



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

Second follow-up report

2004

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»

Second follow-up report

5 March 2004

* 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 competences 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 competences and qualifications needs;
- to recognise and validate competences 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 acceding 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 second annual follow-up report and the first one reporting on a full year of activities. It describes social partners' activities on development of competences and qualifications at cross-industry, sectoral and company levels and gives useful examples of good practices. It testifies to the intensification of dialogue and partnership between social partners and their willingness to find practical solutions to the lifelong learning challenges in Europe.

Finally, European social partners consider this report as a major joint contribution to the Lisbon strategy, which will be presented to the European Spring Council 2004. They urge the Commission and the Council to take account of their work in the current discussions on the future of the education and training systems in Europe.

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

Chapter I – Main trends

This report is the second to be published on the follow-up to the framework of actions. As last year, it clearly emerges from the document that social partners have intensively debated the issue of competence development in all Member States.

Debates took various forms in the Member States, thereby respecting national practices and traditions of dialogue between the social partners and/or concertation between public authorities and players on the labour market.

The framework of actions created or strengthened an impetus for dialogue and joint work on the lifelong development of competences and qualifications in most Member States, building on existing practices. Many joint activities reported last year have a prolonged effect over several years. The same applies to some general collective agreements at national or sectoral levels, which have been adopted for a period longer than one year. Therefore, even if they were concluded in 2002, they are still valid in 2003.

Concerning **tripartite activities**, social partners reported in several countries their implication in the design of public policies on education and training e.g. participation in advisory bodies, discussions on draft bills etc. Through these activities, they were able to impact on the definition of the national strategies for lifelong learning and to further promote the approach taken in the framework of actions towards competence development.

Compared to the first year, activities in the **bipartite social dialogue** were less geared towards dissemination of the framework of actions and more focused on developing new avenues for competence development at different levels. Different means were used to that end, including collective agreements, joint projects, the establishment of discussion fora and/or foundations, the development and promotion of concrete tools to help companies developing learning activities for their employees, and to encourage and enable employees to take part, etc.

Without being exhaustive, it is possible to identify **common elements** in the work of social partners in 2003:

1/ Social partners want to ensure a better match between companies' and individuals' competence needs and learning supply

In the context of a globalising market, businesses have to adapt more and more quickly in order to remain competitive. Their competence needs evolve accordingly. On the other hand, employees increasingly need to improve their employability and career prospects, in connection with the labour market trends.

Against this background of rapid pace of change, social partners are anxious to take into account the changing demands for competences in their work. Several national reports describe social partners' efforts to anticipate and identify the key competences that will be needed in the short, medium and longer term.

2/ Mobilising resources for competence development is a shared challenge

National reports illustrate the variety of instruments used by social partners in order to mobilise resources to promote efficient investment in the lifelong competence development. Some instruments are put in place in cooperation with public authorities, be they European or national (use of EU funds, tax incentives, creation of new funds, etc.). Some instruments are more specifically geared towards individual resourcing of competence development (Individual Learning Account, co-investment schemes etc.)

3/ Motivation of individuals and companies for competence development is key

To promote a lifelong learning culture, social partners believe they have a key role to play in informing, supporting and advising employees and enterprises, with a special attention for SMEs. A significant amount of reported joint activities relate to the issue of guidance.

Social partners activities mainly aim to support employees in their learning efforts for competence development and to guide companies in the assessment of their competence needs. Guidance activities are also targeted to young people, low skilled and unemployed wishing to enter and/or re-enter the labour market.

4/ Social partners live up to their responsibilities by facilitating learning in companies and building bridges between formal and non-formal learning

Reported social partners activities impact both on the environment of learning, with the aim of facilitating and encouraging competence development in companies, and on the content of learning.

Concerning the environment of learning, a significant number of actions aim to promote the validation of competences, support the development of qualification standards and build bridges between the formal and non-formal training systems.

Regarding the learning content, social partners are active in particular in the design of training modules and/or training plans for individual, companies and/or sectors. An important objective in these activities is to promote multiskilling so as to enhance the adaptability of the employees on the labour market. Social partners also report specific activities in sectors where there exist shortages of qualified employees and for specific categories of workers such as managers.

Chapter II - Follow-up of the framework of actions

Austria

Sources of information

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

Actions taken at national level

At national level the Federation of Austrian Industry (IV), the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Chamber of Labour (AK) and the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) had been actively involved in several initiatives, which supported the objectives of the framework of actions. The main activities were as follows:

For the first time the Austrian adult education system was analysed by the OECD. An expert group visited Austria in March 2003; the social partners formed part of the national steering committee and informed the OECD experts about the strong and the weak aspects of adult education in Austria. Among other things, the social partners once more emphasised the importance of a lifelong learning (LLL) coordination and advisory body for Austria. The country report will be published at the beginning of 2004.

The Federation of Industry supported the development of a revised concept of the new government to develop a LLL strategy for Austria. At the core of the concept there should be a task force for LLL, chaired by a Regierungsbeauftragter (person specially mandated by government). The task of this expert group is to work out a status quo analysis including the definition of reform areas, the definition of strategic objectives and cornerstones of a LLL policy until 2010 (LLL:2010) and the development of an LLL action plan. This LLL concept has already been integrated in a political action plan for education and vocational training by the Austrian Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

On quality assurance in adult education, a working group including the social partners has been established by the Austrian Ministry of Education. Its aim is to create an "Austrian Label of Quality for Further Education".

A current initiative concerning the apprenticeship-training scheme might also have a strong impact on professional training programmes for adults. Due to ongoing developments in several professional fields it was agreed that training standards should be adapted by introducing a modular system of qualifications leading to more flexible training schemes which are in accordance with changing professional demands in different companies as well as with different individual learning needs.

Moreover, it should also be possible to acquire additional competences through additional training modules beyond apprenticeship training. In the future there may be modules of apprenticeship training, which also become part of adult-training

schemes and vice versa. This would lead to training programmes where initial and continuing training are reintegrated.

In order to support implementation of the framework of action proactively at national level, the Federation of Industry was project partner in the Berlin social dialogue conference on *Lifelong development of competences and qualifications – voluntary European frameworks and their practical application*, coordinated by BDA and supported by the European Commission. Country reports on LLL presented by social partners gave a current overview of the latest developments followed by workshops focusing in particular on qualification demand, recognition and validation of skills and competences, information, counselling and support systems as well as financing of LLL.

At a further conference in the area of lifelong learning organised by the Chamber of Labour, the Swedish adult education system was presented and discussed (with Dr. Robert Modlitba, Swedish Ministry of Education; 80 participants).

In cooperation with the social partners an expert conference on competences in a changing world of work was organised focusing on demographic trends, qualification demand of companies, quality assurance and equal opportunities through education. It was the third conference on future qualification demand organised by the Austrian Labour Market Service.

The two largest 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:

- **bfi**

Owned by the Chambers of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation, its activities focus on vocational education and training for the employed as well as educational and occupational schemes for unemployed persons and workers facing the risk of unemployment. Most of the education and training courses are based on modular systems. The bfi is certified according to the international standard ISO 9001.

In 2002 14,053 courses and seminars comprising a total of 1,383,465 lessons were held in more than 140 locations all over Austria, and attended by 166,375 persons. 1,619 employees and more than 5,800 freelancers worked on behalf of the bfi.

There are a number of other institutions also affiliated to the bfi. An example with reference to the "European Year of People with Disabilities" is the BBRZ: the BBRZ in Linz (Upper Austria), with branches in Vienna and Styria, provides the opportunity for occupational reintegration after an accident or severe illness. The BBRZ offers guidance and counselling as well as individually tailored education and training schemes, complemented by medical and psychological services. It is Austria's largest provider in the field of occupational rehabilitation.

- **WIFI**

The WIFI (training institute of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) offers courses and seminars in management, foreign languages, individual development, business administration, and information technology for more than 300,000 participants a year.

On the basis of several international cooperative ventures, the WIFI responds to the need to create programmes leading to qualifications and competences, which are applied and recognised across the EU. This is an essential contribution to improve transparency and supra-national accreditation of the qualifications acquired.

At present this applies for international language certificates as well as certificates in new technologies. Moreover, there are bilateral cooperative ventures leading to jointly developed training programmes with mutual accreditation. First examples in this respect are the "European Office Management Academy" and "European Exports Management Programme".

Bearing in mind that there will be an increasing demand for employees with practice-related training at peak/top level, the WIFI offers more training programmes at higher education level. Respective fields are Business Management, Finance Management as well as technical disciplines such as Industrial Engineering, Electric Process Engineering and Information Technology itself.

Good practice examples

- **Implacement Stiftung ("implacement" foundation)**

In order to achieve a better match between qualifications available and qualifications for which there is a demand on the labour market, the new instrument Implacement Stiftung has been developed, introduced in some Länder in 2002 and now in place all over Austria from 2004 onwards. It is a common initiative of the social partners together with the Austrian Labour Market Service, financed by the Länder, the Labour Market Service and the companies involved.

The Implacement Stiftung offers targeted and demand-oriented qualification of unemployed people for a concrete job already offered by a specific company. These job-offering companies are involved early in planning and implementation of the training measures.

In particular in areas facing a lack of skilled labour, the Implacement Stiftung gives the opportunity to train selected people according to their needs and the company's requirements. The unemployed gain not only from the qualification measure itself but also from a firm job offer after training has been completed.

The Learning Voucher of the Chamber of Labour

In 2002 the Chamber of Labour (the legal representation of all Austrian workers and employees with obligatory membership) launched a new initiative, the „AK Bildungsgutschein“ („Learning Voucher of the Chamber of Labour“) in all nine Austrian Länder. Every member of the chamber of Labour can order a learning voucher worth € 100 (in some Länder members on parental leave receive € 150). The voucher can be used for specific courses at selected training providers. Since its introduction, 80,000 vouchers have been distributed and used across the country (figures from June 2003).

A first evaluation of the Learning Voucher in Vienna showed that:

- 18% of the participants were taking part in a course for the very first time,
- 45% would not have participated without the Learning Voucher,

- 12% of all employees on parental leave participated (childcare is available free of charge),
- 71% will "definitely" take part in another course and 23% "probably".

These results motivated the Viennese Chamber of Labour to enlarge the programme by autumn 2003. Since spring 2003 the Chamber of Labour Austria is a member of the "e-lap"-network ("European Learning Account Partners").

- **The MAGNA-Manager (MAGNA STEYR)**

Magna follows the concept that, in principle, every Magna employee has the opportunity to develop himself/herself to move into a leading position in the company.

A training centre and – recently - a specific academy were founded, offering programmes which are open to all employees and especially tuned for qualifying potential future managers according to their and the future position's qualification needs.

The training model developed shows precise planning and organisation and is highly target-oriented. It contains special qualification modules for the respective career path of the trainee up to the level of a MAGNA-Manager. At all levels of training, the model foresees internal training, learning on the job and job rotation as well as external qualification measures such as studying at university. The costs of the qualification measures are agreed with the employee and fully covered by the company.

Belgium

Sources of information

- Trade unions: FGTB-ABVV (General Federation of Labour in Belgium), ACV-CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) and CGSLB (General central of liberal trade unions of Belgium), 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

In the area of continuing training, the Belgian social partners have their own competence within the company which allows them to define and implement autonomously a genuine training policy which is particularly adapted to the needs of companies and the realities of the labour market.

This policy entails action by the different organisational levels the social dialogue, i.e. cross-industry, sectoral or company level.

At cross-industry level, the overall effort of companies in terms of vocational training together with the broad lines of policy priorities which must be pursued by sectors and companies is determined in the framework of cross-industry agreements negotiated every two years. These agreements have now been firmly incorporated in the framework of the European employment strategy.

The sectors are an essential cog for giving concrete form and implementing the provisions contained in the cross-industry agreements on lifelong education and training.

- Collective labour agreements concluded in execution of each cross-industry agreement determine the contribution of companies in the sector to the overall training effort as well as the broad lines of training policy within the sector, for both the aspect of continuing training and the aspect relating to groups at risk. The autonomy which the sectors enjoy in this framework allows them to organise their own training structure which is particularly suitable for responding to the specific features and requirements of companies and workers in the sector in question, while respecting the general guidelines identified at cross-industry level.
- It is also at sectoral level that the social partners manage, on a bipartite basis, the funds and/or training centres created to finance and organise training courses targeting workers in companies in the sector in question and jobseekers looking for employment in that sector.

Lastly, the company, as the main contributor to and beneficiary of this policy, is a key element in this system, into which the collective labour agreements which are concluded in certain cases can be incorporated.

It should be pointed out that, apart from this important autonomous role in the framework of their own competence, the social partners are also closely involved in definition and implementation of continuing education and training policies, at both European and national level and taking account of the competences of the different levels of power.

Actions taken at national level

At cross-industry level, attention is drawn essentially to the fact that:

The Belgian social partners confirmed in the latest cross-industry agreement dated 17 January 2003 their commitment to achieving an overall corporate training effort equivalent to 1.9% of total payroll spending by the end of 2004. Their aim is to realise the objective set in the framework of the cross-industry agreement dated 8 December 1998 of increasing the overall training effort from 1.2% to 1.9% of total payroll costs over a period of six years. This commitment will have to be met at the same time as maintaining the specific effort of 0.1% targeting employment and/or training of persons in groups at risk.

In close liaison with the European employment strategy, the priorities defined in the framework of the cross-industry agreement dated 22 December 2000, i.e. at national level and for all sectors, in the form of guidelines addressed to the sectors, relate to:

- the situation of older workers, low-skilled workers and women;
- development of interesting or new experiments or initiatives;
- skills shortages;
- organisational problems of SMEs in order to enable them to take advantage of training measures.

Lastly, at the last national conference for employment, a series of agreements were concluded between the social partners and the government which follow the lines of the strategy developed in the framework of the most recent cross-industry agreements and by virtue of which, among other things:

- The commitment made in the latest cross-industry agreement of earmarking 1.9% of total payroll costs to training is confirmed;
- The social partners generally commit to ensuring that one worker in two follows training by the year 2010; all the persons concerned will make efforts to ensure that 60,000 workers are involved in a training effort each year;
- The inflow into professions where there are skills shortages will be strengthened, notably through training efforts;
- Efforts will be made with a view to better planning of training efforts (at the level of sectors and companies).

Particular emphasis was placed in the conclusions of this same conference to improving the monitoring of training efforts:

- By entrusting the National Labour Council and the Central Economic Council with the task of perfecting a simple but accurate measurement instrument, i.e. one which takes into account all the training efforts developed by companies;

- By asking the bipartite committees to prepare by end-March 2004 a report on compliance with their sectoral agreements and measures for achieving the agreed objectives, together with a breakdown of training efforts by category, age and workers' level of study.

Actions taken at sectoral level

1. General

The policy defined by the social partners at cross-industry level is based on sectoral training structures. Bearing in mind the autonomy left to the sectors, these structures can vary depending on the sectors under consideration.

However, they often take the form of a training fund and/or training centre financed by resources from specific social contributions levied on wages in general, on the basis of collective labour agreements, i.e. instruments which are the product of consensus between the social partners in the sector. A training-credit system which makes it possible for companies to simplify management of vocational training for workers is in place in some sectors.

The content of policies implemented via these structures is also variable. Generally, these policies can consist, for example, in providing for:

- Collection at sectoral level of additional contributions (or an increase in existing contributions) earmarked for financing new vocational training initiatives via the social fund or sectoral training fund.
- Determination of a given percentage of the work timetable that should be devoted to vocational training programmes.
- Establishment of specific training and employment programmes targeting certain groups.
- A commitment to make an additional training effort, supervised by the works council or trade union delegation and evaluated at sectoral level.
- Addition of value to training through sectoral certification systems or « vocational training passports ».
- Promotion of training plans at company level.

2. Specific actions

Among the many initiatives developed at sectoral level, particular attention is drawn to the following systems:

- **Workers with employee status covered by Commission Paritaire Nationale Auxiliaire pour Employés (CPNAE or CP 218)**

The sectoral agreement dated 15 May 2003 gives the right to four days of training during the period 2004-2005. The training may be in-house or external. In consultation with the trade union delegation, the employer may introduce his own training plan or implement a top-up sectoral model plan. If the training takes place outside working hours, the employer must give the employee compensation corresponding to the working time. If the employer has not offered sufficient training days by the end of the period covered by the collective labour agreement, the worker will be granted one extra day of paid holiday for each day of training not

received.

- **Hairdressing and beauty care (CP 314)**

Establishment within the sector of a very structured training system influencing wages, without affecting job classification systems. This training takes the place of the training generally given by product brands specific to the sector.

Creation of a qualification card for each worker, serving not only to record but also to monitor training credits. The system is managed by the sectoral income supplement fund which pays an end-of-year bonus to workers as a function of the number of hours' training received. The training courses are closely linked to the tasks to be carried out (hairdressing or beauty care or communication techniques) and have to be provided by recognised trainers whose names are accessible to potential trainees via a website to which they can connect using a password (<http://www.coiffure.org/>). The system involves educational institutes and takes account of the needs of trainees in the sector.

- **Paper production sector**

Almost 95% of companies have taken advantage of their right to draw from the fund financed by contributions paid by companies in this sector. More than 2,500 workers therefore benefited in 2003 from an amount equivalent to 2.62% of total payroll costs.

- **Construction sector**

The emphasis was placed on flanking new workers with little experience by assigning to them a qualified 'sponsor' from within the company. The duration of this 'sponsorship' with a view to training varies from one to six months. Three thousand 'sponsors' devoted an average of two hours a day to flanking young starters in this sector.

In parallel, the resources of the training fund were devoted to various types of training action.

- 1) 350 'sponsorship' contracts were concluded between the sectoral fund and affiliated companies; flanking within the company is supplemented by one or two weeks' training in a training centre.
- 2) Organisation and financing of paid alternance-based training (two years) for young people between 16 and 25 years of age (1,400 contracts a year); this is co-financed by the company concerned and the sectoral fund.
- 3) Improvement training organised by the sectoral fund in a centre authorised by the fund and in concertation with the companies (17,000 beneficiaries in 2003).
- 4) Intense cooperation with vocational and technical schools via partnership agreements.
- 5) Payment of grants to jobseekers and training centres in cases of retraining for a different job in the construction sector.

Together, these actions represent around 2.2% of the sector's total payroll costs; this percentage does not include the actions undertaken by individual companies.

- **Insurance sector**

More than 3,400 persons employed in forty companies in the sector took advantage of training paid for out of the sectoral fund. In addition, the sector has for many years endeavoured to develop recruitment and training of young jobseekers. In the

framework of the 2003-2004 agreement, the insurance sector undertakes to recruit 150 young people for a period of one year and to give them additional training during their working hours over a period equivalent to three months with a view to their subsequent employment in the sector. Realisation of this plan is evaluated regularly within the bilateral committee.

Lastly, by virtue of the 2003-2004 sectoral agreement, a training credit equivalent to four days a year (internal or external training) is determined collectively at company level in 2003 or 2004. This credit increased from three to four days when the last sectoral agreement was concluded. There is a "common pot" which will be shared out to meet the real needs of workers.

A report on this subject is presented annually to the works councils.

Actions taken at company level

1. General

Apart from the financing of sectoral training, companies increasingly participate actively in the vocational training policy:

- Collective labour agreements concluded at company level can implement a sectoral agreement and, in the absence of a sectoral collective labour agreement, apply directly the provisions laid down at cross-industry level (notably regarding the obligation regarding groups at risk).
- In some cases, close cooperation is organised between the sector and companies in definition of objectives and resources to be deployed for worker training. For instance, some collective labour agreements make provision for companies to draw up a training plan.

The practical arrangements for adoption and monitoring of the training plan vary from one sector to the next. However, these plans are generally discussed and drawn up in the framework of an agreement between the employer and the trade union delegation (often within the works council).

Approval of the training plan by the social partners at sectoral level is sometimes also required and can then be given by the sectoral training fund or training centre

In the absence of a trade union delegation within the company, a subsidiary sectoral plan can be put in place at sectoral level (e.g. drawn up by the sectoral training fund). Sectoral collective labour agreements also sometimes make provision in this case for the company plan to be submitted for prior examination by a bilateral body outside the company (e.g. the regional contact committee).

Where such provision is made, the vocational training plan is necessary in order to obtain aid earmarked at sectoral level. Compliance with the plan is verified at sectoral level.

2. Specific actions

For examples of good practice in companies, it is pointed out that:

- A trade union organisation has developed a tool box comprising practical guidance sheets with a view to negotiation of training plans within companies. This action is based on the principle that a right to lifelong training must be granted to all workers inside and outside companies via a training plan to be drawn up in concertation between the social partners. This action falls within the framework of giving concrete form to training efforts defined at the level of the use of the employer contribution of 0.1% for groups at risk and the employer commitment to earmark 1.9% of total payroll costs to in-company training. Three guidance sheets are devoted to the objectives (0.1%, alternance-based training, and training plan with the aim of retraining and continuing training) and two guidance sheets deal specifically with the in-company training plan.
- A trade union organisation has developed for use within the metals sector an internal vocational training code based on the following rights: right to vocational training in order to gain access to, maintain, develop within and retrain for employment, right of all workers (young, vulnerable, older, women, immigrants, low-skilled, temporary, etc.) to have fair vocational training, e.g. carried out in the framework of collective negotiations, without loss of pay and appropriate in terms of content and methodology.

Examples of good practice

See point III.2 (sectoral practice) and IV.2 (company practice).

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 and Ledernes Hovedorganisation (The Danish Association of Managers and Executives) member of CEC
- Employers: DA (Confederation of Danish employers), member of UNICE; KL (Local government Denmark), Amtsrådsforeningen (Committee of Danish Regions), and Personalestyrelsen (State Employer's Authority) members of CEEP

Introduction

Within the Danish model social partners together develop solutions to new challenges in education and training. Together with public authorities at various levels these challenges are also met within a large number of bodies and councils that have been established to take care of different parts of education and training. As social partners have worked together in bipartite or tripartite settings for years – new challenges are easily identified. Both bipartite and tripartite cooperation for finding solutions to competence development are therefore dynamic and renewed constantly.

Actions taken at national level

• Guidance

During the autumn of 2002 and the spring of 2003 a draft new law supporting career guidance as well as guidance for education and training was discussed with social partners and finally agreed upon in parliament. The law introduces independent centres for young people on their way to upper secondary and the tertiary level. It also introduces career guidance as an objective within the individual education and training. The overall objective is to set the basis for lifelong learning and for competences needed on the labour market as well as helping adults to return to education and training. A new initiative on guidance for the employed will be launched in the spring of 2004.

• Real competency

The social partners, including the local and regional authorities, co-operate with the Ministry of Education, sharing the responsibility for the dual system in Vocational Education and Training. This co-operation guarantees a dynamic development and tailoring of vocational education and training in step with the rapidly changing qualification needs of trade and industry. To ensure the possibility of a formal vocational education for adults with very rudimentary or no education, basic adult education (upper secondary) has been introduced. It implies that an adult with experience within a specific area of work can have his or her informal qualifications (real competences) assessed and compared with the formal goals for a vocational education. An individually designed educational plan is developed, through which

the adult can achieve the remaining qualifications, thus matching the full set of educational goals for that particular education.

- **Management at all educational levels**

Management is an important part of how we develop our society, and therefore everyone should learn the basics. It is not only leaders and managers who need to know about leadership and management. Management is something we all are influenced by in our working lives – either because we chose to become leaders or because we submitted to management. Knowledge of management must therefore be a part at the curriculum of every educational level, from primary school to higher education. The social partners work together on models to implement management at different educational levels.

In 2004 a project has been started in which the terms management and leadership should be integrated in some form or other into the curricula to give a basic knowledge and a better understanding of how organisations develop.

Actions taken at sectoral level

- **State sector**

In June 2003 the new overall State Personnel and Management policy was published². According to this policy, development of staff members' competences/skills is essential. Policy headings about development of staff are: strategic and systematic skills enhancement is a mutual responsibility; skills enhancement creates security in the job market; a holistic view, creativity and renewal are important competences; unique human potential/talent must be expressed by versatile career possibilities for all; skilled staff members should be recognised and rewarded.

The social partners' agreement on a "Competence package"³ has as its leading principle to encourage interaction between negotiated agreements, structures, funds and practice pertaining to competence development as well as a coherence between competence development, personnel policy and wage policy. The most important element in the agreement is that strategic and systematic competence development takes place within the individual institution for all employees. Both managers and employees must take responsibility to ensure a strengthened development of competences that guarantee the needs of the institutions as well as the individual and professional enhancement of the employee. Employee development interviews are held once yearly, during which developmental goals are agreed upon and evaluated. Additionally, work councils should agree upon principles for the strategic and systematic competence development of the workplace as a whole.

- **Local and regional sector**

In 2002 the social partners at national level for local and regional authorities agreed upon a framework agreement on competences and qualifications. As a means of inspiring local and regional authorities to implement the framework agreement two catalogues were elaborated and distributed during 2003. The catalogues describe the framework agreement and give suggestions as to how it can be implemented

² On the website www.perst.dk an English version of the personnel and management policy 2003 of the state can be found

³ On the websites <http://www.perst.dk> and www.cfu-net.dk an English version of the "package" can be found.

locally and regionally. The agreement states that continuous 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. Consequently, the aim of the agreement is to commit both employees and management to take responsibility in ensuring better development of competences.

- **Private sector - Construction**

The Danish Construction Association and the Federation of Building, Construction and Woodworkers' Union initiated a project with the title "Cooperation and lifelong learning within Construction" together with the Danish Association of Construction Architects and Danish Technological Institute in the autumn of 2003. The cooperation comprises a number of enterprises as well as a number of educational institutions offering education and training at the levels from upper secondary to low and medium circle programmes including a double pathway for people at work to obtain the same qualifications. The specific work deals with "Development of work organisation and training – development of vocational education and training and lifelong learning at a systems level". The activities will run until the end of 2006. The social partners have already developed several tools for in-company training planning.

Good practice examples

- **Competence development tools in the state sector**

The Centre for Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (established by the social partners of the state sector in 2000) has developed tools for assessment of developmental needs and competence development that can be administered by management and employees at individual workplaces, i.e. a digital tool for competence development and educational planning (VEPS 2000), the Competence Game, the Barometer of Competence. All workplaces are advised to carefully follow up on the use of any tool. For instance, a large Directorate within the legal area followed up on use of the Barometer by letting the employees in the different departments formulate questions and recommendations for improvements. The topics ranged from points of organisational development, improvements of working conditions and need for managerial support and attention to communication, strategies on conflict-solving, mutual feedback and formulating competence profiles and competence development plans. Plans and reorganisations will be followed up and evaluated every half year.

- **The Network Locomotive**

The Network Locomotive consists of approximately 160 private and public businesses, trade unions and educational institutions in the Vejle Region. The purpose is to exchange experiences regarding how to identify and motivate employees with inadequate reading, writing and mathematical skills.

The Network Locomotive provides education in reading writing and mathematics at the primary and lower secondary educational level, to prepare the businesses' employees for the demands of the workplaces of the future. The teaching takes place either at the place of business or at one of the centres for adult education in the region.

- **Grundfos A/S**

Grundfos A/S - a large Danish company working worldwide - has for a number of years worked with competence development and has developed a model for an overarching system within the company. Strategic development of competences is based on dialogue between management and employee. The aim is to achieve a common recognition amongst all employees of competence development. The workshops are based on three components: knowledge, know-how and values. The outset for planning is the future needs of the company. Important for success is the fact that both managers and the individual employee have to take responsibility to find solutions to the identified needs of competence development. Furthermore it is stressed that there is a systematic follow-up to the planned development of competences.

- **Learning for managers**

The start-up of the management-training programme 2003 has been a tremendous success. More than 2000 people from different trades and sectors have started on the management-training programme, which has been designed by the social partners from the field. Seen in a Danish context this figure is very high and it signals a huge demand for further training and education within the management area, contributing to lifelong learning for leaders and managers.

A recent survey describes the optimal learning for leaders and managers. The study clearly indicates that short-term courses in management and management-training programmes will continue to be a central form of learning. But networking with focus on management and personal coaching are also high on the priority list for the future. The survey can inspire enterprises and individuals regarding what can be done to create a good learning environment at the workplace.

- **Competence development and management**

The Danish Confederation of Professional Associations carried out 3 regional meetings on how to initiate competence development locally at the work place for professionals from both the private and public sector. What emerged from the meetings was the importance of the conditions for developing competences and management being one of the main drivers and obstacles to competence development at the work place. In line with the conclusion from the regional meetings a survey has been carried out on managers and to what extent managers prioritise and make room and time for developing the competences of their personnel. The survey, which is called: "The potential, ten challenges to Danish human resource managers" highlights that 60 percent of the 1,350 managers involved in the survey felt a need for development of their competences in order to carry out their job as managers.

- **Local solutions**

Local Government Denmark and the Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations are jointly involved in a number of projects that aim at creating a more attractive and more efficient workplace that produces public services of an even higher quality. One such project has focused on on-the-job learning. The main objective was to describe 10 methods to encourage on-the-job learning. The project resulted in a manual that makes it possible for every workplace to give priority to on-the-job learning. The manual was written in collaboration with the Copenhagen Business School. It is available free of charge (in Danish) at www.personaleweb.dk/4Z180I

Finland

Sources of information

- Trade unions: SAK (Central organisation of finish trade unions), 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 Employer's Office) and KT (Commission for Local Authority Employers), members of CEEP

Introduction

According to the long tradition in the field of Finnish Education and Training policy and Labour Market policy, most of the working groups and committees which prepare new legislation have social partners as members. For instance, Adult Education Council of Finland, which is an independent expert advisory body to the Ministry of Education, has social partners as members, and this time also one of them acts as the chairman of the Council. And social partners' representatives are also members of the National Board of Education. Within the field of Ministry of Labour, the social partners are active members in its different permanent or ad hoc working groups preparing legislation and regulations concerning labour market training. The issues to be dealt with are within the scope of the four priorities identified in 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", covering 95% of all wage earners in Finland. The agreement contained an explicit reference to the Frameworks of Actions and it included a special annex for education and training matters. The main actions of the national social partners have been to implement it. In particular, the following measures have been taken:

- The social partners set up a joint working group to further develop the competence-based qualification system. The social partners send specific proposals to the Ministry of Education on this issue and they had a fruitful discussion with the Ministry, and the discussions are now on-going on the counter-proposals made by the Ministry. The prospect of reaching consensus is promising. The working group is also preparing a joint position paper concerning the challenges which are now facing the adult education and training system.
- The social partners decided to set up another working group which deals with issue of how to make labour market and working life attractive to young people. The social partners have sent a joint letter to the Ministry of Education on this issue emphasising the importance of guidance at all levels.

- The social partners paid attention in the national income agreement to the importance of planned development of personnel in companies. In order to support this they recommended that the sectoral social partners start action programmes which can include best practices, guidance and examples on useful systems such as how to create individual training plans at enterprise level.
- The social partners set up a working group jointly with the Ministry of Labour on how to improve the employability of employees in structural change situations.
- The Finnish government decided in February 2002 to start a special programme aimed at raising the qualification level of the people aged 30-54 and in employment with less than upper secondary qualification. The social partners have supported this programme from the start on and have been active in implementing and developing it. They are members of the steering group of this programme.
- The Ministry of Education set up a working group on the proposal from the social partners concerning apprenticeship training for least advantaged group in the labour market and to improve the function of apprenticeship system for adults. The social partners have been active in this working group and it will present its final conclusions next month.
- Some years ago the social partners jointly proposed to the Government creation of a special tripartite national council on knowledge and competences. This proposal has taken some time to be decided but lately the discussions between the Government and the social partners have been promising and now the Ministry of Education is preparing necessary conditions to create this tripartite national council. This council is to be composed of appropriate ministers, high-level representatives of social partners and public authorities.

Actions taken at sectoral level

The Federation of Finnish Electrical and Electronics Industry together with all the appropriate social partners have started a project named "Mirror". It is part of the Equal Community Initiative funded by the European Social Fund. It has been set up to find ways to develop a basis for increasing the learning motivation of girls in mathematics, natural sciences and technology. Its main objective is to increase the proportion of girls participating in technology, especially in mechanical engineering, IT and electronics, by offering positive examples and role models as well as by developing motivational education and learning methods.

Public authorities responsible for health care together with appropriate social partners are preparing a joint recommendation concerning the principles, practices and methods of continuing training in order to fulfil the requirements of health care of high quality. Employers' organisation KT will in future follow yearly the number of days and persons having participated in the training.

The State Employers Office has developed e-learning facilities for state agencies. An open platform for e-learning was given at the disposal of the ministries on a pilot basis in 2003.

Actions taken at company level

- **Finnair**

Finnair, the Finnish airline company, started the Competence Management Programme in 2001. The Programme defines the key competences in four roles in each business unit. The roles are management, superior, expert and employee. The key competences are the same in the title level but the content has been adapted according to the specific needs of each role. The development discussion identifies the learning needs of each individual and upon this process the learning paths are built.

- **Federation of Municipalities of Vocational Education in northern Savo**

The Federation of Municipalities of Vocational Education in northern Savo has modernised its organisation and accordingly made it easier to offer further training for its personnel in order to secure the quality of competences and knowledge at all levels of organisation.

France

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CFDT (French democratic confederation of work), CGT (General confederation of work), FO (Workers' force), members of ETUC
- Employers: MEDEF (Federation of enterprises of France), member of UNICE

Introduction

The year 2003 was marked by conclusion, between all representative employer and worker organisations at national and cross-industry level (MEDEF, CGPME, UPA, CFDT, CFE-CGC, CFTC, CGT-FO, CGT), of the agreement dated 20 September 2003 on worker access to lifelong vocational training. This agreement, on which negotiations started in January 2003, relates to the areas for priority action defined at European level, developing four major avenues:

- to enable workers to be players in their professional development,
- to promote the acquisition of qualifications throughout working life,
- to develop worker access to training actions throughout their working life,
- to promote the personalisation of training programmes, use of new educational technologies and on-the-job training.

In order to make the entire apparatus of negotiated agreements on vocational training easier to understand, the social partners assembled in one and the same text the negotiated provisions applicable in this area. This text gave rise to conclusion of the agreement on 5 December 2003.

The government incorporated the provisions of the 20 September 2003 agreement in a draft law introduced in a fast-track procedure. Adopted in first reading by the Assemblée nationale on 6 January 2004, it is expected that it will be definitively voted through in February 2004.

Actions taken at national level

In order to promote achievement of the objectives set out above, the 20 September 2003 agreement offers workers the right to receive training throughout their working life with a view to enhancing their skills.

It makes provision for exercise of:

- an individual right to training (DIF), activated on the initiative of the individual, in liaison with the company. This right corresponds to 20 hours of training a year and can be rolled up over a period of six years,
- a vocational orientation discussion every two years in the company,
- a skills balance sheet or validation of achievements gained from experience, with access priority for workers aged over 45 years,
- a "training passport" which allows a worker to keep an inventory of diplomas earned during initial training, professional experience gained during traineeships, training actions pursued, etc.,

- competence development targeting workers with insufficient qualifications in the light of technological and organisational change or certain categories of persons (older people, employees who wish to start or acquire a business, men and women at the end of a period of parental leave, etc.). These actions are implemented in the framework of a “period of skills enhancement” including training actions.

The social partners have developed the principle of training outside working hours in order to inject greater flexibility into the realisation of training.. They have also simplified the practical arrangements for alternance-based contracts for young people and jobseekers by creating a single contract “competence development contract”) and entrusted sectors with new responsibilities for definition of categories or types of training eligible under the contract or the competence development period. They have also made provision for establishment of observatories to forecast trades and qualifications needs in each sector, in order to stimulate preparation of work-related projects by workers and training plans implemented on the initiative of the company.

These different measures are accompanied by a larger financial investment by companies. With effect from 1 January 2004, companies employing ten persons or more will be required to make a contribution equivalent to 1.6% of their total payroll costs, as compared with 1.5% at the present time. Companies with fewer than ten employees will invest at least 0.4% of their total payroll costs with effect from 1 January 2004, and then 0.55% with effect from 1 January 2005.

The new arrangements provided for in the 20 September 2003 agreement will be implemented after the vote on the law on vocational training. Sectors will then be able to define their priorities and assign to these priorities the resources at their disposal, in order to ensure greater complementarity between the needs of companies and the need to increase the skills level of all employees.

Germany

Sources of information

- Employers: BDA (Confederation of german employers' federations), member of UNICE; ZDH (Central federation of German craft), member of UEAPME
- Trade unions: DGB (Confederation of German Trade Unions), member of ETUC

Introduction

After the discussion on the results of PISA, in 2003 first steps in the right direction have been taken in reforming the school system (all-day schools, standards). Further efforts to raise the quality of education and to strengthen the basis for lifelong learning are needed.

Continuous further development of qualifications is a shared task of the social partners in worker participation, and is laid down in the labour-management relations act. It places on the social partners a responsibility to promote this objective also in the process of lifelong learning through appropriate measures and agreements.

Especially the dual vocational training system (Duale Berufsausbildung) in Germany is the basis for a skilled workforce, securing innovation and competitiveness. The standard training provided for in work contracts is largely concentrated in a period of three to three-and-a-half years, in order to maintain and further develop the high level of qualification in the interest of employees and employer. To that end, the social partners created a total of seven new vocational training profiles and reworked twenty-one existing vocational training profiles during the reporting period 2003.

It continues to be an important shared goal that education and training are interlinked in such a way that the cross-over from vocational training to higher education is facilitated.

Also in 2003 the basis was build for the introduction of new recognised occupations with less complex requirements in order to open perspectives to disadvantaged young people and those with learning deficits.

Alongside school, university and the dual vocational training system, vocational training is an integral component of our education and training system. In this regard, promotion of vocational training by the Federal Labour Agency plays an important role. The poor success rates for reintegration of the unemployed in the labour market have shown that the quality of measures needs to be upgraded, in order genuinely to improve the chances of the unemployed on the labour market. The measures must be carried through more efficiently and on a more targeted basis, as well as being oriented on individual qualification needs. Above all, the chances of hitherto disadvantaged target groups on the labour market are also in urgent need of improvement.

In order to prepare the ground for the sustainable success of the social partners' initiatives and actions to improve vocational skills and qualifications, the public

authorities must improve the framework conditions. This relates in particular to incentives to open up further learning opportunities, improving access and strengthening social cohesion.

Continuing training develops competences in line with changing needs. It is important to stress that there are different responsibilities. Training that is exclusively related to employers and the vocational training system is the full responsibility of employers. Training that is exclusively related to private interests other than working life is the full responsibility of the individual. Training that is related to private interests as well as to the workplace and to general employability has to be a shared responsibility between employees, employers and the state. This shared responsibility needs a better balance, which does not place the entire burden on the employer or employees. The social partners agree that different incentives (legislation, financial or tax support, time-accounts, etc.) should be promoted by the state to reinforce implementation of the lifelong learning process throughout working life.

Actions taken at national level

- Social dialogue project initiated by BDA together with DGB**

BDA has taken the opportunity to launch a trans-national project, together with four partners, the French business confederation MEDEF, the Austrian industrial association IV, the Danish employers' association DA and the German trade union DGB with the aim of stimulating a trans-national exchange of experiences and promoting follow-up of the framework of action for lifelong learning. All employer project partners were expected to cooperate with their national trade unions.

The overall intention of this common project, which is titled "Industrial relations and social dialogue in change – Bringing European framework agreements into life" was to bring forward implementation of the framework agreements. The aim was to "translate" the contents of the framework agreements for companies, and actively to include them in this process.

Implementation of the framework agreements was brought forward, encouraged and publicised by means of two trans-national conferences held in Berlin. The first conference was on lifelong learning and took place on 24 February 2003 while the second conference on telework was held on 16 June 2003.

Besides the German and European social partners, branches and companies of all four participating countries attended the two conferences. It is companies themselves which considerably contribute to "translating" the abstract European agreements into coherent, applicable "guidelines", fostering lifelong learning and telework.

As a follow up to the conferences, BDA together with the project partners has elaborated a report for each conference showing examples of good practice and demonstrating actions to be taken in Austria, Denmark, France and Germany.

In the view of the social partners involved, this was a particularly important project. Complementing the measures that the national and European social partners are deploying in any event in order to promote implementation of the two agreements

on lifelong learning and telework, this project offered the opportunity to give further stimulus to existing positive practice and to integrate the new framework agreements through information, exchange of experience and specific recommendations for action. The experience gained with this project can also be used for future voluntary framework agreements reached in the framework of the social dialogue, for instance if the current negotiations on stress are concluded successfully.

- **Core curriculum "economic education"**

In 2000, DGB jointly with BDA created the initiative "Business - necessary for general education at school". Together, the social partners endeavour to ensure that socio-economic education becomes more firmly established in school lessons.

A joint working group bringing together the Conference of Economics Ministers (WMK), Conference of Education Ministers (KMK), BDA, BDI, DIHK, ZDH and DGB has prepared "Recommendations for a core business curriculum including quality criteria for teacher education and training as well as practical training of pupils and teachers in companies".

At the heart of the recommendations, which have now been approved by WMK and KMK, are development of country-wide curricular standards, introduction of a binding time budget of 200 hours for economic education in secondary stage I, continuation and intensification of economic education in secondary stage II and development of quality criteria for teacher education and training as well as practical training of pupils and teachers in companies.

The Länder are now urged to implement the recommendations as rapidly as possible.

- **Teaching project "Workshop Zukunft" (Workshop Future)**

The DGB - world of learning for professional orientation

Our work environment and the world we live in are subject to drastic changes. How can pupils be best prepared for the difficult cross-over school and working life? With the project "Workshop Zukunft", DGB, the German trade union umbrella organisation, wants to open up new ways for maturely selecting a profession and developing vocational skills. It addresses pupils from 8th to 10th grade and their teachers.

At www.workshop-zukunft.de an eLearning environment has been established. A self-determined learning process in a web-based work environment makes the pupils act for themselves. At the same time it identifies ability, with the aid of the new media, for self-orientation within the working world and for the development of individual perspectives. In addition, web-based training promotes the acquisition of key qualifications for working life such as team spirit and communication skills.

The project "Workshop Zukunft" is being sponsored by the federal ministry for education and research within the framework of the "school – economy/work life"-programme and through funds of the European Social Fund programme until July 2004. It is educationally flanked by the institute for research into scholastic development of the University of Dortmund.

- **New education and training structure in the area "Restaurator im Handwerk" (craft restorer)**

An example of good practice is the new education and training structure in the area of restoration for historic monuments, which was modernised with the involvement of ZDH and the social partners during the period under review. The basis for the training regulations is constituted by the examination regulations for the individual craft specialities. These were reworked and coordinated by the relevant specialist associations and trade unions during the period under review.

Modernisation of the legal provisions for training examination regulations in this area relate to the following crafts, among others: paint and lacquer work, the specialities "structure and protection of buildings" and "church painting, historic monuments", joiner, stonemason, carpenter, plasterer and metalworker, parquetry worker, goldsmith and silversmith, bookbinder, interior decorator and sculptor.

After the journeyman examination in the above-mentioned crafts, training as a journeyman in restoration can be followed. After the master examination, training as a "craft restorer" is on offer. In this way, a particular stimulus is given to promotion of lifelong learning through an attractive training offer.

This education and training concept was recommended to craft chambers across Germany for implementation.

Actions taken at national and sectoral level

- **"Ausbildungsinitiative 2003" (Training Initiative 2003)**

In an overall initiative with the government and trade unions, employers have announced that they will make every effort to mobilise as many apprenticeship places as possible. Employers' associations, especially at regional level, have called upon companies to invest in training, offered support and organised cooperation. Examples include:

- BASF Ausbildungsverbund (Training Cooperation): in 2003 BASF AG initiated cooperation in training with other companies. With this initiative, it contributes to securing and enlarging the supply of apprenticeship places in the region. Partners are especially smaller or specialised companies that are not able to offer the full training spectrum. BASF supports these companies by offering service, e.g. marketing, recruiting, teaching special training elements, coordination with schools. Information: www.bASF.de.
- BayME/VMB-Lehrstelleninitiative 2003 (Training Initiative 2003): the Bavarian metal and electrical industry sponsors/supports 1,100 additional apprenticeship places in member companies in 2003 and 2004 by paying for part of the training expenses and by organising part of the training for companies. Information: www.ausbildungsoffensive-bayern.de.
- Tarifvertrag zur Beschäftigungssicherung – Ausbildungsinitiative Niedersachsen, 2 June 2003 (Collective Agreement on Employment Protection – Training Initiative Metal and Electrical Industry Lower Saxony): the collective agreement accompanies the Training Initiative in Lower Saxony. The Association has sponsored the creation of more than 100 additional apprenticeship place in a member company with € 10,000. Furthermore, the collective agreement states that the number of places is supposed to remain constant in 2003 and 2004 and "future-oriented" occupations are to be supported.

- **DGB project LeA – Leben und Arbeiten (Life and Work)**

In order to ensure that employee training is related to needs, it is essential to develop and maintain a widely accessible, high-quality and up-to-date guidance service offer. Accordingly, the purpose of the DGB project LeA is to develop and test on the ground practice-relevant and forward-looking concepts for training guidance oriented on holistic education coaching for employees.

The fundamentals for the education coach concept were developed in 2003 in dialogue with employees, worker representatives, personnel officers and company directors. The needs, wishes and possibilities of the individual were given just as

much consideration as the needs of companies and the basic skills and knowledge ascertained in the early recognition of qualification needs initiative. In particular, LeA meets the growing need for specialist and general guidance for employees with a low to medium level of qualification. In this way, LeA makes an active contribution to shaping the process of modernising the vocational training system and to further development of lifelong learning.

DGB started the LeA project at the end of 2002, and it runs until October 2005. LeA is being promoted and supported within the framework of the early recognition of qualification needs initiative started by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The project is being conducted in cooperation with the Berufsförderungswerk (bfw) and the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Organisation (FhIAO). www.dgb-lea.de

- **“Demography Initiative”**

The subject of the initiative is “Betriebliche Strategien für eine altersgerechte und generationenübergreifende Arbeits- und Personalpolitik” (company strategies for an age-appropriate working and personnel policy including all generations). The aim is to raise the awareness of those responsible in companies, to consult them about the consequences of demographic change and to develop or test possible solutions. Partners are small and medium-sized companies, associations mainly in the metal and electrical industry (Verband deutscher Maschinen- und Anlagebau (VDMA), Zentralverband Elektrotechnik- und Elektroindustrie (ZVEI) and Zentralverband Sanitär Heizung Klima (ZVSHK)) as well as scientific advisers (Fachhochschule Niederrhein, ISO-Institut Saarbrücken, GfAH mbH Dortmund). The scope of the project includes “lifelong learning concepts”.

- **Start of IT training system**

Cert-IT, the first IT personnel qualification point of the IT social partners (ver.di Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft, IG Metall, Fraunhofer Gesellschaft, Gesellschaft für Informatik, BitKom, und Zentralverband Elektrotechnik- und Elektronikindustrie e.V.) was put in place on 6 December 2002. It enables the social partners to shape the quality management of this training and to award certificates to IT specialists. Cert-IT will take care of IT personnel certification country-wide for the 29 specialist profiles in the framework of the new IT training system. Certification is based on global standards under the umbrella the accreditation body TGA and therefore offers internationally recognised diplomas, thereby ensuring cross-border acceptance and offering far-reaching perspectives.

These activities are flanked by an Internet portal operated jointly by IG Metall and BITKOM, the IT sector's trade union organisation and business association respectively. This platform supports implementation of the new education and training offers through information, guidance and services for teachers, trainers and education managers (www.kib-net.de).

With a view to lifelong learning, the new IT training system promotes individual responsibility and self-managed acquisition of knowledge and skills in a targeted manner. Given that the IT training can be implemented within the company, access is greatly facilitated. Acquisition of practical skills in real work processes as provided for in the IT training system is a forward-looking model for lifelong learning.

Acquisition of university degrees (Bachelor/Master) and the possibility to cross-over from the vocational to the university education system characterise potential for the future in the interest of employees, businesses and society.

- **Establishment of trade union networks for works councils and staff councils on the theme of vocational training/continuing training – Project KomNetz**

The trade union organisations Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (Ver.di), Industriegewerkschaft Metall (IG Metall) and Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie (IG BCE) are all partners in the project KomNetz. In this project the trade unions advise and support works councils in the shaping of lifelong learning in the company, which in Germany is one of the tasks of worker participation in accordance with the Federal Constitutional Law. The project and the networks that have been put in place are intended in particular to help works councils and staff councils to awaken and stimulate the interest of employees with regard to their qualification as well as development and promotion routes. In addition, they are intended to support the knowledge management of works and staff councils on the theme of vocational training in terms of deepening, supplementing, implementation, exchange and generation.

KomNetz is being implemented in the framework of the research programme "Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung" (learning culture - skills development) put in place by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The programme is supported by BMBF and the labour ministry with resources from the European Social Fund. The programme is operated by "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V." (business training research association). KomNetz started in January 2001 and runs until December 2004.

<http://www.unibw-hamburg.de/PWEB/paabap/forsch/komnetz/komnetz.htm>

- **Implementation of job competitions**

Implementation and (motivation for) participation in national and international job competitions is also a particular achievement of the social partners, motivating not only the next generation within the profession but also the public in the area of lifelong learning. As a rule, former winners not only set up their own businesses but also work to pass on their knowledge and encourage others to learn. They therefore act as "multipliers" for lifelong learning.

- Internationale Berufsweltmeisterschaft (international professional world championship) in St. Gallen (IBW) (cross-sectoral):

The organisers of IBW want to motivate young people, companies and educators from professions in industry, services and crafts to measure their performance at global level. At the same time, the image of vocational training should be promoted. In the year under review 44 professions from 37 nations with around 700 participants competed over four days for the title of world champion. The winners are therefore among world leaders in their respective professions. 180,000 spectators, including many school children, followed the event and gained an impression on the spot of the diversity and possibilities of professions. In addition to medals, "diplomas for outstanding performance" were awarded
- National professional championship in craft industries (PLW - practical performance competition)

At the Germany-wide finals of PLW 2003 - German championships for young journeymen - the professional capabilities of 873 regional winners were measured. The eliminations took place in 122 professional competitions. A total of 259 craftsmen, including 86 young women, won one of the much sought-after places in the three winner categories. Altogether, several thousand craftsmen up to the age of 23 took part in PLW 2003 at the level of

chamber, region and country. The impetus for the competition came from ZDH and Stiftung für Begabtenförderung im Handwerk (foundation for the promotion of talent in crafts).

- Competition "Die gute Form im Handwerk – Handwerker gestalten" 2003 (good form in craft - shaping craftsmen

With this competition, which was held for the 15th time this year, creative imagination and aesthetics are intended to be promoted continuously starting at school. A further objective is to draw the attention of a wider public to the importance of design and structure in craft trades. In the year under review, a total of forty participants in the competition from nineteen trades qualified as prize-winners.

- **Introduction of the concept "Europeanisation and differentiation of craft education and training"**

With this concept, in the year under review a modernisation process in craft vocational training was initiated, in order to ensure flexible, effective and quality-enhancing vocational training structures. This includes greater differentiation and interoperability of craft education and training, which opens up a whole range of possibilities which support target-group-oriented individualisation and flexibility in training and employment in the craft sector. This should make it possible to respond better to the different qualification requirements of employees. The individual should be able to adapt his or her career options in the craft training and employment system to changing framework conditions, and identify different training and employment career possibilities in the craft sector. In addition, craft career paths should also be better coordinated with other qualifications outside the crafts sphere. In this way, ZDH is making a contribution to the equivalence of vocational and general education and training. Furthermore, the concept makes provision for stronger orientation of craft vocational training on Europe: using "euro-compatible vocational modules", ZDH takes account of demands for transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of qualifications in Europe.

Actions taken at sectoral level and at company level, good practice examples

1) Metal and electrical industry

- **Agentur Q (Agency Q)**

For implementation of the 2001 collective agreement on qualification - which covers 880,000 employees in the metal, electrical and IT industry - the social partners (Verband der Metall- und Elektroindustrie Baden-Württemberg e.V., IG Metall Baden-Württemberg) created Agentur Q in July 2002.

The task of Agentur Q is to advise primarily small and medium-sized enterprises and works councils on the organisation of their vocational training. Agentur Q is intended to help support qualification in companies, so that they can continue to be competitive into the future and can preserve jobs.

The following major projects have been started:

- project on continuing training in the work process for skilled workers
- project on continuing training concepts and measures for semi-skilled and unskilled workers (e.g. migrants)
- project on continuing training for 3D designers

<http://www.agenturq.de>

- **Job Navigator**

Trade union IG Metall has developed a new guidance service for workers who are interested in continuing training but who first of all require a reliable capability analysis of their abilities and inclinations. To that end, since 2003 the Job Navigator can be used as an information and guidance service provided by IG Metall for individual vocational development. The Job Navigator is suitable for those who wish to keep professionally fit, reorient themselves, change jobs or ascertain what they are capable of.

The Job Navigator comes with a personal skills handbook with which the user can catalogue and evaluate his or her own vocational skills. Also on offer is an individual capability analysis which is drawn up by external experts, a guidance service and a continuing training checklist. In addition, it comprises a wide range of information about work and professions.

http://www.igmetall.de/weiterbildung/job_navigator.html

- **Project VAH - Virtual Automobile House – a qualification offensive in the automotive sector**

IG Metall is a partner in the VAH project. This abbreviation stands for virtual automobile house. It refers to a learning system for education and training in the automotive sector. In future it is intended that all 28,000 businesses offering training in this sector in Germany should be linked up to a tele-learning centre which makes educational material available to employees online which can be used in a realistic learning environment. VAH allows qualification through practical simulative learning tasks, in other words through the trainee's own actions. These training courses are incorporated in an educationally simplified workshop, commercial and accounting system with interfaces to all relevant automotive information systems on the basis of Internet technology.

The project is being run under the responsibility of trade association Zentralverbandes des Deutschen Kraftfahrzeuggewerbes and trade union IG Metall from June 2002 until the end of May 2005, it is operated by the Fraunhofer Institut for Computer Graphics (FhIGD) in Darmstadt and has financial support from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

<http://www.vah-projekt.org/>

2) Chemicals Industry

- **Collective agreement in the chemical industry with a section on qualification**

During the 2003 negotiating round the social partners in the chemicals industry reached agreements on education and training. This year's package comprises an agreement on "Future through education", an "Agreement on qualification" and an addition to the sectoral framework agreement with arrangements for work-time accounts.

In December 2003 the social partners carried out an assessment of training during the year. On that basis, the number of training places for 2004 was increased by 1.7%. In the case of positive developments, trade union IG BCE is prepared to negotiate on a freeze of the training budget in the framework of future negotiating rounds. If the number of offered training places agreed for 2004 is not reached, the social partners want to start negotiations "immediately" with the objective of improving the offer. The increase for subsequent years will be determined in each

annual negotiating round. For the new Länder, a separate but similar collective agreement has been agreed.

In the collective agreement on qualification a framework is created for vocational training which can be supplemented through agreements at company level. Central elements are company qualification planning and an individual qualification agreement. The individual qualification agreement is intended to determine the employee's own contribution in the form of time. Training time can also be recorded in the form of credits or work-time accounts. In that case, the social partners should make arrangements for "a fair division of costs taking account of the benefit to the individual and to the business ". In this way, the social partners are entering into a new form of "co-investment" in training.

In the addition to the sectoral framework agreement, the possibility of work-time accounts for training is opened. On the basis of company agreements, work-time accounts can be put in place in the form of long-term accounts. These accounts can record not only overtime, work-time reductions for older workers and rights over and above statutory holiday rights, but also overtime rates and other bonuses - in other words, the accounts can also be denominated in "monetary" terms. However, they can be used not only for training but also for time release prior to retirement.

- **Project "Ciwes"**

With this project companies in the chemicals industry, employees in the sector and training service providers are intended to gain support in successful and competitive shaping of the training system in the chemicals industry and thereby also of Germany's attractiveness as a location for the chemicals industry. Not least, implementation of the new collective agreement is intended to be supported and promoted to that end. Major features of the Ciwes project are an analysis of what currently happens in terms of training, identification of current and future training needs in the sector, analysis of the current training offer and preparation of recommendations for a specific training system for the sector. Ciwes was started in 2003 under the responsibility of BiBB and will be implemented in cooperation with the trade union Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie and trade association Bundesarbeitgeberverband Chemie e.V. until the end of 2005. Project partners are technology centre VDI/VDE-Technologiezentrum Informationstechnik GmbH and the service company Unique - Gesellschaft für Arbeitsgestaltung, Personal- und Organisationsentwicklung mbH.

<http://www.vdivde-it.de/ciwes/default.htm>

- **Project "Betriebsräte als Weiterbildungsberater" (Works Councils as Training Advisers)**

Since 1 July 2001 trade union IG BCE Landesbezirk Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland has been implementing a project with the title „Betriebsräte als Weiterbildungsberater“. The objective of the project is to promote training in companies through works councils, given that training practice is seriously underdeveloped in most businesses (especially SMEs) despite the considerable need for action. In this situation, works councils can give important signals by advocating training initiatives vis-à-vis management.

In addition to numerous workshops, major training projects have already been implemented in seven companies, with a duration of five to twelve months. Works council, directors and managers work together at the earliest stage possible on design of the project. Employees are also involved in planning via the works council on the basis of discussions and questionnaires. It is precisely this joint approach to training involving the four groups that has generated great dynamism in the project

companies. The works council flanks the project via the board of directors. Through discussions with employees, it creates the necessary motivation for training and prevents the company from taking poor decisions. Among managers, it establishes a positive climate by providing them with support as the persons with central responsibility for planning and implementation of training, and involves them in shaping the project.

www.wbb-net.de

- **Lifelong-Learning Animateurs Project (LLLA) of Trade Union IG BCE**

With the collective agreement in the chemicals industry, trade union IG BCE has seized on the theme of training and created a framework for the theme of employability. And this is precisely the emphasis placed by the German partners in the European "Lifelong learning animateurs project", which has been running since October 2002, supported by the EU. The objective of the project is to develop a training concept which qualifies colleagues to animate their environment to discuss the theme of training with each other. The fact that this gives support particularly to those who have not so far taken part automatically in training is a particular aspect of this training offer.

Alongside the German partners HVHS Springe IG BCE, the project includes Finnish, Swedish, Bulgarian and Spanish training and trade union organisations.

3) Construction Industry

- **Joint declaration of the social partners on training dated 3 November 2003**

The construction industry trade associations and trade union Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt (IG BAU) agreed an action programme in their joint declaration on training dated 3 November 2003.

Among other things, a permanent working group on training and a joint training offensive are to be started in the framework of the sectoral social dialogue. Within this framework, model projects will be implemented and a "construction passport" will be created, in which formal qualifications and skills acquired informally can be recorded - similar to the model of the European curriculum vitae.

<http://www.zdb.de/zdb.nsf/0/9482729E4070ABD0C1256DD60031C1D9?openDocument>

4) Company examples

- **Project "make it"**

In the project "make it – employee-oriented skills development in teams –" concepts for skills development of all employees at the Melsungen establishment of B. Braun Melsungen AG are drawn up, which take account of individual development interests as well as the needs of the business. The objective is to ensure the employability of employees. One of the aims is to implement these concepts in day-to-day business practice.

The project is being implemented in cooperation with training institutes Weiterbildungs-Stiftung and Institut für Arbeitswissenschaft der Universität Kassel, and trade union Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie. "Make It" is supported in the framework of the education ministry's support programme "Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung" (learning culture - skills development) and by the European Social Fund.

<http://www.makeit.wbs-wiesbaden.de>

- **Deutsche Bahn AG**

The following agreements between the social partners ensure ongoing modernisation and prompt implementation of the requisite qualifications and statutory requirements for qualification:

- collective agreement on training (trade union TRANSNET - DB AG) for initial vocational training and regular continuing training
- voluntary group agreement (trade union TRANSNET - group works council - DB AG) on arrangements for transfer of costs in the case of promotion training (industry master), extended until 31 December 2005
- voluntary general agreement (trade union TRANSNET - general works council - DB Netz AG) on a bonus for successful conclusion of the master qualification (incentive system)

- **Project ALF - Work-process-oriented learning in manufacturing**

Trade union IG Metall jointly with DaimlerChrysler AG is running a project with the title "Arbeiten und Lernen im Fachbereich"(ALF) (working and learning in specialist situations) in which tools and systems for lifelong learning on the shop floor are developed and put in place in important manufacturing areas. An e-learning infrastructure will be built up as well as a system for flanking the learning of production workers. Via an Internet-based learning and information system available to all workers, all the necessary qualification material for all the activities and tasks involved in the production process will be presented in educational form and available for downloading at any time. By means of this system, and accompanied by a coach, workers can go through the qualification programmes individually on the job, which will be documented in a training passport and can be used for the work career. Implementation will be progressive starting in 2003, in the plants in Mannheim, Untertürkheim and Sindelfingen involving around 20,000 employees.

<http://www.projekt-alf.de/>

- **Example from the SME sector: TELBA AG Düsseldorf:**

TELBA AG runs its own in-house training workshop, with employees responsible exclusively for education and training, in which not only training contents and training regulations but also additional qualifications are taught. These in-house courses are also used by trainees from other businesses.

Another interesting point is that the firm trains both disadvantaged and talented young people ("learning from each other"). In addition, on completion of their courses, the former trainees take part in product courses organised by manufacturers used by TELBA. There is also the possibility of training to become a technician or master, with some of the training costs being paid by the firm. The firm also cooperates with other partners, e.g. a technical college and a grammar school, which enables school pupils to experience day-to-day life in a business in the framework of project work, and hence to motivate them to learn about business.

Greece

Sources of information

- Trade Unions: GSEE (General confederation of greek trade unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: FGI (Federation of Greek Industry), member of UNICE

Actions taken at national level

The FGI in cooperation with GSEE, the European Training Foundation and CEDEFOP organised and carried out a two-day European conference under the title "Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications of the Workforce: Roles and Responsibilities" which took place in Athens on 23 and 24 May 2003.

The main objectives of the conference were a) to raise awareness and stress the importance of lifelong development of the competences and qualifications of the workforce between the member states of the EU and the new states as crucial in achieving the Lisbon Strategy goals, b) to highlight the role and responsibilities of all actors involved in society in promoting lifelong learning, c) to further disseminate the key priorities of the "Framework of actions on lifelong development of competences and qualifications", as agreed in 2002 between the European social partners. The conference was attended by government officials and social partner representatives from the thirteen new member states, the Greek EU Presidency, a number of officials and experts from EU states, the European Commission, international organisations, European employer and employee organisations as well as local employer and employee organisations.

The aforementioned event triggered a series of meetings between the social partners concerning ways to improve efficiency and produce far more fruitful results in the operation of their Joint Account of own funds, LAEK, deriving from employers' and employees' contributions for the promotion of vocational training for employees in enterprises and the unemployed. Action in this area will take place in the first part of 2004. The objectives are a) to make more efficient use of the available and incoming resources for training and b) to initiate innovative methods and promote new lifelong learning programmes that will respond to the real needs of the labour market as well as its labour force.

The social partners worked jointly in laying the foundations for a new framework designed by the state, called the "National System of Education and Training linked to Employment" (ESSEEKA). This framework, which aims to promote the promotion of lifelong learning, the **development of competences and qualifications and their validation**, was adopted in October 2003 by the Greek Parliament and will be operational soon. The role of the social partners was very decisive in formulating provisions of the law. It is expected that this role will be even more active in the operational phase.

Good practice example

- **Neorion Shipyards – Analysis and anticipation of training needs and skill requirements**

When the oldest shipyard in Greece, Neorion, went into a period of recession it had to lay off 723 employees in Syros island. After it was privatised at the end of 1994 the new management set a new goal of reorganising, gradually restoring and fully establishing the most historic shipbuilding industry in the country. To achieve this, the following measures were taken with regard to human resources:

- Mapping of the real needs in human resources, per department and competence
- Qualitative assessment of competences for 600 employees who were to be rehired
- Setting up a training / retraining programme for these people
- Establishment of Neorion Vocational Training Centre that undertook the design and implementation of this programme

The positive results achieved since then are the following:

- Introduction of multiskilling in production
- Establishment of a variety of new competences
- A general upgrading of skills and competences of the entire workforce
- Application of the key features of the concept "Enterprise as a Learning Organisation"

This long process has included the design of training modules for the needs of the recruited ex-employees, their re-orientation in new positions in demand at the shipyard, the establishment of cooperation with experts from higher education, human resources, manpower organisations, research institutes, and the building of a database of professional profiles for each employee.

An on-going evaluation process which takes place within the company on a regular basis defines new goals to be achieved, ensuring further improvements for the development of competences of the company's workforce.

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 (training and employment authority), 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 on this investment in education and to extend its reach to all groups in society.

Actions taken at national level

FÁS, the Department of Education and Science, IBEC and ICTU have pursued a concerted approach in the allocation of ESF funds towards company training. This involves steering resources towards new projects, and in some cases new providers.

Implementation of the Report on the Task Force on Life-long Learning, published in October 2002, continues to be a priority. The mandate of the National training advisory committee and the expert group on future skill needs is currently being renewed.

Actions taken at sectoral level

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

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. These statistics mask a wide variation in funding with those having low skills receiving much less than those with a high level of education. Thus, an unintended consequence of this expenditure may be to widen inequality within the workforce.

A competency Development Programme (CDP) was introduced by FÁS in January 2003 to replace the Training Support Scheme (TSS) and Construction Training Incentive Scheme (CTIS), which were terminated on 31st December 2002. The aim of the CDP is to raise the competency levels of targeted employees in particular

occupations within specific sectors to ensure that the national stock of skills matches the national human resource requirements for continuous economic growth.

In 2003, FÁS continued to implement a pilot programme of management development for small firms (under 50 employees). The programme is operating in Dublin, South East and South West regions, and involves 30 companies. It is expected that the programme will conclude in February 2004.

Good practice example

- **Skillnets**

Skillnets the training Networks Programme was launched a new call for proposals at the end of 2002. This was over subscribed, and activities commenced in 2003. In addition, a call for in company training proposals was made in 2003. Activities in these areas will be mainly at sectoral level

- **Construction sector**

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

- **New qualifications framework**

The new qualifications framework continues to be developed by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the two awarding bodies, FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) and HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council). They are currently developing a framework for the accreditation and certification of training and life-long learning. All the Social Partners are involved thereby ensuring that particular emphasis is placed on workplace training.

Italy

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CGIL (General Italian confederation of work), CISL (Italian confederation of trade unions) and UIL (Italian union of work), members of ETUC
- Employers: Confindustria (Confederation of Italian Industries), member of UNICE; Confapi (Confederation of individual private SMEs), Confartigianato (General confederation of Italian crafts) and CNA (National Confederation of Handicraft and SMEs), members of UEAPME

Introduction

The main elements that mark the context in which the framework of actions was applied in Italy in 2003 are:

- The Italian social partners (CGIL-CISL-UIL and Confindustria) relaunched the bilateral cross-industry social dialogue on education and training by a follow-up to the agreement on principles dated 23 January 2002.
- An agreement for competitiveness and employability (signed by CGIL-CISL-UIL and Confindustria) entitled "Accordo per lo sviluppo, l'occupazione e la competitività" was concluded in mid-2003. The pact addresses the areas of research and training, as well as the areas of infrastructures and disadvantaged territories.
- 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.
- 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" (Handicraft Training Fund), the first to be established in Italy, designed to finance continuing training plans at all levels for retraining of workers.
- A cross-industry 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 that during 2004 will be fully operational.
- The government adopted, at the beginning of 2003, a law on the labour market and employment and some months later a law on education and vocational training systems.

Actions taken at national level

Confindustria continued the 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.

Regarding the resources allocated to vocational training, signature of the framework of actions stimulated the identification of cross-industry funds for continuing training, release of which started in 2003. 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" is now partially organised at central and local level and will start to finance the first plans for promotion of continuing training for workers in 2004.

Regarding continuing training for managers, Confindustria and Federmanager has started the organisation of a fund known as "Fondirigenti", within the already existing Fondazione Taliercio.

During 2004 the Handicraft Training Fund, Cross-industry Fund for continual training, set up by the entrepreneurial handicraft confederations (Confartigianato, CNA, Casartigiani and CLAAI) and the trade union Confederations (CGIL, CISL and UIL), will be fully operative with the possibility of setting up the first vocational training actions for workers and for the numerous enterprises which are part of the fund. These actions are aimed at satisfying the requests and needs of vocational training, re-qualification, adaptation and updating of professional worker abilities.

The number of workers (13% of the total number of workers interested in the Funds) and enterprises (43.71% of the total number of interested enterprises in the Funds) who are part of the Handicraft Training Fund make it an important instrument in representation and support of vocational training needs of these workers and craft/micro/small enterprises, for whom it is strategic to invest in development, growth and adaptation of effective professionalism especially in view of the complex challenges coming from market globalisation.

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

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 that during 2004 will be fully operational.

During 2003, four other funds for continuous training have been created by the trade union confederations (CGIL, CISL and UIL) and the national organisations for the commerce, banking/insurance, cooperation sectors and professional offices.

The social partners have also secured from the Ministry of Labour and ISFOL⁴ the resources needed to update a training plan for continuous training for the social partners.

The framework of actions was also used in the European Leonardo da Vinci programme, in which some social partners concluded joint projects, relating in

⁴ A Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour.

particular to the priorities **analysis of competences requirements** and **recognition of competences**.

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 competences needs** in various sectors.

In 2004 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 I (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. A second project known as FUTURISME II allowed the implementation and focalisation mainly of the results achieved regarding the specific theme of continuing training of workers.

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

- Single contract in the mechanical sector**

A single national contract for mechanical sector was concluded on 7 May 2003, which makes provision for workers in the form of lifelong learning. The system is now characterised by bilaterality at national and local level. This national contract was signed by Federmeccanica, Fim-Cisl, Uilm-Uil, with the exception of Fiom-Cgil.

The Bilateral Body at national level will have the aim to support planning and organisation of training for employees.

Worker co-investment is foreseen in terms of time through the use of hours accumulated in individual time accounts.

The partners are now working to carry out the agreement.

- National contract in the mechanical sector for SMEs**

A national collective agreement in this sector for SMEs was signed on 29 May 2003 by Unionmeccanica-Confapi with trade unions organisations CISL, UIL, with the exception of CGIL, confirming the importance of professional valorisation of human resources in order to increase employability and the quality of employment. It is foreseen a common evaluation for the institution of a National Bilateral Body having the aim to identify the specific training needs of the sector and to promote the organisation of adequate training for employees.

Training is recognised as fundamental for professional growth of employees in relation to technical, organisational and productive changes in enterprises. The promotion of training plans is foreseen also in order to increase competences and the vocational qualification of employees, by the conclusion of training agreements between enterprises and workers fixing their commitment for the achieving of training objectives taking into account costs incurred by enterprises.

- **Bilateral training body in the chemicals sector**

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 competences development. The OBC has published a vademecum on training opportunities in the chemicals sector. 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 competences needs and competences recognition for workers in the sector. Other initiatives are envisaged at both local and national level.

- **National collective agreement for employees of SMEs in the textile sector**

The national collective agreement of textile sector, singed on 19 May 2000 between Uniontessile-Confapi and trade unions organizations CGIL, CISL, UIL has established an Observatory on training, vocational guidance and employment with the aim of promoting studies and researches on these items, identifying training needs connected to the sector and supporting planning of training for employees.

- **National collective labour contracts for employees of the craft/micro/small chemical, rubber-plastic and glass sectors enterprises.**

This sector's national collective labour agreement, signed on July 11 2000 and still valid, between Confartigianato, CNA, Casartigiani, Claaai and the trade union Confederations, CGIL, CISL and UIL, foresees, in view of promoting the realisation of vocational training courses for workers, the commitment of the parties in periodically evaluating the companies and the trades where there is a demand for qualified labour and in the meantime give presentations of these companies and professions to young people who show an interest in this sector.

- **National collective labour contracts for employees of the craft/micro/small construction enterprises**

The sector's national collective agreement signed on 15 June 2000, and currently being renewed, between the National Handicraft associations, Confartigianato, CNA, Casartigiani, Claaai and the National Trade Union Associations, CGIL, CISL and UIL, seeks to inject impetus into vocational training of workers, the creation of Schooling Bodies or the improvement of those that already exist. These bodies, which are financed with contributions from the enterprises involved, have as an institutional aim the creation and promotion of adequate first training initiatives for youngsters entering the sector. They also have as their task the continuing training,

qualification, re-qualification, specialisation and up-dating of workers already present within the sector and the training needs arising from technological and legal innovations and new production processes.

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 now been strengthened and makes provision for flexible use of working time.

- Fondirigenti - Fondazione Taliercio**

Through this foundation, the social partners (Confindustria and Federmanager) have developed a questionnaire to enable managers and companies to use an online system for evaluating competences. The second phase of this project has consisted in disseminating the results for the benefit of all European managers.

- Research on training needs for the handicraft sector**

In the craft sector, EBNA – National Bilateral Body of Handicrafts, – composed of Confartigianato, CNA, Casartigiani, CLAAI and CGIL, CISL and UIL, carried out a primary National Research on Training Needs, financed by the Labour Ministry. The research, whose method was based on instruments of structural, organisational and capability analyses and possibilities for professionalism within the different areas of the sectors, has made it possible to define the frameworks of activity and areas of competence through which vocational handicraft knowledge can be mapped out, programmed and acquired anticipating needs arising from innovations.

Following the successful National Handicraft Training Needs Research, EBNA has started a second research project – this time with the help of the European Social Fund – fitted into the area of a System of Action at national level for a permanent observation network for identification of professional and capacity needs.

- National Analysis of Training Needs in Private SMEs**

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.

The study which was conducted by Enfea can be summarised as follows:

- observing labour from an economic point of view (importance of competitiveness) and social support (employability and adaptability);
- designed to identify the factors that determine significant quality changes in the medium term;
- express as modification of learning which constitute competence of the vocational figure under study (professional requirements);
- the scope to support the programming process (definition of priority and logic of the offer) and the course of the project (orienting educators towards a detailed analysis of the single contests object of the intervention);
- in a logic of integration between global (State and Region) and local (single territorial productive system) levels.

During 2003, a similar National Analysis of Training Needs, made by social partners on a bilateral basis, was carried out in other sectors (industry, cooperation, banking, etc.).

Luxemburg

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CGT-L (Confédération Générale du Travail de Luxembourg) and LGGB (Union of the Christian trade unions of Luxembourg), members of ETUC
- Employers: FEDIL (Federation of Luxembourg's Industrialists), member of UNICE

Introduction

In Luxembourg there is a long tradition of cooperation between public authorities and social partners with a view to adapting the structures linked to continuing vocational training and to developing joint actions. It is given concrete form at the level of a tripartite vocational training advisory committee put in place to advise the government. Each year, the opinions of this committee constitute the basis for the part of the national action plan for employment devoted to training.

Actions taken at national level

With a concern to promote continuing vocational training, on 2 May 2003 the social partners signed an agreement on individual access to continuing vocational training. The cross-industry agreement has three sections.

- The first section recommends the introduction of some adjustments to working time (adjustable timetable) for the benefit of persons wishing to pursue vocational training or complete their school education.
- The second section proposes the introduction of unpaid leave for a period of up to six months, under clearly defined conditions, for the benefit of employees pursuing training provided by institutes recognised in the framework of the agreement.
- The third section makes provision for the introduction of individual training leave enabling the employee to take advantage of training leave in order to participate in the closed list of training courses specified in the agreement.

Companies and sectors or economic branches can now draw inspiration from the clauses of this agreement for putting in place arrangements for adjustable timetables and unpaid leave. These provisions will become effective on adoption of the draft law on reform of collective agreements, which will allow the government to declare that cross-industry agreements are generally applicable. In the case of individual training leave and the adjustments to tax and social security legislation to which it gives rise, the social partners will leave it to the discretion of the legislator to transpose the clauses into positive legislation.

In addition, employer organisations organise courses and conferences, inter alia, on staff delegations and secondment of workers as well as courses in the Luxembourg language.

The two trade unions which are representative at national level organise training courses for staff delegates as well as their members through their training centre IFES (*Institut de formation économique et sociale* - institute for economic and social training).

Actions taken at sectoral level

Continuing vocational training courses are provided by *Chambres professionnelles patronales et salariales* (employer and employee professional chambers) as well as by trade organisations through their specialised institutes such as *Institut de Formation Bancaire de Luxembourg* (banking training institute) and *Institut de Formation Sectoriel du Bâtiment* (IFSB) (training institute of the construction sector). Created in 2002 by the construction and public works sector, IFSB has put in place the first training courses, notably for integration of the unemployed, and has continued to develop its programme. In addition, the social partners in the health sector have put in place and jointly finance a continuing vocational training centre (CFPC Dr R. Widong).

In 2001, *Union Luxembourgeoise des Entreprises de Travail Intérimaire* (ULEDI) (union of temporary work companies) agreed a reinforcement of training efforts when the sectoral collective agreement was renewed. Accordingly, in close cooperation with *Institut de Formation de la Chambre de Commerce* (chambers of commerce training institute), training has been put in place for permanent employees of temporary work agencies and a first cycle of training was provided during 2003. Its programme takes account of the specific features of the sector and also relates to labour law, social security and relations with the administrative departments directly concerned by temporary work.

The Netherlands

Sources of information

- Trade unions: FNV (Dutch Federation of the trade union movement), MHP (Trade Union Federation for Intermediate and Higher Employees) and CNV (National Christian trade union federation), members of ETUC
- Employers: VNO-NCW (Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers), member of UNICE; MKB-Nederland (Royal Dutch Association of SMEs), member of UEAPME, and LTO Nederland (Dutch Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture)

Introduction: General context at the national level

Lifelong learning and employability are still high on the agenda of the social partners. In the still difficult year 2003, witnessing economic recession, it became clear again that lower qualified employees are very vulnerable on the labour market. Social partners continued to include and improve framework conditions for learning in their collective agreements.

From the Government side, however, two negative decisions have to be reported. The first is that the general fiscal instrument to support training in companies were cancelled. Only those fiscal incentives related to initial training remained. New measures were added in the framework of combating unemployment, especially for those without a first vocational qualification. Social partners will certainly come back to this development in their opinion in 2004 about shared responsibilities for lifelong learning. This opinion will be requested in early 2004 from the Social Economic Council, in which social partners participate. The second is that the new government reduced considerably the support for employee saving accounts. Earlier, this was considered by social partners as a possible instrument to include a component for individual learning accounts. Given government policy, this instrument is out of the picture now.

Actions taken at national level

- **Recognition and validation of competences and qualifications.**

In 2003 progress was made, especially in the field of assessment of prior learning (APL). Supported by the national expert centre for assessment of prior learning, in several branches initiatives have been launched to implement APL. Three examples:

- In the metal-industry, APL is supported by the bipartite training and development fund of the branch. After assessment, employer and employee can ask for guidance, what skills are still lacking and should be trained for, in order to acquire the most relevant qualification from the national framework for vocational education for the metal-sector. In that case the guidance includes suggestions for training as well as indications of possible career development.

- In the childcare branch, the relevant national board for vocational education OVDB intermediates between child-care organisations and schools for organising APL based on portfolios.
- In the AGGF sector (potatoes, vegetables, fruit), APL has been introduced and the costs of assessment are paid by the bipartite training and development fund of the branch. The method of assessment will be further developed, in order to be able to translate the results not only into function profiles of the branch but also into formal qualifications that occur in the national qualification framework of vocational education.

It is worth noting that in all cases social partners use the added value to link APL outcomes one way or another with national qualifications that are known and recognised throughout the country. There may be necessary additional training to acquire any skills that are missing, but of course this is much more effective than starting from scratch.

Actions taken at sectoral and company levels: the Dutch carpet industry.

The Dutch carpet industry has about 30 companies and employs 3,000 employees. In terms of production it is in third position worldwide and leads in terms of product development, patterns and textures. Increase of productivity and innovations are at the centre of considerations, with new demands on competences of the employees. Initiated in 2002, now the Association of Dutch Carpet Manufacturers VNTF has an improved training system in operation in 2003, with the following characteristics:

- the content of the courses is developed by the companies and directly related to their needs
- the main learning environment is the company; in addition there is a school component, fitting perfectly with the learning experience in the company
- the employee/student has direct access to all the course material through the internet
- the managers of the employee/student function as coaches and discuss with him/her learning progress and development

The results of the new approach are a higher motivation for learning and the learning is much more effective.

Example of good practice

- **Het Noorder Dierenpark (Emmen zoo)**

In Emmen, a small city in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, a modern and beautiful zoo is located: Het Noorder Dierenpark. Depending on the season, 200-400 employees work there and the majority stay with the company quite a long time. Because of higher competition between zoos for visitors, the higher demands of visitors and the wish of employees themselves concerning personal development, it was necessary to emphasise more flexibility and employability of the employees. With the unions and in the framework of a collective agreement, the company agreed on implementation in 2003 of the instrument of the personal development plan, based on four conversations a year between the employee and his direct manager. The company training and development plan includes facilities (courses,

costs) for realisation of the personal development plans. The effect is twofold: employees are motivated to work on their own employability and managers become more aware of the capacities and employability of the employees.

Portugal

Sources of information

- Trade unions: UGT (General Workers Union), member of ETUC
- Employers: CIP (Confederation of Portuguese Industry), member of UNICE

Introduction

Since the first follow-up report prepared by the Portuguese Social Partners on the framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, the following developments can be reported:

1) The Labour Code and its implementing laws

This Code was the subject of negotiations between the Government and the Portuguese Social Partners for a period that lasted more than six months. The Code was approved by the Parliament on 27 August and has been in force since 1 December 2003.

The dialogue between the Government and the Social Partners was intended to ensure an adequate balance between companies' needs for modernisation and adaptation on the one hand and workers' needs for security and protection on the other, but the final result is not supported by Social Partners, namely CIP and UGT.

After the Code was approved, a new period of negotiations started between Social Partners and the Government, in order to implement the Code. More than 38 bills were discussed, including one regarding vocational training. This discussion lasted for another seven months.

The Code includes very important provisions regarding the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, which were already foreseen in the previously agreed "Employment and Vocational Training Agreement", signed by the Social Partners and the Government in February 2001. For example:

- Article 56 – imposes, in general, vocational training for workers under 18 years of age;
- Article 123, 2 – general principle of diligent participation by workers in vocational training actions organised by employers;
- Article 125, 2 – establishes that companies must involve at least 10% of their workers in vocational training;
- Article 125, 3 and 4 – entitles workers to have a minimum of twenty hours of certificated training a year in 2003 and thirty-five hours a year in 2006;
- Article 137, 3 – establishes some rules about training of workers with fixed-term contracts, namely that employers can determine these actions where there is no agreement with the workers.

2) Revision of the Vocational Training legal framework

After the Government approved a General Law on Education – that is now being discussed in Parliament – the Government presented to Social Partners a Draft Law on Vocational Training. This Draft Law on Vocational Training was deeply criticised by the Social Partners, in such a manner that the Government decided to withdraw it on 25 September and declared that a new version would be presented by October.

However, the second version of the Draft Law on Vocational Training was presented only on 13 January.

In order to discuss these subjects Social Partners have organised several meetings with their own member associations to prepare the negotiations on the new Vocational Training Law.

3) Social Pact for Competitiveness and Employment

A discussion is presently taking place within the Standing Committee for Social Dialogue (Social Concertation) regarding a possible Social Pact for Competitiveness and Employment, proposed by the Prime Minister, aimed at identifying and adopting measures and policies which will contribute to an increase of productivity, competitiveness and employment, and will boost some other essential matters, such as Innovation, Vocational Training, R&D, Health and Safety, or the fight against Tax Evasion. Within the framework of this Social Pact, three Working Groups have been created, one of them specifically to discuss education and vocational training.

Actions taken at national level

Concerning the above-mentioned Labour Code, Labour Code Regulation, Draft Law for Vocational Training and The Social Pact For Competitiveness and Employment, CIP and UGT have organised actions with their members that have contributed for the dissemination and consolidation of the concept of "lifelong development of competences and qualifications" at national level.

UGT and CIP have also been defending some changes in the tax system, in order to promote vocational training.

Actions taken at sectoral and company level

UGT has been promoting concrete actions directed to workers with the objective to motivate them both to the importance of vocational training and of the development of competences and qualifications.

CIP has launched several actions intended to raise companies' awareness regarding lifelong development of competences and qualifications, which are considered very important for the productivity and competitiveness of companies and for the employability of their workers.

Examples of good practices

Some collective agreements mention the need to promote certificated vocational training and the obligation on the worker to take part in it.

And we can mention some developments concerning vocational training, for instance the following specific cases:

CIMPOR, a cement company, is an important example, since it promotes constant vocational training for all its workers, whatever their professional category.

The DOURO AZUL agreement (tourism sector) is another interesting case. It determines that workers or their representatives must be involved in the elaboration of training plans. The same agreement also guarantees a 10% pay rise, in addition to a possible promotion for workers who attend vocational training actions.

Spain

Sources of information

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

Introduction

Dissemination and discussion of the "framework of actions" continued in 2003, but it had less visibility than the previous year. Nevertheless, the four priorities remain in the centre of all the debates and developments in this field.

The main events in the national context regarding development of qualifications and competences during 2003 were the following:

- Development of the new Act on Qualifications and VET:
 - Identification and definition of standards of qualifications to be included in the new System of Qualifications, after approval of a regulation (Royal Decree) establishing a new National Catalogue of Qualifications. This system is going to be the global framework for certification, validation and recognition of qualifications, taking into account both formal education and training and informal learning.
 - A project (called ERA) was launched in order to test a methodology for assessment and validation of informal learning.
- Definition of a new framework for funding continuous training.
- Extension for 2004 of the national framework agreement on collective bargaining, which served as a reference for negotiators of collective agreements in 2002 and 2003, which includes a specific reference to the framework of actions.

Actions taken at national level

Dissemination and discussion activities continued in 2003. Leaving aside the dissemination of the framework of actions through the websites of employer organisations and trade unions, it has also been discussed in several seminars and conferences.

A book, called "Training and competitiveness", compiled several presentations including some of social partners concerning the framework of actions. The book was published by the Tripartite Foundation for Continuous Training.

An article of the employer organisation CEOE was published in the magazine "Teams and talent", which has a wide distribution among human resources managers.

A new framework for funding continuous training was established, after consultation of the social partners who stressed the framework of actions' priorities regarding the new regulation. Since 2004, companies investing in training their employees can reduce their social contributions if they comply with some requirements. The percentage of this social tax reduction is bigger for SMEs and a minimum is granted for micro-enterprises. The aim is that the new framework fosters training and increases investments of companies, by co-funding these investments, in line with the priorities of the framework of actions.

While this was the main innovation, other reforms were introduced in the supply of free training courses to workers at sectoral and intersectoral level, and in the Tripartite Foundation for Training and in other consultative bodies.

The new framework for continuous training includes also training linked to the new National Catalogue of Qualifications, in order to be officially recognised, building bridges between continuous training and formal vocational education.

Actions taken at sectoral level

Sectoral studies on needs for qualifications and competences were launched, in the context of the activities funded by the Tripartite Foundation for Vocational Training.

Working groups were established in 23 sectors, in order to develop qualification standards and training modules for the new System of Qualifications. Experts who participated in these groups were proposed by social partners and other stakeholders. The first outcomes were recently presented and discussed at a three-day Conference with active participation of social partners.

CEO, CC.OO. and UGT published several surveys on Collective Bargaining on the issue of vocational training. Although no special innovations have been introduced during 2003, collective agreements frequently include regulations about training and development of competences and qualifications. These surveys show little evolution, but also some improvement on the issue of development of competences and qualifications as a joint interest of employers and workers.

Actions taken at company level

A variety of practices, events and other initiatives illustrate that the commitment of companies with the development of competences is relevant and it continues to increase. Nevertheless, other data show that there are no grounds for complacency and much still must be done, especially at the levels of SMEs and with low-skilled workers.

During 2003, almost 3,000 company training plans were approved to receive co-funding from the Tripartite Foundation for Training and Employment, which meant around € 135 million in order to train more than 2 million employees.

Good practice example

- **NH Hoteles**

NH Hoteles is an expanding young hotel firm. It has 240 hotels in 16 countries with more than 12,500 employees. The values of the firm are orientated towards the external customer, paying special attention to the quality of service, as well as to the employee as an internal customer. The firm offers the employee a whole range of training and development activities (courses, e-learning, workshops, forums, exchanges, etc.)

One of the company policies in this field is identification and anticipation to the competences and qualifications needed. This is done through a system that combines three complementary views or perspectives, allowing adjustment of training activities to real needs. These three perspectives are:

- Vertical perspective: competence development needs of all employees are analysed on the basis of the performance assessment carried out by the superior (in some levels, also by colleagues and assistants).
- Own perspective: all employees regularly report their own thoughts and wishes for the competences that they should develop.
- External perspective: competences are assessed and analysed by external specialist companies in order to define the company's and the employee's development needs.

The HR Department integrates these three views with the aim of planning objectively a training and development programme specifically customised to reflect real needs. This optimises the training investment.

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), members of CEEP

Introduction

Lifelong learning and development of competences and qualifications are matters of great interest for the Swedish labour market organisations. We regard the development of competences and qualifications at the work place as crucial for the employees' employability as well as for companies' competitiveness and the development of public services. The labour market organisations notice great difficulty in finding staff with appropriate competences. The difficulty in recruiting workers with vocational education has become a structural obstacle to growth. One reason is that the public education and training system does not adapt quickly enough to meet the changing labour market demands or sufficiently enough to meet the increasing need for advanced vocational education. During 2003 several initiatives were taken by the Swedish labour market organisations: studies, projects and discussions focused on the importance of lifelong learning and the growing need to validate and recognise skills and qualifications.

Actions taken at national level

- **Identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs**

For many years the labour market organisations and the government have regarded lifelong learning and development of competences as strategic areas directly connected to the European Employment strategy – and the European Social Fund (ESF) as an important tool for the identification of work-related needs for improved competences. At its mid-point, the ESF programme Objective 3, which mainly focuses on skills development and gives priority to assistance for skills development analyses and skills development for employees, has had more than 850,000 participants of whom the majority (88%) in priority area 1. The evaluation shows positive results for individual participants.

Several employer federations and their trade union counterparts in private and public sector work with identification and anticipation of and information regarding, competence and qualification needs. As an example, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation finished its project for Competence development and learning (KUL) with a seminar and also launched written reports highlighting the need for strategies for identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs.

- **Recognition and validation of competences and qualifications**

The Federation of Private Enterprises published a study showing that much of the learning in companies is accomplished through learning in everyday work. Similar results were presented in a study made by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise.

The government decided to install a time-limited authority, the Delegation for Validation (2004 – 2007).

The introduction of more flexible regulations regarding admission to undergraduate education have made it possible to apply to university and institutes of higher education not only on the basis of a regular exam. The labour market organisations have - through different initiatives - contributed to realising this.

- **Information, support and guidance**

Government plans to make municipalities responsible for information and career guidance. As many initiatives regarding web-based information and guidance have already been taken, several labour market organisations have recommended that the new initiatives should be used to build on what has already been put into practice.

A National Reference Point for information, support and guidance has been developed.

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation continued a project (FUF) aimed at supporting members with a short education to participate in further training.

- **Resources**

In order to make it possible for people who want to re-train for a new professional career, a new educational format for basic vocational training under apprentice-like conditions is being tested. Special economic means are now available for adults who need to finance their studies in order to complete their exams.

Actions at sectoral level

- **Identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs**

Several employer federations and their trade union counterparts in private and public sector cooperate in vocational training and identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs. This has resulted in new university programmes and courses in close cooperation with the work places in all sectors – for example - the health care and trade sectors.

Computer knowledge is increasingly a prerequisite for employment. This is why the Data Processing Society's introduction of a "European Computer Driver's License", ECDL, was endorsed by the social partners. At the moment 220,000 persons have passed the ECDL Start and 160,000 persons the complete ECDL.

- **Recognition and validation of competences and qualifications**

Universities, upper secondary schools and employers have in cooperation with local unions in the health care sector developed and put into practice methods for validation of competences and qualifications.

County councils and regions arrange preparatory training as well as training in the Swedish language in order to make it easier for health care professionals from countries outside EU to gain recognition in Sweden.

Labour market organisations at sectoral level participate in different projects regarding validation of competence and qualifications.

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees launched a pilot scheme in order to develop means to recognize and validate the competences gained through work as a workers representative. The mapping of competencies is finished and is going to be validated against subject areas and at work places.

- **Information, support and guidance**

The Institute for professional development of medical doctors in Sweden (IPULS) launched a website giving overview of their approved courses and has thereby made it easier for medical doctors who need a certain professional development.

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees launched the project Adult Learning, aimed at creating awareness among adult members regarding the need for continuous training.

- **Resources**

The finance sector together with universities developed a strategic resource for education and training of people aiming to work in the sector and for development of people already employed in the sector.

Actions at company level

In Sweden there is in private and public companies a frequent and an intensively ongoing work for lifelong learning, and it is impossible to give a precise picture of everything that is being done. We have agreed on giving a description in broad and overall terms.

- **Identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs**

Private and public companies, as well as the labour market organisations, on a regular basis perform studies for identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs. Methods used are continuously developed for better precision.

- **Recognition and validation of competencies and qualifications**

Labour market organisations at local level and companies actively participate in projects regarding methods as well as the actual performance of validating competences and qualifications.

- **Information, support and guidance**

Labour market organisations actively participate in information, support and guidance towards their members, both at company level and via their educational organisations.

- **Resources**

Some public and private employers have introduced individual learning accounts in order to stimulate and facilitate their employees' competence development.

The labour market organisations in Sweden stress that time and people are important resources, as well as money, for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications. Resources available will be significantly reduced when the ESF-project Objective 3 ends.

Good practice example

- Learning at work in flexible ways**

Masugnen (in Lindesberg) is a centre for commission education. It helps develop the competences of employees, unemployed and entrepreneurs with the starting point in the individual's needs. Masugnen tailors education/training programmes for adults after validating the participants' competences and qualifications. They can arrange compulsory, secondary as well as advanced vocational training. The centre has specialised in distance learning and ICT learning. In its guidance centre it is possible to meet a guidance counsellor, be validated and have an individual study plan as well as gain advice on how to finance your studies. Masugnen also has a separate branch at the hospital in Lindesberg.

Since Masugnen was known to be at the forefront regarding flexible learning and distance learning, it was selected as partner when the social partners in the mining and explosives industry and their organisations for vocational training anticipated a need for a training programme for employees in the explosive industry. Since they saw similar future needs for other areas of industry and services – and the possibilities in developing new teaching methods for distance learning based on information and communication technology - the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and Almega were heavily engaged in realising the project.

At the same time, Nammo, Nordic Ammunition Company Vingåkersverken AB had anticipated a need for competence development among its employees due to reductions, increased competition and increased demands from authorities and customers.

The distance-learning model designed, built on modern technology and an active search for knowledge. The training programme on explosives consisted of five theoretical interactive modules and one practical. As a whole, the programme – including lessons given by external teachers - was performed at the workplace; half of the day participants studied, the rest of the day they gained practice at work. Important to note is that also persons who were looking for a new job – persons with long education (nurses and engineers) as well as persons with a short education - were given the opportunity to participate in the programme. Persons who passed received a professional certificate and a diploma and – where appropriate - upper secondary credit points.

The project was financed through one of the funds arranged by the social partners in the private sector and the ESF-programme Objective 4. Each labour market organisation contributed with its experts

This model for learning at work in flexible ways has been approved of from other areas of industry and services and is now frequently in use in Sweden. It has also

led to the development of several new programmes of advanced vocational training in various areas.

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

After a difficult first quarter, the UK economy recovered through 2003, with steady growth allowing employment, in particular self-employment, to increase. Recovery has so far been focused on a few sectors, in particular public services and construction and more recently financial and business services sectors. Against this background, the social partners' priority in 2003 was ensuring that the Government's overarching Skills Strategy, launched in July, addressed the needs of employers and learners.

Actions taken at national level

Employers and unions played a vital role in shaping the Skills Strategy, which has implications for all four priorities in the framework. For example the final Strategy proposes a more flexible qualification system, so it is easier to recognise and validate competence, and includes measures to improve information and guidance for individuals and employers. It also establishes a new entitlement for all individuals without a level 2 qualification to access free learning to achieve foundation skills for employability.

The CBI, UNICE's UK member, and its trades union counterpart, the TUC have joined together with Government and delivery agencies in a new Skills Alliance to drive implementation of the Strategy and ensure that employers and individuals see real improvements on the ground. The social partners have worked together on skills at regional and local levels on Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). For example, in the Northwest the Forum of Private Business (FPB) is working with the TUC, LSC and North West Development Agency on new information, advice and guidance strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises, as a result of the UEAPME Futurisme project.

The social partners are closely involved in the Government-funded Employer Training Pilots. These are testing measures designed to increase the competence of workers with low or no qualifications. Initial findings from the first year of the Employer Training pilots show the importance of flexible, brokered training. The pilots use an 'assess train assess' model to identify existing competences and further training needs in order to achieve a national level 2 qualification. Ninety per cent of training is delivered on the employers' premises. Timing is flexible which suits the individual employee and the employer, who agrees to release staff. So far over 3100 employers and 14 000 employees are taking part.

Employers and unions have contributed to the work of the Modern Apprenticeship Taskforce to ensure a better fit between the programme and employers' current and future skill requirements and to improve the operation of the system so that more young people can benefit from quality apprenticeship training.

Actions taken at sectoral level

Social partners have been closely involved in the development of the new Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) – nine have now been licensed. The CBI facilitated a series of discussion seminars with its trade association members on current and future competence needs and the role which the SSCs should play. The TUC has facilitated meetings with the trade unions to discuss the union role on SSCs and how unions can work in partnership with employers to address skill needs at the sector level.

SSCs continue to develop support for individual sectors, and FPB is working with the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) on endorsement for relevant training and management initiatives. The social partners are contributing to the development of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), based in existing academic institutions, and linked to regional and sectoral economic objectives.

The NHS aims to provide a modernised health service designed around patient's needs. A development strategy called the Skills Escalator has been agreed with health service unions to deliver the necessary skills. Staff are encouraged to update their knowledge and development is designed to open up routes for career progression. The strategy also aims to attract a wider range of people to the NHS by providing basic training for unemployed individuals. The NHS works with partners such as Job Centres, health service unions, LSCs, Workforce Development Confederations and the University for the NHS to implement the Escalator.

Actions taken at company level

Evidence of commitment to raising skills is encouraging, although much remains to be done. The Commission's recent draft interim report on Education and Training 2010 showed that 22% of the UK's adult population had participated in education and training in the previous 4 weeks compared to an EU average of 8.5%. Almost ten million employees (36% of the workforce) work for an organisation which is either recognised as an Investor in People or committed to achieving the IIP Standard. In the 12 months up to 30 September 2003, 407,399 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) certificates were awarded, an increase of almost 7% on the previous year.

In spring 2003 the Government put Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) on a statutory footing. The number of ULRs has increased from 4,000 to 6,500 in line with the Government target of getting 22,000 such representatives in place by 2010.

The Small Firms initiative launched in February 2003 to help small businesses use the IIP Standard to identify and meet their skill needs had produced 170 recognitions and 3568 commitments by December. The social partners were involved from the beginning in designing the support and raising awareness among their members.

NHS Trusts are using the Skills Escalator to develop entry routes into the organisation for individuals without professional qualifications, who are often longer term unemployed. Southport and Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust has developed and runs a pre-employment training course "Health Learning Works" in partnership with local education providers and health service trade unions. South Birmingham Primary Care Trust has developed a scheme to recruit care workers from minority ethnic groups. It offers professional qualifications in the NHS and has achieved a 96% retention rate after initial training.

Good practice examples

- Skills for Life Agreement in the Printing Industry**

The Graphical, Paper and Media Union (GPMU) signed a Skills for Life Training Agreement with Derby based print company BemroseBooth in April 2003. The Agreement builds on four years of work by GPMU learning representatives and aims to build a learning partnership within the company between the employer and the union by encouraging employees to engage in lifelong learning and also by establishing a Workplace Learning Centre. Employees receive 50 per cent of the course time as paid release from their job and donate 50 per cent of their own time. Employees are also given paid release to attend basic and key skills assessments.

GPMU Training and Education Manager, Dave Jeffery, says that "the union learning reps in partnership with the company have created a culture where employees want to learn and to progress within the company." The company's Human Resource manager, Keith Marklew agrees, saying that he has "been impressed by the successes of the Union Learning Reps in terms of switching people on to learning".

- Shepherd Construction**

A Yorkshire-based firm with approximately 1000 employees, Shepherd is one of a number of leading construction firms committed to driving up skill levels in the sector. Like other major contractors, Shepherd is using Construction Skills Certification Cards to recognise the competence levels of its employees. The card provides accreditation recognised by the industry and is signed off by the manager. Shepherd uses quarterly audits to see how much progress individuals have made. The firm has an assessment centre and has provided businesses in its supply chain with the assessment for higher level NVQs, e.g. NVQ Level 5 in construction contract management, supporting 50 candidates from 30-40 companies.

- North Bristol NHS Trust**

The Trust initiated the "Professional Development Pathway" scheme to further develop the skills of qualified nurses. Depending on the nursing grade, the programme offers training and experience in different clinical or management areas for periods between 18 months and 5 years. It enables staff at different grades not only to improve their skills but also to develop the competences to apply for promotion to higher grades, managerial level and academic qualifications.

The European level

Introduction

The framework of actions was adopted in March 2002 by the European social partners at inter-professional level. Member organisations of UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC committed themselves to promote the framework of actions in the Member States at all the appropriate levels. Subsequently, follow-up actions have been taken primarily in the Member States. However, some actions can also be reported at European level.

Actions taken at European cross-industry level

The European social partners continued to disseminate actively the framework of actions in 2003. They participated in numerous conferences, workshops and meetings involving training providers, policy-makers and national social partners to explain the rationale on the framework of actions adopted in 2002, disseminate the good practices described in the follow-up report 2003 and more generally discuss ways to promote competence development in Europe. National social partner federations cooperated to organize some of these conferences, highlighting their common commitment to promote the lifelong development of competences across Europe⁵.

European social partners had also opportunities to discuss with the European Institutions and to identify the crucial elements for a successful implementation of the Lisbon strategy at European and national levels. Cooperation was fruitful for example when discussing the report of the European Employment Task Force chaired by Mr Wim Kok.

Concerning education and training policies in particular, it should be noted that since February 2002 European social partners meet the troika of the Education Council on a regular basis. These meetings are an opportunity to exchange views on the cooperation process in the field of education and training, for example on the Commissions communication "Education and Training 2010". This is the reason why social partners call on the Commission to take into account the objectives defined in the joint framework of actions in its communications and orientations.

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

- Within the context of its Futurisme II project (co-financed by the European Structural Funds), UEAPME held a seminar on "Training and Social Dialogue" in Liverpool in April 2003. UEAPME presented the Framework of Actions and exchanged best practices with SME and Trade Union organisations from the UK, Sweden, Belgium, Italy and Denmark on how social partners can work together to improve life-long learning in and for SMEs, with a special focus on micro-businesses.

⁵ For example, the Conference organised on 24 February 2003 by BDA ([report of the Conference](#))

In July 2003 a thematic working group was set up for the EQUAL programme on lifelong learning. UEAPME is a member of this working group whose aim is to identify, disseminate and mainstream good practices developed by the EQUAL programme.

- ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP launched in 2003 a project to help national social partner organizations in the acceding countries to prepare for their full integration in the European social dialogue from May 2004 onwards. In this context, the framework of actions adopted in 2002 and the implication of its promotion by social partners in each national context is discussed.

Actions taken at European sectoral level

- **Electricity sector**

In the race towards recruiting and retaining the best available workforce in the European electricity industry, continuous training of staff and proper matching of the actual skills of workers with the demands of a changing environment are of the utmost importance. In order to remain an attractive employer, and to maintain its competitiveness, the electricity sector must find suitable ways to ensure that its personnel maintain their skills at an appropriate level.

Lifelong learning is a key principle for the training policies of the electricity sector. It allows company-specific policies to be applied to tackle the need for continuous staff training.

In order to concretise this growing interest, the social partners decided to launch a study on life-long learning in the electricity sector. The study was undertaken on the basis of a survey among electricity companies in several countries. As a joint effort, the partners drafted a questionnaire to investigate the various aspects of life-long learning and the associated policies. The questionnaire was sent to European electricity companies and answers were collected during 2002.

In June 2003, a joint statement of EURELECTRIC, EMCEF and EPSU and the final report on the study on Lifelong Learning in the Electricity Sector were issued. More information can be found at the following address: <http://public.eurelectric.org/Content/Default.asp?PageID=52>

On the basis of the study report and its conclusions, the social partners will continue to monitor the needs for lifelong learning. EURELECTRIC, EMCEF and EPSU are, for the benefit of companies and employees, committed to jointly exploring ways to provide information related to those needs. As a part of those efforts the social partners propose to hold a joint workshop to explore the needs for life-long learning, focusing on learning from good practices.

- **Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries**

Following the adoption of their joint document in January 2003 on "Skills shortages in the metal industries", WEM - which has been renamed CEEMET (Council of European Employers for the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries) in January 2004 - and the EMF (European Metalworkers' Federation) organised a joint Conference on 30 September & 1st October 2003 titled "*Skills Shortages in the European Metal Industry. A step towards achieving the Lisbon goals*". The

Conference - which was co-financed by the European Commission - was addressed by Commissioner Liikanen (DG ENTR) and Mr. Briesch, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, which hosted the event. About 140 participants from companies, employer associations, trade unions, EU Institutions as well as consultants and academics attended the conference. They came from the 15 EU member states, several "applicant" countries, Norway and Switzerland. The Conference was divided in two sessions dedicated respectively to "image of the metal industry" and "new ways to deliver training including distance learning and e-learning". The report of the Conference shall be available soon. CEEMET and EMF are currently discussing on other possible issues in the field of vocational training that could be discussed jointly in a near future.

- **Postal Sector**

The European Social Dialogue Committee for the Postal Sector decided, during its plenary meeting on the 7th of July, 2003, to launch a new collection of good practices on training and skills development.

This new collection of good practices is inspired by the "Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development and Qualifications" established and signed at a horizontal level by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP: the questionnaire is organized with reference to the four priorities of this framework:

- Identify and anticipate competencies and qualifications needs
- Recognize and validate competencies and qualifications
- Inform, support and provide guidance
- Mobilize resources

It also takes into consideration two other issues, which might be relevant to the postal sector:

- Work organization – learning organization, how to use the work organization as tool for developing competencies
- Adapting to the rapid change and development.

The questionnaire is available on the new site of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Postal Sector: postsocialdialog.org. This web site, set up with the support of the European Commission presents more than fifty good practices already collected for three years. It has been launched during the last plenary meeting of the Committee, on the 16th of January 2004.

A synthesis of questionnaire's results will be published on the web site in the middle of the year 2004.

At the plenary session on 16 January 2004, the working group on training and skills development was asked based on the collection of good practices to elaborate proposals about possible next steps within the area of life-long learning to be presented and discussed during the next plenary session of the Committee.

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

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UNICE/UEAPME**
European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and
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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 teamwork, 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 foundation⁶, 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

⁶ 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 ETUC⁷ 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.

⁷ The ETUC delegation includes representatives of the Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee