

CEDEFOP

The value of learning

Third report on vocational education and training research in Europe on the evaluation and impact of education and training

Cedefop's third research report addresses the contribution of education and training to realising a knowledge-based society. It specifies the material and non-material benefits of learning for individuals, enterprises and society as a whole. It also discusses ways of improving the design and implementation of education and training programmes or measures by purposeful evaluation. The report serves both to inform and improve policy and practice, and further develop research. Thus it contributes to the discussion on the goals set by the European Council at its Lisbon and follow-up summits.

Evaluation is a systematic investigation to determine the significance, worth or benefits of a policy, programme or measure, using relevant social research methods, criteria, standards and indicators. It is at the same time a developmental process that enlightens specific policies, processes and practices for its stakeholders. Ideally, it contributes to collective learning and to knowledge production. It reduces uncertainties in decision-making and helps to improve design and implementation of social interventions, while ensuring an effective allocation of resources. It contributes to a more rational and reasoned policy-making and generates society debates.

Evaluation is spreading all over Europe. It is used by government and stakeholders as a tool for monitoring the implementation and maximising the allocation and use of resources in various social policies, including education and training and active labour-market policies. The European Commission is also evaluating its programmes and requires from the Member States follow-up and outcome evaluations for structural and social funds.

To discuss these various facets in detail, present case studies and best practices, and review the methods used as well as the findings of evaluation and impact research, the synthesis report (see Box), drafted by Pascaline Descy and Manfred Tessaring (Cedefop), is divided in four main parts.

Part 1 discusses evaluation itself from a theoretical viewpoint, including different basic philosophies underlying evaluation. It reviews the phases and usage of evaluation according to the various stages of development of VET programme: design, implementation and assessment. It argues that evaluations should include

Continued on page 3

ITALY

New strategies for lifelong learning

Thanks to the introduction of important regulatory innovations and new priorities, including a revision of the objectives of training activities, the Italian national continuing training system has made considerable progress towards its transformation into a coherent and integrated policy system in the course of the last three years.

The report on continuing training in Italy (1), drawn up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies/Central bureau for guidance and vocational training of workers, with the collaboration of Isfol, reviews this development by analysing the changes to the system.

The report points out that national policies are gradually coming closer to the Lisbon strategy objectives. It highlights the introduction of new funding instruments (the joint inter-occupational funds (2)), new forms of training provision (learning on demand from individuals and specific sectors) and the increasing role of the social partners as continuing training is incorporated into collective bargaining. It also draws attention to the creation of instruments providing a framework for nationwide provision (schemes piloted under Law 236/93(3) on training plans agreed with the social partners and European Social Fund programmes), including the dissemination of good practice. Last but not least, it emphasises increasing investment in the training of human resources in specific sectors (e.g. compulsory updating training for medical and paramedical staff).

The European strategy for lifelong learning has given a considerable impetus to these developments, drawing the attention of institutions and the social partners to the fact that over and above its traditional role as a response to the skills deficits of workers and firms, continuing training must also fit into a general overall strategy, comprising initial vocational training, continuing training and adult education.

On the basis of statistical data, the report goes on to describe the state of the art of continuing training in Italy: more than 850 000 workers engaged in some 58 000 training initiatives in the period 2000 to 2003 at a total cost of almost EUR 1.2 billion. 75 % of the costs were financed through European Social Fund programmes, and the remaining 25 % through national legislation, i.e. Law No 236/93 (company training plans and individual learning on demand) and Law No 53/2000 (training leave).

Continued on page 7



E-skills: The story continues

European e-skills conference

The European e-skills 2004 conference (Thessaloniki, Greece, 20 - 21 September) was a major staging post after the first European e-skills summit (2002) in Copenhagen. Organised around the activities of the European e-Skills forum (1), and focusing on its report *E-skills in Europe: towards 2010 and beyond* (2), the conference involved more than 150 public and private sector experts and decision makers. Discussion covered global sourcing and the strategies and best practices to boost e-skills, e-learning, competitiveness and job creation.

Participants included representatives of several EU Member States and acceding countries, Directorates General of the European Commission (3) and the European Investment Bank. There were also delegates from leading ICT companies (4), from research, academia and training, representatives of European and international professional ICT associations (5) and consortia (6), and the social partners (7).

A number of messages were delivered from the conference. The first was that the European Union should adopt 'a comprehensive strategy for improving ICT skills and training across all sectors, at all levels and for all citizens'. Second was that the European Commission, alongside Cedefop and industry partners, should support a 'European level ICT skills meta-reference framework' for better planning of investments in training and skills. It should also further develop common principles for quality standards and for certification, whether public or private, profit or non-profit oriented.

Priority actions

The conference participants called upon all relevant stakeholders to support a number of priority actions in 2005 (8).

1. Developing a long-term strategic approach

The importance of the ICT sector and of ICT skills in general should be further promoted. Global sourcing must be able to reconcile the competitiveness and flexibility needed by business with the promise of career perspectives for European citizens. The Commission should facilitate this process, monitor European ICT competitiveness and encourage Member States to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the European Union for inward investment and inward migration of high-tech workers.

2. Improving ICT labour market data availability

The Commission should support the development of e-skills scenarios, in cooperation with industry, the OECD and Cedefop, and the establishment of a European network of experts. Eurostat and national statistical offices should work together to clarify, agree on and implement best practices in classifying and gathering new statistics to help training providers and enterprises in their strategic and skills planning.

3. Promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships

Improved dialogue and cooperation between industry, professional associations, social partners, the Commission and Member States is required, as is research into appropriate legal, financial and institutional frameworks for multi-stakeholder partnerships. Developing a European ICT skills and career portal,

Continued on page 2



Letter from the Director

During recent months much of our energy has been focused on supporting the European Commission and the Dutch Council presidency in the preparation of the Maastricht communiqué. This is a follow up to goals set in Lisbon in 2000 and the November 2002 Copenhagen declaration (see Cedefop Info 3/2002) on enhancing cooperation in the field of vocational education and training (VET) at European level. It had specifically provided for a review, at the end of 2004, on progress towards achieving these targets. To assist this review process the European Commission in late 2003 commissioned a major study on how far Member States had progressed towards these targets. Cedefop provided a major input through scientific co-ordination and monitoring of the study. In addition I was happy to see that the consortium which won the contract for the study was led by a member of Cedefop's ReferNet (the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the UK) and included a number of other ReferNet members. A synthesis of the study is now being prepared by Cedefop and will be presented at the meeting of ministers in Maastricht in December. We will include extracts from it in the next issue of Cedefop Info.

The services of the Commission have now published a proposal with relation to a common European qualifications framework. It contains both a common framework for reference levels and a typology of knowledge skills and competences. It proposes eight levels and covers both VET and higher education. It is specifically designed to allow for, and encourage, the validation of non-formal and informal learning and in particular of competences and skills acquired at the work place. It is linked with, and takes into account, the proposals for a European Credit Transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET). We will return to these subjects in Cedefop Info in 2005.

Meanwhile we are also working with the Commission on arrangements for the implementation of the new Europass (see Cedefop Info 2/2004). Both the Education Council and the European Parliament gave their general approval to these proposals in May, although a formal decision has not yet been agreed. The ECVET, the common qualification framework and Europass will constitute major steps forward in the promotion of transparency between, and easier recognition of, qualifications and therefore increased cooperation between education and training systems and greater mobility.

Lastly, as the article on page 4 shows, there has been continued progress in the field of lifelong guidance. Work on implementing the resolution agreed by the Council in May has commenced. Over the next three years, Cedefop will continue to cooperate actively with the Commission, the ETF and the OECD, with the aim of strengthening guidance systems, policies and practices, through research and exchange of experience.

Those of you who know Cedefop well may be a little surprised to find me still writing the letter from the Director in this issue of Cedefop Info. The second of my five-year contracts expired on 30 September and I had fully expected to leave the organisation on that date. However, the process of appointing my successor, in spite of the best efforts of all the parties concerned, has not led to a successful conclusion. Accordingly, following a request by the Chairman and Bureau of the Management Board, I have signed a contract to remain as Director for one further year. The Management Board is expected to re-launch the process for finding a successor at its November meeting.

Johan van Rens
Thessaloniki
October 2004

E-skills: The story continues

Continued from page 1

networking by learning centres across Europe, and promoting role models could also assist.

4. Designing innovative learning solutions

Policy makers and stakeholders should encourage university-industry cooperation with a focus on: designing innovative learning solutions; defining standards for mutual recognition of modules and units of training and credit transfer; and devising vendor- or platform-independent certification and skills assessment. Opportunities for certification, accreditation and assessment of e-skills at degree and sub-degree levels should be researched to help bridge formal and non-formal education and training.

5. Developing a European ICT skills meta-framework

A European ICT skills meta- or reference framework and subsequent European-wide certification standards in ICT should be developed; Member States and the Commission can cooperate with the social partners and multi-stakeholder partnerships on this. They should also support efforts to increase the transparency of certifications and promote appropriate quality standards for certifications and the training industry.

6. Reducing the digital divide

Member States, the Commission, industry and social partners should encourage training and targeted education resources in basic ICT skills so that the workforce is 'digitally literate'. True e-government demands e-citizens; this should be embraced if we want to narrow the 'digital divide'.

BACKGROUND TO E-SKILLS

The European Council 2000 in Lisbon set the goal of making the European Union 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. In a knowledge-based economy, workers with ICT and e-business skills (e-skills) assist innovation, enhance productivity and develop knowledge-intensive products and services. For the Information Society to deliver e-government to e-citizens, everyone must be able to use ICT.

What are e-skills?

The term 'e-skills' encompasses a wide range of capabilities (knowledge, skills and competences) and spans many economic and social dimensions. The ways individuals interact with ICT vary considerably according to context.

The term covers mainly three categories⁽¹⁾:

- **ICT specialist skills:** for specifying, designing, developing, installing, operating, supporting, maintaining, managing, evaluating and researching ICT systems;
- **ICT user skills:** for effective use of ICT systems - common generic software tools and specialised tools supporting business functions - by individuals in support of their own work, mostly outside the ICT industry;
- **e-business skills:** using ICT opportunities, such as the Internet, for more efficient and effective performance of business, new methods of organisation, and establishing new businesses.

E-business skills are strategic and related to innovation management, not technology management which uses ICT specialist skills.

The competences required of both specialists and users change constantly with new ICT applications. Some Member States have sufficient ICT skills in numerical terms but skills gaps and mismatch exist and may even increase.

The supply of individuals with appropriate 'practitioner skills' remains a concern. There is a tendency for young people to turn away from mathematics and sciences, which underpin much specialised ICT training. The increasingly globalised nature of the ICT industry

poses the danger of jobs being transferred from Europe to other locations with more highly skilled (and often lower paid) human resources.

ICT skills are increasingly important to the individual for quality employment and obtaining maximum benefit from the growing number of available ICT-related services. ICT 'user skills' range from a basic ability to use a computer (digital literacy) to higher level skills (the ability to use more advanced applications) which give an individual the opportunity to add real value to their activities, wherever these take place

European action

The eEurope 2005 Action plan, the EU's strategic vision for the Information society, includes promotion of digital literacy under its e-inclusion theme and the integration of ICT into learning under e-learning, implemented through the e-learning initiative, action plan and programme.

Building on earlier work by the ICT Skills Monitoring Group and on the outcomes of the Copenhagen summit in November 2002, DG Enterprise established the European e-skills forum in March 2003 to foster dialogue between relevant stakeholders, government officials, social partners and professionals. This forum has examined definitions, social and international aspects and certification and qualification issues of e-skills in Europe. Its synthesis report and the Thessaloniki conference will assist in suggesting future policies and recommendations for further action⁽²⁾.

Cedefop will contribute to this by supporting the European Commission in preparing and implementing a coherent EU e-skills policy to meet the 2010 target.

Cedefop will contribute to⁽¹⁰⁾:

- improving data on e-skills demand and supply;
- designing innovative learning solutions and exploring examples of good practice in certification;
- developing a European e-skills meta-framework in cooperation with the Commission and the European committee for standardisation (CEN), and its information society standardisation system (ISSS).

The study on ICT certification in Europe, commissioned by Cedefop from CEPIS in early 2004, will provide further reflection on quality standards, credit transfer and recognition and on European level comparability and compatibility of approaches.

⁽¹⁾ Documents and deliberations of the e-skills forum can be consulted at <http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/esf>

⁽²⁾ E-skills in Europe: towards 2010 and beyond: synthesis report of the European e-skills forum, Final, September 2004. See: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/doc/e-skills-forum-2004-09-fsr.pdf>

⁽³⁾ Enterprise and Industry, EAC, Employment and Social Affairs, Information society and Eurostat

⁽⁴⁾ Microsoft, Nokia, Cisco Systems, IBM, Certiport, CompTIA

⁽⁵⁾ Council of European Informatics Professions

⁽⁶⁾ Career Space, eSkills Certification Consortium, eLearning Industry Group, Project Management Institute

⁽⁷⁾ EICTA, Uni Europa, European Metal Workers Federation

⁽⁸⁾ The Final conference declaration can be found at:

<http://www.eskills2004.org/files/Final%20European%20e-skills%202004%20Declaration.pdf>

⁽⁹⁾ See the article on the e-Skills conference in this issue.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Based on concluding remarks made by Dr Stavros Stavrou, Cedefop Deputy Director at the end of the e-skills conference on 23 September 2004.

For more details e.g. background papers and the presentations linked to this event visit the conference website: www.eskills2004.org

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Source: Cedefop/bs/fg

E-learning for international markets

Compendium promotes debate on transnational e-learning

Development and implementation of e-learning in Europe are the central focuses of the recently published Volume 33 (1) of the business and training series issued by the Nuremberg Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung or f-bb (Corporate Training Research Institute).

Creating e-learning products for worldwide use is a difficult task. Standard products, mainly Anglo-American in origin, dominate the international market, whereas material from most European countries is still usually targeted at a purely national public. This challenges and invites European providers to design e-learning programmes which can be adapted to various languages and cultures and thus marketed internationally.

The diverse experiences and e-learning approaches of five European countries are documented in the recently published Volume 33 of the business and training series from Nuremberg's corporate training research institute, f-bb. Researchers, content developers, media educators and practitioners from Britain, the Czech Republic, France, Germany and Italy discuss their experiences and present their specifications for universally compatible e-learning products in the area of corporate continuing training.

Gabriele Fietz is responsible for the Leonardo da Vinci pilot project which prompted the publication. She came to the following conclusion:

"Close cooperation between EU members is the key to success. All participants, from designers to "onsite" users, must be fully incorporated into the programme development phase from the word go. That is the only way we can assure that we have what we need to satisfy both the European and international markets.

That is, e-learning products which are flexible enough to respond to all kinds of demands, and which are capable of competing on international markets. Sales volume must be adequate to warrant the continuing high cost of e-learning material and to ensure the viability of these products."

The bilingual publication (in English and German) demonstrates the obstacles to European e-learning collaboration and documents the various approaches. The accompanying CD-ROM features numerous checklists and guidelines, an authoring tool for independently creating or adapting graphics-supported exercises and an e-learning glossary in five languages.

(1) Fietz, Gabriele; Junge, Annette; Mason, Robin et al.: E-learning for Internationale Markets - Development and Implementation of E-learning in Europe, Bielefeld 2004. The volume (ISBN 3-7639-3115-5) can be purchased for 24.90. Further information: fietz.gabriele@f-bb.de

Source: Nürnberger Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung (f-bb)

Editorial note:

E-learning continues to be an important theme in Cedefop's work programme. One of the more recent Cedefop publications (No. 3011) is *Perspectives for e-learning businesses - markets, technologies and strategies*, by J. Hasebrook, D. Rudolph and W. Herrmann, 2003, ISBN 92-896-0215-5 - available from the EU's Publications Office (catalogue number TI-49-03-886-EN-C, price EUR 25, excluding VAT).

The effectiveness of education systems depends entirely on approaches to teaching and learning. E-learning technologies are contributing to the dramatic expansion of the market for educational services and products. The introduction of information and communication technologies must be accompanied by far-reaching reorganisations of learning structures.

The book considers:

What are the strengths of e-learning markets outside traditional education?

What are the most promising strategies for e-learning companies?

What is the European perspective on the global e-learning market?

In it the reader will find information, supported by charts and graphs, on:

developments in Europe, the United States and other countries;

the most promising segments of the global e-learning market;

the most promising strategies for e-learning companies;

key technologies;

e-learning companies and the products and services they offer.

Source: Cedefop/jma

The value of learning

Continued from page 1

both formative and summative aspects depending on their adequacy to the various stages. It concludes by reviewing the 'history' and the level of evaluation activity in various European countries, as well as the most common standards applied by evaluators.

Part 2 presents the approaches of evaluation and impact research. It is divided in two main chapters. The first chapter reviews the objects and the methods, qualitative and quantitative, of programme evaluation. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the most common theories, approaches and methods of impact research, i.e. the investigation of the impact - both material and non-material - of education, training and skills on economic and social development as well as on company and individual performance.

After these theoretical and methodological considerations, Part 3 discusses, on the basis of case studies, country examples and best practices, how evaluation can support the implementation and assessment of education and training system reforms and of more targeted interventions such as active labour-market policies and programmes:

- to assess the types of reforms and programmes needed, establish priorities and choose objectives;
- to design interventions while involving all stakeholders, deciding on types and levels of action and planning interventions;
- to follow-up and steer implementation, providing feedback, reorienting strategies of reform and ensuring a good allocation of resources;
- to judge whether reforms and programmes have achieved their objectives and generated other unexpected or unintended effects; and
- to advise on future policies.

Finally, Part 4 discusses recent research results on the diverse benefits of education, training and skills for the society,

Cedefop has published its series of reports on vocational education and training research since 1998. The reports provide a comprehensive review of current research in initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET) in Europe, its results and their implications for policy, practice and future research. Attention is also paid to theoretical and methodological foundations, and due reference given to relations with institutional, economic, social, demographic, and other fields of social action.

In preparing and publishing this reporting series Cedefop aims to improve transparency on VET research in Europe by fostering cooperation and communication both within the research community itself and between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.

The third research report is composed of three volumes of background reports, with contributions from renowned researchers - *Impact of education and training*, *Foundations of evaluation and impact research*, *Evaluation of systems and programmes* - and of a synthesis report 'The value of learning: Evaluation and impact of education and training', prepared by Pascaline Descy and Manfred Tessaring (Cedefop).

The three volumes of the background report are currently prepared for print and will be published separately in autumn-winter 2004-2005. The synthesis report will be published early 2005.

Detailed information on previous Research reports is on Cedefop's European Training Village (www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/ResearchLab/)

Contents

Austria 6, 18 • Belgium 15 • Czech Republic 8, 10 • Estonia 8 • Finland 7, 11 • France 11, 15, 19 • Germany 6, 18 • Ireland 5, 9, 14 • Italy 1, 13, 18 • Latvia 15 • Malta 17 • Netherlands 6, 7 • Norway 16 • Poland 14 • Portugal 11, 13, 19 • Romania 12, 13 • Slovakia 10 • Slovenia 16 • Spain 9 • Sweden 12 • United Kingdom 17, 19

Cedefop/Europe 1-5

Cedefop: The value of learning • Italy: New strategies for lifelong learning • E-skills: The story continues • Cedefop: Letter from the Director • E-learning for international markets • EU action to strengthen guidance systems • New Director at the ETF • Erasmus Mundus: European master's degree courses

Lifelong learning 5-7

Ireland: Ahead of the curve • Austria: Good marks for lifelong learning • Germany: Strategy for lifelong learning sets standards • Netherlands: Regional networks as a basis for renewal of vocational and adult education

Internationalisation of vocational education and training 7-8

Netherlands: 'I am a European' - European citizens and the role of education • Finland: WorldSkills 2005 promotes vocational skills • Valorisation guidance • Czech Republic/Germany: Playtime for economics students

Educational policy 8-10

Estonia: Information system on education - a basis for the right decisions • Spain: Measures planned by the Ministry of Education and Science • Ireland: New curriculum for upper secondary education • Slovakia: The chicken and egg in the development of vocational training • Czech Republic: Fewer young people frees training capacity for adults

Vocational education and training 11-12

Finland: Implementation of on-the-job learning • Portugal: New regulatory framework for vocational training • France: Powers of the regions extended • Romania: Breaking the vicious circle

Initial vocational training 12-13

Sweden: Government plans to improve upper secondary school • Italy: Summer guidance work placements

Continuing vocational training 13

Romania: New strategies and methods • Portugal: Both sides of the textile industry regard vocational training as superfluous

Employment policy 14-15

Poland: Improving the quality of public employment services • Ireland/Europe: Investment in human resources conference • Latvia: Work experience for students during summer holidays • France: Towards a new social cohesion plan based on return to employment

Vocational guidance 15

Belgium: Job information files for the German-speaking community • Belgium: Performance bonus to guide job-seekers towards the right training introduced in Flanders

VET quality - certification systems 16-18

Slovenia: The certification of non-formal and informal learning - a challenge for employees and companies • Norway: Restructuring to ensure quality • Norway: New website for quality assessment and development • Malta: Promoting parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications • United Kingdom: Reform of the credit framework for adults • Italy: The initial vocational training quality charter

Financing of training 18

Germany: Digging increasingly deeper into state coffers to finance vocational training

Special target groups 18

Austria: More money for disabled students

New organisations and programmes 19

United Kingdom: Toolkit to help universities and colleges meet the needs of employers • France: Open and distance learning: good practice shared by partners • Portugal: National education programme on safety and health at work

Social partners 20

The state of affairs: European and international vocational education and training at sector level

for companies and for individuals. OECD countries have invested heavily in education and training and this has had considerable positive effects on labour productivity and economic growth. Education and training also display - directly or indirectly - non-material benefits such as

better health, trust, crime reduction and social cohesion. Taken together, investing in human capital is rather beneficial policy. This is also true for companies as their investment in training generates substantial gains in terms of productivity, profitability and stock market performance, independently of whether training is specific or general. There are in addition considerable monetary and non-monetary returns for individuals when investing in education, training and skills. Life course and biographical studies demonstrate even further that initial participation in education and continuing training have cumulative effects in the long-term for occupational career and personal development.

Source: Cedefop/Pascaline Descy, Manfred Tessaring

EU action to strengthen guidance systems

In the last issue of Cedefop Info we featured an article on the recently adopted Council Resolution on lifelong guidance and explained that the Resolution was not an isolated initiative but rather part of a broader process of work. The current article aims to provide an overview of guidance work done at European level prior to the Resolution and of what is planned to support and complement the follow-up of the Resolution.

EU funding from the 2004 Joint Actions Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth Programmes has been allocated to create a small number of European networks of national fora. The rationale for such fora lies in the transversal dimension of lifelong guidance, which spans the education, training and employment sectors. Bringing together all actors concerned with the development of policy, systems and practices for lifelong guidance will encourage mutual learning and co-ordinated effort to develop systems better able to respond to the varied needs of citizens over their lifetime. Under the Socrates programme resources were made available for the development of lifelong guidance systems and practices. Under the Leonardo da Vinci (LDV) programme for 2003-2004, support was provided for the development of career information, for training of practitioners and for the development of workplace guidance. Under the LDV programme for 2005-2006, resources will be provided to support guidance aspects of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (composed of officials from education and labour ministries, representatives from the European social partners, consumer, parents' and youth associations, and from international bodies such as the OECD, IAEVG, World Association of Public Employment Services) has been instrumental in driving work forward. The Group has fed into the policy debate at European level by providing recommendations on guidance aspects of the Concrete Objectives of Education & Training process and of the Copenhagen enhanced co-operation in VET process as well as of the new gen-

eration of education, training and youth programmes. The Group has also overseen the preparation of a range of self-assessment tools designed to be of practical assistance to those involved in guidance at national level, including: common aims and principles of lifelong guidance; features of lifelong guidance systems; a proposal for a framework of core quality criteria for guidance services and products and a career guidance handbook for policy makers (this will be published jointly by the Commission and the OECD in December 2004). A study on indicators and benchmarks in guidance has been launched and is expected to be completed at the end of 2004. Cooperation has been established with the responsible Group to examine the role of guidance in validation of non-formal and informal learning and the importance of guidance has been mentioned in the Council conclusions on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These initiatives all form part of the first work programme of the Expert Group for the period 2003-2004. The mandate of the Group requires it to present a report to the Commission in late autumn 2004 outlining a basis for concrete action in the field of lifelong guidance. This report will contain a proposal for a second work programme for the period 2005-2006, including specific actions to promote the implementation of the Resolution.

An extensive body of research has informed reflection at European level. In 2001 the OECD launched a review of policies for career information, guidance and counselling services. 14 countries took part in this OECD initiative. On the request of the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, in 2002 Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) extended the review to cover the remaining Member States and future Member States. In 2002, the World Bank also undertook a related review of career guidance policies in some middle-income countries so that a total of 37 countries were reviewed.

Drawing on this research, Cedefop has published a report on Guidance Policies

in the Knowledge Society. This report outlines significant developments, trends, challenges and issues, as well as strengths and weaknesses of information and guidance systems and policies across 29 European countries. It also identifies interesting practice illustrated with examples taken from a range of countries. Policy-makers and practitioners will thus be able to benchmark their own systems in relation to those of others and to assess their practices in the light of the efforts and experiences of colleagues across Europe. Annexed to the main report is a short paper comparing and contrasting the career guidance policy situation in Europe with that of some middle-income countries and some non-European developed countries and summarising the main findings and conclusions of the career guidance policy reviews carried out in all 37 countries.

Cedefop created guidance web-pages in order to disseminate widely the results of the work of the Commission's Lifelong Guidance Expert Group. In addition to the output of the Expert Group, the web-pages contain: information on guidance related EU policy developments and funding programmes; the results of the OECD, Cedefop and ETF career guidance policy reviews; publications; papers from past international guidance events; information about forthcoming events and links to other European or international guidance websites. A section on examples of interesting policy and practice is in development.

With the kind permission of the OECD and the ETF, Cedefop has incorporated the results of the 29 career guidance policy reviews of European countries into our 'eKnowVet' database that is part of our Knowledge Management System. This means that, in addition to being able to consult and print out each of the country reports, the data can be searched by theme (for example policy instruments; recent initiatives; roles of stakeholders; target groups; staffing and so on) across all 29 countries or by any selected subgroup of countries. Transversal data from the synthesis report on guidance policies has also been included in the 'eKnowVet' database. The database can be accessed

via the guidance webpages.

Lastly, Cedefop is revising the virtual community on lifelong guidance which it established to support the work of the Expert Group. Membership of the virtual community will be streamlined and limited to guidance stakeholders interested in interactive exchange. The virtual community provides the opportunity to comment on draft papers produced by the Expert Group, to share information and views on new initiatives and approaches and to take part in topical discussions. An external animator is being recruited to stimulate and support debate. If you wish to apply for membership to the virtual community please go to <http://communities.trainingvillage.gr>



Guidance policies in the knowledge society
Trends, challenges and responses across Europe
A Cedefop synthesis report
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Further information on the website of Cedefop under:
http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Guidance/

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New Director at the ETF



A challenging mandate

On 1 July 2004, Dr Muriel Dunbar, 52, took over at the helm at the European Training Foundation (ETF). In moving to Turin, she left a position as deputy director and senior consultant for education and training at the British Council in Jakarta, Indonesia, where she had worked since 2000. Prior to that her career has taken her to the City & Guilds of London Institute, a National VET qualifications agency where she began work in 1983, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and, from 1996 onwards, the British Council. In the last ten years she has been involved in VET development projects in Russia, Namibia, the Palestinian Territories, Mexico, Colombia, Egypt, Bulgaria and Tunisia. Her work in Indonesia and throughout her career has given her a solid preparation for the challenges now facing her at the ETF in Turin.

In an interview for the ETF magazine "Live & learn", Dr Muriel Dunbar explained how "the job in Turin presents an excellent opportunity to use all the strands that have emerged in my career so far. I have worked with vocational education and training for the better part of 30 years. A fair share of my experience with VET involves the developing and transition countries. And the senior management experience is, of course, indispensable."

In fact, her most recent work prior to her joining the ETF involved activities very similar to those in which the ETF has been engaged in other parts of the world - a feasibility study on local skills development in Papua New Guinea, a project helping to build local capacity in preparation for the Indonesian decentralisation of education funding, and a project providing management training to senior university administrators. In what is a remote, environmentally sensitive and very un-

derdeveloped region, the 'work aimed to establish the potential scope of local capacity development and prepare the ground for what hopefully will become a larger project', Muriel Dunbar continued.

In this way, the project was very similar to some of the work Muriel Dunbar is now involved with at the ETF. During the last few years, the ETF has shifted its focus towards becoming a centre of expertise, by sharing expertise in VET across regions and cultures it helps people to develop their skills, thereby promoting better living conditions and active citizenship in democratic societies that respect human rights and cultural diversity.

In talking about the ETF's current and future role, Muriel Dunbar has the following to say: 'If you approach VET as a tool for economic development, the ETF has an exciting and challenging mandate. It is crucial for the European Union to work on the development of strong economies in its neighbourhood, both for the development of new markets for goods and services, and for the management of sustainable employment. A strong and prospering buffer zone around the European Union will take the strain off migration problems and social unrest'.

In her first few months at the ETF, she has taken time to meet all staff and discover where their strengths and weaknesses and, hence, those of the ETF, lie, and will soon participate in her first Governing Board and Advisory Forum meetings as Director.

Last, but not least, Muriel Dunbar is discovering the charms of the city of Turin with all that its proximity to the Alps and the Langhe, one of Italy's largest wine producing regions, brings.

Source: ETF



Erasmus Mundus: European master's degree courses

The European Commission has selected the first 19 Erasmus Mundus master's degree courses. The aim of the programme is to strengthen European cooperation and international ties in higher education by supporting high-quality master's degree courses and encouraging exchanges between students and academics from all over the world and the European Union. A total of EUR 230 million will be spent on the programme between now and 2008, 90% of it on the mobility of students and researchers. The budget for the launch year is EUR 8 million.

Eighty-two European universities in 16 EU Member States and Norway are participating in the selected courses. The countries most prominently represented are Germany (13 universities), France (12), Italy (10) and the United Kingdom (8).

In autumn 2004, 14 of the 19 master's degree courses were launched and the first recipients of Erasmus Mundus scholarships have arrived: 140 students and

42 academics, all with excellent academic records and chosen by their universities, from about 80 countries all over the world, will study in Europe for up to two years.

The master's degree courses cover a very wide variety of disciplines: law, economics, social sciences, politics, environmental sciences, management, sociology, education, industrial relations, mathematics, health, new technologies, etc. As from 2005, European students and researchers will in turn be able to go to non-EU countries to enrich their studies.

For further information see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

Source: Cedefop/cf



Lifelong learning

IRELAND

Ahead of the curve

The Government needs to invest more in training at work and give a higher priority to research and development if Ireland is to maintain competitiveness in an enlarged EU, according to a recently published review of industrial policy (1). 'Ambitious targets must be set to improve educational and skills attainment across all levels', the report states.

Wide-ranging recommendations are proposed to generate growth and employment in the economy with particular emphasis on indigenous industry. The report identifies three aspects of education and skills development as being critical.

Upskilling of the existing workforce

The report proposes increasing the numbers graduating from secondary education and facilitating access to higher education for a wider share of the population. At present approximately 17% of young people leave school without completing the final upper secondary examination, the Leaving Certificate (see also separate article on page x of this issue). It suggests the provision of training for a range of occupations for these early leavers, through new work-study programmes, relevant to the needs of the labour market. Qualifications from these programmes should be equivalent to Leaving Certificate standard, the report states. The report proposes increasing the current Leaving Certificate completion rate to 90%.

To support ongoing skills improvement at all levels, a formalised programme of lifelong learning is rec-

ommended, to be administered through a 'One-Step Up' initiative. This initiative would encourage greater participation in ongoing learning by facilitating and encouraging employees to continually develop their skills by a further increment. The focus will be on raising skill levels rather than reskilling and on transferable rather than company-specific skills. While the initiative seeks to engage with the workforce as a whole, the report says it should pay particular attention to the people with low levels of qualification and in low-level occupations, who are least likely to receive sufficient access to learning opportunities.

An adaptive and responsive higher education sector

The report calls for greater collaboration between universities and other third level institutions and the enterprise sector so as to ensure graduates have the right mix of skills, and advocates increased mobility between the two. Governance of higher education must be reviewed to enable flexible responses to the increasing pace of change in enterprise. This will mean an increased role for the enterprise sector in the governing bodies of higher education institutions and a funding framework that combines core funding with a competitively-based element, allocated on the basis of performance. Additional diverse sources of private funding should be sourced.

The report quotes OECD figures, which place Ireland in 12th place out of 30 for the number of 25-34 year

olds holding degree-level qualifications. It recommends that the proportion of graduates should be in the top 10% of OECD countries and that the quality of awards from the Irish higher education sector should be benchmarked internationally.

Expansion of the workforce through an appropriate skills-based immigration strategy

It is estimated that approximately 420 000 new workers will be required over the period 2001-2010. With domestic sources of labour diminishing and increasing competition in Europe and EU for skilled labour, Ireland will have to source workers from outside the EU. The report proposes the development of a strategic skills-based immigration policy to attract and retain highly skilled workers from outside the EU.

The employer representative body, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) welcomed the report, the former for its central proposal that enterprise be put at the heart of the government agenda and ICTU for its recognition of the role of social partnership in delivering economic growth and jobs and its emphasis on increased funding for training especially for lifelong learning.

(1) Enterprise Strategy Group: Ahead of the curve, Ireland's place in the global economy. Dublin: Forfás, 2004. Download address: http://www.forfas.ie/publications/esg040707/pdf/esg_ahead_of_the_curve_full_report.pdf

Source: FÁS, Training and Employment Authority, Dublin

Good marks for lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is not only a buzzword of European education and training policy but a fundamental principle. It is developing into a benchmark for European education and training, with a view to meeting the challenges of the 21st century. In Austria, lifelong learning has rapidly become a success story - so much so that the EU objective of at least 12.5 % of the active population participating in lifelong learning by 2010 was reached by 2003. It has been observed that above all younger people take advantage of the continuing training on offer, especially of continuing

vocational training, as illustrated by the success of initiatives delivering personal lifelong learning and specialised continuing training. The vocational school-leaving certificate, preparatory courses for the compulsory school leaving certificate and sandwich courses at universities of applied sciences boast such high growth rates that the funding for these streams has had to be increased five- to eightfold in the course of the last six years.

The OECD report on adult learning in Austria, published in June 2004, draws attention to this laudable development and

identifies the wide diversity of continuing training provision as an important factor in its success. The OECD points out that Austria has set the right priorities in adult learning, with adequate course provision and appropriate price levels. Moreover, the system specifically provides for the promotion of groups with labour market integration problems, e.g. job market returnees, young school dropouts and migrants. The OECD nevertheless recommends a closer linkage between training measures within labour market policy and other forms of continuing training provision.

A steering committee is to be established in the autumn of 2004 with a view to reinforcing continuing training provision and developing a comprehensive strategy by defining targets and their main organisational modalities and deadlines.

Further information from:
Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Vienna
Tel. (43-1) 53120-5021
<http://www.bmbwk.gv.at>

OECD: Thematic Review on adult learning - Austria Country Note
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/19/32303060.pdf>

Source: Helmut Hafner, Laboratory for Plastics Engineering, Vienna

GERMANY

Strategy for lifelong learning sets standards

Joint federal government-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion sets development priorities for effective initial and continuing training in the different life phases.

The federal government and the Länder are tackling the further development of the German education and training system head on: they have devised a strategy for lifelong learning which encompasses all life phases, from kindergarten and school through VET and higher education to continuing training. The joint federal government-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion has issued a strategy paper which it sees as an opportunity to set European-wide standards for the definition of lifelong learning.

The strategy is essentially based on life phases which are attributed key development priorities. In the childhood phase it is primarily a question of developing the motivation and capacity for learning. Parents and educators play a decisive role in this phase, as they determine the extent and quality of informal learning. New educational and pedagogical plans can decisively promote the skills development of children. The commission regards networking between kindergarten, schools, parents, youth welfare and youth work as well as learning counselling of, above all, parents, as further important building blocks in this life phase.

In the day-to-day learning routine of youth, characterised by compulsory school-

ing, the focus is above all on skills development. In this life phase schools not only have the task of imparting specialised knowledge, but must also develop learning, action-related and social skills, fostering teamwork skills and establishing the basis for self-directed learning. In this phase, learning counselling involves careers guidance for the young people themselves. The commission points out that schools need more decision-making powers in order to lay the foundations for a new learning culture and to ensure equal opportunities of access to learning.

The commission defines early adulthood as the time of entry into working life, including initial vocational training, up to starting regular employment. The development priorities of this phase are informal learning, self-directed learning and skills development. The foundations are established by networking between schools, enterprises, universities, job placement organisations and continuing training institutions. The modular provision of these services allows for a targeted enhancement of skills and improves equality of access to educational/training routes. The main thrust of learning counselling in this phase is vo-

ational training, higher education and continuing training. The new learning culture is focused on practical and transferable skills.

For adults, lifelong learning is gaining more and more importance in a context of rapid change. However, as occupational and social commitments leave adults little scope for action, self-structured learning is the best answer. The commission also favours recognising qualifications acquired either within the family, at work or in their leisure activities. A modular approach allows individuals to build up their individual skills profiles gradually throughout this phase.

For the commission, the elderly life phase comes shortly before or during retirement. In theory at least, older people can choose what and why they decide to learn to an extent greater than all the other life phases. In practice, however, they still come up against formal limits. In its strategy paper, the commission draws attention to age-specific barriers in educational and learning provision. These should be dismantled so that older adults can enjoy equal access to lifelong learning. The commission stresses that acquiring or maintaining indepen-

dence and self-determination is an essential aim of lifelong learning, applying also to older people in the later stages of life. The commission's strategy also clearly identifies older adults as a target group for continuing training, not only to update their skills, but to help them acquire new skills and pass on their experience and knowledge to the younger generation.

The task of educational experts is now to fill this strategic framework with concrete content.

Source: BLK/BIBB/Cedefop/sk



NETHERLANDS

Regional networks as a basis for renewal of vocational and adult education

In June 2004, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science published the main policy paper (1) for the development of the vocational and adult education sector in the Netherlands in the coming years. This paper is the basis for a continuing exchange with educational institutions on the reform of vocational education.

Society has changed considerably. As a result of the transition to a knowledge society, the individual should keep up with a more and more complex society and national government should reposition itself between Europe and the regions. The vocational and adult education sector should accordingly change more than it has done up to now. A key aspect is to interweave education and professional practice more and more.

The government should retreat by giving more responsibilities to regional networks

in which vocational education institutions (regional training centres) operate together with companies, national expertise centres for vocational education and the labour market, municipalities and other educational institutions. The region itself, with the regional training centres (ROCs) in the centre, should formulate their own ambitions. The region is not defined geographically, but regional networks can and should change according to the needs defined in their ambitions and the needs of the regional labour market and of learners.

The Max Goote Kenniscentrum recently published research (2) on the methods of identifying various stakeholders in vocational education and training and the instruments necessary to specify their role and relation to educational institutions.

Important issues in the new policy developments for the sector are:

- vocational and adult education to prepare for a variety of (learning) careers;
- lifelong learning and lifelong guidance;
- more responsibility for learners themselves;
- all (potential) learners to be included in the educational process;
- a competence based qualification structure as a basis of renewal education;
- examination;
- educational staff and institutions to be more entrepreneurial, both in their own "learning" careers and in teaching others;
- government to give a clear framework, with fewer rules;
- regional networks to define the needs and aims of vocational education and to give an account of the results;
- active cooperation on topics of the European agenda, including benchmarks. International developments urge the VET

sector to cooperate with other European countries, particularly neighbouring countries, on topics such as the stimulation of mobility, safety rules or other professional conditions.

(1) Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Koers BVE, het regionale netwerk aan zet (Steering the course for vocational and adult education; the regional network at work). In Dutch only. Den Haag, 2004. ISBN: 90-5910-421-8.

(2) E.H. Hooge, M.E. van der Sluis & F.J. de Vijlder. Stakeholders in beeld. Max Goote Kenniscentrum. 2004.

For further information contact:
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
PO Box 16375, 2500BJ Den Haag, Netherlands
Tel. (31-70) 41 23 456, Fax (31-70) 41 23 450
Website: <http://www.minocw.nl> and
<http://www.minocw.nl/koersbve/doc/2004/koersbve.pdf>

Source: CINOP, Netherlands

New strategies for lifelong learning

Continued from page 1

In the course of 2004, the new funding instruments, the joint inter-occupational funds, are gradually beginning to replace existing instruments as the various public CVT policy strands are revised and integrated into a coherent system. As specifically sectoral instruments, the funds are generating a redefinition of all the existing instruments in terms of train-

ing implementation and target groups. Data for the period 1999 to 2001 demonstrate that a substantial majority of the implemented training initiatives tended to cater for the same target groups - so-called 'strong' labour market groups (young people, mainly men, managers, executives, engineers and employees at senior or middle level living in medium-sized or large urban centres, upper secondary school certificate holders or graduates, those working in the tertiary sector or ITC) - although they only rep-

resent a minority of the Italian labour force. This trend was induced by the prevalence of training and counselling centres delivering this particular form of training. The joint inter-occupational funds can correct this dynamic by supporting individual demand and, along the same lines as in France and Spain, by creating services which will stimulate and orient learning on demand from individual workers and enterprises (above all employees, the self-employed or proprietors of micro-enterprises) requiring ad-

ditional assistance in defining their own skilling needs.

(¹) http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/training_continua_03/rapporto.html. Although the full report is in Italian, an English abstract is available at: http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/training_continua_03/abstract.pdf

(²) Cf. Cedefop Info No 1/2004 'Joint inter-occupational funds for continuing training: criteria and provisions for the management of financial resources' and Cedefop Info No 3/2003 'Continuing training: Joint inter-occupational funds launched'

(³) The text of Law No 236/93 can be found, among others, at: http://www.oigamipaf.it/NORME/1993_236_L.htm

For further information: <http://www.welfare.gov.it>

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL ReferNet Italy

Internationalisation of vocational education and training



NETHERLANDS

'I am a European' - European citizens and the role of education

EU 2004 Last July, the Dutch Minister of Education put the issue of European citizenship on the agenda of the informal meeting of European Ministers of Education. 'Fostering active citizenship through education should be an important element in the forthcoming European Union Education Programmes. The programmes should be used to stimulate network building.'⁽¹⁾

Both at national and at European level (²) the awareness of active citizenship has been increasing, since the treaty of Maastricht defined the concept of European citizenship in 1992. For most inhabitants of the European Union, Europe is still far away from their own world and little emotional involvement in European issues can be traced. On the other hand, 'recent changes affecting the social and cultural condition of our societies such as globalisation, immigration, communication technology and individualisation, present new challenges to the existing mechanisms by which norms and values, the basis of social cohesion, are transferred to next generations of citizens.'⁽³⁾

The Dutch Council of Education (Onderwijsraad) has advised the Minister of Education on the possible role all sectors of education could play in fostering Euro-

pean citizenship. Europe plays a distinguished role in the various mobility programmes, but education on European citizenship should be strengthened. However, it is difficult to speak of a single definition of Europe. Young people should be prepared to act both at a political and socio-cultural level. The political context asks for knowledge of European institutions and (critical) awareness of European political issues. The socio-cultural context requires young people to have the ability and knowledge to participate adequately in social activities (learning, working, etc.) in the member states of the European Union.

The advice of the Council of Education, based on research (⁴) done by CINOP, the Centre for the Innovation of Education and Training, proposes various actions to maximise the contribution of education to the development of European citizenship (⁵):

- define clear goals and validate the results related to the creation of a European identity and citizenship in European, bilateral or national mobility programmes;
- bring any expertise, experiences and good practices from European projects on citizenship and European identity together and support the development of learning materials;

- raise the number of youngsters participating in mobility (to 1 in every 5 or 6 students in VET), because this is a very effective learning environment;
- use European funds to raise the number of exchange and mobility projects in Europe;
- create a Europe-competence, if possible based on relevant parts of curricula in secondary education and senior secondary vocational education;
- enhance the use of ICT and Internet, e.g. for virtual mobility.

(¹) Conclusions of informal meeting of EU-Ministers of Education and the European Commission, in Rotterdam on 12 July 2004, http://eu2004.minocw.nl/docs/nl/presidency_conclusions_rotterdam.pdf

(²) 2005 will be the European Year of Citizenship

(³) Conclusions of informal meeting of EU-Ministers of Education and the European Commission, in Rotterdam on 12 July 2004

(⁴) Dinjens, F. and Visser, T. Een zoektocht naar stimulering van het Europese Burgerschap in het Nederlands Onderwijs. 's-Hertogenbosch. CINOP 2004

(⁵) Onderwijsraad (Education Council). Onderwijs en Europa: Europees burgerschap (Education and Europe: European Citizenship, in Dutch). The Hague. ISBN: 90-77293-21-3

For further information contact: Fleur Dinjens, CINOP, The Centre for Innovation of Education and Training, Pettelaarpark 1, Postbus 1585, 5200 BP 's-Hertogenbosch. Tel. (31-73) 68 00 800, Fax (31-73) 61 23 425. E-mail: fdinjens@cinop.nl, Website: <http://www.cinop.nl>

Source: CINOP, Netherlands

FINLAND

WorldSkills 2005 promotes vocational skills



In May 2005, Finland will host the 38th WorldSkills Competition in Helsinki. The competition includes a total of 40 skills, and nearly 800 young competitors from 40 different countries are expected to participate. Planning and implementing the competition forms an extensive key project in vocational education development in Finland, the aim of which is to improve the quality of vocational skills and promote the appreciation and attractiveness of vocational education and training. 2005 has been declared the national year of the professional, the main event of which is the WorldSkills Competition.

WorldSkills Organisation (WSO)

The aim of the international WorldSkills organisation is to promote a worldwide awareness of the essential contribution that skills and high standards of competence make to the achievement of economic success and individual fulfilment. The organisation includes 39 member countries from all continents. The main activity of the organisation is the biannual WorldSkills Competition, the first of which took place in Spain in 1950. After Finland, the next competitions will take place in Japan in 2007 and Canada in 2009.

WorldSkills Competition a key project for Finland

Finland's decision in the summer of 2000 to apply for the right to host the competition was a significant strategic decision, both politically and educationally. Preparing for, and implementing, the competition form a key long-term project in the enhancement of VET and supports the VET development targets set at a national and European level. The 2005 championships can therefore be said to promote the Copenhagen process and to improve the recognition and appreciation of European vocational education and training.

The aim is to create new national and international cooperative networks in an effort to upgrade VET. In Finland, the results of the project are used to improve learning assessment methods, demonstration of skills, on-the-job training and teaching methods, as well as to promote the internationalisation of vocational education and training.

Skills Finland is responsible for organising the competition under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the prestigious Helsinki 2005 Advisory Board appointed by the Ministry. Tuula Haatainen,

Minister of Education, is chairperson of the Advisory Board. The competition is the largest educational event ever to take place in Finland, and also the most extensive event ever arranged at the Helsinki Fair Centre. In addition to the actual competition, the WorldSkills Competition includes a number of other events. A total of 150 000 visitors are expected to attend the competitions, including 60 000 young people from secondary and vocational schools, and 4 000 foreign guests.

For further information: Ms Eija Alhojärvi, Executive Director, Skills Finland. E-mail: eija.alhojarvi@skillsfinland.com. Website: <http://www.wsc2005helsinki.com>

Source: NBE, Finland.



Playtime for economics students

It may not top the list of the most 'fun' subjects to study but economics can be taught in a way that makes it more enjoyable for students. That is the lesson of Simgame, a two-year Leonardo da Vinci project currently approaching its conclusion.

Simgame was created by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NÚOV, www.nuov.cz) and the consultancy company Consim, (www.consim.cz); it has project partners in Germany, led by BIBB (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung) and in the Czech Republic. The game assists the teaching of economic processes and decision-making by using simulation, thus encouraging active student participation and acquisition of new skills in an amusing way.

Knowledge in practice

It is essentially a board-game, providing simulation (without computer support) of the basic relationships between business subjects. Students/players have to respect the rules of the market economy while using their knowledge in practice as members of company executive staff (e.g. as marketing, finance or production managers). They develop a strategy for their business and try to succeed in the marketplace, competing with other students/businessmen to determine the winners and losers. They play while learning and learn while playing.

Improving knowledge using the emotional reinforcement of game-playing is substantially more in-

tensive than by traditional teaching. The closer the game is to reality, the greater is the intensity of the process. The role of the teacher in such a process changes into mentor and tutor, supporting the students during learning.

The aims of the Simgame project are to strengthen the quality of initial vocational training, increasing employability and improving the ability to compete in the European labour market. The game supports these aims by developing entrepreneurial and social skills such as self-direction, risk-taking, self-employment, team working, communication skills, and system-thinking. Young people who enter the labour market already equipped with such skills will make an indirect contribution to the capabilities of small and medium size enterprises. The project will also impact on the methodological and social competences of teachers and trainers and their involvement in lifelong learning.

The project is aimed at various target groups: pupils aged 16 to 18 in upper secondary and vocational schools; trainees and apprentices in business occupations; employees in small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly handicraft firms, that have to be trained in entrepreneurial skills; and teachers and trainers who want to use gaming simulation as a teaching method.

Close cooperation

Creating a simulation of real conditions of business practice for the game has involved close cooperation be-

tween vocational education institutions, schools and social partners. The role of social partners lies especially in transforming business practice requirements into the goals and contents of the training module and the teaching and methodological materials. Representatives of entrepreneurs (mainly SMEs) were involved in correcting the simulated economic processes so the game would reflect changing business reality in partner countries.

Current project participants include teachers and students from upper secondary schools with an economic orientation from the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Austria and Slovakia. Czech schools are represented by the Business Academy Association and the Slovak school by ŠIOV Bratislava. The schools from Germany, Italy and Austria are participating directly.

Many students and teachers have already reacted positively to the Simgame; it has been successfully tested at several secondary business schools in partner countries and at international conferences. Currently the game is available in Czech and German, with English and Italian versions planned. The project ends in December 2004.

Further information:

Martina Kanakova, Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání (National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education) - NÚOV
e-mail: kanakova@nuov.cz

More details (in Czech, German and English) are available on: www.simgame.org or www.nuov.cz

Source: Martina Kanakova/Cedefop

Valorisation guidance

How the UK Leonardo National Agency takes a practical view of an abstract concept

Valorisation focus

The Leonardo da Vinci Programme has produced many innovative methods and products for improving vocational education and training (VET) across the 31 participating countries. However, too often these innovations have been stranded in the experimentation stage, unable to develop further or reach an audience beyond the project partnership.

In response, the European Commission has developed a valorisation strategy designed to promote the transfer of programme results into national and European systems and practices. *The Valorisation guidance note*, produced by the Leonardo UK National Agency, is designed to offer applicants and project promoters background information on the concept of valorisation, and practical advice on devising a valorisation plan and on typical valorisation activities. The note uses case studies to anchor the concept of valorisation in daily project life and to provide diverse and concrete examples. Although produced for Leonardo projects, many other European projects could benefit from the insights and examples it provides.

Valorisation practice

In the context of the Leonardo programme, valorisation means:

- exploiting the results of projects;
- raising awareness of, and further developing, project results in different contexts and situations (e.g. regions, countries, sectors);
- recognising good practice and encouraging relevant key players to do the same;
- embedding project results into the practices of organisations;
- mainstreaming project results into local, regional, national or European provision.

A variety of European activities support these strategies, as detailed in sections 2 and 3 of the note.

The main focus, however, is on what valorisation means for Leonardo projects. Advice is given to those applying in 2005 and 2006 on how to write a comprehensive and concrete valorisation strategy. This covers what makes a good quality valorisation plan, the kind of activities that should be included and the budget that should be allocated. The note also contains information aimed at current Leonardo projects for which the concept of valorisation may be new, even if the activities it encompasses are not.

The final section of the guidance note consists of 10 case studies compiled from interviews with current UK projects. These reflect views on valorisation activities such as thematic monitoring and also give examples of successful approaches to valorisation. Analysis of the interviews highlighted several important aspects of valorisation:

- analysis of training needs;
- active dissemination;
- synergy with local, regional, national or European policy;
- choosing the right partners for the project;
- awareness of how results may be relevant to other sectors.

The ultimate aim of the *Valorisation guidance note* is to give Leonardo projects and applicants relevant and practical information on valorisation and what it means for them. Copies of the note can be downloaded from the documents and resources section of the website below.

Further information: Faye Lewis, Leonardo UK National Agency, ECOTEC Research & Consulting, 12-26 Albert Street, Birmingham B4 7UD, United Kingdom. Tel. (44-121) 616 37 70. Fax (44-121) 616 37 79. E-mail: leonardo@ecotec.co.uk. Website: www.leonardo.org.uk

Source: Faye Lewis, Jacqueline Craig

Educational policy

ESTONIA

Information system on education - a basis for the right decisions

It is characteristic of education systems in many countries that available resources do not always correspond to the actual needs of the sector. When financing cannot be increased, the rational and efficient use of those resources that are available becomes critical. Making and implementing the best decisions on different management levels in turn depends on high quality information concerning the education system. It has to be reliable, easily accessible, available and unified.

At the moment there are several institutions responsible for and involved in the collection, analysis and presentation of educational information in Estonia. This means that the results of analysis are not always comparable or congruent, and that access to information can be complicated. In addition, different institutions often use different classifications when processing and presenting data. A further complicating

factor is legislation. Legal regulations are either not interpreted in the same way by all institutions involved or, in some fields, there is a lack of regulation altogether. Developing a unified educational information system is therefore about more than just implementing an information technology project and requires changes in the legal framework as well.

Needing reliable and easily accessible information for efficient decision making, the Ministry of Education and Research initiated a project to bring different partners together and to combine the collection and analysis of various educational data in one system called EHIS (Eesti Hariduse Infosüsteem) - the Estonian educational information system. A special unit will be formed in the National Examination and Qualification Centre to administer this new system. The system will contain data about schools, students, curricula and

staff, will cover all education levels and types of school-ownership and will follow a unified classification system. EHIS will enable schools to present and the ministry to process different documents electronically. Instead of the current practice of filling in numerous questionnaires for different institutions, schools will only have to submit the required data once. In addition, the new resource can be used by the Estonian Statistical Office to forward relevant information to Eurostat.

The project, which started two years ago, has recently produced its first results.

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Source: INNOVE, Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development, Tallinn

Measures planned by the Ministry of Education and Science

At the end of June 2004, the Minister for Education and Science (formerly Education and Culture) presented the principal measures planned for the new legislative period to the Education and Science Committee of the Senate (upper house of parliament).

The first part of the minister's statement focused on transversal issues such as the "development of policies characteristic of a state of autonomies". One of the new minister's priorities is to establish an ongoing dialogue between central government and the autonomous communities. In order to ensure that all the administrations responsible for the education system cooperate and coordinate their activities, existing agencies, e.g. the Sectoral Education Conference, are to be reinforced while new agencies are to be set up, e.g. the Sectoral Conference for Science and Technology with the task of analysing Spanish participation in European programmes. Moreover, cooperation with the regions is to be strengthened by the signing of general protocols with the autonomous communities and specific agreements on concrete actions. A further priority will be ongoing efforts to promote equal opportunities with the reinforcement of the existing grant system and additional funding for the coming academic year. The minister also announced an improvement in management procedures for grant programmes. The introduction of new legislation will be inspired by the European objectives for education and training set in

the course of the last two years towards a knowledge-based, cultured, dynamic, competitive society characterised by social and territorial cohesion. The minister further announced that a seminar was to be organised in the near future to disseminate and analyse the promotion of European objectives in the field of education and training.

The second part of the minister's statement addressed sectoral issues. The minister sketched out the broad outline of policy in the field of non-university education, where the priorities are:

1. Measures to promote equal opportunities in education.
2. Reform of certain aspects of the Organic Law on the Quality of Education of 23 December 2002 (LOCE) (¹), to develop quality education system for all.
3. Ongoing quality improvements in accordance with European objectives.

These reforms are to be introduced in parliament in the course of the first few months of 2005.

Moreover, the cabinet adopted measures in May which replace the royal decree establishing the schedule for the implementation of the LOCE, which represent a partial adaptation of the implementing timetable indicated in the royal decree and defer the entry into force of certain controversial aspects, e.g. secondary education training paths (the LOCE establishes a sys-

tem of paths in the second cycle of compulsory secondary education, [14 to 16]), the general baccalaureate examination and religious instruction as an assessed subject at schools. Two aspects are exempted from the amended schedule: free nursery education and language teaching.

In the context of the measures designed to improve the quality of education, a working party is to be set up to analyse the current structure of the teacher training and teachers' professional development requirements in the course of their careers. With reference to European quality, standards and mobility benchmarks, the minister announced that the Integrated System of Qualifications and Vocational Training (²) was to be introduced within the context of coordination between the autonomous communities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the social partners. Moreover, work on the development of the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications (³) is to be continued and completed.

(¹) Cf. Cedefop Info No 2/2003: 'New regulatory framework for the Spanish education system'. The (Spanish) text of the LOCE is available on the internet at the following address: <http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2002-12-24/pdfs/A45188-45220.pdf>

(²) Cf. Cedefop Info No 3/2002, 'Law on qualifications and vocational training'.

(³) Cf. Cedefop Info No 1/2004, 'The National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications: an essential instrument', and Cedefop Info No 2/2004 'National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications'.

Source: INEM, Public State Employment Service

IRELAND

New curriculum for upper secondary education

Moves to self-directed learning and continuous assessment are among proposals to modernise upper secondary education in Ireland (¹). Although in recent years many courses have been updated, it is believed the present system (²), which relies on the recall of extensive amounts of information, does little to promote self-learning or reward initiative.

The educational system also needs to respond to pressures from a student cohort with diverse learning needs participating in education for longer. Recent research shows that, compared with Ireland, many countries present learners with greater flexibility in making and taking curriculum choices. In addition, European countries recognise the need for curriculum and assessment provision at upper secondary level to clearly relate to frameworks and structures established for adult and continuing education.

Currently the senior cycle is of two- or three-years duration. The optional Transition Year enables students to experience a range of educational inputs, including work experience, over the course of a year that is free from formal examinations. In the final two years of the senior cycle, students take one of three programmes, each leading to a state examination - the traditional academic Leaving Certificate, or two more vocationally-oriented programmes; the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) (³).

Extensive consultation took place with education partners prior to the publication of these proposals. A consensus emerged on emphasising both the importance of building on the strengths of the current system, where "getting the Leaving" remained a priority, and, in the future, the need for learners to take more responsibility for their own learning. Much discussion related to the balance of elements in the cur-

riculum, particularly between knowledge and skills. Contributors to the consultative process considered the skills learners should develop and how an increased emphasis on skills might interface with, and be embedded within, the existing curriculum structure and content. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment proposals identify the following key skills that will be emphasised in the new curriculum: learning to learn, communication and information processing, personal effectiveness, critical thinking and working with others.

It is envisaged that over the next three years the current senior cycle programme will remain, while planning takes place on the introduction of the restructured cycle. The option of taking a two- or a three-year senior cycle will remain. The restructured senior cycle curriculum will comprise transition units, short courses and traditional subjects. Subjects will be organised in smaller units, which fit together, one leading to another. Link modules on preparation for the world of work and enterprise education, now part of the LCVP (which will be discontinued) will become short courses that may be accessed by a wider number of students. The number and combination of transition units, short courses and subjects will be specified. Within these parameters, schools will have the flexibility to of-

fer programmes that meet the diverse needs of all students, including students with special educational needs and those from a variety of educational backgrounds including returning learners.

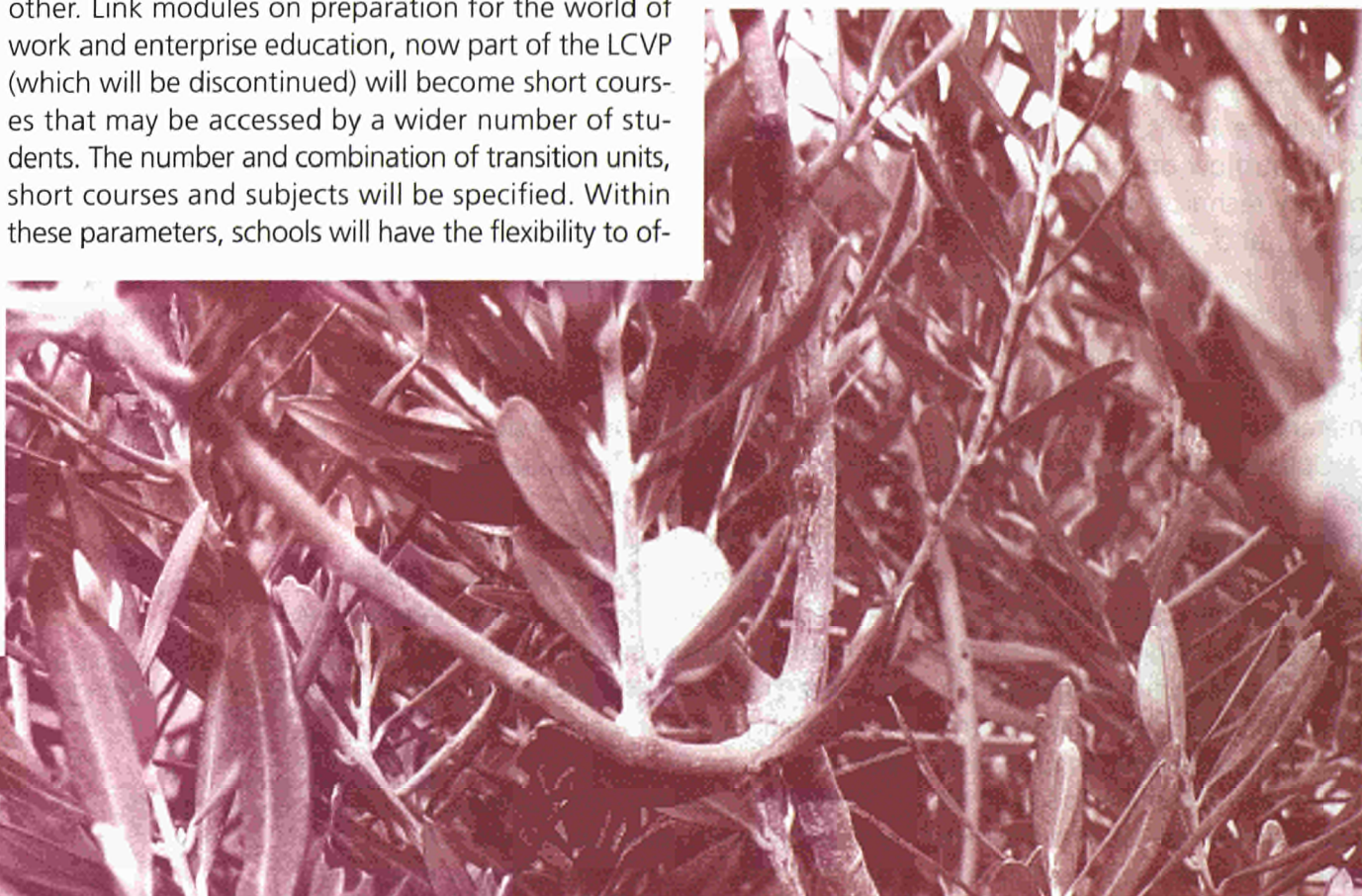
The focus throughout the new cycle will be on developing learning skills that will help young people learn for a lifetime, preparing them for the world of work, for further education and for higher education. A final document outlining in detail the assessment and examination procedures for the new cycle will be published in late 2004.

(¹) National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: Proposals for the future development of senior cycle education in Ireland - overview. Dublin: NCCA, 2004. Download address: <http://www.ncca.ie/f/index2.php?name=publ>

(²) See Vocational education and training in Ireland - short description, Cedefop 2004. Download address: http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/5145_en.pdf

(³) Le Métails, Johanna: International developments in upper secondary education - context, provision and issues. Dublin: NCCA, 2003. ISBN 1649-3362. Download address: <http://www.ncca.ie/f/index2.php?name=publ>

Source: FÁS, Training and Employment Authority, Dublin



The chicken and egg in the development of vocational training

Financing education in Slovakia is from 2004 strictly based on per capita contributions. In a country facing a dramatic decline in live births from over 80 000 in 1989 to slightly over 50 000 in 2003, per capita financing causes fundamental changes in the network of schools. Municipalities are forced to merge and close schools and kindergartens. In the school year 2004/2005 over 200 institutions have been closed and over 450 merged with others. The ebbing tide will dramatically affect secondary schools very soon. Already, the self-governing regions maintaining secondary schools are having to close and merge schools lacking students, as the following examples show.

The Associated Secondary School has recently appeared in Dolný Kubín as a result of merging one secondary specialised school and two secondary vocational schools. It offers various programmes in different areas of study, e.g. food-processing (baker), textile and clothing (dressmaker), metal processing (painter), economics and organisation, retail and services (shop assistant - horticulture products), agriculture and forestry (farmer).

A newly established Church Associated Secondary School in Trebišov offers programmes covering areas of study, such as economics and organisation, retail and services (shop assistant, hairdresser), metal processing (passenger car mechanic), textile and clothing (dressmaker), food-processing (baker-pâtissier), electrotechnics (auto/car electrician).

No doubt, it is correct and saves money to offer theoretical education and training within one school and to use capacities efficiently. Nevertheless, problems may occur in the provision of practical training

and in ensuring the quality of education and training in a new heterogeneous environment. The fiscal pressure on public education authorities to undertake all necessary cost-saving activities is hard. Nationwide over 3 000 teachers lost their jobs in 2004 due to the declining numbers of students.

The most interesting point however is how the regions deal with the restructuring of VET schools. There are two contrasting views here. 'Economists', criticising soft fiscal constraints and the gradual increase in the indebtedness of schools, consider the current fiscal pressure inevitable for the sake of efficient allocation of means. 'Educationalists' speak about the underestimation of the long-term impact on the future labour force, about debts caused by permanent undercapitalisation, and about the educational needs of regions and the real quality of VET schools. Indeed, what they say sounds plausible. The restructuring of the network of schools and programmes should not be blindly driven by fiscal limits; it should follow a clear vision of regional development, labour market needs, and of the quality assurance in VET schools. It is however also plausible to argue that these initiatives would not exist without fiscal pressure and that it is impossible to wait for visions and policy papers, which are permanently in the process of finalisation.

So, what should come first, a regional vision followed by subsequent and subordinated economic action, or an economic action-creating environment for subsequent regional development? Which is the chicken? Which is the egg?

How to solve the chicken and egg dilemma in VET and the regional development is not as simple as it is

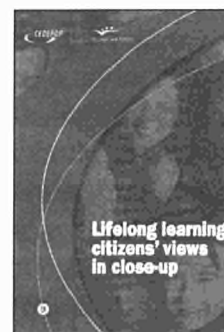
in biology, but the question is correct. Perhaps it is best to bypass the dichotomy and avoid, by developing balanced and cohesive policies, both the reluctance of hardcore educationalists to change and the rigidity and tendency to economise the whole of life hardcore 'economists'.

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Source: Slovak National Observatory of VET

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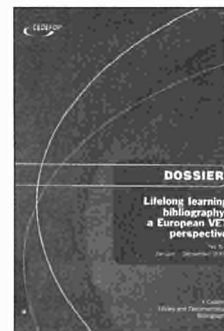
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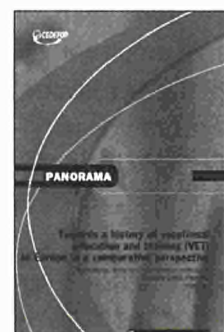
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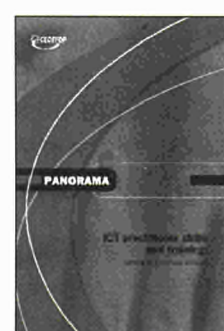
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CZECH REPUBLIC

Fewer young people frees training capacity for adults

Due to demographic trends, secondary VET schools in the Czech Republic operate at 55-65% of capacity. In addition to their excess capacity, the fragmented network of secondary schools also poses a problem. Schools therefore face the problem of low student numbers and providing too many programmes. An average secondary technical school (STS), which provided upper secondary level VET (ISCED level 3A), is attended by 200 students. An average secondary vocational school (SVS), offering apprenticeship training (ISCED level 3C), has 300 students. The size of SVSs decreased during the 1990s, particularly due to an outflow of students to secondary technical schools. On the other hand, the size of STSs decreased (by 40%), mainly because of an increase in the number of mostly small private schools. This makes it more difficult to put human and material resources to efficient use.

Optimising the network of schools is one of the aims of the long-term plans, prepared in 2003, for the development of education in the 14 regions of the Czech Republic. As a result of rationalisation, the average size of a secondary school should, by 2008, reach 500-700 students in initial education. Schools with fewer than 350 students should become an exception. The freed resources will be used in adult edu-

cation, retraining and leisure activities. Instead of closing down schools, regions plan to set up vocational education and training centres. Such centres would incorporate a number of smaller schools and thus provide a wider variety of both initial and continuing VET programmes on one site. It is also assumed that close cooperation will develop between regional employers and schools and that this will facilitate a flexible response to the needs of industry, an improvement of teacher training and the provision of appropriate technology to schools.

Following regional long-term plans for the development of education, projects focused on the building of VET centres are currently being implemented in many regions. One example is the establishment of a VET centre focused on technical and mechanical engineering. The centre, with modern equipment and appropriate social facilities, will provide practical training for students of several secondary schools. It will cooperate with labour offices and leading engineering companies in the area to organise retraining for the unemployed and training of employees. The centre will also serve as a training base for teachers and trainers.

Another example is a project aimed at developing a communication system and a VET centre focused on

construction in the South Bohemian region. The objective is to interlink training institutions and organisations in the region and to provide access to information about educational opportunities to a wide spectrum of those interested, including the business sector. The project will be based on close cooperation between secondary schools, the South Bohemian Chamber of Commerce, labour offices and businesses in the field of construction. The Chamber will be the chief coordinator.

These examples illustrate that regions seek varying solutions in line with local circumstances. Some schemes involve the establishment of truly new integrated campuses; others will be based more on coordination of information and educational activities. Since the projects are demanding in terms of finance, regions seek to obtain some resources from the European Structural Funds.

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

FINLAND

Implementation of on-the-job learning

The implementation of on-the-job learning was one of the themes of an extensive study on upper secondary education carried out by Jyväskylä University. As many as 127 general upper secondary schools and 130 upper secondary vocational schools participated in the study carried out during the school year 2001-02. The questionnaire was answered by the principals of the schools.

Upper secondary vocational education lasts three years in Finland. One year of study consists of 40 credits. In the total 120 credits there is a period of on-the-job learning which accounts for at least 20 credits and corresponds to 100 days' on-the-job learning.

On-the-job learning therefore forms a part of the school's vocational education and training (VET) curriculum. On-the-job learning is a focused, supervised and assessed study carried out at the workplace. It is the object of a written contract between the workplace and the education provider. The school plans and develops on-the-job learning together with the representatives of the world of work. The schools themselves can decide how on-the-job learning is placed in the student's individual study plan.

On-the-job learning has to be completed at the workplace and outside the school. Only as an exception can it be completed in the school's own enterprises. In some cases, students who work in the school's enterprises

can participate in making offers, planning and carrying out the work and thus gain some experience of entrepreneurship.

School work links

The research showed that 60% of the vocational institutions arrange on-the-job learning for first year students. On-the-job learning periods are normally less than five credits in the first study year, but in the second and the third school year they are long enough for a student to be able to manage large work entities and to take responsibility for job assignments. In the third school year on-the-job learning periods are normally 10 credits. The connections between the world of work and schools are numerous and varied. Many interest groups and stakeholders follow the activities of the vocational schools and give them feedback. All the vocational institutions that participated in this study got feedback from the students' employers. However they seldom receive feedback from the students' parents.

In general upper secondary schools there are only a few days during which the student is familiarised with the world of work. The connections between general upper secondary schools and the world of work are not in general very good.

Interaction between practice and theory

On-the-job learning is goal-oriented and supervised study carried out at the workplace. During the shorter on-the-job learning periods, the student is familiarised with his/her field of work as well as with the challenges and expectations (s)he faces in the field. On-the-job learning helps the student to set goals in his/her studies and professional development and this improves his/her overall motivation. During the second and third year on-the-job learning periods, the student is able to perceive the connection between theory and practice and can apply the knowledge and skills from his/her studies in practice. In the third study year students work more independently and their approach to work is more holistic. The student may also get ideas on how to develop the work environment and methods.

(¹) Erkki Kangasniemi: MILLÄ TOLALLA ASIAT OVAT? Mitä indikaattorit kertovat Suomen toisen asteen kouluista. Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos, Tutkimuslauseita 17. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, October 2003 in Finnish only [What's up? What do the indicators tell about upper secondary schools in Finland?] University of Jyväskylä, Institute for Educational Research.

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Source: NBE, Finland

PORTUGAL

New regulatory framework for vocational training

Vocational training and the resulting skilling of workers are one of the essential conditions for economic and social development.

The objectives of vocational training are defined in the Portuguese Labour Code: it is the obligation of the state to ensure that all citizens are given the opportunity to acquire job-related knowledge and skills and update these skills throughout their working lives.

Similarly, it is the obligation of employers to promote initial and continuing training initiatives to develop and update the vocational skills of workers, who in turn have the obligation to actively participate in these programmes.

The new regulatory framework for vocational training entered into force on 28 August, by virtue of Law No 35/2004 of 29 July 2004 (¹) which regulates the Labour Code.

Workers now have a recognised right to vocational training with effect from 1 January of each year, or after six months of employment in the year of recruitment. To implement this right, the employer has the obligation to develop training plans specifying the objectives, trainers, venues and schedules of the training initiatives.

The new legislation goes on to specify that 10 % of the workforce of each firm should be engaged in continuing training for a minimum of 20 hours of certified training (to be increased to 35 hours as of 2006).

Workers hired on the basis of fixed-term contracts are entitled to a specific

number of hours of training depending on the duration of their contract: 1 % of working time for a contract of a maximum of one year; 2 % for a contract of one to three years and 3 % for a contract of more than three years.

If the employer fails to fulfil these obligations, the workers have the right to use their training time entitlement to engage in training on their own initiative (subject to 10 days' notice). In this event, the worker may opt for courses related to their working activities or leading to qualifications in the following fields: information and communication technologies, occupational health and safety or foreign languages.

(¹) Law No 35/2004 of 29 July 2004 - Diário da República No 177-I Series A. Available on the internet at: http://www.iapmei.pt/resources/download/Lei_35_2004.pdf

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Source: Diário da República [official journal], No 177, 29 July 2004



FRANCE

Powers of the regions extended

The new law on decentralisation (¹) of August 2004 extends the powers of the regions in the field of vocational training and apprenticeship.

From now on, "the region shall define and implement regional apprenticeship and vocational training policy", not only as far as young people are concerned (in accordance with legislation dating back to 1983 and 1994), but also with regard to unemployed adults seeking a new career path.

This extension of regional competences means that the programming instrument of the regions - the regional plan for the development of vocational training (PRDF) - now extends to adults, encompassing all vocational training actions designed to promote access to, maintenance of and return to employment. The regions are responsible for the adoption and implementation of the PRDF.

As far as apprenticeship is concerned, the law also devolves responsibility for the payment of the financial aid to enterprises entering into an apprenticeship contract - the so-called "flat-rate compensatory allowance" - to the regions. It is the task of regional councils to "determine the nature, level and the conditions of its allocation". The regional councils are now also responsible for the registration of apprenticeship contracts, compulsory for those firms wishing to benefit from the related financial advantages.

Moreover, the regions now hold responsibility for the organisation within their territory of the network of information and counselling centres for the validation of experiential learning, contributing to the provision of assistance for those seeking accreditation of prior learning.

Finally, with effect from 31 December 2008 at the latest, the law transfers the organisation and funding of work placements for unemployed adults organised by the national association for the vocational training of adults (AFPA) (²) to the regional councils. The opposition had in fact firmly opposed this decentralisation of what it regards as a prerogative of the state, advocating that as part of the public employment service, these activities should not have to compete with private agencies.

(¹) Law No 2004-809 of 13 August 2004 on local liberties and responsibilities, published in the Official Journal of 17 August 2004. The (French) text can be consulted on the Légifrance website: http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/images/OE/2004/0817/oe_20040817_0190_0001.pdf

(²) AFPA is the national public training agency under the aegis of the Ministry of Employment.

Source: Régis ROUSSEL, Centre INFFO from Inffo Flash No 641, 1 to 31 August 2004, article by Renée David-Aeschlimann



Breaking the vicious circle

Employers claim VET schools do not provide the required competences and schools complain about the lack of interest and low participation of enterprises in education and training. Even though unemployment rates are higher among graduates from general education, parents favour "academic education pathways" for their children. This is a striking phenomenon.

Before 1990, going into VET meant choosing a rather narrowly defined training field at a rather early age. Hence, the first important VET reform projects aimed at demand-driven educational planning. This proved a step forwards, but it takes much more to make all players develop acceptance, commitment and ownership.

Following a reform of the education and training system in 2003, vocational education now forms part of compulsory education (now ten, previously eight years). To make VET more attractive and useful, another PHARE project

was launched last year in developing regions. The aim is to respond better to the regional needs and to get all stakeholders on board. Schools involved in the previous project will provide assistance.

Making parents aware of inaccurate perceptions and raising the image of VET will be a major challenge, but needs to be part and parcel of the initiative. This is where guidance and counselling services and in-service teacher training institutions will have an active role to play. To ensure that VET also meets their demands, social partners and, in particular employers, should contribute. For this, clear roles and responsibilities will be devised in developing VET programmes, curricula and, especially, sound and relevant work experience for students. School managers and teachers have already received training on how to cooperate with enterprises. The recently created regional consortia with representatives from local public authorities, regional development agencies, school inspectorates and

universities, employers and trade unions have been asked to produce regional action plans for the period 2003 - 2010. Sound labour market and supply-side capacity analyses should form the basis of these plans. A standard planning approach should apply and include listing the types and levels of qualifications needed in the region, structuring the location of VET schools to ensure equal access and efficiency and introducing measures needed to strengthen the partnership between schools, students and enterprises. Local action plans (at county level) and school action plans will follow.

Among the pillars of this exercise are the conclusions drawn from earlier projects. Irrespective of any changes implemented at the systemic level, sustainable reform will only happen if it is the result of an internal process, started and conducted from inside the VET school and in cooperation with the local community. Thus, teachers have been trained in student-centred learning. Appropriate

learning materials are being developed. Attention will now focus on integrating students with special needs. Parents are key in shaping attitudes and pathway decisions. Motivating them to become active partners in associative management, guidance and delivery of work-experience could establish community partnerships.

These strategies to develop partnerships and a culture of participatory management in VET are seen as a way forward in making VET more attractive and ensuring high quality provision.

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Source: Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest

Initial vocational training

SWEDEN

Government plans to improve upper secondary school

In April 2004, the Government presented to parliament (the Riksdag), a bill⁽¹⁾, which proposed a strategy for the improvement of the quality of the Swedish upper secondary school, of which initial vocational education and training is a part. One of the main reasons for improving the upper secondary school is that more people must complete their studies and have access to high quality education. The reformed upper secondary school must aim to emphasise knowledge within a context, promote in-depth studies and coherence and counter negative stress. These changes will apply from 1 July 2007.

Of the eleven proposals for improving upper secondary school, the following five focus primarily on vocationally oriented training.

Grades for subjects instead of modules

Grades for the whole subject will reduce stress, encourage in-depth study and put the focus on overall coherence rather than the individual parts of the subject. Accordingly, subject grades will be introduced within the framework of a modular programme-based upper secondary school. When the modules for a subject have been completed, an overall subject grade will be awarded. This will replace the current system, in which grades are awarded for individual modules and no overall grade is awarded for the subject.

New upper secondary school certificate

Under the current system, pupils need only to complete 90% of their stud-

ies; no minimum grades are necessary to receive a certificate. A new certificate will be introduced to document that the holder has completed the programme and has achieved a pass grade in at least 90% of his/her studies, including a pass grade in the project work module related to the programme. The aim is to provide clear objectives for pupils to achieve, thereby increasing quality.

Enhancing the overall focus of the educational programme

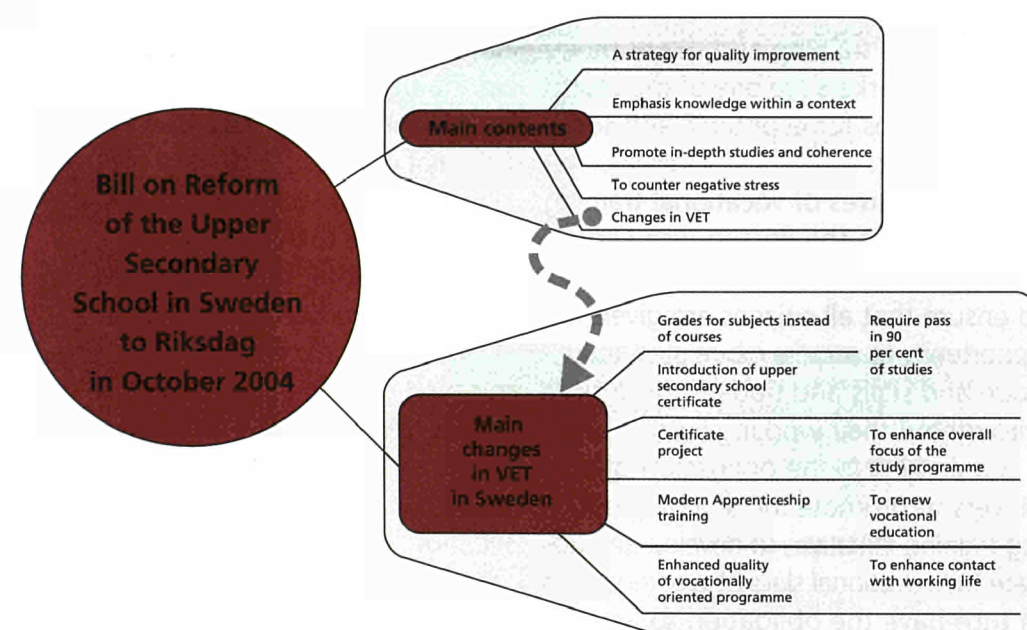
Particularly for pupils taking vocational courses, the new upper secondary certificate will be an important quality instrument enabling them to show what they have achieved.

A modern system of apprenticeship training to renew vocational education

A new system for apprenticeship training is proposed as an attractive alternative to the existing upper secondary national vocationally oriented programmes. The system will have the same goals as these programmes and will give pupils a good knowledge of the core and programme-specific subjects, so that they are well equipped for both the labour market and life in society, as well as for access to higher education.

Enhanced quality in upper secondary vocationally oriented programmes

High-quality initial vocational education is necessary to meet the needs of both individuals and society. One approach to raising the quality of voca-



tionally oriented programmes is to develop better linkages to working life. Municipalities will be made responsible for holding consultations with the social partners on issues associated with vocationally oriented training programmes.

All pupils will be given the opportunity of high quality learning at a workplace, connected with their programme. As is the case at present, pupils who have chosen vocationally oriented programmes will receive at least 15 weeks of training at a workplace.

Pupils in non-vocationally-oriented programmes will also have the opportunity of training at the workplace. This can take many different forms, some involving coordination with higher education institutions, the business sector and working life.

The Swedish Agency for Education during autumn 2004 will receive an as-

signment from the Riksdag to evaluate the framework documents for upper secondary school.

(1) Kunskap och kvalitet elva steg för utvecklingen av gymnasieskolan [Knowledge and quality - eleven steps for improving upper secondary school], Govt. Bill 2003/04:140.

For further information:
See reform proposal on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science, also in English:
<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/23471>

Source: Skolverket, Stockholm

Summer guidance work placements

A new instrument is to help young Italians acquire important skills for labour market integration

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has specified a number of details of the 'summer guidance work placement', a new scheme addressed to youngsters (aged from 15 and not yet 18) and young adults (between 18 and not yet 25), regularly enrolled in a course of study at a university or an educational institution of any type or level, for the acquisition of skills exploitable in the labour market.

Circular No 32 of 2 August 2004⁽¹⁾ specifies both the objectives and modalities of the introduction of the new summer guidance work placement, already up and running since the entry into force of the legislative decree of 10 September 2003, No 276⁽²⁾, (the so-called Biagi Law ⁽³⁾).

The summer work placement is designed to help students choose a career and give them a better insight into the world of work. The maximum authorised duration of the work placement is three months in the period between two school years. An important aspect for students is that they also have the opportunity of obtaining training credits via the recognition of the activities carried out in the course of the placement.

As in the case of other types of work placement, three types of players are involved. Companies prepared to offer placements draw up an appropriate agreement with the sponsoring agencies (job centres, the regional education boards, schools, vocational training centres). The sponsoring agencies are in turn responsible for the correct implementation of

the placement, and must guarantee that a training and guidance plan stipulating the objectives and arrangements of the placement is drawn up for each trainee.

Moreover, in the course of the placement, guidance and practical and didactic training must be overseen and monitored by a tutor while an appropriate agreement on training content must be established.

Although there are no statutory limits on the number of summer trainees firms may take on, a number of relevant provisions can be found in collective agreements. Moreover, on their own initiative, host firms may grant trainees a financial

allowance of no more than EUR 600. The commencement of a summer placement does not imply the institution of an employment relationship or deletion from job centre registers. The company nevertheless has to provide insurance against occupational accidents.

To facilitate the use of this new instrument of on-the-job guidance and vocational training, the Ministry of the Labour and Social Policy has provided a standard summer guidance work placement agreement for the use of sponsoring agencies and host firms.

⁽¹⁾ Cf. <http://gazzette.comune.jesi.an.it/2004/187/5.htm>

⁽²⁾ Cf. <http://gazzette.comune.jesi.an.it/2003/235/7.htm>

⁽³⁾ Cf. Cedefop Info No2/2003: Labour market reform package Italy

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

Source: Alessandra Pedone - ISFOL ReferNet Italy



Continuing vocational training

ROMANIA

New strategies and methods

A series of surveys, studies, and debates of the last few years have pointed out that, in Romania, participation levels in vocational training are rather unsatisfactory, despite the progress registered in updating the legislation and in institutional restructuring of CVT. The results of a second Eurostat Survey on CVT pointed out that in 1999 only 11% of companies provide vocational training for their employees and the participation rate among the employees of these companies was 20%. A National Agency for Employment report showed that, in 2002, only 2.5% of the unemployed participated in vocational training courses. A recent survey on lifelong learning, carried out by the Romanian Institute of Statistics, shows that the participation rate in the second quarter of 2003 of the population aged 15 years and over in at least one type of learning activities was 18.1%. The results show that one out of five Romanians aged 15 years and over (one out of four in the urban areas and one out of six in the rural areas) participated in at least one type of learning activity.

The new Phare Twinning Project, Support for Continuing Vocational Training, launched in March 2004 aims at improving participation in CVT through the design of new methods and strategies for the development of the training system. The project is the result of an 18 month EU-funded partnership established between the Romanian Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (MLSSF) and the Danish Ministry of Education.

The project is supported by Phare funds amounting to €1 million and a government contribution amounting to €121,000. It started with a series of surveys on the demand and supply of CVT in the north-west and south-west regions of the country in the tourism and construction sectors, which are seen as offering important future employment possibilities. 150 companies were surveyed and 38 vocational training suppliers were interviewed. The participants in the survey included employers and employees, trainers, and managers of training centres.

The most important conclusions of the survey were:

- most of the companies, employers, and employees consider CVT as being more of a personal task of the employee him/herself rather than a company responsibility;
- many employers cannot perceive the added value of CVT to their company, while the large-sized private companies want to develop their own CVT systems;
- training courses organised over a long period, aimed at obtaining a qualification, seem to discourage participation in CVT, while the offer by short-term course suppliers in specific fields of competence is insufficiently developed;
- the social partners seem to be interested in CVT issues, yet their involvement depends on the powers of representation and authority granted to them.

These conclusions were debated in a seminar, with a broadly based participation, organised in June 2004. An array of operational recommendations was prepared and these are currently undergoing a thorough analysis by the MLSSF.

For the very near future, the project envisages two study visits by the MLSSF experts involved and decision makers to EU countries as well as the launching of a training programme for 400 trainers and managers, who themselves are suppliers of CVT services. At the same time, a process is to be initiated for the design and testing of new CVT strategies and methods, with the involvement of the social partners. To ensure the wide visibility of the reform and change processes, a webpage will be developed on CVT issues in Romania.

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Source: Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest

PORTUGAL

Both sides of the textile industry regard vocational training as superfluous

Portugal's competitiveness is still based on low wages but despite the fact that the import quota system is due to expire and the market is to be liberalised in 2005, neither the employers nor the workers in the textile, clothing and footwear industries seem particularly receptive to vocational training as a strategy of survival.

This is the result of a study entitled 'An analysis of the processes of retraining the workforce of industries at risk: the case of the textile, clothing and footwear industries', sponsored by the Institute for information, training and support of enterprises (IAFE) with the support of the Portuguese University (UP) ⁽¹⁾.

The textile, clothing and footwear industries were selected in view of their overall weight in the European economy as a whole and in Portugal in particular. These industries provide 200 000 jobs in Portugal and despite an annual workforce contraction of 10%, they nevertheless remain one of the country's main sources of wealth. The study, based on a survey among 55 enterprises related to these industries, reveals that the majority of employers and workers still regard vocational training as a waste of time and money.

There are nevertheless cases of good practice which prove the contrary and IAFE⁽²⁾ and its partners - the employers and trade union associations are in agreement on this point - are seeking to bring about a change of mentality. Thus, the study draws attention to the establishment of a vocational training observatory for these industries to monitor socio-economic trends in the sector, forecast skill requirements and disseminate models of good practice, by recommending changes to occupational profiles and training provision, and pointing to the advantages of vocational training for enterprises in these industries.

⁽¹⁾ The study is available at: <http://www.iafe.pt/default.asp?mnu=1&id=1&ACT=5&content=9>

⁽²⁾ Instituto de Informação, Apoio e Formação Empresarial (IAFE) <http://www.iafe.pt>

Further information from:
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Source: Analysis of: Mota, Dora O Comércio do Porto (daily newspaper)



POLAND

Improving the quality of public employment services

Poland is still looking for ways to improve the organisation and operation of public employment services. After the massive overhaul of 2000, when labour offices stopped functioning as a part of a three-level structure (National Labour Office, 16 regional offices and 350 local labour offices) and were incorporated into local government structures, recent months have brought further changes relating to the nature and scope of their services.

On 1 June 2004, the Act on promoting employment and labour market institutions came into force. It sets out the tasks of labour offices and proposes solutions aimed at improving the quality of their service. Two major aspects of the new legislation are discussed below.

The first relates to labour market services and instruments. The Act identifies labour market services to be provided by labour offices. These include employment

agency (job brokerage) services, EURES services, career information and vocational counselling, assistance in job seeking (job clubs), training programmes for the unemployed. Although such services have been offered by labour offices before (with the exception of EURES), this is the first time the role of labour offices as primarily service-oriented and the role of the Minister for Labour as setting the service performance standards is so clearly defined. The ISO-based standards are currently being developed as part of a 2001 Phare project entitled 'Service standards for labour market institutions,' which will be completed soon.

The Act defines labour market instruments as support actions addressed to those clients who need more than standard services. These include such measures as partial reimbursement of accommodation costs for those who take up work outside their usual place of res-

idence. Additional instruments which can be used to assist those who are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market (youth under 25, those who remain unemployed for over 24 months, those in the 50+ age bracket, people without vocational qualifications, single parents with at least one child under 7) include employment subsidies, vocational placements, scholarships to continue education and child care costs. The Act sees the need for client segmentation and identifying certain typical 'paths' of assistance, depending on the client profile. At the same time, labour offices continue to enjoy a great deal of freedom in proposing specific assistance to their clients and are encouraged to hone their understanding of the clients' needs.

The second novel aspect of the new legislation is the issue of labour offices personnel. The Act defines key professions/specialisations for the personnel of

the labour offices. It introduces relevant qualification rules, which require the improvement of the skills and abilities of the staff on an ongoing basis. Under the Act, the Minister for Labour is obliged to issue regulations laying down framework training and education curricula for public employment services personnel and to set the requirements concerning institutions which might be interested in offering this kind of training. The 2002 Phare project, 'Public employment services,' can greatly enhance this process.

The effectiveness of the new regulations will be tested in their practical application.

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Source: BKKK Cooperation Fund, Warsaw

IRELAND/EUROPE

Investment in human resources conference

The European Employment Strategy (1) and the Employment Task Force have identified the need to invest more and more effectively in human capital as one of the key areas to which all Member States should give priority attention. The Spring European Council endorsed this with the Heads of Government agreeing that one of the challenges to be tackled was investment in human capital if the employment targets set under the Lisbon Agenda were to be achieved.

It is against this background that a conference organised in consultation with the European Commission's DG Employment and Social Affairs was held in June as part of Ireland's programme of EU Presidency events. It was attended by state agencies, social partners and experts from across Europe and sought to build on the Conference on Human Capital held in Brussels in September 2003. The latter explored the benefits of investment in human capital and the impact of training on the individual, which in turn leads to improved performance and added value to the organisation. The focus of the Dublin "Investment in Human Resources" conference was the promotion of enterprise training and the presentation of examples of good practice and experience at national and company level. It also explored some innovative measures that have been successful in Member States, as well as the role of the European Social Fund. The objective was to outline why governments regard investment in human resources as essential and to give practical examples of how and why individual enterprises have invested in training.

The opening session entitled "National and Company Experience of Enterprise Training" provided:

- An overview of the wide diversity of training coverage and measures across Member States;
- The policy approach to training taken at national level with Ireland put forward as a specific example;
- An exchange of experiences of small companies in providing training. What kind of training do they do? How is this developed? What solutions have they found to problems?

This session also looked at the role of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the important contribution it has made, and continues to make, in assisting Member States to develop the capacity to invest in education and training.

The afternoon session entitled "Investment and Innovation in Enterprise Training" focused on incentives and new approaches that have been successful in Member States. It also looked at the reasons for investment in training and what returns this investment can provide.

In his opening address to the conference, Mr Frank Fahey, Minister for Labour Affairs, told the conference that with fewer people entering the labour market from schools and colleges due to Europe's changing demographics, companies are becoming increasingly dependant on the skills and adaptability of their existing workers to remain competitive. He spoke of the "compelling business case as well as a social inclusion case" for investing in the training of workers, who were currently low skilled.

Mr Stavros Dimas, EU Commissioner

for Employment and Social Affairs said the independent Employment Taskforce (1), chaired by the former Dutch Prime Minister, Mr Wim Kok, had stressed the need for Europe to re-think how it invested in its human resources, pushing public authorities, individuals, themselves and businesses to start sharing the responsibility for the cost of investing in human capital. "Investing in human capital and raising skills levels pays off. In the past 5 years, over 60 % of all new jobs have been in the high-skills sectors and one additional year of school or training increases an individual's salary over a lifetime by almost 10 %. Everybody gains, so it is appropriate that education and training costs should be shared by all."

The Commissioner added that it was clear that cohesion policy should embrace the whole of the European Union

but the absolute priority for future Structural Funds must be the least developed Member States and regions.

(1) http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/eestm_en.htm
Further information available at:
<http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/standard.asp?sNavlocator=4,21,502>

Source: FÁS, Training and Employment Authority, Dublin



Work experience for students during summer holidays

In summer 2004 the State Employment Agency for the first time initiated a project which focussed on providing working skills and work experience to general secondary and VET school pupils.

The main aim of the project was to give an opportunity to pupils aged 15 and over to obtain necessary basic skills, to get work experience and to enhance their knowledge of the labour market.

The State Employment Agency acted as a mediator between pupils and employers and controlled the process of allocation of work. To do this, it developed a common database on pupils and employers interested in cooperation.

What is the benefit for the employer? Within the framework of the project the government for the first time supported those employers who are interested in employing teenagers, partly by paying a "salary" to pupils and partly by remunerating the mentors.

The project lasted from 1 June to 31 August and involved 3223 pupils and 441 employers. Pupils were employed in trade, public catering, agriculture, public facilities, health care and many other fields.

The successful involvement of local municipalities should be mentioned. Various companies were successfully involved

in the regions. In Riga large companies offered the most working places. Some employers were very responsive and supported pupils by offering lunches and excursions.

Unfortunately, less than half of the 855 youngsters showing interest in the project had a chance to participate due to limited state funding.

The project was assessed as successful. Pupils became acquainted with specific features of various occupations and the work of pupils was organised in a secure and tidy environment. Youngsters gained new working skills and knowledge for choosing a career. They were

engaged on the basis of interviews and other formal requirements thereby getting experience into the recruitment process. For students from families with low income (36%), the project provided an opportunity to earn money and support family needs.

The State Employment Agency has decided to continue the project next summer and to ask the government to continue its funding.

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Source: Academic Information Centre, Riga

FRANCE

Towards a new social cohesion plan based on return to employment

On 30 June 2004, Jean Louis Borloo, Minister for Employment, Labour and Social Cohesion, presented a "new social cohesion plan" to the cabinet. The plan is designed as a response to the major problems jeopardising the cohesion of our country (persistent long-term unemployment, youth unemployment, increasing social exclusion, the housing crisis). A total budget of EUR 12.7 billion has been set aside for the plan, which is to extend over five years.

The plan provides various solutions to combat the persistently high rate of youth

unemployment (21.3% compared to an average of 9.8% among the population at large) and help young people return to work: customised guidance for unskilled youngsters, measures to promote and increase the appeal of apprenticeship schemes, reduced social charges to encourage firms to take on new workers in combination with a specific right to training, and a new channel of public-sector recruitment.

Moreover, the plan envisages the creation of 300 "job houses" over and above the 1 000 centres of the National Em-

ployment Agency to specifically cater for jobless persons at risk.

The plan also includes a series of measures designed to promote gender equity: financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) taking on substitute workers to stand in for women on maternity leave, coverage of childcare for women undergoing training and recognition of the work of the spouses of self-employed workers.

Finally, the plan also provides for measures to combat racial discrimination with the creation of a high-level authority to

combat discrimination and promote equality, as well as an update of legal instruments against racism.

Further information:

- Social cohesion plan
Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Cohesion
June 2004, 45 p.
<http://www.cohesionsociale.gouv.fr/DP.PCS.pdf>

- An 8-page summary of the plan can be found (in French) at:
<http://www.cohesionsociale.gouv.fr/Pdf/SPCS.pdf>

Source: from Inffo Flash No 640, 1 to 31 July 2004, articles by Philippe Grandin, Virginie Leblanc and Knock Billy

Vocational guidance

BELGIUM

Job information files for the German-speaking community

The choice of a specific training programme, degree course, job or profession is taken after a lengthy process in the course of which certain attitudes, opinions and expectations emerge. One of the factors which can decisively influence this choice is information on jobs.

Hitherto, the job information centres of the employment service only featured job vacancies in Wallonia, Flanders, France and Germany. The Internet offers a welter of information on jobs, but not always in German. So although interested persons can gain a relatively clear picture

of what the various occupations involve, they are generally not adequately informed about the situation in the German-speaking community.

The employment services' Job information files offer clear, comprehensive, up-to-date and detailed information for the use of people about to choose an occupation. The relevant activities, requirements, initial and continuing training opportunities, salary prospects, job market situation and other sources of information are described and explained

in full detail. Everyone can therefore form their own opinion, weighing up the pros and cons of the various occupations.

The purpose of these job information files is: to describe a job or occupation; to provide the relevant facts; to inform.

The information featured in the job information files is drawn from a range of sources. Job profiles from Wallonia, Flanders and Germany, information extracted from the websites, homepages and brochures of different sectors and associations, and details of the programmes delivered by secondary schools and ed-

ucational and training institutions in the German-speaking community were compiled and collated with particular reference to the specific situation in the German-speaking community.

The project is implemented with the support of the European Social Fund.

Further information at: <http://www.adg.be>
Dept. for careers guidance of the labour office of the German-speaking community, Hütte 79, B-4700 Eupen, Tel. (32-87) 63 89 00, Fax (32-87) 55 70 85, berufsberatung@adg.be

Source: FOREM - Department for International Relations

BELGIUM

Performance bonus to guide job-seekers towards the right training introduced in Flanders

From 1 August 2004, job-seekers are to receive a bonus ⁽¹⁾ of EUR 150 to EUR 250 if they engage in a training course leading to a qualification in a critical function. The Flemish government has endorsed this measure and set aside EUR 3 million to finance the scheme. The courses that offer the possibility of receiving this bonus are selected by the social partners.

The Flemish government and the social partners had already agreed on the principles of a performance bonus at the conference of entrepreneurs. The idea of a performance bonus was mooted by the social fund of the joint industrial committee for the employees a few years ago. The former Flemish minister for em-

ployment had subsequently examined and developed the proposal. The introduction of a performance bonus is intended as a response to the paradoxical situation that despite rising unemployment, industry still has difficulty filling its job vacancies in critical functions. The reasons lie on both the demand and the supply side. On the demand side, the image of the occupation may play a role, as well as the salary, selection procedures and prospects of promotion. On the supply side, the main factors are a lack of skilling or mobility. The performance bonus is intended to bridge the gap between job market supply and demand. With effect from 1 August 2004, it will be payable to all job-seekers engaging

in a training course leading to a qualification in a critical function. Unemployed persons with no upper secondary certificate will also be entitled to a bonus if they undergo vocational training. To be eligible for the bonus, the unemployed persons must be registered with the Flemish employment service (VDAB) or a VDAB-recognised counsellor. A bonus of EUR 150 and is payable upon award of the final certificate for training programmes of 100 to 400 hours. Courses lasting more than 400 hours give rise to a total bonus of EUR 250, with an advance of EUR 150 payable upon completion of 100 hours of training and the balance payable upon completion of the course. Courses leading to qualifications in the

following occupations, among others, have already been approved: fork-lift truck operator, store issue clerk, drafter, a number of jobs in the construction sector, insurance broker, engineer, temporary employment market agency consultant, commercial clerk, accountant/assistant accountant, IT expert, executive secretary and warehouseman ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Bonuses for courses leading to qualifications in critical functions:

<http://vdab.be/opleidingen/knelpuntpremies.shtml>

⁽²⁾ List of critical functions: <http://vdab.be/opleidingen/knelpuntberoepen.shtml>

Source: VDAB Media and library administration
Further information at: <http://www.vdab.be>



SLOVENIA

The certification of non-formal and informal learning - a challenge for employees and companies

The Slovenian education system has gone through many changes in the last 15 years. The reform of vocational education and training has from the beginning taken into account lifelong learning principles and has resulted in establishing a legal framework for adult education and for validation of non-formal and informal learning. A new National Vocational Qualification Act introducing a certification system was passed in 2000. The preparation of the Act, including consensus building among stakeholders and the piloting of methodologies, was facilitated by support from the EU Phare programme. The act defines the procedures to be followed to have work experience and prior learning assessed and recognised through certificates. It also defines clear roles for all the key stakeholders in the process, including the Ministries of Labour and Education, social partners and professional support institutes. It provides for an alternative route alongside formal education to achieve recognised qualifications. The decision-making process regarding certification is fully integrated in the overall governance system for vocational education and training (VET).

Knowledge standards based on occupational standards

A National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) is a recognised vocational or professional qualification required for an occupation or a specific set of tasks within an occupation. It can be obtained by certification of prior knowledge and experience, and/or through the formal school system.

The basis for NVQs is the elaboration of occupational profiles and relevant occupational standards. They are prepared for different levels of qualification and education e.g. lower /middle vocational, middle technical and higher non-university technical. Social partners agree which occupations can be accessed through formal schooling alone or also by assessment of prior experience.

Assessment procedures

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for assessment and certification. As a first step, it submits the application of an individual to an authorised and registered organisation. On the job assessment and certification of the individual is then carried out by a commission, whose members must obtain a special licence from the National Examination Centre.

Candidates eventually obtain a state-approved certificate attesting their competence in performing certain vocational tasks. Vocational qualifications can then be used to find a job or, in further training, to demonstrate that part of an education programme has already been mastered.

Results

As of May 2004, non-formal and informal knowledge could be validated for about 65 qualifications, mostly for lower-level occupations. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has so far trained 180 assessors and 58 counsellors. As a result, more than 500 candidates went through this system and have successfully acquired a certificate.

Development of the certification system is ongoing in registered institutions, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Chamber of Craft and the Social Chamber. Additionally, individual firms and sectors have started organising certification. An example is the large pharmaceutical company Krka followed by the pharmaceutical sector as a whole. In May 2004, 27 firms/institutions are currently implementing certification and 30 more firms/institutions are waiting for accreditation in order to become certification centres.

Future developments

A major obstacle to the broad application in Slovenia of the certification of prior informal and non-formal learning is formed by the formal regulations that govern access to education and jobs. Further development of assessment and recognition of prior learn-

ing therefore will be largely dependent on overall educational and labour market reforms.

However, increasingly public institutions, companies, public researchers and institutions are concerned with the need to unveil the hidden knowledge many workers have acquired in the course of their work experience. So far, employer organisations, adult education institutions and the Ministry of Labour have been the main protagonists of certification of prior informal learning. While currently this interest is mainly driven by cost and efficiency concerns, the ongoing debates about lifelong learning for all may provide additional incentives to make further progress. Although the Ministry of Education will have to secure equality of access to education and the implementation of the Lisbon objectives, recognition of prior learning is perhaps not among the top priorities of educational reform policies.

No radical changes are therefore to be expected. There will be gradual development, building on what has been achieved so far. In the next few years, the focus will be on increasing the number of qualifications for which non-formal and informal knowledge can be certified, as well as on finding solutions to overcome some limits that already appear in the current system, such as the lack of connection with higher/further formal vocational education, the non-inclusion of the NVQ in the official salary scales, non-transferability at the European level and the weak role of trade unions in vocational education and training overall.

Further information available from:
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 Website: <http://www.bbj.si>

Source: Centre for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana

NORWAY

Restructuring to ensure quality

In March 2004 the Government presented a Report to the Storting (parliament) regarding quality in primary and secondary education. On 15 June 2004 the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education was established as a new organisation within the Ministry of Education and Research.

The Directorate is intended to be a driving force for quality development in Norwegian primary and secondary education. Its establishment is part of the improvements in the national education administration and is one of the elements in a national strategy for quality development.

The Directorate will be an agency with challenging and demanding professional and administrative tasks. Its main task will be to contribute to a continuous quality development of primary and secondary education by, for example, obtaining a broad basis for analysis, assessment and development both regionally and nationally. The Directorate is responsible for the national quality assessment system and has the overall responsibility for

supervising the quality of education in Norway. Local school owners - the municipalities, counties and independent schools - are responsible for the quality of education and through the agency of the County Governors the government will ensure that this quality meets the required national standards.

About 200 people will work in the Directorate. The Norwegian Board of

Education and the administration of the Norwegian Support System for Special Education will both be incorporated in the Directorate, which is located in Oslo, with offices in Molde and Hamar.

The Directorate is also responsible for the professional governance of the work done by the 18 regional County Governors' education departments.

The tasks of the Directorate will be organised in four areas:

- analysis and assessment;
- content and development;
- regulation and funding;
- administration and operations.

More information available from:
 The Directorate's website (mainly in Norwegian, with some resources in English): <http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/>

Source: Teknologisk Institutt, Norway

NORWAY

New website for quality assessment and development

A national website for quality assessment and development in primary and secondary education and training opened on 23 August 2004.

Skoleporten.no contains data from individual schools and school owners, in addition to resources for presenting and assessing primary and secondary education and training and its progress. These are tools that school owners and school leaders can apply in various ways to evaluate and develop their work. The primary target group of the website is education policy-makers, but skoleporten.no also provides useful information to parents, pupils and the general public.

'The opening of skoleporten.no is an important event for the school sector in Norway. Openness about and insight into the everyday operation of the schools, will make it easier for a lot of people to participate in the dialogue with and about the school', said Minister of Education and Research Kristin Clemet in her inaugural greeting on skoleporten.no.

The website is currently available in Norwegian. Sami and English versions will be available in spring 2005.

More information is available from: <http://www.skoleporten.no>
 Source: Teknologisk Institutt, Norway

Reform of the credit framework for adults

'Skills Strategy Progress Report - One Year on' was published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in July 2004. The strategy created the Skills Alliance which has brought together key partners with an interest in skills and productivity - four government departments, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, the Small Business Council and the key delivery organisations led by the Learning and Skills Council. The latter's role is to oversee effective implementation of the strategy. The report is the Alliance's first annual report on progress.

The QCA has, since December 2002, been leading the implementation of a joint programme of work with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and partners in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to create an employer-led qualification system for adults. Its aim is to ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses and that individuals have the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled. The qualification system should be designed to respond quickly to changing skills needs and to enable learners to undertake units, as well as full qualifications, and to gain credits for their achievements. The government aims to have a unit-based credit framework for lifelong learning in England in place for adults by 2010.

To help meet the UK government strategy outlined in its White Paper "21st century skills" (see Cedefop Info issue 3/2003), a unit-based national system of qualifications and credit is being developed that will recognise diverse achievement. The Skills Strategy report recognises that assigning a credit value to the full range of the existing units in the national qualifications framework represents a formidable task and proposes a joint programme to develop a shared approach to credit, including the mutual recognition of units.

The credit framework for England has been developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) (<http://www.qca.org.uk>) and the LSC (<http://www.lsc.gov.uk>). The framework will be consistent with the frameworks of Scotland, Northern Ire-

land and Wales, as well as European frameworks. Its aim is to provide a means by which credit can be gained by learners for their achievement (1). In carrying out this work, QCA and LSC take account of work undertaken on developing credit in further and higher education.

The QCA is now working to agree on the principles of credit for adults. Supported by the awarding bodies, the QCA will assign a credit value to all existing units in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and develop a shared approach to credit. In turn, the LSC is looking at credit systems outside the NQF to see what needs to be done to make them consistent with the principles that the QCA is developing and how applying credit principles can lead to recognition of learning achievement and to entry to the NQF.

The framework is founded on the principle of a credit, expressed as 10 hours of notional learning time (including both taught time and non-taught time such as private study, research etc). Credits are put together to form units, which are in themselves at least 10 hours of learning time. Units would form qualifications via rules of combination. Thus the learner can accrue and transfer units, which are expressed in a common language - credit.

The credit framework offers transparency and clear progression routes for learners. In the future, it is envisaged that the 114 awarding bodies approved to offer qualifications in the National Qualifications Frameworks will be able to cross-recognise each other's units, and that Sector Skills Councils and other stakeholders will design fit-for-purpose qualifications, which meet the needs of end-users such as employers or higher education.

At present four sector pilot projects have been agreed, as pathfinders to designing qualifications and training

programmes that fit within this credit framework. The pilot projects are in the travel, IT, engineering and customer service sectors.

The move towards credit framework is also in line with the EU-level Copenhagen process.

More information from mary.heslop@lsc.gov.uk or info@qca.org.uk
See also : <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/>

(1) Principles for a Credit Framework for England - QCA and LSC (March 2004) - final version to be published

Source: QCA, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, London

Some results of the first year

During the year 2003-04, colleges and other training providers have continued to expand the flow of young people and adults gaining skills, training and qualifications:

a. **Basic Skills** - 200 000 learners achieved at least one Skills for Life qualification this year. Since 2001, 2.3 million learners have taken up 4.6 million Skills for Life learning opportunities.

b. **Level 2** - 260 000 more adults in the workforce achieved qualifications to at least full level 2 at the end of 2003 compared to autumn 2002. The proportion of adults in the workforce qualified to Level 2 now stands at 71%.

c. **Apprenticeships** - 246 000 16-24 year olds were enrolled by the end of March 2004. There have been over 1 million entrants to the programme so far.

d. **Foundation Degrees** - currently 24 500 students are enrolled on Foundation Degree courses, with employers involved in both the design and delivery.

e. **Overall flow of qualifications** - nearly 3 million qualifications were achieved by adults in 2002-03.

Employers and learners continue to express high levels of satisfaction with the training they receive.

81% of employers who had used Further Education (FE) provision were satisfied or very satisfied with the training provided. 63% of learners using FE provision were very or extremely satisfied with their learning experience and over 90% were at least fairly satisfied.



Promoting parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications

The Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Council and the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Conference have been legally set up by the Minister responsible for Education, Youth and Employment to ensure coordination and effective problem-solving in all matters relating to qualifications.

The Council, which will be chaired by the Director of the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (Malta QRIC), (see Cedefop Info 3/2003) will ensure the timely dissemination of information and the coordination of activities related to the awarding and recognition of qualifications of the various certificate/diploma awarding bodies. It will support the development of instruments of transparency in qualifications and frameworks for course organisation, as may be developed and agreed upon by the European Union and identified as good practice in countries out-

side the EU. Above all, it will strive to promote parity of esteem and facilitate the passage between vocational and academic courses, ensuring that vocational training will provide a path both to higher education qualifications and employment.

The Conference has been created to bring together all the authorities designated by law to grant warrants, licenses or similar permits to practice a profession or a calling, as well as representatives of the trade unions and employers and to the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre.

The Conference, which will be chaired by the National Systems Directives Coordinator will meet at least once a year to further coordinate mechanism set up to assist businesses and citizens and to clarify principles and discuss matters related to the evaluation of credentials. It will provide a forum for discussion of

problems, assist in resolving recurring problems expeditiously and contribute towards a uniform application of the general systems directives.

It is hoped that both the Council and the Conference will act as a mutual support service so as to break down barriers which prevent citizens and businesses from taking full advantage of the EU Internal Market.

Further information: Joyce Pullicino, National Coordinator, Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, Great Siege Road, Floriana, Malta, CMR 01, Tel. (356) 21228194
<http://www.education.gov.mt>

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment

The initial vocational training quality charter

Isfol has put forward a proposal for an initial vocational training quality charter ⁽¹⁾ based on a comparison of the experience of the new vocational training institutions and the relevant associations at national level ⁽²⁾. The charter, a vocational training quality manifesto, primarily seeks to define a number of vocational training quality requirements and enhance their transparency for potential users (young people and their families). Moreover, it is also intended to encourage vocational training players to enter into a commitment to uphold these quality standards in the programmes they deliver and thus guarantee training routes consistent with national and European objectives and standards.

The charter was developed in the context of the reform of the educational and training system, designed to help build a unified educational and training system in the second cycle, with the participation of vocational training centres and vocational/technical institutes.

The charter seeks to apply a number of guiding principles to the implementation of initial training routes (for young people up to 18 years of age) which constitute 'an essential component of the second cycle of the reformed education system', on a par in value and status with academic secondary routes.

The ongoing reform process has substantially upgraded the role of vocational training. Whereas in the past it was merely a question of skilling, it now involves the recognition of experience which can contribute to the full maturity of individuals with a view to their active integration into the world of work or further training.

The reform of the system has therefore triggered a reorganisation of the new model of initial vocational training in the regions. This provides the starting point for the quality charter. The spheres of initial vocational

training are defined: initial vocational training programmes are to be developed on the basis of the demand of young people and their families, with the right of reversible choices in an open and flexible system. Initial vocational training is moreover an expression of the networks of relations with the other institutional, social and productive players in the field.

The quality charter examines two basic concepts: educational and didactic quality. The former places the individual at the centre of the education process, while the latter is based on skills guidance/orientation, learning by doing and multiple learning contexts. In particular the latter (the territorial context, didactic resources and learning methodologies) are to be defined in the training contract to establish a link between the world of work and the world of training.

Evaluation of the quality of training outcomes plays an essential role in the training process: training objectives are set by the organisations in terms of pre-established general standards, while a structured evaluation of qualifications is triggered externally in accordance with uniform nationwide transparency standards and European and international recognition.

Whether or not the principles of the charter will be complied with in practice will obviously depend on external factors such as continuity of funding, autonomy of design and didactic approach and an effective system of guidance. However it is above all a question of the organisational quality of the training centre. This includes the extent to which it matches the specific requirements in terms of efficiency and effectiveness set by the regional accreditation system.

The charter gives a summary definition of the life cycle of the training process: analysis of the territorial context, planning and design, guidance/orientation,

implementation of the training per se, job search assistance, evaluation. The learning process and ongoing progress are documented in a 'training record' while the practical work and tasks accomplished are registered in a 'skills portfolio', exploitable in the labour market or as training credit.

⁽¹⁾ The text of the charter can be found in Italian at http://www.isfol.it/isfol/download/sf%20charter%20qualita_fp.pdf or in English at:

<http://www.ciofs-fp.org/download/foto/Carla%20qualita%20in%20inglese4.doc>
⁽²⁾ The relevant vocational training institutions and associations are as follows:
 Casa della Carità Arti e Mestieri, <http://www3.chiesacattolica.it/confap/enti/casacar.htm>
 Ciofs/fp [Salesian vocational training for women] <http://www.ciofs-fp.org/IT/default.asp>
 Cnos-fap [Salesian national centre for refresher training], <http://www.cnos-fap.it/>
 Luigi Clerici Foundation, <http://www.clerici.lombardia.it/default800.html>
 Forma, www.forma.sardegna.it
 Enaip [Italian Catholic Workers' Association] http://www.enaip.it/_index.html
 Engim [Giuseppini del Murialdo national association], <http://www.engim.org/>
 Ial [Institute for Workers' Training], <http://www.ialcisl.it/>, <http://www.ialweb.it/index.asp>
 Smile [Systems and Innovative Methodologies for Work and Education], <http://www.smileonline.it/>

Further information at:
http://www.isfol.it/BASIS/web/prod/document/DDD/sfn_pub48.htm
 Isfol - Training systems - Via G.B. Morgagni 33 - 00161 Rome
 Giorgio Allulli
 Giacomo Zagardo
 sisform.form-sup@isfol.it
 Fax (00-39) 06-44291871

Source: Alessandra Pedone -ISFOL ReferNet Italy

Financing of training

GERMANY

Digging increasingly deeper into state coffers to finance vocational training

According to a study conducted by the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), the State spent more than EUR 3 billion on non-school-based vocational training in 2002.

The public authorities have a high price to pay for their pledge to offer a vocational training place to all those young people "willing to engage in training and capable of receiving training" amid falling training place provision. The actual cost of this pledge has now been calculated by a BIBB study on public expenditure on initial and continuing vocational and training in the period 1980 to 2002. The study

shows that state funding, i.e. the taxpayer's bill, has more than doubled in the course of the last 20 years from EUR 4.1 billion in 1980 to some EUR 10 billion in 2002.

A clear shift can be observed in the proportion of state spending on vocational schools on the one hand and non-school-based vocational training - e.g. measures to encourage the creation of additional industrial training places or the promotion of training for disadvantaged youngsters - on the other. In 1980, while the lion's share (almost 85%) of the approx. EUR 4 billion funding was

channelled into vocational schools, only EUR 638 million was spent on non-school-based vocational training. By 2002, funding for non-school-based vocational training had climbed to EUR 3.167 billion, accounting for almost 32% of the overall expenditure of approx. EUR 10 billion. In contrast, the proportion of overall funding set aside for vocational schools fell by 17% to 68% in the same period.

The considerable increase in Federal Agency for Employment spending on non-school-based vocational training is due mainly to measures to promote the vocational training of disadvantaged

youngsters. Expenditure on such measures rose from EUR 1.3 million in 1980 to EUR 268.6 million in 1991, to peak at EUR 1.076 billion in 2002.

The BIBB has published a brochure with details of all the results of the study on the contribution of the public authorities to the funding of vocational training. The publication (in German), by Klaus Berger, can be ordered at a price of EUR 9.90 from Bertelsmann, Postfach 10 06 33, D-33506 Bielefeld, Tel. (49-521) 911 01-11, Fax (49-521) 911 01-19, e-Mail: service@wbv.de.

Source: BIBB/Cedefop/SK

Special target groups

AUSTRIA

More money for disabled students

Grants for disabled students are to be significantly improved with effect from winter semester 2004. The aim is to decisively promote the integration of disabled people into higher education. Regardless of their type of disability, disabled students will now be entitled to

higher grants payable over longer periods than before. The relevant regulation, due to enter into force on 1 September 2004, includes the following improvements: grants will now be payable for a total of three (as opposed to previously two) semesters longer than for able-bodied

students; the list of eligible disabilities has been extended to include cerebral palsy and the severely hearing-impaired with cochlear implantation. In general, grants for students with disabilities are to be increased by 5% up to a ceiling of an additional EUR 420 per month.

Further information from:
 Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Vienna
 Tel. (43-1) 53120-5021
<http://www.bmbwk.gv.at>

Source: Helmut Hafner, Laboratory for Plastics Engineering, Vienna



UNITED KINGDOM

Toolkit to help universities and colleges meet the needs of employers

The University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) has launched 'Fit for Purpose', a comprehensive resource to help higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) develop higher level vocational learning programmes, which more accurately address the needs of employers.

Aimed at curriculum designers and deliverers within further and higher education, the toolkit's purpose is to encourage the wider use of National Occupational Standards (NOS) in foundation degrees, honours degrees, postgraduate programmes and graduate apprenticeships to ensure that:

- the vocational learning undertaken by students is more relevant and meaningful to employers;
- graduates are more work-ready and attractive to potential employers.

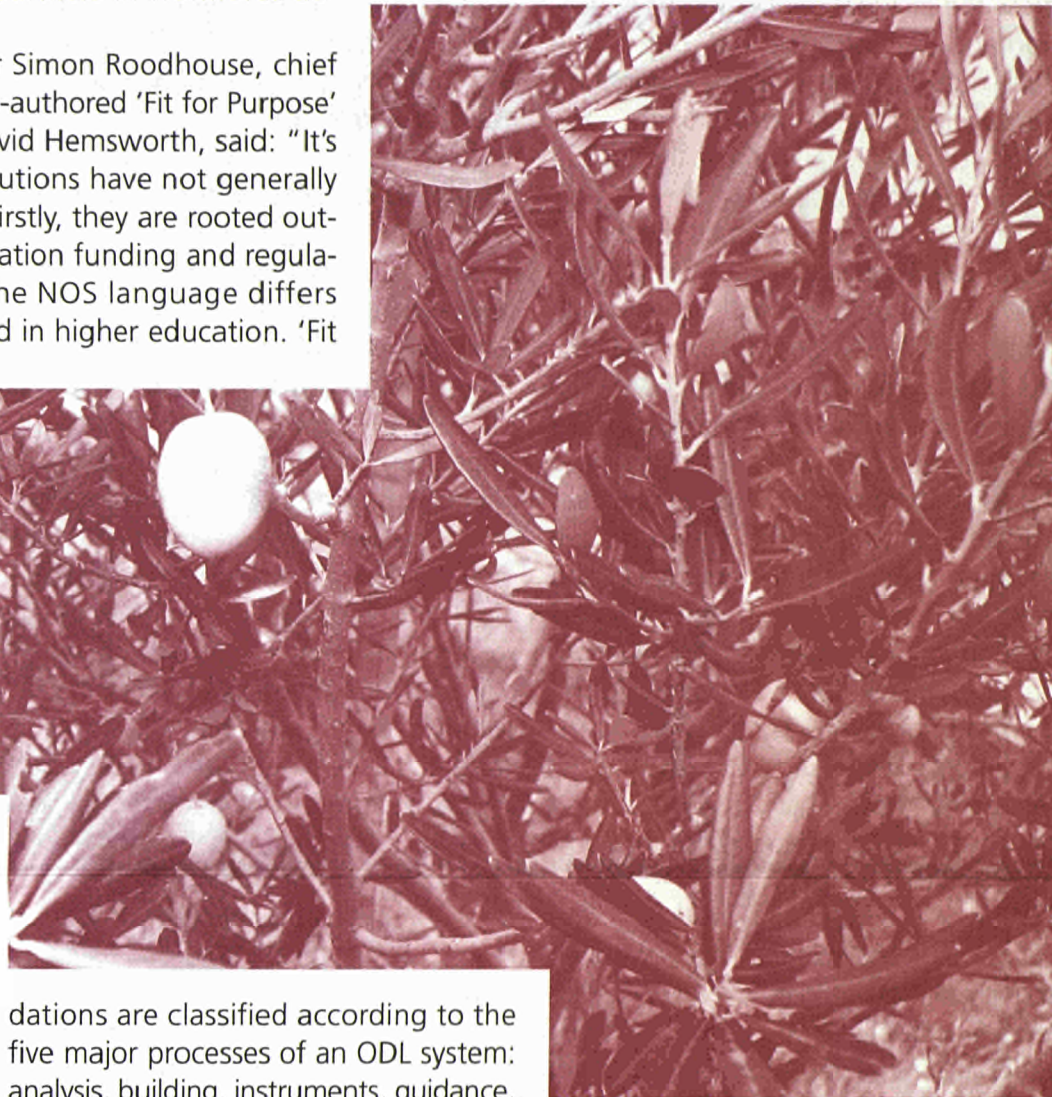
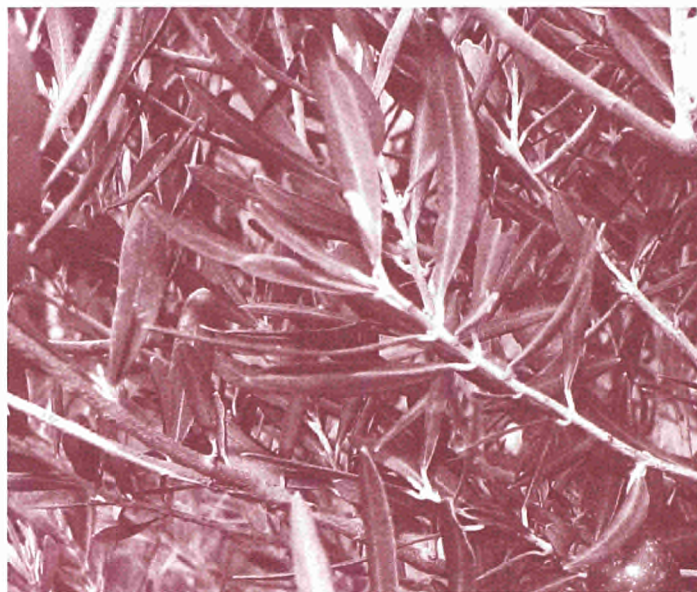
'Fit for Purpose' is sponsored by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). National Occupational Standards (NOS) define individual competence in performance terms, i.e. they represent the successful outcome of work activity. However, NOS are greatly underused by the majority of those responsible for designing higher education programmes. This may go some way to explaining why universities and colleges are often criticised by employers for not producing work-ready graduates. The LSC is committed to working with higher education to increase access for people with vocational skills and engage HEIs as partners in workforce development.

At the launch, Professor Simon Roodhouse, chief executive of UVAC, who co-authored 'Fit for Purpose' with UVAC consultant, David Hemsworth, said: "It's understandable why institutions have not generally embraced the standards. Firstly, they are rooted outside the usual higher education funding and regulatory systems; secondly, the NOS language differs significantly from that used in higher education. 'Fit

for Purpose' addresses this by explaining exactly what NOS are, outlining their role in vocational learning and qualifications, providing solutions to issues, sharing good practice tips and listing useful information sources."

Further information from:
Louise Jaggs
Fit for Purpose
TextOnTap
Tel. (44) 1242 257770
E-mail: UVAC@textontap.com

Source: QCA, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, London



FRANCE

Open and distance learning: good practice shared by partners

A guide to good practice in the field of open and distance learning (ODL) has just been published by the French Forum for Open and Distance Learning (FFFOD) and the French standardising body, AFNOR.

AFNOR, comprising an association under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry and two subsidiaries, specialises in the development and dissemination of standards and in certification and counselling activities. The FFFOD, for its part, is a association of various bodies involved in ODL and educational multimedia promoting French know-how and experience in this field by means of an information and exchange system, meetings

on specific themes and working parties.

The tool drawn up by a group of experts (*) is a methodological guide which describes processes and recommendations for the development of quality ODL actions. It is addressed to project leaders, trainers, designers, tutors starting out in ODL and experienced players wishing to evaluate their own provision, by identifying weaknesses and finding solutions.

The guide is the result of observation of practice in the field as well as comparative analysis. It provides a summary of elements which are transferable and generally applicable. Its 282 recommen-

dations are classified according to the five major processes of an ODL system: analysis, building, instruments, guidance, evaluation.

(*) The group of experts comprised AFPA (National Association for the Vocational Training of Adults), ALGORA "Formation ouverte et réseaux", Centre INFFO (Centre for the Development of Information on Continuing Education), CNED (National Centre for Distance Education), the Le Préau and, Savoirs Interactifs associations, as well as other specialised ODL agencies.

Further information:
- Référentiel de bonnes pratiques: technologies de l'information - formation ouverte et à distance (BP Z 76-001)
AFNOR, French Association for Standardisation; FFFOD, French Forum for ODL; project leader Jacques Naymark
Saint-Denis-La Plaine: AFNOR, 2004, 61 p. (ISSN 0335-3931)
AFNOR, 11 avenue Francis de Pressensé, F-93571 Saint-Denis-La Plaine Cedex; Tel. (33-1) 41 62 80 00; Fax (33-1) 49 17 90 00; URL: <http://www.afnor.fr/>

FFFOD, 91 rue Blomet, F-75015 Paris; Tel. (33 1) 45 31 25 54; fax (33 1) 45 31 24 61; Sonia Le Louarn sonia.lelouarn@fffod.org; URL: <http://www.fffod.org>

- The TFS programme of television broadcasts accessible on the Internet, developed by AFPA, also offers six 13-minute free-access sessions, explaining the approach used to draw up the guide and presenting its main processes. <http://www.tfs.afpa.fr/site2/index.asp?rubr=103&idserie=51&idateller=6>

- INFFO Flash, No 637, 16 to 31 May 2004, p. 17
- INFFO Flash / La Lettre Algora, No 638, 1 to 15 June 2004, p. 3

Source: Stéphane Héroult, Centre INFFO

PORTUGAL

National education programme on safety and health at work

More than 500 training and awareness-raising initiatives targeted at students, teachers, civil servants and educational decision-makers were carried out in the framework of the National Education Programme on Safety and Health at Work (PNESST) in the first half of 2004.

The National Programme comprises a range of activities aimed at developing a culture of prevention and promoting occupational health and safety (OHS) in schools. Launched in 2000, PNESST seeks to make a contribution to reducing occupational accidents and work-related diseases and to forge closer links between the school community and the world of work.

PNESST is based on three key areas of action:

- Development of study programmes; integration

of the OHS dimension into primary, secondary and higher education curricula;

- Teacher training;
- OHS awareness-raising/education within the school community as part of the educational mission of schools.

The national programme, implemented by a team of 29 experts throughout the various regions of Portugal, reaches a total of 260 schools with 89 885 students and 3 425 teachers.

In the course of the first half of 2004, 37 training schemes took place with a total of 1 172 participants, including educational decision-makers, civil servants and teachers. In the same period, 483 awareness-raising campaigns were carried out in a number of regions with the participation of 13 080 students and 2 622 teachers.

PNESST is represented on the working party on education of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (*), to which it submits annual reports on the results of its school-based activities. The programme has reaped international praise as a project developed in and beneficial to the school community.

(*) European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
http://agency.osha.eu.int/index_en.htm

Further information from:
CID/DEEP:
fatima.hora@deep.msst.gov.pt
claudia.arriegas@deep.msst.gov.pt

Source: http://www.portugal.gov.pt/Portal/PT/Governos/Governos_Constitucionais/GC16/Ministerios/MAET/Comunicacao/Notas_of_Imprensa/20040820_MAET_Com_Seguranca_Trabalho.htm



The state of affairs: European and international vocational education and training at sector level

Industry and services play an increasingly important part in European and international education and training solutions at sector level. Stakeholders at this level are directly confronted with practical challenges resulting from internationalisation of trade and technology and are eager to seek education and training solutions beyond the scope of national qualifications. So how do we address the internationalisation of education and training? This was one of the main questions raised at the seminar on European education and training solutions at sector level, held in the Hague on 5-6 October, 2004.

This seminar - which continued the focus of the European Symposium in Strasbourg on Construction of European qualifications (1) - was one of several events the Dutch Presidency is jointly organising with the European Commission (DG EAC), aimed at further strengthening European cooperation in vocational and educational training. These events are bringing together the key political and practical processes and players involved in adopting and implementing a Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Communiqué. The Communiqué will update the Copenhagen declaration, reporting on progress made since November 2002 and setting new priorities and strategies for the coming two years.

One of the first steps towards a sector strategy at European level has been to increase the visibility of activity at this level. Since early 2003, Cedefop has been mapping initiatives and projects which focus on European and international sector levels. Its aims include, inter alia, obtaining a detailed overview of initiatives, activities and projects on development of international sector competences and qualifications (profile, coverage, impact). Trying to identify the main actors involved and the links between existing initiatives and projects are also important. The intention is to examine how these initiatives interact and ultimately relate to national qualification systems.

As this type of information has not been systematically collected before, the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) agreed in November 2003 to develop a user-friendly database to facilitate continuing identification, development and comparison of competences and qualifications at sector level. The database is currently under development so findings are tentative at this stage; a more comprehensive analysis will be presented later. The database will increase the understanding and visibility of the process, and subsequently help to identify and compare qualifications. It will also support the development of sector competences and qualifications. A new bibliographical database on the sector approach will be a part of the larger database; the bibliographical database on skills needs by sector has already been

developed.

Though no strategy on developing sector qualifications has been outlined, several European initiatives and structures support the development of qualifications and competences at sector level. Such initiatives and projects have been identified by exploring various reports, online information and databases such as EIROnline and Leonardo da Vinci (LdV). In addition, DG Employment has provided information on supported projects and several sectors have provided material directly to Cedefop.

Initiatives in sectoral social dialogue

For a long time, many issues directly related to developing sector qualifications and education and training at European level have been raised in the framework of European social dialogue. Up to May 2004, 30 European sector social dialogue committees had been established, directly supported by DG Employment. Several sectors have agreements on comprehensive education and training strategies, though discussions on developing sectoral qualifications do not only take place in formal sector social dialogue committees. Additionally, 35 sectors at European level have organised dialogue on issues related to development of sectoral qualifications, vocational training or lifelong learning. Nine of these sectoral committees have reached agreements and joint opinions on the same topics. The material collected often refers to initial discussions on development of sectoral qualifications and vocational training, which are then subsequently linked to later agreements and joint opinions on lifelong learning. For instance, the commerce sector planned to develop vocational training programmes to promote lifelong learning. Another example is the European Central Bank social partners' agreements and joint opinion on lifelong learning, where professional, vocational and entry level skills have been defined.

National system impact

Within the context of their joint texts, several sectors emphasise that completed agreements should not interfere with national bargaining systems. For instance, the relatively new agreements made by the agriculture social partners propose initiatives to national organisations representing agriculture employers and employees, Member State authorities and the Commission. As this covers further implementation of already planned projects it was impossible to find a comparable example in any other sector. However, according to information received from partners in the European bank sector two Member States have adopted their agreement and the 'framework'.

The high number of sector projects supported by the LdV programme offers a clear, and qualified, overview of vo-

cal training in Europe. The special sector profile of this programme is often hidden behind predetermined themes, and the approach itself might not have been a result of strategic choice. For instance more than 250 sectoral approaches within 39 different sectors have been identified in the LdV programme for 2001-02. Within these, the health and social sector has the highest number of projects looking for European solutions (9 out of 44), followed by agriculture (8 out of 23) and construction (4 out of 25).

Need for coordination

The material collected shows a complex picture. It has been difficult to track down the relationship between projects agreed in the context of social dialogue and then carried out under other programmes. However, several sectors have contacted Cedefop and further information has been gathered by following the development of their projects. These projects cover agriculture, art performance, banking, commerce, construction, hairdressing, mining, plastics and sport sectors; the majority build on each other under various EU programmes. Some sectors are also exchanging experiences and sharing good practice as a spin-off effect, e.g. between banking and insurance. Although numerous activities in the LdV programme support development discussed in sectoral social dialogue, many LdV initiatives are independent and not part of the collaboration and strategy set by the social partners. For instance, one LdV project introduced a standard European foundation certificate in banking, unaware of the agreements and work done by the banking sector social partners. Some initiatives overlap, while others build on work done by others. Many projects belong to a cluster of initiatives. Moreover, there is no coordination of the various new certificates created, so these may also overlap. Many training providers involved in projects offer certifications; results indicate that many new European certificates are being introduced.

Lack of coordination leads to work duplication or overlap and prevents valuable knowledge and experience, which has normally to be shared, being gained in projects. The question is to what degree the various stakeholders are aware of related activities in the same sector. In many cases they are not informed about similar activities within the framework of

sectoral social dialogue. Sectors are also faced with several challenges in their aim to adapt European qualifications to the national level. An important challenge in the coming period could be to link stakeholders working on related issues and thus support voluntary cooperation, for example in the form of project clusters.

These new challenges are not only increasing as new industries and services emerges while other decline, but new external requirements force enterprises, sectors and public authorities to reconsider the way education and training is structured, financed and managed.

Gordon Clark, DG Education and Culture, underlined in his closing remarks at the Hague seminar that sectors can play a crucial role in meeting the new education and training challenges. 'The balancing of initial and continuing education and training, the anticipation of skills needs and the internationalisation of skills are issues which cannot be solved by national (public) education and training systems alone. New strong stakeholders are making an impact on education and training policies.' While aiming for 2010, sector level initiatives are being strengthened through the introduction of an overall framework for qualification and competences. The new European Framework is to support the development of a diversity of relevant, high quality education and training solutions within a lifelong learning perspective. Citizens need to be able to combine, transfer and accumulate knowledge and competences across institution, sectors and countries; only then is lifelong learning possible throughout the European labour market.

(1) Held 30 September-1 October 2004, organised by the High Committee for Education and Employment, Ministry of National Education, France and the Louis Pasteur University in France.

The full article with numerous examples of sectoral initiatives and projects is available in the electronic version of Cedefop Info. To consult the electronic version, go to www.trainingvillage.gr and click on 'Bookshop' under 'Information Resources'.

Source: Cedefop/bul

