flash 102 and Flash 119, were aimed at assessing the use and mastery of the Internet by teachers.

- The teaching profession is largely open to innovation and convinced of the educational relevance of the Internet. Only one teacher in five not using Internet said it presents no interest for teaching, and one in ten mentioned a lack of knowledge on his/her part or that of pupils. Moreover, nearly 90% of teachers are convinced that their teaching method has already been changed by the Internet or will be sooner or later.

- Still too much a man's business. The Internet is used markedly less by female teachers (38%) than by their male counterparts (56%).

- The use of Internet in teaching is still limited, although rising significantly. The Internet is used by 46% of teachers, up from only 39% last year. Fewer teachers use the Internet in primary schools (40%) than in secondary (51%) and professional/technical schools (62%).

- Classes are not connected enough. The main reason mentioned by teachers not using the Internet in the classroom is the lack of a connection in the classroom, rather than the lack of connection for the school, the main reason given last year.



Information

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Does mastery of ICT (information and communication technologies)

really improve pupil performance?

What are the keys to successful use of ICT at school?

According to experiments in progress, the most successful uses of ICT at school result from interactions between the use of technologies, teaching methods and the organisation of the school. The different combinations explain the diversity of situations in Europe.

ICT can be used as a simple addition to existing teaching materials. The use of multimedia for research and the consultation and storage of information does not really pose a challenge to present ways of teaching. ICT can also play a role in stimulating cooperation between pupils or teachers. This can happen both within the school and in opening up the school to outside partnerships: parents, local communities, museums, businesses and so on. An appropriate teaching context is necessary for the proper inclusion of such tools.

The most innovative establishments are also those that have reconsidered the way they are organised. Some assign specific areas for projects alternating the 'virtual' with the 'real'. The architecture of the school is modified. Conditions are created to enable teachers

to take part in training schemes, plan their tasks and acquire experience in networking. Such conditions are not specific to ICT but are very often a preliminary to their productive use.

Likewise, in schools where the use of ICT is working well, pupils often already have a high degree of autonomy. Technology does not create autonomy, but autonomy is a pre-requisite to the 'autonomous' use of technology.



Information

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Schools connected to the Internet (%)

Teachers using the Internet in their teaching (%)

10

	2001				2002					2001				2002			
	Primary	Secondary	Profess./techn.	All	Primary	Secondary	Profess./techn.	All		Primary	Secondary	Profess./techn.	All	Primary	Secondary	Profess./techn.	All
Belgium	90	96	94	91	91	99	98	93	Belgium	34	45	47	40	46	54	46	49
Denmark	98	99	100	98	100	100	100	100	Denmark	69	79	96	83	70	81	92	84
Germany	90	98	97	94	98	99	98	99	Germany	12	31	41	29	19	51	51	49
Greece	22	58	85	45	28	85	92	59	Greece	4	7	8	6	7	11	6	9
Spain	91	95	98	94	91	97	100	94	Spain	18	21	33	20	24	34	67	29
France	63	97	98	84	75	99	99	89	France	27	33	38	32	29	42	52	38
Ireland	96	99	100	98	99	100	100	99	Ireland	82	57	50	69	73	56	70	65
Italy	87	98	97	89	87	94	92	88	Italy	26	54	59	32	32	59	69	38
Luxembourg	86	100	100	92	50	100	100	67	Luxembourg	27	35	41	32	24	30	32	29
Netherlands	91	100	100	93	92	95	60	92	Netherlands	34	40	69	37	40	64	100	45
Austria	53	95	96	72	90	99	100	94	Austria	23	66	42	42	21	72	83	44
Portugal	56	91	100	62	92	94	87	92	Portugal	18	22	43	20	43	37	46	41
Finland	99	99	97	99	98	100	100	99	Finland	78	73	63	77	74	66	75	73
Sweden	100	100	100	100	99	100	100	99	Sweden	54	67	40	65	51	68	78	64
United Kingdom	93	98	n.a.	95	98	100	100	99	United Kingdom	56	58	n.a.	57	65	66	79	66
EU	84	96	97	89	90	98	99	93	EU	34	37	42	36	39	50	58	46
Norway	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	99	100	100	99	Norway	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	63	84	62	71
Iceland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	100	100	100	100	Iceland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	40	43	33	42

(Source: Eurobarometer Flash 101, Flash 118)

(Base: teachers of subjects other than computer science.)

Source: Eurobarometer Flash 102, Flash 119)

Send us your reactions!



Erich Gundlach,
Head of the Human Capital and Economic Growth research group, Department of Development Economics and Global Integration, Kiel Institute for World Economics (Germany).

More money does not mean better quality

Erich Gundlach, member of the Kiel Institute for World Economics (Germany), debunks some well-rooted myths about return on investment in education and training.

In the view of many observers, achieving the goal of a "knowledge-based economy" means that public expenditure in education systems should rise significantly. Is there any automatic link between rising investment and improved performance of education and training systems and the translation of this increase into economic performance?

Spending more on public education is almost always held to be an appropriate strategy to master the challenges of the coming 'knowledge-based economy'. But despite its seeming plausibility, such a strategy often does not work as expected. When applying economic schemes to education, the productivity factor always has to be borne in mind. One would expect that educational expenditure per student should rise over time. This is because education is likely to face an increase in the relative price of each unit of output. The reason is that services like education face an inherently slower productivity increase relative to other sectors like manufacturing. Hence one would expect that education expenditure should increase with labour productivity just to maintain a constant quality of education.

How is this situation reflected in the reality of the EU Member States?

In most EU countries education expenditure per student has risen much faster than average labour productivity growth, with Sweden and the Netherlands as possible exceptions. Inflation-adjusted education

expenditure per student increased almost 200% in Germany and more than 200% in France and Italy between 1979 and 1999. By contrast, the average productivity record of these countries suggests that for a given quality of education output, the relative expenditure should have increased by only about 50%. However, the available empirical evidence suggests that the performance of students in Germany, France and Italy has remained constant at best over the period in question. What is more, the only countries with a slight improvement in measured student performance, namely Sweden and the Netherlands, are apparently those that report the lowest increase in education expenditure per student.

What steps need to be taken to improve the return on investment in education?

For most European systems of education, institutional reforms might be necessary before additional resources can be expected to improve student performance. In the age of globalisation, countries with inefficient education systems are likely to face a loss of international competitiveness for their products and services, and this would limit the possibilities for further economic development.

What kind of institutional reforms are needed?

Recent findings have identified a number of factors that help to improve student performance such as, to name but a few, centralised exams, school autonomy in personnel and management decisions, and a significant privately managed education sector. In contrast, school autonomy for budget and curriculum appears to be bad for student performance.

Can the same argument be applied to vocational training?

On that point, I would like to focus on retraining programmes for workers in the perspective of reducing unemployment, since declining unemployment appears to be a good indicator of the competitiveness of an economy. The evidence is rather surprising. Overall, the employment gains from worker retraining programmes do not appear to be big enough to lift many people out of poverty or to reduce unemployment significantly. Consistent with evidence from the US, European studies also find that access to job search assistance measures significantly raises employment rates, at a lower cost than training measures. Low-skilled workers cannot adapt easily to changing economic circumstances through retraining measures. Labour market programmes focusing on older workers may fail economically but continue to be supported for politically motivated reasons. Subsidising rather than retraining older workers and preferring to invest in human capital through effective education of the young may prove to be a more efficient policy alternative.

The way the social partners understand and implement lifelong learning is of essential importance. Mindful of this, the European Union made a point of consulting these partners before the European Commission drew up its action plan on lifelong learning⁽¹⁾. The consultation brought to light the different perceptions of the roles of employers and unions in implementing lifelong learning. Even though they did not see entirely eye to eye, the social partners were still able to define a joint framework of actions for the ongoing development of skills and qualifications.

Lifelong learning: the social partners say 'Yes, but...'



When they evaluate progress in the area of lifelong learning, the social partners agree that insufficient resources have been implemented. The level of public expenditure in the field of education continues to be far below the requisite level, in particular with regard to the commitments entered into at the Lisbon European Summit. Member States did not set specific targets in terms of a substantial annual increase in the percentage of GDP to be invested in the development of human resources', observes the European Trade Union Confederation in its contribution to the consultation⁽²⁾.

Employers, represented by the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (Unice), nonetheless qualified this view: 'The figures available only trace investment in formal training schemes and therefore do not reflect the investment in human resources in non-formal learning by companies and individuals'. They go on to call for 'finding ways of making such investment transparent'.

Who pays the bill? Who is responsible?

The question of investment inevitably raises that of financing lifelong learning and the responsibility incumbent upon the social partners. The unions reject the idea of individuals having to foot most of the bill, thereby ignoring the fundamental role and responsibility of the public authorities and employers. Investment in human resources, they explain, must not be seen by companies as a cost, but as investment enabling them to innovate in terms of products and organisation, increase productivity and competitiveness, maintain and develop workers' employability and absorb the jobless into employment. Workers' representatives also call for the introduction of a genuine individual right of access to lifelong learning.

The individual right of access to lifelong learning does not have the endorsement of employers, as reflected in Unice's position: 'European employers are opposed to instituting an individual legal right [...] as it is an inappropriate tool to widen access to learning.' The employers give three reasons for their position. First, they say it is very likely that the people who would make use of this legal right would not be those

most in need of better access. This argument is backed up by evidence from the Member States in which workers have the right to take time off to study and where the more highly qualified employees predominantly use the right to training. Secondly, 'the type of training undertaken under such schemes often has little direct relevance to the workplace', notes Unice. Thirdly, it is 'difficult to see how it would be possible to put such an individual legal right into practice, as it is not clear who would have responsibility for it'. For Unice, a better solution would be to encourage those interested to participate in financing their own training and to take responsibility for their own learning. It also notes that one of the major obstacles to lifelong learning is very often workers' lack of motivation.

The case of SMEs

Without taking a stance on the question of the individual right of access to learning, the representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises advocate a middle ground, with a real sharing of responsibility. Often relegated to the sidelines of the major debates between unions and employers, for the simple reason that a good many of them have no union representatives, SMEs took advantage of the consultation to make their voice heard. And an important voice it is, representing nearly 120 million jobs in around 20 million SMEs throughout the EU. Highlighting the lack of resources, which is even more glaring in small structures than in large enterprises, and the need to include training for heads of businesses in lifelong learning, the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) calls for better recognition of ongoing informal training and skills improvement in small enterprises. 'The general view has been that, because employees of SMEs participate in training outside the workplace to a lesser degree than other workers, there are less training programmes. [...] Studies conducted in the United Kingdom and Sweden demonstrate that there is a considerable amount of on-the-job training in small enterprises, whereas in enterprises with more than 100 employees, most training activities take place externally or through defined in-house training programmes that are more easily coordinated with formal external training provision.'



What about content?

Emphasizing the distinction between informal training (within companies and without any formal certificate on completion of the training scheme) and formal training (within recognised structures), UEAPME also points to the problem of the content and organisation of training schemes, calling into question the relevance of external training. 'Training offered by institutes is very often unsuited to small enterprises. The time and places for the courses are too inflexible. They oblige staff to be away from work too long and content is too theoretical and too formal!'

For Unice there is no doubt about it: needs in terms of the content of lifelong learning – at least when it concerns workers – must be defined, as a matter of priority, in close cooperation with enterprises, if not by enterprises themselves. As for priorities, Unice takes a more qualified view of the importance of learning the information and communication technologies (ICT). One way of coping with the ongoing evolution in skills needs is to ensure that 'basic education and training effectively equip people with basic skills that will allow them to continue learning throughout their working lives'. They mention: the values and attitudes needed for active participation in economic and social life, numeracy and literacy, 'essential skills' (social skills, ICT skills, problem-solving skills) and intercultural skills, especially languages. In conclusion, Unice, like CEEP⁽²⁾ and the other social partners, states that efforts to promote new skills cannot be made at the expense of traditional basic skills, where there are still serious shortcomings.

Working together to develop lifelong learning

The social partners' differing positions did not prevent them from working together to draw up a framework for action for the lifelong development of skills and qualifications, presented jointly at the Barcelona summit, which was attended by political officials responsible for social and vocational affairs on 14 March 2002⁽¹⁾.

Drawn up within the framework of social dialogue, with the support of the Directorates-General for Employment and for Education and Culture, the document identifies four priorities for action:

- identification and anticipation of skills and qualifications needs;
- recognition and validation of skills and qualifications;
- information, support and counselling,
- resources.

(1) Adopted in November 2001, the Commission Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* remains a reference document on EU strategy in matters of lifelong learning.

(2) *Feedback from European social partners as part of the consultation on the Commission's Memorandum on lifelong learning*, supporting document to the Commission Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*.

(3) European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest, the fourth social partner participating in the EU consultation on lifelong learning.

(4) ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP: *Framework for action for the lifelong development of skills and qualifications*, March 2002.

Through its three flagship programmes – Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth – the European Union is active on a number of fronts: formal education, informal and non-formal education, vocational training, adult education, school-business partnerships, mobility grants for students and teachers, etc. Ideal platforms for exchanges of know-how, experience and innovative practices on a European scale, these programmes work directly to improve education and training systems. An overview:

▶▶ On all learning fronts



It was in the 1980s that the European Union's action in the area of education really got off the ground with pilot programmes like Comett, Lingua, Petra, Force, Erasmus, etc. In 1995, a major rethinking led to the creation of three main programmes: Socrates (education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training) and Youth (non-formal education).

For a high-quality European area of knowledge...

Socrates concerns education proper, from nursery school to adult education. In Europe, education systems vary considerably from one country to the next. Given this context, the cooperation initiatives supported by Socrates (establishment of common projects, encouragement of mobility, comparative analyses and studies, support for harmonisation of curricula) strengthen dialogue and promote experience sharing.

Leonardo da Vinci, the action programme that is the platform for implementation of EU vocational training policy, also makes use of numerous transnational cooperation schemes in order to enhance the quality of training systems and practices. The strategy of Leonardo da Vinci is thus to disseminate and enhance the value of the projects it supports. Its 'products' are tools developed by partnerships between vocational training establishments (sometimes with support from private partners), which can then be integrated into the vocational training systems and practices of enterprises.

The Youth programme, for its part, gives European young people between the ages of 15 and 25 intercultural learning and personal development experiences outside formal training and education systems.

...accessible to all...

Socrates places emphasis on combating social exclusion and academic failure by providing support for disadvantaged groups and promoting equal opportunities for men and women. The programme also attaches particular importance to language learning, especially the lesser used and taught languages.

Leonardo da Vinci has the task of meeting two major challenges currently facing employment policy in the Union: reducing the number of jobless and strengthening workers' skills in the context of an increasingly competitive market. In concrete terms, Leonardo da Vinci must facilitate integration into the workforce and improve the quality of training, but also open up access to training schemes for the greatest possible number of applicants.

Disabled young people or those from a culturally, geographically or socio-economically disadvantaged background also benefit from priority access to the activities of the Youth programme.



... and outward-looking

Open to 30 countries, Socrates provided grants during its first phase (1995 to 1999) for 460,000 students and 80,000 teachers for study or teaching abroad under the Erasmus action, which this year will celebrate its symbolic one millionth student. Under the Comenius action, some 10,000 schools are involved in transnational cooperation projects. In addition to study or teaching abroad, Socrates supports numerous partnerships between schools and other actors in civil society.

In the area of learners' mobility, Leonardo da Vinci has helped more than 200,000 young people and trainers to participate in a training course abroad and nearly 100,000 organisations have already received support from the programme. Further, nearly 3,000 pilot projects have been set into place.

Both through group exchanges and individually, the Youth programme gives Europeans aged 15 to 25 the chance to participate in numerous cooperation and voluntary projects, either locally or abroad. While the experience acquired by participants is not part of any official curriculum, it nonetheless develops valuable skills, such as the sense of initiative and responsibility, teamwork and the discovery of other cultures.

In 1999, the Youth programme became

open to young people from the 12 Mediterranean partner countries through Euro-Med Youth. Moreover, south-east Europe, the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Latin America are priority cooperation regions.

Beyond the frontiers of the European Union, many countries today have cooperation agreements with universities and training centres in the European Union in the field of higher education. Agreements in force with the United States and Canada were renewed for a five-year period early in 2001. Two new pilot projects were recently added, one with Japan and the other with Australia. The Tempus programme – which covers the countries of the former Soviet Union, the western Balkans and Mongolia, and has resulted in nearly 180,000 mobility experiences since 1990 – was recently opened to the southern Mediterranean countries (MEDA programme). Exchanges are possible with Latin America under the ALFA programme (Latin America Academic Training).

As the European education ministers declared in Bologna in June 1999: 'We must ensure that the European higher education system exerts a worldwide power of attraction equal to its extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions.'

Comenius
Erasmus

Jeunesse
Socrates



Since 1987, hundreds of thousands of students have studied at a foreign university for periods of three to twelve months under the Erasmus action of the Socrates programme. This year, Erasmus will celebrate its 15th anniversary with its symbolic one millionth student participant. A good time to stand back and assess the progress made so far.

At the start, Erasmus focused chiefly on student mobility. With time, especially after it became part of the Socrates programme, mobility was incorporated into a much wider framework of cooperation between universities.

While student mobility remains at the heart of the project, other activities aimed at developing a European dimension to higher education have been added: exchanges of teaching staff, development of transnational curricula and thematic teaching networks, the European university cumulable credit transfer system, etc.

An intellectual

and

personal enrichment

Ulrike, a law student from Berlin, spent the second semester of her last year of studies at the University of Nice.

'I really wanted to leave Germany – not only for professional reasons, but also to live my life and discover another culture. There are a lot of grants available for studies abroad, but what Erasmus offered seemed best to match what I was looking for.' At the end of her semester in Nice, Ulrike had to sit exams in French, a prerequisite for recognition of her studies.

'When I returned home, all I had left to do was to present my dissertation to get my degree. For a law student, Erasmus study in France is without a doubt a real edge for finding a job. Germans who have studied in France are very successful with employers

because the French civil code is the source of German law. What's more, I picked up a sound basic knowledge of European and international law during my stay in France.'

Ulrike does recognise, though, that things were not necessarily easy every day. 'I was very motivated when I arrived in France. Just the idea of having to get by on my own, without my parents, my friends or my usual professors, was very stimulating. With hindsight, I have to admit that I was under a lot of illusions before I left for France. I thought that living abroad would be easier and that my level of French was quite good. I had overestimated myself a bit.... Fortunately, the people in Nice were very helpful, so I didn't feel at sea and was able to resist the very natural temptation of socialising only with other expatriates.'

In the end, everything that stands out in Ulrike's memories of her stay in Nice is positive. 'It helped me land a job fast, discover another culture and learn more about myself. Upon coming home, I was as happy to see my parents again as I was sad over leaving France.'



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Points of reference

Between 1987 and 2001, 851,415 students studied abroad thanks to Erasmus. In the course of academic year 2002-2003, this figure will rise to over one million.

Students from Portugal, France, Austria and Germany are the most interested in the programme. However, the number of applications is rising most sharply in the applicant countries.

The United Kingdom is the destination most preferred by students, followed by Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands. The number of foreign students accepted by these countries is greater than the number leaving them to study abroad. The reverse is true in the associate countries, with the outflow of students five times as high as the inflow.

One million students



The success of the Erasmus programme, launched in 1987, has been overwhelming. During its first year (1987-1988), 3,000 students from 11 Member States participated. Integrated since then into Socrates, which maintains relations with 30 countries, Erasmus is sending its one millionth student to study abroad in 2002.

To celebrate this landmark, 'Erasmus Week' was launched on 18 October 2002 in all the participant countries. As the 1,800 universities involved celebrated the event, 30 past or present Erasmus students were invited to Brussels to meet Viviane Reding, European Commissioner responsible for education and culture, and the Heads of State or Government meeting for the Brussels European Council on 24 and 25 October. The Erasmus Student Charter, outlining the rights and responsibilities of future participants, was also presented as part of the Week's activities.

A springboard to employment in another country

A 1996 study⁽¹⁾ on employment among former Erasmus students concluded that many who take part in the programme, particularly over a long period, land a job requiring the skills acquired during their study abroad (languages, knowledge of the culture of another country, etc.). Moreover, nearly one third of these students were offered a job abroad, often in the country where they studied, which 20% accepted. Some 71% of Erasmus students are employed by businesses or organisations with international relations.

(1) F. Maiworm, U. Teichler, Study Abroad and Early Career. Experiences of Former Erasmus Students, Erasmus Monograph no. 21 (Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, UK: 1996).

Erasmus



Another view

An economics student from Paris arrives in Barcelona under the Erasmus programme. Leaving home was hard! Now he embarks on his discovery of an unknown city, starts learning a language he has only a sketchy idea of, becomes initiated into cultural diversity in a flat shared riotously by a group of students from Germany, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Spain and Italy, and makes sentimental experiences which lead to passionate discussions. The adventures of an 'Erasmus hero' are brought to the screen for the first time in *L'auberge espagnole* (The Spanish Inn), a film that received support from the European Union's MEDIA programme. Director Cédric Klapisch (*Un air de famille*, *Chacun cherche son chat*, *Péril jeune*, etc.) gives us a whimsical insight into Europe.

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#18 In the field

Erasmus

On 17 July 2002, the European Commission proposed a new university programme, Erasmus World. With a budget of 200 million euros for a four-year period (2004 to 2008), the initiative aims to establish a specifically European higher education offer and to improve its public image and visibility abroad.

Erasmus World

a global showcase for European higher education



Higher education is becoming increasingly international. Worldwide, the number of students interested in obtaining an international education is continually on the rise. In the face of this demand, Europe is not fully exploiting the potential of its long-standing cultural and scientific traditions. The preferred destination for students from non-EU countries is still the United States. What is more, those who choose Europe are not evenly distributed: 300,000 out of the 400,000 students from other continents go to the United Kingdom, Germany or France.

The Member States have so far failed to combine their strengths to develop a common identity and to offer a 'European quality' label recognised worldwide for all their higher education establishments. Such recognition is of paramount importance, however, if future decision-makers are to be better acquainted with the Union and develop closer ties with it.

In order to make good this delay, Erasmus World aims to propose a truly European higher education offer, attracting students from both within the Union and outside it, and enjoying a better public image, greater visibility and greater accessibility.

To this end, a number of key actions have been defined: the identification of European postgraduate studies grouped under an 'EU Master's Degree' and involving at least three higher education institutions from three different Member States; the creation of a single scholarship plan for the best-qualified graduate students

and scholars from third countries; the establishment of partnerships with higher education institutions from third countries to strengthen Europe's presence at world level; and the organisation of activities aimed at enhancing the appeal of the European academic offer.



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Europe in search of

mobile workers

Even though free movement of workers is written into the Treaties, mobility in the European Union is still limited. Indeed, in 2001 only 0.4% of the Union population, or some 1.5 million workers, exercised their right of mobility between Member States. This figure is worrying in today's context of an ageing population (entailing the risk of a shortage in manpower in the Union, already affecting some regions).

A European curriculum vitae (CV) has been developed at the Commission's initiative, in cooperation with the Member States and the social partners, to help citizens find work, especially outside their country of origin.

Available online with instructions and examples on the Cedefop website (www.cedefop.eu.int/transparency/cv.asp), this simple tool enables all jobseekers to present their qualifications more clearly and effectively, thus widening the scope of their search for work or training to all the Member States. The European CV form goes further than the usual record of education, training and job experience: it also allows applicants to highlight their linguistic, social, managerial, technical, artistic or other skills and aptitudes however they were acquired, whether through education, work or their private lives. So the EU aims to encourage the recognition of abilities that are 'non-formal', i.e. not necessarily recognised by official certificates and diplomas.

statement of the applicant's career objectives and a summary of key skills have become *de rigueur*. What is more, the CV must mention language and computer skills. The importance of adding a heading on 'hobbies and activities' depends on the employer's corporate culture. For some, it can be decisive in the selection of an applicant, whereas for others it is of limited importance!

As for harmonisation on the European level of the CV format, this is welcomed by recruitment professionals who, moreover, did not await the Union's initiative before proceeding with a limited degree of standardisation. The biggest temporary employment agencies, for example, have already worked out an agreement on a standard online CV. 'In spite of the levelling effect that harmonisation inevitably entails, job applicants still have a certain margin of manoeuvre in their presentation. We must not lose sight of the fact that writing a CV is always an attempt to stand out from the crowd!'

prospect of having to rewrite the same CV several times in different formats. What is more, standardisation irons out non-essential differences to the advantage of the applicant's individual personality. Among equally qualified candidates, the decisive factor is sometimes the better written CV. With the harmonised system, which encourages applicants to make a personal presentation, the employer is better able to make a choice based on personality. In any case, it is during the personal interview that the decision is really made!



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Recognition is not always easy in practice. Indeed, for Fabienne Hansoul, Career Manager at Securex, a human resources management firm, 'a CV must first present the applicant's contact details and education. In addition to the academic career proper, a

For Lyndon Evans, head of the European Department of Manpower, a leader in the temporary employment industry, 'the initiative is very commendable, because it helps jobseekers to save a lot of time. Many get discouraged when faced with the

Learning the trade of violin-making in Cremona, the home of Stradivarius, learning iron working in Toledo or management practices in an SME in London: many young trainees dream of such opportunities. Some hope to acquire skills that are not taught in their country of origin and others simply want to experience life in another country through work-training. To encourage such mobility, but also to give greater transparency and visibility to European pathways for trainees, the European Commission launched Europass-Training on 1 January 2000.

▶▶ Europass-Formation, a passport to learning and work



For trainees plunged into different work environments and cultures, there is obviously no lack of learning opportunities: discovering different know-how and technologies, learning a foreign language, or developing communication and cooperation skills through teamwork. More than 125,000 Europeans have already been awarded grants for a work-training experience abroad. For some, the stay was crowned with the award of one of the 25,000 Europass-Training documents issued to date, a real passport to employment anywhere in the Union.

The Europass initiative is available to anyone enrolled in sandwich courses (alternating full-time study with supervised work experience) in a Member State of the Union, regardless of the applicant's age or level of training. The principle is simple. The training establishment in the country of origin contacts a host establishment in another country and works out an agreement on the content, objectives, duration, practicalities and follow-up of the European pathway. Upon completion, the host establishment issues the Europass-Training document describing the training followed.

Trainees are not the only beneficiaries, however. On the business side, companies welcome the initiative with equal interest. Foreign trainees are an enrichment to a company, bringing with them their culture of origin and specific skills. John Haydon, who heads a fish-farming business in Ireland, explains that in some cases the experience and know-how of a trainee offer a new look at certain company habits: "Trainees from other countries bring with them their spirit of challenge and their enthusiasm. This enthusiasm, compared to our own experience, is a sort of challenge to the methods we traditionally use. With their academic experience, young graduates often arrive with lots of new ideas, which we try to put into practice."

Trainees also often facilitate contacts with new foreign partners and can help overcome language barriers.



The trainee completes the European pathway in a host establishment in another country, based on an established plan and under the supervision of a mentor.

At the end of the work-training experience, the host establishment fills in the Europass-Training document (in its own language). The document must indicate the type of training completed and the qualification obtained, along with relevant comments on the trainee's work experience and qualities and, where appropriate, the method of evaluation used.

The information provided by the host partner is translated when the trainee returns to the training establishment in the country of origin.

On the basis of the Europass-Training document, the home training body evaluates the experience abroad and allocates credit to the beneficiary under its own system.

The Europass-Training initiative does not itself finance the training periods described in the document, but the European Commission supports several measures to promote the mobility of persons in training or already working. Under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, mobility is supported through Community financing to cover subsidiary costs of a stay abroad, such as travel expenses, language and cultural preparation, and insurance.

While Leonardo da Vinci finances a large part of the European pathways recognised by Europass-Training documents, the latter are also granted for pathways financed by other means, including support on the national or regional level.



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An inside view

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In the field
#18

Pauliina, from Finland, took part in a two-week work-training experience at a kindergarten in Denmark. She is a student in a vocational institute, like **Tanguy**, who completed a training period in the Netherlands on yacht maintenance. For both, this was their first-ever experience studying and working abroad. At the end of their training, they each received a duly completed Europass-Training document.

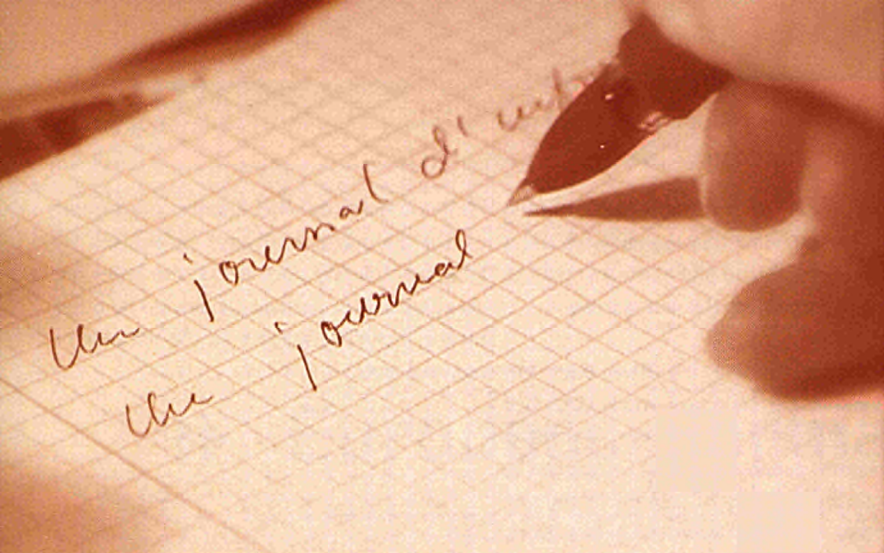
Pauliina Autio

'I came to Denmark for a work-training course on the advice of one of my teachers. At first, I was reluctant because I didn't speak any English or Danish. But later, I said to myself: "Why not try?" Now, I feel good here. I had to learn to make myself understood by the children without speaking their language, just with a look, a smile, a presence. The children "adopt" you, they're very open. I also appreciated the attitude towards foreign children, many of whom are the children of immigrants, from Turkey, for example. And they have the same rights as the others. I found that wonderful.'

Tanguy Rogel

'I was interested in a work-training period in the Netherlands for several reasons: to improve my English, since we communicate with the bosses in English and I don't know Dutch, to study the different trademarks on the market in the Netherlands and to compare them with those on the French market, and to discover their work techniques and safety rules. In contrast with my experience in French companies, Cock Baerts, the boss of Corba, trusts us much more and lets us take initiatives. I think that if I were offered a job in any European country, I would be much less apprehensive today about accepting...'





▶▶ Ulla's double life

Ulla Firatli Thorsen is a secretary at the Nordic Popular Academy, a continuing training centre located on the outskirts of Göteborg, in Sweden, which receives support from the European Commission under the Grundtvig action of the Socrates programme. It is Ulla's job to provide orientation for trainers from the Nordic or Baltic states participating in the different seminars organised by the Academy. One evening per week, she attends a French course, part-financed by the local public authorities.

In Sweden, the concept of lifelong education and training has been around for a long time. The Swedes have access to an extremely wide range of training for adults, in parallel with the official education networks. Easily accessible throughout the country, the training courses often take the form of 'study groups', generally with five to ten participants. The nearly 300,000 study groups in Sweden are followed by one third of the adult population.

The training results in qualifications that can be recognised in other countries. But participants are usually motivated by personal reasons, often simply the pleasure of learning. The French study group that Ulla attends includes a doctor who would like to study medicine in France at some point in the future. Another group member, an older person, takes part because the group gives her the chance to learn the language of the country where she and her husband usually spend their holidays. Ulla

is also working to improve her French because she spends holidays in France. Another member is a friend of hers, married to a Frenchman. She would like to be able to communicate with his family.

In addition to the skills they teach, these groups break down social barriers based on learning. 'The teachers place great emphasis on the sharing of resources and life experiences with the group', explains Antra Carlsen, project leader at the Nordic Popular Academy. According to Lars Franson, of the European Network of Learning Cities, 'these barriers are quite common and are related to several factors: some people have had a negative experience early in life; others have had to leave school early or have been unemployed. What is important is to break down such barriers.'

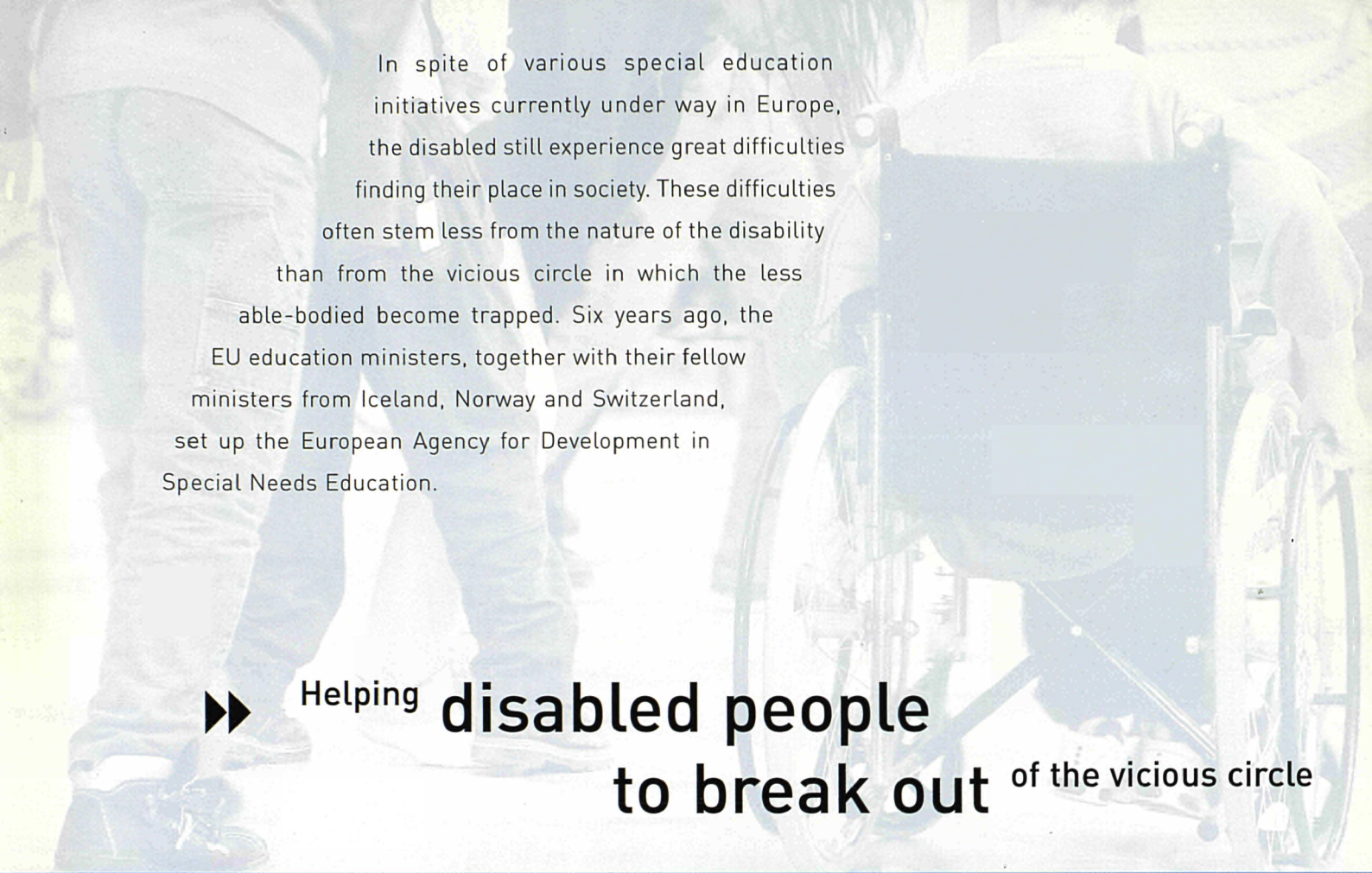
Compared to a good number of European countries, Sweden is lengths ahead when it comes to adult education. By asking the

Member States to draw inspiration from this example, the European Commission hopes to give all Europeans the same opportunities for acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout their lives.



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In spite of various special education initiatives currently under way in Europe, the disabled still experience great difficulties finding their place in society. These difficulties often stem less from the nature of the disability than from the vicious circle in which the less able-bodied become trapped. Six years ago, the EU education ministers, together with their fellow ministers from Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, set up the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.

▶▶ Helping disabled people to break out of the vicious circle

A number of stereotypes still cling to the 37 million disabled people in the European Union⁽¹⁾. Most of the relatively small number of programmes available to them restrict their choice of profession, and thus are of limited interest. In some EU countries, nearly 80% of disabled adults have no education beyond primary school. Considered illiterate, they are stigmatised because of their disability, but they also find themselves deprived of the right to develop their capabilities.

Faced with this dual liability, integration into the labour market is often tantamount to attempting the impossible. For those who manage to land a job nonetheless, there is still the question of working conditions. The disabled often need 'made-to-measure' solutions. From access to buildings to work tools, a good deal of progress still needs to be made.

Mindful of this reality, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education has set the objective of improving the quality of education policies and practices in the field of special education, so that children and young people with disabilities can enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else.

To achieve this aim, it has built up a European special education cooperation and information network, of which the nerve centre is the Internet site www.european-agency.org. The site's success continues to be confirmed over the years (with some 4,000 visitors a day). It offers practitioners, researchers and policy-makers valuable information on how various problems (transition from school to employment, financing means for special education institutes, etc.) are being addressed in Europe.

The site also has a newsletter, a catalogue of publications with extracts and online versions of important documents, a calendar of

events and overviews of special education in the member countries. In addition to its role of providing information, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education organises exchange programmes for professionals, training courses and numerous seminars and conferences. It will also be very closely involved, in 2003, in the events organised as part of the European year for people with disabilities.



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(1) Eurostat estimates the percentage of individuals directly affected by a disability, in one form or another, at between 10 and 12% of the population in most Member States, for a total of some 37 million people, of whom half are of working age.

EN



Lifelong learning: further information...

The site of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture contains a specific section on lifelong learning that contains all the relevant legal texts and founding documents. In addition to these

references, the section also answers some basic questions: What is meant by lifelong learning? What are the European Commission and other organisations doing to support lifelong learning? How is cooperation organised at European level? The section is available in five languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/III_en.html



Education and culture at a glance

Every two months, the online newsletter *Education and Culture at a Glance* provides an overview of policy developments, programme implementation, key events and publications in all the areas covered by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

Available in English, French and German at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/news/index_en.html



Europe and Youth, a New Impetus

The brochure *Europe and Youth, a New Impetus* presents an up-to-date portrait of today's young Europeans, while providing answers to their principal questions: How can I find a job? How can I become financially self-sufficient? How can I gain recognition for practical experience not formally recognized by traditional education systems?

This brochure can be downloaded in pdf format (in English or French) from the site of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth.html>



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