



UNICE
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**«FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS FOR THE LIFELONG
DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES AND
QUALIFICATIONS»**

First follow-up report

2003

European Trade Union Confederation*

**Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of
Europe – UNICE/UEAPME****

**European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation
and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest**

**« FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS FOR THE LIFELONG DEVELOPMENT OF
COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS»**

First follow-up report

14 March 2003

* The ETUC delegation includes representatives of the Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee

** UEAPME - European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

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Foreword

In March 2002, the European social partners adopted a framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications, as a contribution to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy¹.

They identified four areas for priority actions. These priorities are:

- to identify and anticipate competencies and qualifications needs;
- to recognise and validate competencies and qualifications;
- to inform, support and provide guidance;
- to mobilise resources.

The member organisations of UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC agreed to promote the framework of actions in Member States at all appropriate levels taking account of national practices and to transmit this document to all interested players at European and national levels.

The social partners also decided to draw up an annual report on the national actions carried out on the four priorities identified.

After three annual reports, the social partners will evaluate the impact on both companies and workers. This evaluation can lead to an update of the priorities identified. The social dialogue ad hoc group on education and training will be entrusted with this evaluation, which will be presented in March 2006.

Furthermore, in their work programme for 2003-2005, the European social partners envisaged including the social partners from candidate countries in the follow-up of the framework of actions by organising a seminar in 2004 and by including them in the reporting activities from 2005 onwards.

This is the first annual follow-up report. It describes how the framework of actions has been introduced in the social partners' activities on development of competences and qualifications and gives useful information on the first follow-up actions taken at cross-industry, sectoral and company levels.

Finally, the social partners call on the Commission and the Council to take account of the priorities of the framework of actions in the context of the ongoing work on the future objectives of the education and training systems, in the Bruges – Copenhagen process on vocational education and training and in the European Employment Strategy.

¹ The framework of actions adopted in March 2002 can be found at annex

Chapter I – Main trends

Given that this report is the first to be published, only a few months after adoption by the European social partners of the framework of actions, it is difficult to identify clear major trends in the information submitted by the social partners on the follow-up actions they have taken at different levels.

However, it clearly emerges from the document that introduction of the framework of actions in the various national contexts has provided the impetus for debates between the social partners on development of competences and qualifications, and in some cases has made it possible to group activities around the four priorities identified at European level.

The framework of actions has been introduced in various ways in the Member States, thereby respecting national dialogue practices between the social partners and traditions for concertation between public authorities and players on the labour market.

At the European level, the framework of actions has also influenced the work of several branch social dialogue committees, thereby contributing to debates and joint actions on the development of competences and qualifications.

Regarding the follow-up actions taken, it is possible to distinguish between four major types of action:

- dissemination activities (translation of the text, meetings to inform, analyse and discuss the priorities, etc.);
- discussion on the framework of actions between social partners and integration of the priorities in collective agreements;
- promotion of the approach and the priorities of the framework of actions through tripartite concertation (i.e. discussions between employer representatives, trade union representatives and public authorities);
- follow-up of one or several priorities through more focused actions and projects, either jointly between social partners or separately.

A variety of instruments emerged as being common to the actions of social partners in a number of countries, in order to promote the four priorities of the framework of actions.

Without being exhaustive, examples include:

1. Identification and anticipation of competencies and qualifications needs

Reports and studies have been conducted in several countries taking account of the economic and labour market situations and prospects in the country/sector concerned. Some social partners have placed particular emphasis on the

identification of basic competence needs or competences linked to information and communication technologies (ICT).

Social partners in several countries paid particular attention to supporting SMEs in the effort to identify competence and qualification needs.

Social partners also took actions designed to develop the competences of certain categories of workers so that they can maintain and develop their employability, or to help companies and organisations to put in place competence management policies and to evaluate their impact. These actions relate in particular to the young, older workers, workers with low basic skills and managers.

There are also actions designed to match training offers with the needs of companies and the labour market, in particular at branch and territorial levels. These actions demonstrate the importance of cooperation between the authorities in charge of training and/or employment, institutes/schools/universities and the social partners.

2. Validation and recognition of competences and qualifications

The complexity of validation and recognition of competences and qualifications is reflected by the very wide variety of approaches and instruments developed.

Activities in this area show clearly the social partners' concern to build bridges between the world of formal education and the world of work, which plays an essential role in acquisition of non-formal and informal competences. In this area, in-depth cooperation with the public authorities is essential.

Examples ranged from partnership with public authorities or training institutions at national or local level; autonomous initiatives by social partners at national, sectoral or regional level as well as actions at company level.

3. Information, support and guidance

Most of the activities reported concern cooperation between the social partners and the public authorities in order to render more effective guidance, information and support services to young trainees and workers.

4. Mobilisation of resources

The importance of mobilisation of resources for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications is reflected in the very wide variety of instruments developed. These included company investment in competence development (e.g. establishment of competence development strategies in companies, investment in training, time-off for training), investment by the individual (e.g. training voucher) and co-investment (e.g. training cheques, joint social partners funds and European Social Fund programmes) as well as the establishment or reinforcement of tax incentives.

Conclusion

This first report on the follow-up to the framework of actions confirms the interaction between activities and proposals of social partners at European and other levels.

The discussions of the European social partners when the framework of action was being adopted were enriched by the practices of social partners at national, branch and company level (some examples of good practices were published at annex to the framework of actions). We now see how the framework of actions and the four priorities identified at European level have in turn enriched the discussions of the social partners in the different countries.

The effort to promote information exchange and mutual enrichment will be valued and pursued in the years ahead in the context the social partners' multi-annual work programme.

Chapter II - Follow-up of the framework of actions

Austria

Sources of information

- Workers: ÖGB (Austrian Trade Union Federation), members of ETUC
- Employers: IV (Federation of Austrian Industry), member of UNICE; WKÖ (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) member of UEAPME and AK (Chamber of Labour)

Actions taken at national level

At national level the organisations IV, WKÖ, AK and ÖGB organised several meetings to disseminate the framework of actions and explain its rationale, and discussed it in expert groups on education and training. The main meetings were as follows.

Three conferences (in total 400 participants) took place on "Financing Lifelong Learning" (with Professor Dieter Timmermann, University of Bielefeld, Germany), "The Consequences of PISA for Lifelong Learning" (with Dr Andreas Schleicher, OECD) and "e-learning: Expectations and Reality" (with Professor Hermann Astleitner, University of Salzburg, Austria).

A conference on Lifelong Learning in the metal industry was organised in the context of agreeing on a memorandum, which welcomed the initiatives of the EU in the field of lifelong learning.

A proposal to create an advisory board called "Zukunft Forum Weiterbildung" to advise the government on the development of a lifelong learning strategy was discussed among the social partners and the ministry. This board could also play an important role in the follow-up to the social partners' framework of actions. It is quite likely that the new government will set up an advisory board on lifelong learning.

Following-up the priority of **mobilising resources**, further tax incentives proposed by the Federation of Industry have been decided for companies investing in education and training: these companies can now obtain up to 20% tax credits. Investment in both internal and external training is taken into account. Furthermore, companies, which do not make enough profit to benefit from the tax deduction, can claim a training benefit. This training benefit amounts to 6% of the actual expense.

AK called for a new incentive for employees (implemented 01.01.2003): in Austria training expenses are treated as income-related expenses in the framework of the individual's tax declaration. This instrument, used on a permanent basis and regulated by federal tax law, has now been enlarged: expenses for long-term training measures leading to a broad vocational re-qualification (i.e. leading to completely new qualifications) can for the very first time also lead to tax deductibility.

The two biggest Austrian training institutes, WiFi (training institute of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) and bfi (Vocational Training Institute of the Chamber of Labour and the Trade Union Federation) offered a wide range of courses:

WiFi has performed – according to recent statistics for 2002 - 26,000 courses, seminars, etc., throughout Austria with more than 300,000 participants. It has **identified needs** in further education and training especially in the IT-sector and in the field of management of SMEs and financial-management. Besides academic-level programmes, WiFi is still introducing all kinds of IT certificates in the industrial sector in order to **recognise and validate competences**, e.g. ECDL, CISCO, Microsoft-Certificates etc. These are standardised, internationally accepted proof of acquired competences. In view of the imminent EU enlargement and its consequences for the exporting sector, WiFi is also increasingly active in the field of adult language training.

The bfi offered more than 14,000 courses to a total of 160,000 participants. Its activities focus on vocational education and (continuing) training for workers and employees as well as educational and occupational schemes for unemployed persons and individuals threatened with unemployment. The objective is to promote the personal and occupational development of the persons enrolled in the courses, by means of high-quality education and training provision at a reasonable cost. Many of the training courses are based on modular systems, so individually tailored, and thus highly efficient forms of learning are possible. The bfi is certified in accordance with the international standard ISO 9001.

Actions taken at sectoral level

An anticipated trend is a broad need for different kinds of qualifications in the health and well-being sector. WiFi has detected a great need for highly professional services in human health and is greatly interested in developing training programmes at a very high level whilst at the same time demonstrating service activities to participants that comply with the legal restrictions in this sector.

The social partners in the metal industry agreed on a memorandum which welcomed the initiatives of the EU in the field of lifelong learning and placed an obligation on both employers and employees to deal with key questions of company based training in future collective negotiations.

On the level of the apprenticeship system the social partners agreed on a number of new measures: bearing in mind the demands for Lifelong learning curricula have been modernised, various apprenticeships have been organised in "group apprenticeships" thus improving the mobility on the labour market and the basis for professional development, and an amendment will place a special focus on an "integrative apprenticeship" for handicapped persons.

Good practice examples

voestalpine: Project Life

In order to enlarge its capacities at the headquarters in Linz, voestalpine calculated a need for about 1,000 new staff members.

Against a background where it is more and more difficult to find new workers on the labour market as society is continuously getting older, voestalpine has given priority to older staff members and plans to keep them in work longer.

This month, the voestalpine Executive Board agreed on implementation of the programme LIFE, which was prepared by an external institute during a six-month analysing phase and further developed together with eight expert teams. The programme also received support from the European Commission in the framework of the Leonardo Programme (project title: Lernbarrieren überwinden - speziell für ältere Arbeitnehmer).

At the core of LIFE is the so-called "Formula 33": every staff member shall have the possibility to use 33 hours or 2% of the annual working time (on average 1,600 hours) for training activities. "Formula 33" also means "three pillars for three generations", i.e. also young staff will be integrated, in order to promote team work. LIFE will be implemented in the different companies of the voestalpine group via plant agreements. Specific models will be developed for the 4,500 shift workers.

WiFi

The qualification needs in terms of IT competences are now concentrated on higher qualifications, e.g. on university and similar level, whereas the needs for basic IT competences seem to be fulfilled. WiFi has therefore developed a new kind of programme in the field of adult training, the so-called "Courses of Academic Character" (software engineer, database engineer, e-commerce engineer). In these one- to two-year programmes with an academic approach, WiFi trains experts to obtain a highly practice-orientated qualification, which can be deployed immediately.

Chamber of Labour, Vienna

In 2002 the Chamber of Labour Vienna offered vocational guidance for about 17,000 persons. It launched a new initiative, the "Bildungsgutschein" (learning voucher) with a value of € 100 (for members on parental leave € 150), valid for more than 1,500 courses. In 2002 almost 20,000 learning vouchers have been claimed.

Belgium

Sources of information

- Trade unions: FGTB-ABVV (General Federation of Labour in Belgium) and ACV-CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions), members of ETUC
- Employers: VBO-FEB (Federation of Belgian enterprises), member of UNICE ; UNIZO (Union of self entrepreneurs) and UCM (Union of middle classes), members of UEAPME

Introduction

Lifelong learning belongs to the shared responsibilities of the social partners, the Communities (Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking) and the Regions. Given the limited role of the Federal authorities in this area and the emphasis on the role of the sectoral social partners in collective bargaining, there is no 'single' policy view on lifelong learning in Belgium. But all parties involved are making considerable progress in boosting competence development: all indicators point to a sharp rise in overall participation in lifelong learning and measures are being taken to improve adult access to lifelong learning, especially through innovative funding and leave mechanisms for workers, and validation of non-formal learning.

Actions taken at national level

At the end of 1998 the social partners concluded a central agreement for the whole private sector, which includes a commitment to raise the investment of companies in the training of their employees **from 1.2% to 1.9%** of the wage bill by 2004.

Besides this general effort for the training of workers, the social partners agreed also to continue the former engagement to invest **0.1%** of the wage bill in employment and training, this being earmarked for at-risk groups (including non-employed). These commitments have been confirmed for 2001/2002 and 2003/2004. Special efforts are being made to improve the access to lifelong learning for all workers and to develop ICT literacy.

Social partners are also working on a **tool to evaluate companies' efforts** in competence development in qualitative and quantitative terms, based on the definitions of training in the CVTS 2 survey (Eurostat).

Social partners and federal government have agreed also to enlarge the system of paid **educational leave to part-time workers**, with some restrictions: only for vocational training.

FEB has also reported dissemination of the framework of actions among its members.

Actions taken on a regional level

1. Flanders

In Flanders, the following tripartite activities have been reported:

- In 2001, an advisory committee in which the social partners are represented formulated an advice to the Flemish government to promote the **recognition of prior learning and competencies**, starting with concrete experiments. At the beginning of 2003, five experiments started in different fields: child care, training and recruitment of teachers, jobs in the tourism sectors, for migrants and for low-skilled workers.
- In November 2002, a specific Task Force on **information and guidance**, in which the social partners were represented, delivered an advice to the Flemish government for the implementation of a right to career counselling. Through co-financing from the European Social Fund (and some sectors) a network of centres for career counselling of workers will be developed. Some of these centres are being developed by trade unions (ACV and ABVV) for their members and by VDAB, the Flemish public employment service.
- **Training cheques for companies** are a new initiative of the Flemish Government since February 2002, for all enterprises with economic activities in the Flemish Region. The budget 'training cheques' for 2002 was initially € 45 million. All training given by a trainer recognised by the Flemish government (in twelve months from date of issue) can be paid for with training cheques. A cheque has a face-value of € 30. The company pays 50% of the cheque and the Flemish government the other 50%. Each company can buy at most 200 cheques a year. From 2003 on, sectoral social partners are invited to strengthen the system by making a contribution to the 50% cost paid by the company. This is limited to general training (European definition), to SMEs (European definition) and to a maximum of 20% of the value of the cheques (this is to avoid problems with EU competition rules)².
- In the new Flemish draft of agreement for 2003-2004, social partners have reached an agreement on the development of a system of **training vouchers for employees**, similar to the system for companies (see below).

2. French region and community

In the French region and community, different actions have been taken or are planned, which are in close connection with the priorities identified in the framework of actions. In particular, the following tripartite activities have been reported:

- Negotiation of a **Charter for training** (promotion of competence development; indicators; administrative simplification etc.).
- Agreement between the different authorities of the French-speaking part of Belgium to develop a **network of centres for the recognition and validation of competencies** (see below). A consultative commission,

² Info: www.opleidingscheques.be.

composed of the social partners, will function as a steering group. The validation system is expected to be operational at the beginning of 2004.

- Improvement of **the information and guidance public services** by the establishment of new "cités des métiers" (job fairs). It is expected to be operational at the end of 2003.
- Touching upon the issue of resources, a reform to develop **financial incentives for training** is also being discussed.
- Since November 1998, a training cheque system has been established in the Walloon area to encourage the participation in continuous education actions in favour of the self-employed but also in favour of wage earners. At the present time each self-employed person or company has the benefit of an annual 400 hours training credit and financial help which amounts to € 15 for each hour (a maximum of € 6,000 yearly for a company). This system is by now in progress and should be modified in the next few months.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The inter-professional agreement implies that agreements will be concluded at sectoral level or at company level, taking on board the priorities decided at the cross-industry level. In 2002, at least 81 sectoral agreements were concluded, which represent approximately 2 million workers i.e. 93.5% of private sector workers.

Other specific initiatives taken at sectoral level were also reported:

- In the insurance sector, a global training credit has been introduced;
- In some sectors, joint working groups have been set up to establish a methodology aiming at a better monitoring of companies' efforts in the field of training. This is the case, for example, in the metallurgy and insurance sectors;
- In the timber industry, partnership agreements with schools and training institutions have been established to help identify and anticipate competencies needed on the labour market;
- Specific projects in particular in the bank and telecommunication sectors have been launched to boost e-learning as a competence development tool.
- In the construction industry, job and qualification profiles have been drawn up and steps taken towards high-quality training, improved training, certification for training and sponsorship schemes.
- Under the 2001-2002 Flemish Region agreement on employment, the social partners in the Flemish textile industry have concluded a cooperation agreement with the Flemish government covering the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2004. One of the cornerstones of this agreement concerns lifelong learning and skills management.
Under this agreement, the textile sector will also be carrying out a sectoral study of the market with a view to both pinpointing 'problem' professions and, more

particularly, meeting companies' training needs more efficiently. For several years, the sector has also been working on a project with the Flanders Social and Economic Council (SERV) on professional qualification profiles.

- In the temporary employment sector, companies are spending 0.30% of wages on training initiatives either with the company using temporary workers (77% of cases), with temporary employment companies themselves, or in a training institute and during working hours. During 2002, the average time spent on training was 4.2 days and training was available to all age groups.
- In the 'auxiliary' sector, which covers all employees in the private sector who cannot be classified as belonging to a particular industry, the social partners have taken creative initiatives to increase the numbers of those participating in training, the most recent being specific measures aimed at older workers (see below).

Good practices examples

Flanders: "training and guidance vouchers"

On 22 January 2003, the Flemish social partners agreed that in Flanders the system of training vouchers should be developed for adult workers, in order to raise the participation of adults to lifelong learning. Each year, an adult worker can buy "cheques" for a total amount of € 250. In a first phase, the cost paid by the worker will be reduced to 50 % of the value of the cheques (in other words, an advantage of € 125 a year). With these vouchers, the worker can buy training or career guidance (including recognition of prior learning), with some restrictions:

- only training or career guidance in institutions recognised by the Flemish government or the sectoral social partners;
- only general training (cf. European definition);
- out of working time or during education leave;
- only for the payment of direct costs (not child care or transport).

The social partners agreed also that in a second phase (after evaluation), the cost of 50% for the workers can be reduced for some vulnerable groups (e.g. unqualified school leavers).

The Flemish government reacted rather positively and is now looking to see how it can find a budget for the implementation of the system.

French region and community: "centres for the recognition of competencies"

Recently, an agreement was reached between the different authorities of the French speaking part of Belgium to develop **a network of centres for the recognition and validation of competencies**. A consultative commission, composed of the social partners, will function as steering group. A "Consortium" is being created with the different actors (adult education, public employment service) for the development of the network and the application procedure for centres. Each centre can deliver a "titre de competence" (competence title), based on testing and on a competence portfolio, to adults who prove that they meet the standards for a certain occupation. The social partners of the different branches are asked to co-finance the validation actions.

Sectoral level: training of older workers (auxiliary sector).

For workers in the 'auxiliary' sector (who do not have their own joint committee), the Cefora sectoral fund, run by the social partners, has set up a joint campaign designed to help companies make optimum use of the experience and knowledge of workers aged 45 and over. Companies which organise one or more training activities via a training institution other than Cefora will receive training subsidies. Additional financial incentives are planned for workers aged 45 and over.

All employers within the sector may put their workers aged 45 and over forward, free of charge, for a profile study carried out by Cefora. Jobseekers aged 45 and over who are in the process of being recruited may also be put forward free of charge before they take up their position so that they can take part in additional training activities if required.

Based on the profile created, Cefora will offer advice on additional training for older workers. Together, a practical training plan will be developed with a view to upgrading workers' skills and enabling them to continue working efficiently within the company. Under the service currently offered by Cefora during this trial phase, workers receive free and priority access both to all workers' training activities and to some training activities aimed at jobseekers.

Denmark

Sources of information

- Trade unions: LO (Danish Confederation of Trade Unions), FTF (Salaried Employees' and Civil Servants' Confederation), AC (Danish Confederation of Professional Associations), ETUC members
- Employers: DA (Danish employers), member of UNICE; KL (Local government Denmark) and Committee of Danish Regions, members of CEEP

Introduction

For many years the social partners have worked together – and together with public authorities at various levels – to define and find solutions to challenges within education and training. As a typical result a large number of bodies and councils have been established to take care of various parts of education and training. A debate on implementing the strategies is therefore ongoing in bodies and councils representing social partners as well as in bodies and councils representing social partners and public authorities.

Actions taken at national level

- To promote internationalisation and recognition of further vocational education, the social partners have agreed upon a set of recommendations to the Council of Further Vocational Education - an advisory body to the Minister of Education. One important aim is to promote transparency and international recognition through development of a "qualification key" and through support to networks.
- From 2003 the adult vocation-oriented education system gives an opportunity for all managers to be admitted on a "management line" from basic level to the highest academic level. For access, not only formal qualifications but also work experience is taken into account. A degree is formally recognised and gives access to the formal education system. The "management line" has been developed in close cooperation with social partners.
- From 2003 the further education and training system gives an opportunity to engage in managing. Every manager can participate in a general training for managers no matter what background he or she has in terms of function and level of responsibility. For access, acquired competences, but not necessarily formal qualifications, is needed.
- Furthermore, a national project in SMEs has been started to develop tools for managers in order to plan competence development aimed at low-skilled workers.

Actions taken at sectoral level

1. State sector

During collective bargaining in the beginning of 2002 an agreement on competence development was reached in the public sector. The most important elements in the agreement on strategic and systematic competence development in the state sector are³:

- each and every employee has a right to a yearly dialogue with his or her employer.
- every employee has a right to a written individual plan for his/her competence development.
- It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the necessary means are provided and to follow up on the individual competence plan.
- principles and guidelines for the dialogue between employer and employee should be discussed in the work councils.
- the work councils should furthermore discuss the strategic and systematic competence development of the workplace as a whole.

2. Local and regional public sector

The social partners at national level for local and regional authorities have agreed that the continuing development of both employees' and managers' competences and qualifications is considered a prerequisite for carrying out tasks efficiently and contributes to further development of the workplace.

To ensure follow-up on these decisions, a yearly discussion in the works council about the local or regional authorities' policy on development of competences and qualifications is mandatory. In addition, the planning of a strategic and systematically based development of competences and qualifications is carried out for all employees. This includes management and employees in cooperation listing the goals for individual employees or for groups of employees at every workplace.

Both management and employees have a mutual obligation to reach the goals set. Management must ensure the framework and conditions for development of competencies and qualifications and the employee must work towards reaching the goals set. It is decided locally how often follow-up takes place. However, as a minimum follow-up must take place at least every two years.

3. Financial sector

In the financial sector, the social partners have a long tradition of cooperation in the field of training and education. The collective agreement in the sector comprises different kind of tools promoting training and education of the union members - these tools also include funding of training and education activities. As a new initiative, the social partners in the sector together with educational institutions, are now discussing the idea of establishing a "Centre of Knowledge" with the aim of strengthening competence development in the sector.

³ On the website www.stk.dk there is an English version of the "package".

4. Transport sector

Social partners within the transport sector has developed a pathway for experienced workers within the sector to obtain formal qualifications for low-skilled workers with at least four years of experience within the sector and at least 25 years old.

The basic idea is to validate competences acquired at a non-formal basis and supply "missing" qualifications on a formal basis. The social partners have formed TUR as a common body to deal with education and training within the sector. To point to the possibilities for a pathway, two conferences were held in the summer of 2002 with people responsible for training at colleges. Furthermore, it was decided to campaign for the pathway during the autumn of 2002.

Good practice examples

Basic training for managers

Several companies make use of basic training for managers. The training has been developed by the social partners. Vestas A/S which is the global leader in the field of wind turbines has with great success used the training as a key tool and as an integrated part of the development of managers within the company

Checklists for further competence development

In relation to tenders of public transport (buses) social partners have developed checklists, that focus systematically on the level of education and training and plans for further competence development for workers and managers for the companies participating in tenders.

Policy on learning environment at the workplace

In spring 2002 the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations launched a proposal and issued an invitation to a political debate on the shift of focus on the political agenda for training – suggesting that training had to be more linked to the job than was previously the case. As a result of this debate it was decided to initiate theme days on competence development, and how to create a learning environment at the workplace. Three theme days are now scheduled for April 2003 to which the Confederation and its member organisations invite all professionals and managers in order to take part in the discussion on how to develop competences and competence environments.

Competences development for nurses and domestic carers in local authorities in Høje-Taastrup

It is a joint management and labour project and has increased the qualities of the home care delivered to elderly people. The project is a part of KOM project. (Quality management project).

Day care for children in Silkeborg

Local authorities, together with labour, have set up a project for developing the competences for registered child-minders. The intention is to strengthen the quality of the daily work: to strengthen and develop the competencies of registered child-minders and to strengthen leaders' competencies for learning and development.

Competence development in a new digital world

Local authorities in Hvidovre, together with the union for The Association of Danish Lawyers and Economists, have set up a project to develop competences in a new digital world and, understanding for Lawyers and Economists to create networks for leaders in other local authorities and in the counties.

Finland

Sources of information

- Trade unions: SAK (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö), STTK (Confederation of Salaried and Technical Employee Organisations) and AKAVA (Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals), members of ETUC
- Employers: TT (Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers) and PT (Employers' Confederation of Service Industries in Finland), members of UNICE; VTML (State Employers Offices) and KT (Commission for Local Authority Employers), members of CEEP

Introduction

For many years, cooperation between the public authorities and the social partners has been very close and effective in Finland. There are quite a number of different bodies and councils where social partners from different levels together with authorities and other stakeholders try to find solutions to the challenges. These bodies deal with all the four priorities identified by the Framework of Actions.

Actions taken at national level

In December 2002, all Finnish national-level social partners concluded the bi-annual "national income agreement", which covers over 95% of all wage earners in Finland, making an explicit reference to the framework of actions. The national income agreement served as a framework when collective agreements at sectoral levels were concluded on 2 December 2002.

The national income agreement contains a special annex for education and training matters. This annex foresees several actions, which are in close connection with the priorities identified in the framework of actions:

1. Measures to be taken by social partners to maintain and develop competences at the workshop level:

- Social partners have set up a joint working group to further develop the competence-based qualification system, which is a Finnish response to the need to recognise the skills and knowledge acquired during working life.
- Social partners have set a working group together with public authorities to disseminate information to young people concerning chances offered by business professions.
- Social partners recommend that their member federations promote the maintenance and development of the professional knowledge and competencies with the help of best practice examples.
- Social partners contribute by their own means to the national programme to raise the level of knowledge and competencies of employees aged 30-54 years without an upper secondary qualification.

2. Proposals to the government to invest more in adult education and training
 - In order to stress the need for social partners to be involved in policy preparation measures, social partners have proposed that they should be invited to working groups established by the Parliamentary Committee. They have also proposed that all proposals which are accepted unanimously should be forwarded immediately.
 - Social partners have also made a proposal to develop paid educational leave benefits.
3. Proposal to establish a tripartite National Council on Knowledge and Skills
 - Two years ago, the social partners proposed to the government in the National Income Agreement establishment of a National Council on Knowledge and Competencies. This year, they called on the government to speed up this establishment. This council should be chaired by the Prime Minister and be composed of appropriate Ministers, high-level representatives of social partners and public authorities.

Leaders of employers and trade union organisations also met in March 2002 to discuss dissemination actions. A priority is to encourage less educated workers to take higher qualifications.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The Employer Confederations, TT and PT, as well as VTML and KT have actively informed their member federations of the framework of actions and encouraged them to act in this field.

Good practice examples

Telecommunication sector

All the social partners in the telecommunication sector have together started a project called "Edutele" whose main aim is to organise continuing vocational education and training for people older than 40 years and employed in this sector. The sector is undergoing a structural change, and this project will help to smooth the consequences of industrial change. The project includes three different training programmes, NetMaster, BcrMaster and IctMaster, but these programmes can be tailored according to the needs of an individual and of an enterprise. Most of the financing for the project comes from the employers. The European Social Fund, through the Finnish authorities, is also partly funding the project.

M-Real Company Kirkniemi Mills

M-Real Company Kirkniemi Mills is part of a large paper industry company. The firm's annual capacity is 600,000 tonnes of paper, it has three paper machines and it employs 850 people. Management and employees agreed on a project called "The Paper Mill of The Future - Kirkniemi 2005". The aim of the project is to estimate how the paper mill of the future will look and what are the new ways to work in the mill.

The project includes a lot of training covering professional multiskills and cooperation capabilities tailored to the needs of everyday work practices and customer relations.

France

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CFDT (Confédération française démocratique du travail), CFTC (Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens), FO (Force-ouvrière) et CGT (Confédération générale du travail), members of ETUC
- Employers: MEDEF (Federation of enterprises of France), member of UNICE; CGPME, member of UEAPME

Introduction

Concurrently with negotiations on the framework of actions at European level, national and inter-professional negotiations were initiated in France on the theme of worker access to lifelong learning.

Elements of the negotiations related to:

- the worker as a player in his own vocational development,
- diversification of training access routes,
- the role of the different players,
- enlargement and simplification of the notion of training.

Suspended in October 2001, these negotiations resumed in January 2003.

During 2002 employer organisations and trade unions drew inspiration from the European framework of actions for lifelong development of competences and qualifications in order to prepare new avenues in the negotiations.

The new themes chosen are:

- demographic developments and training,
- vocational training and lifelong training,
- articulation between sectors and territories,
- autonomy and optimisation of mechanisms for financing training.

Actions taken at national level

Activities to disseminate the framework of actions were deployed throughout 2002. The trade union confederations circulated the text to their regional inter-professional unions, either directly or via their periodical publications.

This framework of actions was discussed at a seminar held in Paris in January 2003, in which the five trade union confederations participated, on the theme "Competences, qualifications and work: where are we?".

The framework of actions also prompted training sessions organised by the trade unions at professional and inter-professional level.

MEDEF's territorial organisations were informed about this framework of actions, at their general assemblies, seminars and meetings of regional competences observatories.

There was also a debate on this theme in the Economic and Social Council in the Rhône-Alpes region.

Other tripartite actions are currently under way with a view to implementation of the mechanism for validation of work experience. The purpose of this mechanism is to allow any person with three years of experience to have this work experience validated through the award of a vocational certification i.e. :

- either a diploma of the education ministry or an other ministry;
- or a vocational title delivered by the labour ministry;
- or a joint social partners' certification.

During 2002 the new National Commission for Vocational Certification focused on putting in place a national register of vocational certificates (RNCP) which seeks to inventorise all certificates.

This register will be operational in the early months of 2003.

Actions taken at sectoral level

MEDEF has presented and analysed the framework of actions vis-à-vis around forty professional sectors representing all branches of industry and services.

Actions taken at company level

For several years MEDEF has been involved in a project to develop the competences of individuals in French companies.

This project "Objective competences"⁴, has given rise to:

- preparation of nine competences dossiers summarising the results obtained and incorporating elements of European monographs,
- a European conference on competences held in November 2002 at which speakers made reference to the European framework of actions.

⁴ For more information: <http://objectif-competences.medef.fr/>

Germany

Sources of information

- Employers: BDA (Confederation of German employers' federations), member of UNICE; ZDH (Central federation of German craft), member of UEAPME

Introduction

In Germany, the results of PISA have confirmed what enterprises have criticised in the educational system for a long time. Reforms are needed to raise the quality of education and to strengthen the basis for lifelong learning.

Especially the dual vocational training system (Duale Berufsausbildung) in Germany fulfils this goal and has strong roots in the economy and society. It needs to be developed and adapted to meet the changing needs of labour markets. It is also important to develop new strategies in order to open perspectives to disadvantaged young people and those with learning deficits.

Continuing training develops competences according to changing needs. It is important to stress that there are different responsibilities. Training that is more related to private interests than working life is the full responsibility of the individual. Training that is related to the workplace has to be a shared responsibility between employees and employers. This shared responsibility needs a better balance which does not place the entire burden on the employer.

Actions taken at national level

1. „Bündnis für Arbeit“ (Alliance for Jobs)

In the “Bündnis für Arbeit”, involving employers, unions and the government, education/training has been an important issue. A “Qualifizierungsoffensive” (offensive for qualification) has been started. Furthermore, there have been agreements on certain target groups such as disadvantaged young people, migrants or women to further improve their integration into education and training. The “Bündnis” has also agreed on establishing occupations in the apprenticeship system which meet qualification needs of enterprises and the labour market but also take into consideration the abilities of disadvantaged young people - i.e. occupations with lower theoretical requirements.

2. “Dauerbeobachtung der betrieblichen Qualifikationsentwicklung” des Kuratoriums der Deutschen Wirtschaft für Berufsbildung, KWB (“Business Sector-Specific Information System for the Early Recognition” by the Board of Curators for Vocational Education in the German Business Sector)

Within the framework of an initiative by the German Federal Ministry of Education, the KWB implemented from 1998 to 2001 the project „Dauerbeobachtung der betrieblichen Qualifikationsentwicklung“. The aim is to recognise the changing qualification needs of companies in different sectors in time and comprehensively by

using the adviser and expert networks of the employers. Overall trends in qualification are recorded to be able to take them into account into vocational training policies. The results also present the need for action and solutions seen by the experts in initial and continuing vocational training at different levels of action (e.g. legal or individual measures). These efforts are continued in the framework of a follow-up project.

3. Social Dialogue Project initiated by BDA

In order to bring the discussions on a European framework agreement actively forward, BDA has proposed, together with the DGB and three trans-national partners (DA, IV, MEDEF), a project to the European Commission which was approved in October 2002. The aim of the project is to promote voluntary European frameworks, such as the framework of action for lifelong learning and to initiate a trans-national exchange of experiences. Two conferences are planned, the lifelong learning conference took place in Berlin on 24 February 2003. Conference Participants came from companies, employers' organisations and trade unions.

4. ZDH has created strategic alliances between the skilled crafts sector and the industrial sector for the mutual recognition of qualifications and prior training and for the provision of further training possibilities, irrespective of the prior career path. A qualified technician ("Meister") from the industrial sector (IHK) can pursue further training and a career in the skilled crafts sector (HwK), and a master craftsman/woman can pursue further training and a career in the industrial sector.

Actions taken at sectoral level and good practice examples

Metal and electrical industry

Initiative Think Ing as a joint programme sponsored all federal metal and electrical industry and employers federations to encourage students to take up a technical/engineering professions⁵.

Launch of a vocational training offensive by the Bavarian metal and electrical industry, which has the aim of improving the image of metal and electrical professions. The campaign includes public relations activities, information tools for young people and parents, school based actions and measures to support and encourage companies in offering apprenticeships⁶.

Guidance and information-project "Infomobil": Infomobil is a bus which contains workbenches and which tours to schools and offers practical insights into metal and electrical professions for young people⁷.

Chemical Industry

Chemistry education and training initiative promoted by employers' and industrial associations jointly with trade unions (BAVC, VCI, IGBCE). The aim of this project is to increase the attractiveness of chemical professions for young people and to improve the quality of teaching chemistry in schools⁸.

⁵ <http://www.think-ing.de>

⁶ <http://ausbildungsoffenive-bayern.de>

⁷ <http://www.me-infomobil.de>

⁸ <http://www.bildungsinitiative-chemie.de>

IT-sector

"Girls just do IT! – professional choice with perspectives" is a project initiated by "bfz Bildungsforschung". It aims at encouraging girls and young women to make the choice for learning an IT-profession⁹.

Continuing-Training-System for the IT-Sector: The Social Partners and the German Chamber Organisation developed the Continuing Training System for the IT-Sector in 2002. It is organised by field of activity and the qualification needs of IT enterprises. There are three levels of qualification: specialists (29 profiles), operational (4 profiles) and strategic (2 profiles) professionals.

The level of professionals is supposed to be equivalent to university degrees such as Bachelor or Master: the overall aim is to open existing transversal barriers between universities, Fachhochschulen and the German dual system.

Modular concept from ZDH

In order to implement lifelong learning at sectoral level, it is ZDH's declared goal to promote the lifelong learning concept throughout the skilled craft trades. ZDH is therefore constantly trying to provide the necessary qualifications for lifelong learning already in initial training (Erstausbildung) and to further link together and integrate initial and further training concepts so that learning processes are constantly carried on and not interrupted ('learning gaps'). ZDH has therefore drawn up a new modular system of further training regulations for a variety of skilled craft trades and occupations. Some of the modules can be acquired in parallel to the initial training.

This new modular concept has been stated as an example of best practice in the annual vocational training report of the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) 2003. The implementation of the new regulations has been recommended to all 55 regional "Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses" (Handwerkskammern). Other strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning concern a better focus on special target groups not used to learning (e.g. ageing workers). Regarding ageing workers, a lot of chambers provide training courses for this target group (eLearning, Job-Rotation, 45plus-Ingenieure).

BDS-Project

BDS launched a project aimed at implementing two of the Framework's priorities; the identification and anticipation of competence needs and the provision of information, support and guidance.

Approx. 50 companies (in the biotechnology and medical and maritime technology fields) were analysed. The analysis resulted in the identification of foreign language and intercultural cooperation competences as key competences for the further development of companies and for individual employability.

Tools were then developed and applied for an easier and less expensive analysis of the required foreign language and intercultural competences in the workplace.

⁹ <http://www.girls-just-do-it.de>

Actions taken at company level and good practice examples

Fraport AG: Q-Card¹⁰

- Personnel development tool for qualification during leisure time
- Q-Card: Budget for qualification and information

"3P" and "KOMPASS"¹¹

- personnel development tool
- aim is to get the employees to take the initiative and be more responsible in the matter of career, qualification and development
- 3P is for employees up to the age of 30 including trainees as well as executives.
- KOMPASS is for employees 40+
- Developed and carried out by a consulting firm (Hans Heusgen)
- Used by companies such as Siemens, Deutsche Bahn, Infineon, Rodenstock

Siemens AG¹²

"Networking-project" for female school leavers who have decided to study scientific/technical professions. It includes mentoring, traineeships and internships, student exchange programmes and the participation in an international network.

Deutsche Bahn AG¹³

- Consultancy for companies, trainees and instructors in terms of acquisition and extension of international qualifications
- Development of modern trans-national concepts of vocational training
- Realisation of trans-national professional training with other European railway and transport service undertakings
- Promotion of the learning of foreign languages within the framework of the current European year of languages
- Organisation of placements before, during and after vocational training

Bad & Heizung Kreuz GmbH

The German 'Handwerk' award is a national prize to companies that are very active in the field of initial and further training (on a voluntary basis). It is piloted by ZDH (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks), German member of UEAPME. The award winner for 2002 is the company bad&heizung Kreuz GmbH (gas and water installation).

The company especially promotes individual competence, providing guidance and counselling concerning further training options and using individual interviews to screen personal competence and abilities. Adult Education is as much a special training focus as the training of young people. Following the initial training as plumber or installer and heating fitter (Gas-Wasser-Installateur oder Heizungsbauer), every company employee who has already had initial training in the company is enrolled in two additional three-month-trainings (additional qualifications earned: Electrician and Customer Service Technician). Having obtained this training, there are more options to choose from afterwards (e.g. Solar-Technician), which are also promoted and supported by the company. The company also offers further training courses for office employees (clerks), e.g. accounting or computer courses.

¹⁰ http://www.bundesregierung.de/emagazine_entw,-440060/Initiativpreis-Aus-und-Weiterb.htm

¹¹ <http://www.heusgen.com/kompass/kompass.php3>

¹² <http://w4.siemens.de/knowledge-zone/de/aktionen/yolante/yolante.htm>

¹³ <http://www.db-bildung-international.de/eng/index.shtml>

All employees are briefed on a yearly basis about health and safety topics. Under a further training plan, every employee participates in 8-10 external trainings per year. The employees are exempted from work during the training period. Along with the external training plan, there are also internal (in-company) training plans containing, for example, briefings about organisational matters, customer service, quality management, etc. Every employee keeps a personal record / checklist of the further training courses attended.

Greece

Sources of information

- Trade Unions: GSEE (Geniki Synomospondia Ergaton Ellados), member of ETUC
- Employers: FGI (Federation of Greek Industry), member of UNICE

Actions taken at national level

The Greek social partners have discussed the framework of actions with their member organisations in seminars, conferences and internal committees at national and sectoral level. These discussions have focused particularly on implementation of the four priorities.

The social partners on their own initiative are operating a Joint Account of own funds deriving from employers' and employees' contributions for the promotion of vocational training for employees in enterprises and the unemployed. It is called L.A.E.K. and has already been operating for five years.

The social partners have worked jointly to lay the foundations for the new project called the "National System of Education and Training linked to Employment" (ESSEEKA). The project will be operational soon and aims to promote the **validation and recognition of competencies and qualifications**. The framework has also been implemented through joint experimentation under the EQUAL initiative.

A two-day international conference is planned by the social partners in May 2003, in order to raise awareness and exchange experiences, in particular regarding the **identification and anticipation of competencies and qualifications**.

Tripartite activities in 2002 included:

- Presentation of the Framework in two tripartite workshops on the certification of non-formal learning and lifelong learning respectively;
- Establishment of new subsidiaries of the Greek Manpower Organisation responsible for the promotion of vocational training. The organisation has offices throughout the country;
- Participation in the Certification Board of the Hellenic Registry of Certified Professionals, an independent body in which public organisations and private institutions validate competencies and qualifications.

With the aim of developing tailored **support and guidance** for employees in their career and learning choices, the FGI has taken initiatives to enhance cooperation with the National Centre of Vocational Guidance (EKEP).

As a follow-up to the priority **mobilise resources**, FGI has also submitted a proposal to the government on tax incentives for enterprises and individuals to encourage investment in training and competence development activities.

Actions taken at company level

FGI is in the process of collecting information on best practices in Greek companies for next year's report.

Good practice example

Aluminium de Grèce S.A.

This enterprise has introduced what it terms a "Continuing Progress System" – an ongoing process of active involvement of all the personnel in the systematic and efficient solving of the company's problems and meeting its needs in teamwork with the management. Working together in teams, they decide on matters concerning plan of action, goals, new staff, training needs, choice of tools and means, measuring results.

The results have been a significant development of the employees' competences in problem-solving, creativity and teamwork, communication, ability to learn how to learn and entrepreneurship and an improvement in the quality of the company's products and services, and therefore also competitiveness and profits.

Ireland

Sources of information

- Trade unions: ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation), member of UNICE; FAS (Authority for employment and training), member of CEEP

Introduction

There is universal agreement that investment in education and training has been one of the key contributors to Ireland's economic success of recent years. The challenge now facing Ireland is to build in this investment in education and training to extend its reach to all groups in society.

The issue of lifelong learning has become very topical in recent times. Where previously lifelong learning might have been seen as the province of professionals or knowledge workers the need to continuously adapt and upgrade knowledge, skills and competencies is now seen to apply across all jobs.

The need for lifelong learning has become all the more apparent given current demographic trends where, throughout Europe, there is a decline in new entrants to the labour force and a consequent need to rely on existing, and ageing workers. Ireland is now beginning to experience this trend with a significant decline in the numbers leaving second level education.

In addition to the economic imperative, there are a number of social concerns driving the lifelong learning agenda. Foremost amongst these is the interrelationship between employability and social inclusion.

Actions taken at national level

The Report on the Task Force on Life-long Learning was published in October 2002. This task force arose out of a commitment contained in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. IBEC and ICTU participated in this Task Force which was tasked with developing a Strategic Framework for life-long learning in Ireland by mapping existing life-long learning provision identifying gaps in that provision and proposing solutions to fill those gaps. IBEC and ICTU pursued a concerted approach in the allocation of ESF funds towards in company training (see Actions taken at company level below).

Irish policy on lifelong learning acknowledges that social and economic change will continue to have an increasing impact on skills and knowledge redundancy. The report set out initiatives and recommendations focused on promoting and enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher-level qualifications.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment supports the broad thrust of the report's recommendations and will seek to implement them, subject to the availability of resources. More particularly the Department will endeavour to take account of the report's recommendations through a review of current training commitments and programmes.

Through its labour market agencies the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Education and Science are currently implementing, within existing resources, a range of the recommended actions contained in the Report. The full implementation of the Report's recommendations will, however, give rise to resource implications and the issue of further resources will be considered, in the first instance by the Steering Committee and the National Adult Learning Council who have been given responsibility by the Government to review and report on the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

ICTU has also produced a study proposing specific measures for the promotion of lifelong learning.

In addition the social partners, including IBEC, FAS, ICTU etc are participating in the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, which is developing a framework for the accreditation and certification of training and lifelong learning. A particular emphasis is being placed on workplace learning in the development of this initiative.

Actions taken at sectoral level

Individual unions within ICTU and individual trade associations and sectors within IBEC have been very active in the training area and in a number of instances have established training networks through the Skillnets Initiative.

FAS will promote lifelong learning at sectoral and company level through a range of current and new programmes including *Excellence Through People*, *The Learning Award Scheme* and *The Competencies Development Programme*. Innovative and flexible new ways of delivering learning are being introduced in the form of on-line, elearning promoted and made available in the form of FAS Net College¹⁴.

Actions taken at company level

Training continues to command increasing attention and priority at company level. The IBEC 2002 Human Resources Management Survey indicates that the average spend on training, as a percentage of payroll is 3.15%, marginally up on the figure of 3.01% recorded in 2000. Problems still exist in ensuring that the low skilled, or those in most need of training, participate in training.

In 2002 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment initiated a new In-Company Training measure under the Employment and Human Resources Development-Operational Programme 2002-2006 to promote the training and up-skilling of people in employment. European Social Fund (ESF) co-financing will be available for initiatives, which support (a) new in-company training projects or (b)

¹⁴ www.fas-netcollege.com

the development of in-company training systems. The new measure, which will be implemented in 2003, will supplement existing activity in this area by FÁS and Enterprise Ireland. The measure will adopt a group-based approach and will include actions in which the social partners take the lead. By the closing date thirty-nine proposals had been received and these are in the process of being assessed.

Other initiatives including *Excellence Through People*, *The Competencies Development Programme* and *FAS Net College* aimed at raising awareness, setting higher standards and supporting lifelong learning are available at company level.

Good practice examples

Skillnets

Skillnets – an Enterprise-led Training Networks Programme has been very successful in encouraging ongoing training and development and life-long learning across many networks – at a Regional and Sectoral level. A new training Networks Programme was launched at the end of 2002.

Safety training programme in the construction industry

The Construction Industry Federation, FAS and the construction unions are jointly delivering a safety training programme for all employees in the construction industry. Successful completion of this programme will be mandatory for all construction employees from June 2003.

Excellence Through People

Excellence Through People - A 'cluster' approach, consisting of groups of small businesses, is used to assist in the achievement of the ETP accreditation. In this way smaller companies benefit from a co-operative effort to meet the standards set. In addition the 'cluster' approach provides access to additional supports and services not normally availed of by individual micro-to-small companies.

Italy

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro), CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori) and UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro), members of ETUC
- Employers: Confindustria (Confederation of Italian Industries), member of UNICE; Confapi, Confartigianato and CAN (National Confederation of Handicraft and SMEs), members of UEAPME

Introduction

Three main elements mark the context in which the framework of actions was applied in Italy in 2002:

- The Italian social partners (CGIL-CISL-UIL and Confindustria) relaunched the bilateral inter-professional social dialogue on education and training with signature of an agreement on principles on 23 January 2002.
On 20 May 2002, an agreement was concluded by the craft confederations CONFARTIGIANATO, CNA and CASARTIGIANI with the trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL on the basic principles for a reform of the social shock absorbers in craft industries, which makes provision for a link with specific training initiatives, in the framework of new arrangements for continuing training.
An inter-professional agreement on continuing training in SMEs was concluded on 12 July 2002 by the private industrial SME confederation Confapi with the trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL.
- A general tripartite agreement for competitiveness and social inclusion entitled "Patto per l'Italia" was concluded in mid-2002. The agreement was signed by the government and the social partners, with the exception of CGIL. The pact addresses the areas of employment and the labour market, as well as the area of training.
- The government recently adopted a law on the labour market and employment. A new draft law on education and vocational training systems is also in the process of adoption.

Actions taken at national level

The text of the framework of actions, translated into Italian jointly by the partners, was circulated to various national and local structures and has been placed on the websites of the promoting organisations.

It was presented and commented on at the main meetings and seminars organised by the different partners as well as – jointly – during initiatives organised by the Ministry of Labour and ISFOL.

Confindustria launched an initiative for monitoring of all the actions taken by its members on the priorities identified in the framework of actions, at both sectoral and territorial level.

In spring 2003 the social partners will also jointly organise a day for presentation and discussion of the bilateral actions carried out in the first year of the framework of actions. The European social partners will be invited to this event.

Regarding the resources allocated to vocational training, signature of the framework of actions stimulated the identification of inter-professional funds for continuing training, release of which is expected from 2003 onwards. Further to the various bilateral agreements signed in the past, these funds will serve for realisation of training plans at various levels: sectoral, territorial or company.

Further to an agreement between Confindustria and trade union organisations, a fund known as "Fondimpresa" was put in place on 10 October 2002, intended to finance promotion of continuing training for workers.

Regarding craft industries, an agreement was also concluded on 6 June 2001 by national craft organisations and trade unions on a fund known as "Fondo Artigianato Formazione", the first to be established in Italy, designed to finance continuing training plans at all levels for retraining of workers.

A fund known as "Fondo formazione PMI" was also created on 27 November 2002 further to an inter-professional agreement between Confapi and CGIL-CISL-UIL. This fund is designed to finance promotion of continuing training for SMEs with a two-pronged concern to foster corporate competitiveness and ensure worker employability.

On the point of mobilising resources for skills development and qualifications, it is important to add that a fund has also been set up by the three trade union confederations and national cooperative organisations. Two other funds have been created by the three trade union confederations and the national organisations for the commerce, tourism, banking/insurance and transport sectors.

Regarding continuing training for managers, Confindustria and Federmanager have signed an agreement for creation of fund known as "Fondo Dirigenti", within the Fondazione Taliercio.

Confapi and Federmanager have also signed a memorandum of understanding on creation of a fund known as "Fondo Dirigenti PMI" designed to finance continuous training of SME managers.

The social partners have also secured from the Ministry of Labour and ISFOL the resources needed to update a training plan for continuous training for the social partners.

The framework of actions was also used during the presentation of 2002 proposal calls for the European Leonardo da Vinci programme, at which some social partners promoted joint projects, relating in particular to the priorities **analysis of skills requirements** and **recognition of skills**.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The social partners and the Ministry of Labour have identified in ISFOL the subject which will have the aim of establishing a model for collating all the studies carried out since 1993 with a view to **identifying and anticipating skills needs** in various sectors. The projects seeking to **identify and anticipate skills needs** include:

- Analysis of Training Needs carried out by OBNF – National Bilateral Body for Training – created by Confindustria and the trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL;
- National Analysis of Training Needs in Craft Industries carried out by EBNA – National Bilateral Body for Craft Industries – created by the national craft organisations (Confartigianato, CNA, Casartigiani, CLAAI) and the trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL;
- National Analysis of Training Needs in Private SMEs carried out by ENFEA – National Bilateral Body for Training and Environment– created by Confapi and the trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL.

In 2003 the social partners will also continue to develop cooperation with the public authorities, in particular by providing the latter with specific information on long-term trends on the labour market.

With a view to identifying solutions and applying best practice, the project known as FUTURISME (the future of labour relations in SMEs), a project led by UEAPME (with the involvement of Confartigianato, CNA and Confapi), which anticipates and prepares craft businesses and SMEs for the new challenges of labour relations using new contents and types of training.

Some collective agreements concluded at sectoral level also relate to the themes promoted in the framework of actions:

Single contract in the electricity sector

A single national contract for electricity workers was concluded on 24 July 2001, which makes provision for training initiatives for new appointees (training on arrival), as well as for workers in the form of lifelong learning. Identification of needs and the modalities of training activities (notably with respect to working time and financing) are discussed in a specific annual meeting between the social partners at both national sectoral level and – where appropriate – company level.

Bilateral training body in the chemicals sector

On 12 February 2002, Federchimica and CGIL-CISL-UIL signed a collective agreement for workers in the chemicals sector which makes provision for innovative measures in the area of continuing vocational training. In this context, the social partners have decided to set up a bilateral training body (OBC), with the aim of supporting training at the level of companies in the sector, notably on the basis of joint plans for skills development. Other initiatives are envisaged at both local and national level.

National bilateral body in the integrated services/multi-services and cleaning services sector

On 5 February 2003, the national organisations of cleaning businesses and integrated services/multi-services (FISE, Unionservizi/Confapi, LegaCoop-Ancst,

Confcooperative-Federlavoro, Agci-Ancosel) signed an agreement with the trade unions (Filcams-CGIL, Fisascat-CISL, Uiltrasporti-UIL) which makes provision for measures in the areas of employment, labour market and training and vocational qualifications. In this context, the social partners have envisaged setting up a national bilateral body in the integrated services/multi-services and cleaning services sector, with the aim of supporting training and vocational qualifications at the level of companies in the sector, analysis of skills needs and skills recognition for workers in the sector. Other initiatives are envisaged at both local and national level.

Good practice examples

Chemicals sector: worker co-investment in continuing training

Worker co-investment has been realised on the basis of voluntary and partial use of paid hours accumulated in individual time accounts in order to participate in continuing training courses.

This good practice, started as an experiment in 2001, has been strengthened by the 12 February 2002 collective agreement, which also makes provision for flexible use of working time.

Fondazione Taliercio

A joint project between Confindustria and IMA – Federmanager (management trade union) to promote a foundation (Fondazione Taliercio) for development of a manager training system in Italy, together with dissemination of innovative ideas and good practices in this area. Through this foundation, the social partners have developed a questionnaire to enable managers and companies to use an online system for evaluating their skills. The second phase of this project will consist in disseminating the results for the benefit of all European managers.

Luxemburg

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CGT-L (Confédération Générale du Travail de Luxembourg) and LGGB (Lëtzebuerger Chrëschtliche Gewerkschafts-Bond), members of ETUC
- Employers: FEDIL (Federation of Luxembourg's Industrialists), member of UNICE

Introduction

Cooperation between public authorities and social partners with a view to adapting the structures relating to continuing vocational training and developing joint actions has a long tradition in Luxembourg. It takes concrete form in a tripartite advisory committee on vocational training put in place to advise the government. Each year this committee's opinions form the basis for the part of the national action plan for employment devoted to vocational training.

Actions taken at national level

Aware of the need to promote continuing vocational training and wishing not only to create a legal, regulatory and bargaining framework favourable to individual worker access to such training but also to encourage workers themselves to invest in such training, in 2002 the social partners negotiated an inter-professional agreement in order to make the appropriate adjustments - for both companies and workers - to the judicial institutions from which workers wishing to take such training courses can seek redress and thereby to facilitate access to training.

This inter-professional agreement, which is set to be signed in early 2003, addresses the following means for facilitating the organisation of work: personal adjustment of working hours in the framework of flexitime, unpaid leave, individual training leave, part-time work and a system for time credits.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The construction and public works sector has created a sectoral training institute as provided for in the sectoral collective agreement. The training measures offered by this sector will contribute actively and specifically to adaptation of the skills and qualifications of workers in the sector to today's requirements.

This new approach to continuing vocational training in the construction and public works sector will in the medium term make it possible to offer genuine career prospects to each worker and to increase the general level of worker qualification in the sector. In addition, sectoral recognition of qualifications should generate better mobility in the sector and facilitate finding a new job when the old one is lost.

Furthermore, an association whose object is to organise sectoral vocational training, managed and financed by the social partners, has been created in the hospital sector.

The Netherlands

Sources of information

- Trade unions: FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging) and CNV (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond), members of ETUC
- Employers: VNO-NCW (Confederation of employers and industries), member of UNICE; MKB (Royal Dutch Association of SMEs), member of UEAPME

Introduction

Discussions between social partners to follow-up the framework of actions take mainly place in the framework of the "Foundation of labour" (bipartite organisation of social partners in the Netherlands).

Actions taken at national level

The Foundation of Labour took the initiative to investigate the **investment** by social partners in continuing training as well as in support for initial training. The report was published in October 2002. The investigation was focussed not only on quantitative data, but also on new elements at sector or company level that reinforce lifelong learning. Examples: increased interest in instruments that appeal to individual responsibility (individual development budget); scan/monitoring of developments in the sector that call for new competences, development of assessment of prior learning, effort in career consultancy. For companies with ten employees or more, the average amount spent on training is 2.7% of the wage bill.

The framework has been translated and was distributed among the membership of confederations of employers and unions in May 2002. FNV, the Dutch member of ETUC, also reported discussions on the framework of actions within its internal VET experts and policy-makers.

Priorities of the framework of actions and urgency of action were also underlined by FNV when making recommendations to the Social and Economic Council (Document called "the new learning", 6/2002) and when making a proposal for a new system of qualifications based on competences for the Netherlands (Colo, 7/2002).

Good practice examples

Dupont Nederland

Dupont Nederland offers its employees the Work/Life programme. This programme helps employees to balance their work commitments and private lives. This programme is part of an approach by the company to give employees more responsibility to arrange their own work. Arrangements are made within the team in which the employee works. The concept of teamwork implies more responsibility for each individual participant for attaining the required level of competences. The

company therefore offers many facilities to develop the career of individual employees, such training on the job and assessment of prior learning.

Brand Bier

Brand Bier (part of Heineken) has a training policy, which helps employees to realise the targets of the company more easily and also to take more responsibility for their own career. Each employee works on the development of competences according to his own personal development plan. This plan is updated each year in a review and planning dialogue of the employee and his or her boss. In the coming years a system of assessment of prior learning will be implemented.

Dutch Painters and Decorators Association (Fosag)

The SME Association of Painters and Decorators has developed a system for recognition and validation of prior learning. A large number of employees in this sector are working without a starting qualification. Employees without a starting qualification who want to participate in this project are being assessed. After the assessment each person knows which modules he or she needs to follow. After this training course (theory as well as practice) they need to take an exam. A large number of unqualified employees have successfully followed this course and are now qualified employees. The projects are funded by the European Social Fund.

Dutch Metal SME Association

This sector has developed a so-called knowledge-maintenance-contract with educational institutions. Institutions for higher education give further training to employees who have graduated from secondary vocational education and who have been working for several years in a company. After an assessment (recognition of prior learning/competences) the institution tells the employees which part of the course they need to follow in order to gain a diploma for higher education. The Metal Association has also installed special employability-advisers, who give special advice to entrepreneurs in the metal sector on what role vocational education can play in providing well-qualified personnel, and which training courses they need to organise for the workforce.

Portugal

Sources of information

- Trade unions: UGT-P (General Workers Union) and CGTP-IN (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers-National Inter Trade Union), members of ETUC
- Employers: CIP (Confederation of Portuguese Industry), member of UNICE

Introduction

The Portuguese Parliament is now discussing a proposal for a Labour Code, which was previously the subject of negotiations between the Government and the Portuguese Social Partners over a period of about six months.

This proposal includes some provisions which already exist in the current law and were previously agreed by the Social Partners and the Government in the Employment and Vocational Training Agreement signed in February 2001, such as the provision regarding vocational training for 16-18 year-olds. It also includes some new provisions, for instance the provision that entitles workers to have a minimum of twenty hours of certificate training a year in 2003 and thirty-five hours a year in 2006.

However, this tripartite Agreement includes a number of important provisions about lifelong learning, which have not yet been implemented.

A general law on vocational training must be discussed from next March. Naturally, Social Partners must play an active role in discussions on this new law. We think that this law may introduce a very significant change in the Portuguese Vocational Training System, giving the Social Partners an opportunity to develop and sustain common strategies on these subjects.

Social Partners have organised many meetings with their member associations to prepare the negotiations on the new vocational training law.

Actions taken at national level

Portuguese Social Partners have stressed the interest and impact of the European framework of actions on their national debates on the Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications.

Social Partners have translated and disseminated the text that has been discussed in several meetings with their members regarding the challenges of the Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning in Portugal.

Competences and qualifications development has been taken into account in collective agreements.

At sectoral level the Social Partners have already adopted some of the important measures considered in the Tripartite Agreement.

CIP has also organised several meetings with its member associations to discuss the structure and function of the vocational training centres, that are administrated directly both by the state and employer organisations, in order to make vocational training more satisfactory to the real needs of companies.

Actions taken at sectoral and company level

Trade Union Confederations have already included some of these subjects in their Annual Strategic Orientations for Collective Bargaining in the years 2002 and 2003, and have promoted concrete actions directed at workers to stress the role of vocational training, competences and qualifications.

CIP has launched a certain number of actions in order to promote among companies their awareness for the importance of lifelong development of competences and qualifications.

Spain

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CC.OO.(Trade Union Confederation of Workers Commissions); UGT (General Union of Workers), members of ETUC
- Employers: CEOE (Confederation of Spanish employers), member of UNICE; CEPYME (Confederation of Spanish SMEs), member of UEAPME

Introduction

Three major events define the Spanish national context for the follow-up of the framework of actions in 2002:

- the new act on qualifications and vocational education and training, which was adopted in June 2002 and about which social partners are positive, in particular because it sets up a comprehensive framework for validation and recognition of qualifications, taking into account both formal and informal learning.
- tripartite agreements on continuous training are being re-examined, giving priority to "mobilising resources";
- national framework agreement on collective bargaining, which served as a reference for negotiators of collective agreements in 2002, renewed for 2003, and which includes training issues.

Actions taken at national level

Spanish trade unions and employer organisations informed their member organisations about the framework of actions. The fact that priority has been given to European issues in the first semester 2002 due to the Spanish presidency of the Union (when the framework of actions was adopted) boosted the dissemination of the framework of actions.

The Spanish translation of the framework of actions, agreed by social partners, has been publicised on the website of the trade unions and employer organisations. The framework of actions has also been discussed among people responsible for training policies within the member organisations, in internal committees and commissions of the social partners organisations as well as in different seminars and conferences, with the participation of all social partners. Three of them were attended by representatives of ETUC and UNICE:

- In-depth discussion on the four priorities of the framework of actions was organised by ETUC together with CC.OO. and UGT in Valencia a few days before the formal adoption of the framework, with the participation of several national and European representatives of the social partners.
- Course at Madrid Complutense University "Making a European area of lifelong learning", El Escorial July 2002

- European Seminar on Vocational Qualifications and lifelong learning, Ministry of Education, Madrid December 2002

CEOE took different dissemination actions in 2002. It was sent to all CEOE Federations (more than 200 sectoral and regional employer federations) and discussed in CEOE's Commissions and working groups such as the Industrial Relations Commission and the Education Commission.

Confederación de Cuadros' steering committee has formally adopted the decision to promote the framework among managerial staff at all levels where represented.

The Framework of Actions has also been included in a book called "Social dialogue and concertation on vocational training in Spain" aimed at Latin-American social partners, which was published by the International Labour Office (ILO) in 2002.

Social partners have also sent the framework of actions to relevant public bodies of the Spanish government in the field of Vocational Education and Training (National Qualifications Institute, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and National Employment Institute). It has been also presented in relevant Tripartite and Advisory Bodies.

Following the 2002 national framework agreement on collective bargaining, Spanish national social partners in January approved a new agreement, which sets guidelines and is a reference for collective agreement negotiators in 2003. It includes an explicit reference to the framework of actions and its priorities in the context of Spanish collective bargaining.

The framework of actions is also a reference in work related to the development of the new act on qualifications, which touches upon the four priorities identified in the framework of actions.

Regarding the re-examination of National Agreements on Continuous Training, which establish the system for financial support of training actions, the role of social partners is being analysed.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The framework of actions has been disseminated to all sectoral employer federations. They are taking the document into account in their current work at sectoral level in sectors such as the Metal Industry or the Chemical Industry.

In the metal sector, sector federations of CC.OO and UGT signed an agreement with the employer federation CONFEMETAL on the establishment of a joint foundation with the aim of cooperating in the study and analysis of vocational profiles in the relevant sector and sub-sectors.

Agreements have also been finalised at sectoral level concerning the identification of vocational profiles. The future launch of the national system for qualifications should give rise to even wider joint cooperation between social partners in this field.

Actions taken at company level

CEOE has disseminated the framework of actions among human resources managers and directors of training departments at company level, mainly through articles in professional magazines. Articles have been published in the magazine of the Spanish Association of Human Resources Managers AEDIPE (more than 4,000 copies) and the magazine "Company Staff" (more the 3,000 copies).

CEOE also organised a seminar on competences management at company level. Good practices in Spanish companies were analysed in the framework of the European Observatory for Competences Management project (see MEDEF project in the French fiche).

Good practice example

Caja Madrid

Caja Madrid is one of the country's four major financial groups. Caja Madrid has been developing a **competence-based management system**, steering the organisation in a people-oriented direction, which has the Trade Unions' support (among them CCOO, UGT and C. de Cuadros). The system is based on a dictionary of competences, linked to the strategic goals of the company, which make it possible to define professional profiles and to assess the performances of employees. The enterprise has devised a universal system to assess the approx. 11,000 employees individually. The assessment includes the results of the company, the team, personal competence performance, and also the potential for professional growth and training requirements. The assessment system is linked to other policies such as the professional development system, remuneration or training. The competences approach sets a clear and comprehensive framework for all human resources policies of the company.

Sweden

Sources of information

- Trade Unions: LO (Swedish Trade Union Confederation), TCO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees) and SACO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations), members of ETUC
- Employers: Swedish Enterprise (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise), member of UNICE; Företagarna (Federation of Private Enterprises), member of UEAPME; SFCC (Swedish Federation of County Councils), SALA (Swedish Association of Local Authorities), the national section of CEEP in Sweden

Introduction

Development of competencies and qualifications at the work places is regarded as one of today's strategic issues in Sweden. To a large extent learning takes place within the everyday workplace but the base for learning is established at an earlier stage. Therefore cooperation with schools, universities and other educational centres is crucial. Discussions between employers and employees are important to support competence analyses and competence planning. Thus, in Sweden both employer organisations and trade unions stress the added value of the framework of actions to their often advanced experiences in development of competences. On the Swedish labour market all levels are involved in the discussion of competencies and qualification.

Actions taken at national level

The Swedish trade unions presented their interest in the framework at a public conference in Stockholm when it was launched at the European level in Barcelona. Information and their translation of the framework were circulated among their affiliates as well as on their websites and in particular on a new website¹⁵. An LO project later organised a seminar in which both the local and national level as well as employer associations took part.

Swedish Enterprise took several actions to disseminate and explain the framework of actions to its members. A first step was the translation of the text into Swedish, a second the briefing of member organisations on the content and rationale of the text. The framework of actions was also discussed in Swedish Enterprise's expert group on education and training.

Företagarna has recently presented a report in which it **identifies which competences and qualifications** small companies will require in the next three years. Vocational education is crucial to small companies and post-secondary and tertiary vocational education must be of a greater scope in order to meet the demand. One important conclusion is that universities ought to allow more students to apply on the basis of competencies and knowledge learned in the workplace

¹⁵ www.lo.se/loeuropa

rather than on the basis of formal qualifications, since much of the learning in small companies is on-the-job training.

CEEP's Swedish members¹⁶ have informed about and discussed the framework of actions, and the dialogue about lifelong development of competencies and qualifications is constantly ongoing in different settings at all levels: conferences, forums and networks.

SFCC and SALA have published reports with prognoses about **identification and anticipation of recruitment, competence and qualification needs**. Jointly with the trade unions, SFCC has published a magazine with good examples of changes at different local workplaces regarding organisation of work, including development of the employees' competence and qualifications.

The social partners have engaged in the discussion on how to design new systems for **validation of formal and non-formal competencies**. They have also engaged in regional test-projects on validation of competencies.

Actions taken at sectoral level

At sectoral level, collective agreements containing provisions for competence development have been a matter for discussion over a long period between the bargaining partners. Collective agreements on development of competencies cover a majority of the trades and categories of employees. They are normally revised regularly in connection with the pay rounds. They comprise guidelines for the enterprise level regarding objectives, methods (responsibility, cooperation, training elements), target groups and, in some sectors, also funding. They are designed in order to provide a great deal of room for further cooperation at enterprise level.

In many sectors joint bodies have been set up for this specific purpose and are also dealing with lobbying, organising conferences on development of competencies with regard to their sector. A well-known example is the joint activity among the many partners within the industry/manufacturing sector based on an agreement on cooperation within that sector.

Actions taken at local and regional level

The introduction of new technology and new equipment is usually an incentive for training of employees. Apart from on-the-job-training, regular courses are given in order to raise and broaden employees' competences. Furthermore it is fairly usual for companies to cooperate on a regular basis with schools, universities, allowing students several possibilities to work with "real" problems and in companies, and giving employees possibilities to gain new learning by participating in problem-solving together with students. On similar grounds some companies have engaged in the new education "Advanced Vocational Education" (KY). Between the county councils/regions and universities a cooperation project regarding staff has emerged, allowing nurses/doctors and teachers to combine work and research in both places.

¹⁶ SFCC (Swedish Federation of County Councils), SALA (Swedish Association of Local Authorities), KFS (Swedish Association of Local Employers), Swedish Agency for Government Employers, Fastigo and Pacta

In Sweden there are numerous examples of close cooperation between social partners, companies and educational establishments, as well as between different sectors and educational establishments, focused on development of new training methods. The goal is to satisfy companies' and individuals' need for competence development. In these, ICT is frequently used as a tool to carry out workplace-related competence development.

Guidance regarding career planning exists and is being developed further. The social partners contribute to this work.

Good practice example

The Future of Learning – a visionary project

In only a few years the knowledge-based society has brought about great changes, changes that demand new skills and immediate application. The individual has to learn new skills, refresh old skills and keep learning throughout life. The need for lifelong learning raises new issues: what are you supposed to learn – and how? What do we want the future of learning to look like? This is what the project The Future of Learning – started by The Knowledge Foundation - aims to answer.

In the first part of the project, The Visionaries, one hundred persons met four times during two days for workshops. Their task was to create images of how learning can take place in the future. In the projects' second part, The Dialogue with the Future, people all around Sweden are to be involved in the dialogue at workplaces, in schools, at seminars. The social partners will arrange dialogues in their organisations. A national conference is being planned as well as a debate about learning in media. The Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company will produce a series of radio and TV programmes. An opinion poll is to be carried out and repeated, in order to see how attitudes towards learning society have changed.

The Knowledge Foundation promotes a broad use of ICT in society and supports research at Sweden's university colleges and new universities. They also promote the exchange of knowledge between universities, other institutes of higher education, industrial research institutes and the business community. By bringing together players from different sectors – among them the social partners - the Knowledge Foundation pursues its goal of creating new ideas for Sweden's competitiveness.

United Kingdom

Sources of information

- Trade unions: TUC (Trade Union Congress), member of ETUC
- Employers: CBI (Confederation of British Industry) member of UNICE; FPB (Forum of Private Business), member of UEAPME; the UK section of CEEP

Introduction

2002 was a disappointing year for the UK economy. Overall growth remained low despite strong consumer spending and low inflation. Against this background, the social partners' focus was on productivity. Their follow-up work on the framework of actions builds on the joint Productivity Initiative by the CBI and its trades union counterpart the TUC. This initiative identified three priorities for raising skill levels, i.e.

- tackling the basic skills problems of individuals
- increasing the proportion of the adult workforce qualified to level 2
- increasing take-up of Investors in People by small organisations.

Actions taken at national level

All four priorities in the framework are evident in the social partners' action on skills in 2002. They lobbied successfully for **resources** to help many more small organisations achieve the Investors in People Standard (IiP). This should help SMEs to identify their skill needs and develop staff competence. A package of support to help firms with less than 50 employees work with the Standard will be launched in February 2003.

The social partners jointly launched a document of case studies to raise awareness of the impact of low literacy and numeracy in the workforce and highlight ways of tackling this problem effectively. They are disseminating this good practice widely. They are also working with government to set up a Champions Group of high profile employers and trades union leaders to campaign on **basic skills** in the workforce.

The CBI and the TUC have contributed to discussions with government on Individual Learning Accounts. The aim is to amend and re-launch ILAs to encourage more individuals, especially non-traditional learners, to improve their skills.

The social partners are contributing to discussions with the Government on the effectiveness of a range of skills pilots. These are testing different approaches to improving adult literacy and numeracy; measures designed to increase the take-up of training among workers who do not have a level 2 qualification; and changes to the funding of regional skills development.

FPB also reported dissemination activities within different bodies:

- the Learning and Skills Councils, with whom they are planning a seminar within the UEAPME's Futurisme project in Liverpool in April 2003

- the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative, which endorses training programmes and standards of best practice for small businesses and for those who support them
- the Small Business Service, which supports SMEs locally through the Business Link Network.

Actions taken at sectoral level

FPB was active in the development of the structural change of National Training Organisations (NTOs) into the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). Each SSC agrees sector priorities and targets with its employers and partners in order to reduce skill gaps and shortages, improve productivity, enhance equal opportunities and improve the supply side.

There is much activity in the public sector. For example, the Department of Health is using the Skills Escalator programme to support lifelong learning. The social partners agreed a Knowledge and Skills framework, linked to annual development reviews and personal development plans. Resources include £50 million for CPD and £70 million for NHS Learning Accounts, NVQs and adult literacy, numeracy and language skills. The Department has also set up the National Health Service University to provide both virtual and face-to-face training for all NHS employees.

In local government, a new national agreement on employee training and development is being negotiated, on the basis of meeting both employer and employee needs. It will include best practice guidance, planning and evaluation to promote access to development opportunities, especially for part-time staff, and a clear role for trades unions in supporting lifelong learning.

Actions taken at company level

A range of data for 2002 indicates the strength of commitment within many UK companies to the lifelong development of competence – but there are no grounds for complacency. The number of firms recognised as Investors in People continued to rise and the standard now covers almost 40% of the workforce. In the 12 months up to June 2002, 365,377 individuals were awarded National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

There are now over 4,000 accredited union learning representatives and legislative change in 2003 will provide these union reps with a statutory basis (it is forecast that there will be around 22,000 of them by 2010). The role of unions in promoting learning in the workplace has also been assisted by the Government's "Union Learning Fund" which is now in its fifth year, with a total of £24 million invested in over 300 union-led projects since it began.

On behalf of small businesses FPB has researched the role of 'informal' learning, and is working in partnership to achieve recognition of skills acquired through this process.

Good practice examples

Nissan

Nissan has enabled 3000 of its operatives to gain a level 2 NVQ in manufacturing by working closely with the awarding body for the qualification to match accreditation to their competence requirements. They developed a master portfolio which meant that employees could work towards a qualification without having to leave the production line for long periods. This improved motivation amongst employees who were pleased to have their skills recognised.

Jaguar Cars

Jaguar Cars introduced lean manufacturing systems when upgrading production at the Halewood plant for the new Jaguar model. Systems were focused on a high quality product, requiring a culture change in the workplace. Jaguar organised a customised programme of literacy, numeracy and IT for 880 employees at Knowsley Community College. TUC learning services and Halewood shop stewards supported the programme. Most employees studied for ten days and those needing extra support also received one-to-one tuition. The training enabled 88% of the staff to achieve two units towards an NVQ. Employees became more confident, better communicators and teamworkers, with many starting further learning. The plant has since achieved the highest rating for lean manufacturing within the Ford group.

London Underground

In 1999, London Underground started "The Learning Zone" a basic skills programme to help staff update their basic skills in the context of a more customer focused, IT driven work environment. Funding initially came from the employer and subsequently from the London Development Agency. Marketing for the programme was carried out in co-operation with the trade union and courses are flexible to allow employees to arrange learning around shift patterns and family commitments. The programme has been evaluated and is considered to be highly successful.

The European level

Introduction

The framework of actions was signed in March 2002 by the European social partners at inter-professional level.

Member organisations of UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC decided to promote the framework of actions in the Member States at all the appropriate levels, taking account of national practices, and to disseminate this document to all interested players at European and national level. Subsequently, follow-up actions have been taken primarily in the Member States.

However, the framework of actions has also proved to be a reference instrument for social partners active at European sectoral level. Some sectors have mentioned the framework of actions in their activities and negotiations in the field of education and training. This report gives some examples.

Actions taken at European cross-industry level

The European social partners disseminated actively the framework of actions in 2002, and notably:

- by making the framework of actions known to the public through different means including Internet;
- by organising meetings with national and European sectoral social partners to disseminate the framework of actions and explain its rationale;
- by promoting the approach taken in the framework of actions vis-à-vis public authorities through participation in a range of conferences and seminars on European policy in the field of education and training;
- by promoting the approach taken in the framework of actions in discussions with key players in candidate countries such as officials of the ILO, institutes of education, business associations, etc.;
- by supporting projects organised by their members to promote the framework, notably in the Leonardo da Vinci programme;

Among more specific projects, the following examples can be given:

- UNICE will create a special page on its website to make actions taken by its members to promote competence development more visible and accessible. In the framework of a project called "Objective competences", eleven business confederations members of UNICE studied and exchanged good practices on competence development at company level¹⁷;
- ETUC will create a web page on the framework of actions;
- CEEP national sections have installed a correspondent network at company level;

¹⁷ More information on the project and all reports can be found under <http://objectif-competences.medef.fr/300>

- UEAPME and ETUC are conducting a joint pilot project on the social acquis and SMEs in the candidate countries, which includes discussions on the framework of actions;
- Since February 2002, UEAPME is organising a project called PROTEIN to identify new competences produced in informal training in SMEs and craft enterprises and to produce new criteria and practice for identifying and validating them. This project involves ETUC and other stakeholders from the Member States as well as the candidate countries. The FUTURISME II (2001-2003) project, organised by UEAPME, combines focus groups and seminars on themes such as "Financing of continuous training: difficulties of access for SMEs" and "Fitting the formal training offer to the needs of SMEs".

Actions taken at European sectoral level

Banks

In June 2001, the European social partners in the banking sector (FBE, GECE, GEBC and UNI-EUROPA) decided to include lifelong learning in their work programme for 2002. Further to a study carried out by the joint working group, which collated information submitted by affiliates in eighteen countries, a joint statement on the subject was approved in early December 2002.

The statement, which makes specific reference to the European framework of actions, considers four questions identified by the working group:

- definition of various levels of vocational skills;
- recognition and validation of competences ;
- information and guidance;
- employment and vocational retraining.

Some priorities have also been defined, notably:

- on development of qualifications: priority is given to young people, workers who do not have the skills required for new working methods and management by each employee of his career and employability;
- recognition and validation of competences: each employee must be encouraged to develop his competences throughout his working life and each company must be encouraged to ensure better identification and management of competences. Cases of good practice are described to illustrate this priority;
- information and guidance: companies, employees and social partners must share rights and responsibilities regarding each employee's competence development and training;
- employment and vocational retraining: the possibilities for continuing competence development must be widened to include all employees, regardless of their position or contractual status.

The joint statement in the banking sector clearly entails implementation of the recommendations at both sectoral and company level.

Textiles-clothing / footwear / leather

The social partners in these three sectors have agreed to place the theme of competence development and qualifications on the work agenda of their European sectoral committees for the year 2003.

At a meeting in December 2002 the social partners in the leather-tanneries sector (COTANCE and FSE-THC) agreed to hold specific discussions on implementation of the framework of actions.

Engineering, Metal and Technology-based Industries

The social partners in this sector (FEM and WEM) have been engaged for several months in an informal dialogue on the theme of lifelong learning.

A joint document was recently published on skills needs in the engineering, metal and technology-based industries and a joint seminar is envisaged in the course of this year in order to examine the question in more detail.

The joint position explores themes which overlap in part with the priorities identified in the framework of actions and shed a specific light on the engineering, metal and technology-based industries:

- image of the sector;
- motivation for apprenticeship;
- anticipation of competence needs;
- transparency of qualifications;
- new training methods and use of new technologies;
- responsibility for the financing of training.

Agriculture

On 5 December 2002 the social partners in the agricultural sector (GEOPA-COPA and EFFAT) signed a European agreement on vocational training in that sector.

In this agreement, the social partners propose that, under arrangements to be determined in each Member State,

- employed or unemployed agricultural workers should have the possibility to draw up a "competence inventory". The purpose of this inventory should be to analyse their motivations and identify their competences with a view to determining their possibilities for vocational development and constructing a training plan;
- qualifications acquired in the exercise of a professional agricultural activity should be eligible for validation by a competent authority with a view to obtaining a diploma or gaining access to a training course;
- any official certificate relating to initial or continuing vocational training for agricultural work issued in a Member State together with professional references describing the content of the diploma or certificate should be registered in a "national reference centre" which can be consulted by any employer and any worker as well as by any candidate for training and any trainer.

The national social partners in the agricultural sector are charged with implementation of this agreement in cooperation with the competent authorities in the Member States. A monitoring commission set up within the sectoral social dialogue committee will assist the national social partners and will draw up an evaluation of implementation of the agreement.

Other activities have been marked notably in the catering, sugar and electricity European sectors.

Annex I – List of contact persons

You will find below the list of the members of the social dialogue ad hoc group on education and training.

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Annex II

European Trade Union Confederation*
Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe –
UNICE/UEAPME**
European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and
of Enterprises of General Economic Interest

14 March 2002

« FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS FOR THE LIFELONG DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS »

I./ CHALLENGES

1. The 21st century is beginning with changes, the extent of which it is difficult to assess at present for enterprises and employees, as well as for society as a whole.
2. New information and communication technologies represent one factor in speeding up trade flows. Markets globalise and simultaneously segment in order to retain increasingly mobile customers. Businesses will have to adapt their structures more and more quickly in order to remain competitive. The intensive use of team-work, flattening of hierarchies, devolved responsibilities, as well as greater multi-tasking are leading to the growth of learning organisations. This contrasts with the Taylorist work organisations, which still operate in a number of enterprises in Europe. Public service enterprises are confronted with the same challenges.
3. The ability of organisations to identify key competencies, to mobilise them quickly, to recognise them and to encourage their development for all employees, represents the basis for new competitive strategies. This allows enterprises to keep in line with customer expectations and employees to improve their employability and career prospects.
4. In the context of technological developments and of diversification of work relations and organisations, employees are confronted with greater mobility, internal and external to the enterprise, geographical and occupational, and to the need to maintain and improve competencies and qualifications levels.
5. Against this background of rapid pace of change, the social partners at European level affirm the development of competencies and the acquisition of qualifications as major challenges of lifelong learning.
6. The ageing population and the social expectations, which have resulted from higher levels of education of younger generations require a new way of approaching

* The ETUC delegation includes representatives of the Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee

** UEAPME - European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

learning systems, ensuring that there are opportunities for all age groups – both women and men, skilled and unskilled – if significant increases in competencies and qualifications levels are to be achieved. Lifelong learning contributes to the development of an inclusive society and the promotion of equal opportunities.

II./ SOCIAL PARTNERS' APPROACH

7. Whilst lifelong learning encompasses all learning activity undertaken throughout life, the focus of this initiative by the European social partners is to:

- make an effective and specific contribution to the realisation of lifelong learning in the context of the strategic objectives established at the European Councils of Lisbon and Feira on employment, social cohesion and competitiveness;
- give impetus so that the development of competencies and the acquisition of qualifications are perceived as a shared interest by both enterprises and employees in each Member State;
- affirm the joint responsibility of social partners at all levels with regard to competencies development and promote their cooperation;
- acknowledge the broader dimension of the challenge, which calls for a close concertation with public authorities as well as education and training institutions at all levels.

8. In addition to social dialogue, the success of this initiative depends on:

- each enterprise making the development of its employees' competencies crucial for its success;
- each employee making her/his own competencies development crucial for the management of her/his working life;
- the State and local communities fostering learning opportunities in the interest of competitiveness and social cohesion.

9. The social partners call for the creation, within the institutional framework of each Member State, of conditions, which will further encourage the concerted development of competencies and qualifications, in addition to existing unilateral approaches to learning.

10. The lifelong development of competencies depends on the existence of a solid foundation¹⁸, with which individuals are equipped during their initial education.

11. This solid foundation should be jointly defined and updated by the national education systems and the social partners. It is necessary to reflect further on the subject, in order to specify the content and the conditions needed for each young

¹⁸ The following elements have been identified as forming part of the solid foundation: reading, writing, numeracy and at least a second language, problem-solving ability, creativity and teamwork, computing skills, ability to communicate, including in a multi-cultural context, and the ability to learn how to learn, etc.

person to obtain this solid foundation. The social partners must be associated with this reflection.

III./ DEFINITIONS

12. For the purpose of this initiative,

- “Competencies” are the knowledge, skills and know-how applied and mastered in a given work situation;
- “Qualifications” are a formal expression of the vocational or professional abilities of the employee. They are recognised at the national or sectoral level.

IV./ FOUR PRIORITIES

13. The social partners assert the principle of shared responsibility of players with regard to four priorities and call for the intensification of dialogue and partnership at the appropriate levels. The social partners believe that the lifelong development of competencies depends on the implementation of the following four priorities:

- identification and anticipation of competencies and qualifications needs;
- recognition and validation of competencies and qualifications;
- information, support and guidance;
- resources.

1. IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCIES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

14. Identifying competencies and qualifications needs and anticipating their development represents a complex task given the numerous socio-economic factors, which must be taken into consideration, but it is imperative nevertheless. The social partners regard this identification and anticipation as taking place at two levels:

The enterprise level:

15. Identification of competencies at enterprise level must become a main axis of human resources policies covering all employees in enterprises and an issue for in-depth social dialogue:

- responsibility lies at the highest managerial level for deciding the overall competencies development plan necessary for the success of a company’s business strategy;
- defining and answering competencies needs require the joint involvement of employers and employees;
- individual competencies development plans jointly elaborated by the employer and the employee are important to foster joint efforts to develop the employee’s competencies;

- developing a learning environment is also important for success; professionals and managers play a crucial role in this respect.

The national and/or sectoral level:

16. The collective analysis of competencies needs and of the development of vocational or professional qualifications is a priority in relation to what is at stake for:

- young people in the context of their career guidance and integration into working life;
- employees in the management of their careers and their capacity to remain in employment;
- job-seekers, in view of the developments on the labour market;
- companies, in terms of their competitiveness.

17. In order to put this identification and anticipation into practice, the European social partners consider it necessary to:

- work in partnerships with education and training providers at all levels;
- develop networks to collect information and exchange experiences, including by making effective use of existing European instruments such as the European monitoring centre for change or Cedefop.

2. RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

18. The European social partners regard the recognition and validation of competencies as essential, in order that:

- each employee is aware of and encouraged to develop her/his competencies in the course of her/his occupational life;
- each enterprise has the tools to better identify and manage the competencies in the company.

19. The social partners consider it necessary to deepen dialogue with the aim of improving transparency and transferability, both for the employee and for the enterprise, in order to facilitate geographical and occupational mobility and to increase the efficiency of labour markets:

- by promoting the development of means of recognition and validation of competencies;
- by providing a system for transferable qualifications;
- by identifying the possible links and complementarities with recognised diplomas.

20. At European level, social partners will contribute to on going discussions on transparency and recognition of competencies and qualifications.

3. INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

21. In order that both employees and enterprises can pursue a strategy for competencies development, it is necessary:

- to enable each employee and each enterprise to access all the necessary information and advice;
- to provide SMEs with suitable information and to assist their managers through the creation of customised support.

With this aim in mind, the social partners call for:

- the development of facilities allowing employees and enterprises to be supported in their choices of learning, and to tailor the content according to competencies they have already developed, for example through a one-stop-shop facility in Member States, including a database on lifelong learning possibilities and opportunities for career evaluation;
- these facilities to be easily accessible and relevant with regard to labour market developments.

22. To promote a lifelong learning culture, both trade union and employer organisations have a key role to play in informing, supporting and advising their members and need to develop in house expertise to perform this role.

4. MOBILISING RESOURCES

23. Mobilising resources for the lifelong development of competencies is a key question, which cannot be regarded as depending exclusively on social partners. Other players have also an important role, notably:

- public authorities in order to promote labour market integration;
- the enterprise in order to develop its key competencies;
- the employee in order to play a part in her/his own development.

All players (enterprises, employees, public authorities, social partners) need to seek new and diversified sources of financing.

24. As regards the social partners, they consider the lifelong development of competencies as a priority and assert the principle of shared responsibility for mobilising and optimising resources. The social partners want to promote co-investment and to encourage new ways of resourcing lifelong learning, through the effective and creative management of funding, time and human resources.

25. They call upon the whole range of players in this effort and advocate that it should operate in the following directions:

- to promote exchanges between national social partners and public authorities within Member States, with the aim of ensuring that the taxation of enterprises and individuals encourages investment in competencies development activities;
- to direct the use of structural funds, and particularly the European Social Fund, towards giving a stronger encouragement to social partners to develop initiatives and innovations.

V./ ACTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

26. The member organisations of UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC¹⁹ will promote this framework in Member States at all appropriate levels taking account of national practices. Meetings can be organised at national level for presentation of this document. Given the interest of the matter under consideration, the social partners also decide to transmit this document to all interested players at European and national levels.

27. The social partners will draw up an annual report on the national actions carried out on the four priorities identified.

28. After three annual reports, the social partners will evaluate the impact on both companies and workers. This evaluation can lead to an update of the priorities identified. The ad hoc group on Education and Training will be entrusted with this evaluation, which will be presented in March 2006.

29. When preparing the structured work programme of the social dialogue, the social partners will take account of this framework of actions.

¹⁹ The ETUC delegation includes representatives of the Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee