

skillset AND MATCH

**CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE
PROMOTING
LEARNING FOR WORK**



CEDEFOP

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MAIN STORY: APPRENTICESHIPS

INTERVIEWS:

GERHARD RIEMER
LUCA VISENTINI
MARA BRUGIA

FEATURE: ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY

MEMBER STATES: LATVIA



CEDEFOP

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training.

We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice.

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photo: Angelos Zymars



Cedefop expert Robert Stowell with trainee Anastasia Matonaki

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Adding

value to people's lives

JAMES CALLEJA

CEDEFOP DIRECTOR



In my view,
at the centre
of a European agenda
for education
lies the link
between education
and employment

Research and evidence-based policies add value to people's lives. In today's economic climate, our common goal is to fight unemployment. Cedefop is at the heart of this mission.

Our activities give governments and social partners the tools to create learning environments conducive to skills, competences and qualifications relevant to the labour market. Policy-makers play an important role in translating European vocational education and training (VET) policies and tools into means for employability.

Today's jobs demand new skills and competences; education and training must therefore go beyond formal institutions. E-learning, for instance, provides invaluable opportunities for upskilling and retraining. Similarly, recognition of informal and non-formal learning can qualify a person for a job.

Cedefop and the Commission, together with governments and social partners, are offering VET policies, tools and networking opportunities that enable training providers and learners to engage in meaningful training experiences in their own country.

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Cedefop's support for apprenticeships and work-based learning indicates a significant incline towards reducing early leavers from vocational institutions, engaging more people in activities that combine theory with practice, and brings employers closer to formal education and quality assurance practices.

A Cedefop conference earlier this year (see pp. 9-14) focused on apprenticeships and on matching resources and initiatives from different Member States that create new skills and job opportunities.

Work-based learning is in itself an appealing factor to fight unemployment. Employers today often look for employees who have practical experience. But this is not always possible unless one deliberately exposes young learners to direct work environments. Such interface will determine the actual value of qualifications as well as a person's capacity and determination to achieve results. In my view, at the centre of a European agenda for education lies the link between education and employment.



(Social) partners for training and jobs in Europe

GERHARD RIEMER

LUCA VISENTINI

Policy-makers can design all the policies they want to promote learning and employment, but they stand little chance of seeing results without active involvement of social partners – employers and employees. Cedefop's work is

largely dependent on engagement of the European social partners, who are also represented in its Governing Board. With that in mind, *Skillset and match* discussed the challenges facing vocational education and training (VET) as a vehicle for employability

with **Luca Visentini**, Confederal Secretary of the

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and **Gerhard Riemer**,

Representative of the Employers' Group in the Cedefop Bureau.

Is the rise in Euroscepticism depicted in results of the European Parliament elections going to impact on European policies on training, mobility and employability?

L.V. The increase in Euroscepticism is due to different factors. Perhaps it is due to interference of the EU in national matters, but mainly it arises from effects of the economic crisis and austerity measures. Policies on training, mobility and employability have also been affected by austerity and cuts. However, it would be an enormous mistake if Europe gives up on these actions. They have instead to be strengthened and adapted to people's needs. These actions cannot be effective without a significant inversion of macroeconomic policies towards investment and job creation.

G.R. Education and training is a national competence and so perhaps results of the elections will not directly affect this. At European level, education and training policies can play a role in helping to set a framework for improving national systems and Europe's competitiveness. In turn, this can help to create more opportunities for people, and in this way have an impact on their prospects and create an EU added value.

How can and do social partners influence European policies on vocational education and provide the much-talked-about link with labour market needs?

L.V. Social partners are committed to implementation of such policies. They are the best-placed actors in the labour market, therefore EU and national institutions should involve them properly, especially in initiatives like the youth guarantee, the European alliance for apprenticeships and lifelong learning programmes under Erasmus+.

G.R. Social partners play an important role; they are familiar with the world of work and especially the employers are closely involved with changing trends in skills requirements. At European level, there are different contexts in which social partners try to influence VET policy, such as the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training and the research work that Cedefop does. We also promote the role of work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships. Combining practical work experience and classroom teaching is a good way for young people to develop their skills and competences as well as meeting employers' skills needs.

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The extent of youth unemployment varies from country to country and there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy for Europe _ Gerhard Riemer



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To combat youth (and general) unemployment we need to create more and good jobs, there is no alternative _ Luca Visentini

What is needed to combat youth unemployment while safeguarding workers' rights? The youth guarantee project, for example, makes special reference to good-quality job offers.

L.V. To combat youth (and general) unemployment we need to create more and good jobs, there is no alternative. To do that, we need investment for growth and higher wages for internal demand. Having done that, education and training tools such as the youth guarantee or active labour market policies

(rather than ‘structural reforms’) can concretely contribute to quantity and quality of jobs. But all such actions need clear reference to labour rights and equal treatment. German labour market reforms for mini-jobs (the model for Europe now) didn’t create a single additional working hour in Germany, but just divided the same number of jobs among seven million additional workers.

G.R. Combating youth unemployment is clearly a key concern. The extent of youth unemployment varies from country to country and there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy for

Europe. The youth guarantee can help young people most in need. However, it must not be seen as an alternative to undertaking the necessary reforms of labour markets and education and training systems. These reforms are needed to foster job creation and better align education systems with labour market needs. In turn, this will help to improve Europe’s competitiveness on the global stage, which will lead to more opportunities for Europe’s youths.

Is the European alliance for apprenticeships working?

L.V. Not exactly. The alliance was a very good initiative, but there are several obstacles in its implementation. There is a significant lack of apprenticeship places offered by companies because of the crisis. There are no quality standards as a reference, and national systems are highly fragmented. Social partners are not involved properly. But we are committed to making our voices heard.

G.R. It’s a good initiative and one that employers support. Important steps have been taken, but there is still much more to do; especially when it comes to monitoring and following up initiatives undertaken as part of the alliance.

moving education and training closer to the labour market



One of Cedefop's longest-serving members of staff, **Mara Brugia** joined the agency when it was still based in Berlin, in 1993. She became head of one of the two research areas in 2004. After a stint as Acting Deputy Director (2012-13), she was appointed permanently to the post and took up her duties at the beginning of September. Having experienced life at Cedefop both in Berlin and Thessaloniki – its current base – the Perugia-born economist is best placed to give an account of how the organisation has evolved over the years.

MARA BRUGIA

CEDEFOP DEPUTY DIRECTOR

'When I joined, in Berlin, Cedefop was mainly an information platform on vocational education and training (VET) developments. Its main task was to prepare descriptions of VET systems and it had the most extensive library on VET in Europe. Towards the end of the 1990s, under the Lisbon strategy and the open method of coordination, Cedefop's role in support of EU policies increased, for example by contributing to shaping common EU tools and principles for lifelong learning and by analysing and reporting on policy developments in the Member States. Cedefop progressively became a centre of expertise for European VET policy. In 2010, it also started working systematically to understand better current and future qualifications and skill needs, labour market trends and skills mismatch. Today, we no longer just look at the education and training side. We operate at the interface between education and training and the labour market to help these two different worlds come closer together. This is where in my view Cedefop's key added value lies and should be reinforced in the years to come.'

Ms Brugia describes how Cedefop's work supports European VET priorities: 'In Bruges in 2010, the European Commission, participating countries and social partners commonly agreed that, by 2020, VET should offer attractive and challenging career opportunities both for people with high potential and those who, for whatever reason, face a risk of being excluded from the labour market. This means that by 2020 European VET systems should be more attractive, of high quality, labour-market-relevant, and easily accessible. It also implies supporting flexible learning pathways. These issues form an important part of Cedefop's work, which provides the evidence to help the European Commission, Member States and social partners shape and implement their policies. In 2012, the European Council agreed several initiatives to increase employability. The European alliance for apprenticeships is part of this strategy. Cedefop contributes to the alliance in various ways. We analyse and monitor developments of work-based learning and

“

Good-quality VET implies equipping people with qualifications that combine job-specific with generic and transferable skills, as the latter will become more and more important for finding and keeping jobs

apprenticeship reforms in Member States and we support cooperation on apprenticeships at EU level. We also work more and more with individual countries. For example, we are currently piloting in-depth reviews of apprenticeship schemes in Malta and Lithuania, who volunteered to carry out this exercise with us (see p.15). But we should not forget the role of continuing VET, which will also become increasingly important to allow the adult workforce to update and upgrade their skills continuously. Issues like quality assurance, one-to-one guidance and counselling and validation are crucial. Cedefop is very active in these areas too.'

European citizens want to know what skills they need for the future and how they can best acquire them. The new Cedefop Deputy Director has some advice:

'I think people should follow their passions, talents and personal interests in the study field. Here the role of teachers and guidance staff is key. Then, clearly young people's choices are also affected by labour market relevance of the paths they decide to follow. Cedefop's latest

photo: Angelos Zymares



'Stereosis' photography instructor Paschalis Tseines with trainees Eleni Laloumi and Dimitris Tsagkaridis

forecasts indicate that most job opportunities will be for highly-skilled occupations and in the service sector. However, our forecasts also indicate that demand for qualifications at medium level will remain high in the coming years with VET the main qualifying pathway. Cedefop research shows that, on average, VET graduates experience quicker transition from school to work compared to their peers from general education. It also shows that people qualifying in VET with a significant share of work-based learning have higher employment rates than those coming from fully or mainly school-based VET. Looking at specific study fields, we know that demand is increasing for STEM

skills (science, technology, engineering and maths). VET is traditionally an important supply line for STEM skills but there are concerns that this supply may be insufficient. So it is important that young people (especially young women) choose STEM-related subjects at upper secondary level. But jobs are expected to become more skill-intensive and will require people to be able to work autonomously, organise and plan, communicate well and manage unforeseen situations and change. Good-quality VET implies equipping people with qualifications that combine job-specific with generic and transferable skills, as the latter will become more and more important for finding and keeping jobs.'

FOCUS ON

EMPLOYABILITY

Just as in the Greek EU Presidency in the first semester of 2014, the link between education and training and the labour market features prominently in the current Italian Presidency programme. Noting that ‘tomorrow’s jobs require higher quality, and more labour-market-relevant, skills as well as more flexibility,’ it targets advancing the Europe 2020 strategy’s educational agenda with focus on ‘youth empowerment and employability’.

The Presidency will pay special attention to ‘integrating education and training systems with the labour market by enhancing work-based learning pathways (such as apprenticeships, traineeships, etc.).’

Continuing with ongoing European initiatives to fight youth unemployment, the Italians place particular emphasis on their full implementation ‘most notably through the youth guarantee schemes and the youth employment initiative, as well as through European Social Fund (ESF) funding.’

According to the programme, youth guarantee schemes will start delivering results in 2014. Following concerns that their implementation is falling behind, the European Commission adopted the first two operational programmes – of France and Italy – during the summer.

The Presidency has vowed to push for ‘early adoption of the measures necessary to increase the employment of dropouts, not engaged in education, employment or training (NEETs) and women, such as apprenticeship, traineeship and improvement of access to information on the services provided by public and private employment services.’

Increasing high-quality transnational labour mobility is also a priority and negotiations are pursued ‘on the proposal for a regulation on a



The **youth guarantee** ensures that all young people under 25 get a good-quality, concrete offer within four months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The good-quality offer should be for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education and be adapted to each individual need and situation.

Source: European Commission.

European network of employment services, workers’ access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets (EURES).’

It is argued that these tools will ‘help those who have lost their jobs as a consequence of the crisis to remain in the labour market and find a new job as soon as possible.’

The Italians want a political discussion on education and training’s future role in national and EU growth agendas. Within this framework, their focus is on vocational education and training, the inter-relationship between education and employment and entrepreneurship education. ■



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THE matching GAME



CEDEFOP BRINGS TOGETHER POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

by IOANNA NEZI

To support the youth guarantee, which ensures that all young people under 25 get a concrete offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education, according to individual need, Erasmus+, the European Union's programme for education, training and lifelong learning, earmarked financial support for apprenticeship schemes – including formation of alliances involving two or more countries or social partner organisations. Identifying potential areas for such cooperation requires information about other countries' apprenticeships and training systems. Which raises the question: where can potential partners find this kind of specialised information? How can they find one another? Last May in Thessaloniki, Cedefop stepped in to provide the occasion for precisely this purpose. ■

STEERING PARTNER



The European apprenticeship conference, 'Steering partnerships for growth' organised by Cedefop in collaboration with the European Commission – gathering some 80 representatives of national governments, social partners and experts in the field – showcased examples of actions, programmes and approaches related to apprenticeship which can be adapted by Erasmus+ countries.

WHAT IS APPRENTICESHIP?

Systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.

Source: Terminology of European education and training policy, Cedefop, 2014.

The event was primarily designed to help potential partners find one another, so it did not follow the usual conference format. Instead, interaction, cross-country dialogue and experience-sharing dominated. Participants were invited to share results of their own country's apprenticeship policies and schemes; consider possibilities of using some practices presented in their own country; discuss success factors and challenges in developing quality apprenticeships, and thus identify potential partners to modernise apprenticeships.

This cross-country dialogue was framed within three overall themes, all of which had emerged as areas of potential cooperation: attractiveness, quality assurance, and governance and financing of apprenticeships. Interest in the 22 subtopics related to the three themes varied, with some being raised in several 'ateliers' or discussion groups.

The event achieved its target: in two short days of intense exploratory debate, some countries identified potential partners and are already on their way to creating partnerships. Others benefited from the time

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allotted to informal discussions to explore areas of cooperation and find possible partners.

Opening the conference, Cedefop Director James Calleja said: 'Today's highly complex workplace requires new workers to be even more work-ready – and that is where apprenticeships come in. Moreover, work-based learning, and apprenticeships in particular, foster a strong sense of professional identity, which is important for young people's self-esteem.'

In a video message, European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said that quality apprenticeships ease transitions from the world of education to the world of work, and Member States should make full use of funds provided for this purpose through Erasmus+, the European Social Fund and the European Investment Fund.

Speaking at the conference, Antonio Silva Mendes of the Commission's General Directorate for Education and Culture stressed the importance of action at Member State level to promote a wide array of apprenticeships based on high standards and transferable skills.

THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS (EAfA)

EAfA was set up to connect public authorities, businesses, social partners, training providers and youth representatives involved in apprenticeship-related schemes across Europe. Established in July 2013, the alliance was supported by the first-ever joint declaration by the European Commission, the Presidency of the EU's Council of Ministers and European trade union and employer organisations (the European Trade Union Confederation – ETUC, BusinessEurope, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing public services – CEEP and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises – UEAPME). EAfA encourages all national actors from these varied backgrounds to form partnerships with other Europeans involved in apprenticeships.

STEERING PARTNER



Discussion in the conference working groups focused on what is needed to water and weed to make apprenticeships bloom; what countries can do alone, in partnership with others and at EU level. The discussion report raises the issues, but also offers ideas and solutions.

Making apprenticeships attractive for learners and companies

- Provide authentic information, ideally from peers, and first-hand experience to motivate young people. Awareness-raising activities need not be expensive: networking at local or regional levels supported by employer organisations or others, including volunteers and use of social media, have proven effective.
- There may be heavy competition between general education and apprenticeship to attract learners. In some cases, it may be a disadvantage if apprenticeship is not under the Education Ministry's remit. More so if qualifications awarded are not part of the national qualification framework (NQF).
- Wages can be incentives. As not all apprentices earn wages, financial incentives for learners can also be used.
- A challenge that all countries share is how to involve small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Measures discussed ranged from training funds to intercompany training centres or cooperation of several SMEs to complement training a single company cannot offer. Financial incentives, though,

risk being counter-productive (if employees are replaced by apprentices or employees' status is changed to that of apprentices).

- A major issue for several countries is how to engage companies, social partners, education institutions and learners in designing and implementing apprenticeship schemes, and how to moderate the process.
- For some countries developing occupational profiles/standards/curricula can be quite challenging, time-consuming and costly. But this work cannot be done at EU level. What can help? Sector qualifications and standards and bilateral work on programme/curricula design.
- Apprenticeship-type training at higher qualification levels places different demands on teachers but benefits firms, as graduates are immediately operational.

Ensuring quality

- Apprentices should not be used as a form of cheap labour. Companies should be monitored to ensure they are able (accredited) to host apprentices and that financial incentives are used in the way they are intended.
- Apprenticeship schemes should be integrated into the formal education and training system and award qualifications included in the NQF. In this way, they lead to greater visibility and attractiveness, parity of esteem, improved progression and further training opportunities for apprentices (as demonstrated by Denmark and Germany). For the same reasons,

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apprenticeships should be linked with validation mechanisms.

- Quality assurance for assessment and certification is a make-or-break factor: it alone can guarantee trust in apprenticeship schemes.

Governing and financing apprenticeships

- Countries developing apprenticeships from scratch should start small, through pilot schemes or a single sector. But political commitment is necessary.
- Involving social partners is key to success. Questions covered the nature, level/degree (consultation, co-decision) and areas of involvement, and ensuring efficiency (such as when defining occupational profiles and associated curricula).
- The main issues regarding legal frameworks are how to allocate strategic and operational functions and how to design efficient monitoring and evaluation schemes without imposing too much administrative burden.
- Motivation issues also drew much attention: how best to motivate employers to engage in training and how to encourage them to provide places in sectors where take-up is low. How can government and social partners persuade SMEs to cooperate with schools? What could be the role of chambers of commerce?
- The main ways to encourage employers are clear procedures, a clear framework, financial incentives, and demonstrating that apprenticeships are worth

investing in. It is necessary to establish who pays apprentices' wages, and whether companies are willing to invest without any subsidies or incentives from governments.

WHAT NEXT?

ERASMUS+ PARTNERSHIPS

The European apprenticeship conference was designed to help participating countries and social partner representatives find partners for future cooperation projects on apprenticeship, financed by the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme. And it seems to have succeeded. By the 26 June deadline, applications had been received from several countries. Once the proposals are evaluated, a list of approved projects will be made public.

COUNTRY REVIEWS

In 2014, Cedefop embarked on the pilot phase of country apprenticeship reviews with Lithuania and Malta (see page 15). If successful, this process will expand to more countries. The reviews:

- provide analysis of national apprenticeship systems, including the factors that promote or hinder their success, and identify the key challenges;
- make proposals tailored to national circumstances and goals;
- develop and test a comprehensive approach to reviewing developments of national policy and programmes, which the countries involved must endorse.



DANA-CARMEN BACHMANN

HEAD OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ADULT EDUCATION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE
EUROPEAN COMMISSION



PETER THIELE

DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
GERMANY

ON WHAT THE CONFERENCE CAN ACHIEVE FROM THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME PERSPECTIVE

What we want to achieve is long-term partnerships between countries, in addition to the standard action – that could consist either of mobility projects or strategic partnerships or sector skill alliances. Under each of these standard actions we see a strong potential for programmes that could help achieve objectives of the European alliance for apprenticeships. In addition, we have put together a pool of money targeted specifically at apprenticeships, and supporting national reforms. To implement these projects it's important to have State partnerships within the country as well as between countries, among peers; it's important to have countries come together, to learn from one another and exchange practices. So we hope that with this conference we will have partnerships for the projects themselves – and also well beyond the projects: countries working together in long-term partnerships.

ON WHAT GERMANY CAN LEARN FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Germany has a very sophisticated system, with its dual system for apprenticeships, but nevertheless we also have some problems. For example, large numbers of young people don't cope with minimum standards of the system – how do we get them in? How do we integrate them? How do we get a better transition between vocational training and higher education? We think we can learn from other countries whether or not they share our dual training system. I think this conference has a very innovative approach, because it's not just talking, it's not just speeches, it's real action. The concrete cooperation of Member States, under the auspices of Cedefop and the Commission – let's say under 'light supervision', monitoring and coordinating the European area. I think it's important to establish a truly European area of education and training. To be honest we also see advantages of this cooperation for German industry. For example, we have a lot of German industry in Portugal, and they look for a highly-qualified skilled workforce, they need highly-qualified people, so it's good for us to cooperate with Portugal. So having other countries develop these kinds of apprenticeship systems can also be a return for the German economy.



Lithuanian Minister for Education and Science Dainius Pavalkis (l) with Cedefop Director James Calleja



photo: DOI - Jeremy Wonacott

APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW: LITHUANIA AND MALTA GO FIRST

A new Cedefop project, which looks into the apprenticeship systems of Lithuania and Malta, was launched in May. The pilot project, to be completed in 2015, is in support of the European alliance for apprenticeships and involves government ministries, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, social partners and other stakeholders in both countries.

At the official launch in Vilnius, Lithuanian Minister for Education and Science Dainius Pavalkis said that he hopes this review will enable his government to promote the link between the world of education and training and the world of employment. Cedefop Director James Calleja stressed the need for greater collaboration between education and employment sectors to ensure skills and competences of the workforce are relevant to a dynamic labour market.

In Malta, Minister for Education and Employment, Evarist Bartolo noted that apprenticeships should be a product of solid partnerships between VET institutions, industry, employee representatives and civil society. Mr Calleja added that the review's objective is to create quality apprenticeships as part of formal education and training, and certified through qualifications referenced to the Malta qualifications framework.

Cedefop Deputy Director Mara Brugia explains the rationale behind the project: 'In these reviews, we will analyse, together with the country, the different contextual features, identify strengths and challenges of the apprenticeship policies and establish a set of recommendations to help the country ensure quality

apprenticeships. If this pilot is successful, we will extend the exercise to other interested countries next year. While output of the reviews will be tailored to the individual country's need, they will help us expand our evidence base on apprenticeships and shed more light on the contextual factors that determine or hamper their success. In this way, we will be able to enrich our cross-country analyses, and support policy-makers at national and EU levels more effectively.'

HOW IT WORKS

- **SEPTEMBER 2014**
Lithuanian and Maltese steering committees visit Thessaloniki to exchange experience and finalise with Cedefop experts the methodology for the stakeholders' interviews in the two countries.
- **SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2014**
Cedefop carries out the field work – interviews and focus groups with representatives of social partners, schools, teachers, trainers, students, etc.
- **DECEMBER 2014**
The steering committees return to Thessaloniki to validate research findings and country recommendations.
- **JANUARY 2015**
Country recommendations are finalised.

DESPITE THEIR ADVANTAGES APPRENTICESHIPS ARE UNDERUSED

by STEVE BAINBRIDGE

To reduce high unemployment among their young people, countries are looking to others for help. During the economic downturn, some countries have performed better and youth unemployment has remained relatively low, for example in Germany, the Netherlands and Austria. This has been attributed in part to their apprenticeships or dual systems and, consequently, interest in them has increased.

Apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning are seen as having particular advantages as a learning method. They can provide young people and adults with the job-specific and generic skills employers need and so help smooth transition from school or other learning to work. Given that apprenticeship systems also strengthen cooperation between governments, social partners, employers and training institutions, their revival is unsurprising.

But, for all their advantages, apprenticeships seem to have an image problem, at least in some countries.

For several years European countries have worked to make vocational education and training (VET), including apprenticeships, a more attractive learning option. Learners can now progress more easily from initial VET, including apprenticeships, to higher education.

But some young people and their families still need

photo: Angelos Zymaras



Cedefop senior IT expert Isabelle Thomas-Kollias with trainee Mary Papoutsoglou

more convincing, because, in some countries, apprenticeships are identified with jobs having difficult working conditions, low status and low wages.

Parents and young people are more positive about apprenticeships in skill-intensive sectors and occupations, such as ICT, sales, health-care and renewable energies as they are perceived as leading to attractive jobs and

promising careers.

Developing apprenticeships depends heavily on employers' commitment. However, too few European enterprises offer apprenticeships, including those in skill-intensive sectors. In 2010, on average in the EU, around a quarter of the enterprises with 10 or more employees trained apprentices; this figure is much lower in many Member States.

However, employers who train apprentices highlight the benefits. They see apprentices making a valuable contribution to company objectives and regard them as an investment in the future.

Apprenticeships are not a panacea for youth unemployment. However, high-quality apprenticeships can ease young people's transition to the labour market. They will also reduce skill mismatch and skill gaps by aligning skills and qualifications with labour market needs.



The vocational education and training (VET) system in Latvia is currently being reformed to improve its quality and attractiveness. The main VET schools in the provider network are becoming competence centres. They support development of programmes, provide adult learning and teacher training, and validate non-formal and informal learning.

LATVIA PILOTS WORK-BASED LEARNING

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Schools cooperate with companies to prepare graduates for the labour market

The network structure has been altered by merging schools in response to demographic change. Municipalities will be in charge of smaller schools and will serve mainly local employers' needs. Between 2007 and 2014, 67.2% of EU structural funds allocated to development of VET in Latvia have been used for modernising its infrastructure.

To make VET more responsive to labour market needs, special attention is given to work-based learning. In 2013, within the framework of the cooperation memorandum in vocational education and training in Europe (2012) and following extensive discussions with municipalities and sectors, a pilot project was launched in every seventh Latvian VET school. It covers European qualifications framework (EQF) level 4 qualifications in manufacturing, services, engineering, electronics and other sectors and seeks a sustainable national model for alternating theoretical studies with work periods in cooperation with 29 companies.

'The project is crucial to ensure that VET graduates are better prepared for the labour market and employers have the best possible workforce. Depending on results of the project, 25 more VET schools with more than 500 students will join the project next year,' says Education Minister Ina Druviete.

The head of a school that participates in the pilot project confirms that employers and learners appreciate the initiative. He thinks that it marks the beginning of 'a new era' for the Latvian vocational education system. A new work-based learning approach in VET is foreseen in the national education strategy 2014-20 adopted by the parliament in May 2014.

Latvia will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from Italy in January 2015. European cooperation in VET will be among the discussion topics of the Presidency.



THE CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEMS 'CIVIL WAR,'

One of the most animated workshops in Cedefop's recent past took place in May with the

European credit transfer systems in higher education and vocational education and training (VET) at the heart of the discussion.

There are those, from both sides, who argue for various systems that promote trust in qualifications and mobility – currently the incompatible ECTS and ECVET – and those who believe there should be just one.

Here is what some of the most vocal proponents of the different ideas told *Skillset and match*.

NEVENA VUKSANOVIC

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER,
EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

One of the participants here talked of a 'civil war' that we have experienced in this room in these two days. We are going to continue this civil war as long as we keep neglecting the diversified approach to education and the crucial role of education in responding to the needs of society and shaping it instead of being a purely economic goal. The talk about merging two educational systems has employability at the centre of discussion. Learning for employment is not the only goal. Students definitely learn to get employed, but they also learn to continue learning, they learn to develop personally, to be active citizens. We speak the same language but we have different dialects. We should respect those different dialects, although we should find a way to understand one another. I think learning outcomes should be there, and they should be transparent, not standardised. But whether a single ECTS or the two – ECVET and ECTS – should exist, is something I cannot say right now. We need more pilot projects to be more

effective in our understanding of dialects.

ROBERT WAGENAAR

UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN
(THE NETHERLANDS)

The VET sector is more radical in its approach because society is becoming so complex. At the same time, higher education has to take into account that it has to prepare people for society, not only for citizenship and personal development, and that sometimes requires much more a VET approach and coordination with employers. I think it is possible to have one system. I am for one European qualifications framework and for one credit system. The credit system, whatever you think of it, is important and it protects the learner. Both in higher education now and in VET we are using units, sets of learning outcomes. There is a tremendous overlap in what we are doing and in the objectives we have. The whole idea is that people can progress. They can start by being a baker but at a certain moment they might need leadership. So, they probably need a higher qualification. And people who were not very successful or



Nevena Vuksanovic



Robert Wagenaar



Gabriela Ciobanu



Jean-Philippe Restoueix

happy in a higher education environment might choose VET. It is then our responsibility to allow for recognition of what they've learned at another level or setting.

GABRIELA CIOBANU

DIRECTOR OF VET, NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TVET DEVELOPMENT, ROMANIA

We should discuss the idea of having a credit system which serves lifelong learning purposes. We have ECVET and ECTS, but I don't think this is a good starting point if you want to build something for the individual and for lifelong learning purposes. The idea is to build together probably a new framework, a new common credit system for education and training and for lifelong learning. That system should focus on learning outcomes, because they are the currency we use when we talk about occupations, progression, transfer and recognition from a lifelong learning perspective. It's another discussion whether we should use credit points or not. We should look at what kind of use we could give to those points. There are a lot of things that could be perceived from different angles if we forget

ECVET

The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) is intended to make it easier for individuals pursuing a vocational qualification to transfer and accumulate assessed learning outcomes.

ECTS

The European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) is a learner-centred system for accumulation and transfer of learning credits, widely used in higher education.

about ECVET and ECTS and decide that it is time to build something common – experts from vocational education and training, from the higher education sector, employers, students and civil society should all come together and create something common.

JEAN-PHILIPPE RESTOUEIX

COUNCIL OF EUROPE, HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Even from the higher education perspective, if we believe that it should be based on learning outcomes, how do these learning outcomes translate into currency? I would say it's just a matter of agreement. It is important that the recognition process and the mobility process are fair to the learners. So, to this question I would say, what best fits the learner. This whole debate is part of a certain context. You will have to put your learning outcomes in practice in a given society at a given time. In one area, one system would be better. Perhaps another society would recognise two. It depends on the learner's perspective and on the society the learner lives in. There needs to be agreement on recognition. All these are tools; and the aim from a European perspective is to recognise learners' qualifications, to allow them to build their lives wherever they want to. We need to have the capacity to move and have our qualifications recognised. ■

Better vocational options fewer dropouts from education and training



Early findings of a Europe-wide Cedefop study reveal that the effect of vocational education and training (VET) on dropout rates is largely positive. In countries where vocational pathways account for a large share of education and training, rates of early school-leaving are below the 10% EU target for 2020. Conversely, in countries where VET lags behind, the dropout rate is higher than 10% – in some cases, significantly so.

The study also addresses lack of a commonly-accepted definition of early leavers from VET. Data at EU level and in many countries do not track young people accurately as they leave and re-enter learning environments and/or the labour market.

According to the study, over 97% of early leavers are dropouts, with the remainder being young people who never start post-compulsory education and training. One in five dropouts eventually achieves upper secondary qualifications, with 77% doing so within three years.

The findings were discussed at an expert workshop organised by Cedefop in June. Cedefop Director James Calleja pointed out that the early

leaving problem is largely VET's to solve: early leavers (aged 16 to 24) who return to education typically choose vocational options. He spoke of early leavers as 'casualties of the education system' whom public authorities have a responsibility to support.

Cedefop has launched a three-year project to address lack of data on early leaving from vocational pathways and to analyse the role VET plays in reducing dropout rates. Expert Irene Psifidou, who organised the workshop, said that the project is 'ambitious but necessary: to develop tools that will make it possible for countries to monitor individual learning pathways and to evaluate national policies on early leaving.'

COUNTRY EXAMPLE

THE NETHERLANDS

Workshop participants agreed that data collection must be improved to provide an accurate overall picture. Thanks to such comprehensive data and monitoring, policy-makers in the Netherlands have solid evidence on which to base decisions. As a result, early leaving rates have dropped significantly in the past few years. In addition, systematic tracking (by means of a personal education number linked to a social security number) alerts authorities when learners leave or re-enter education and training at any level. This system has revealed that the national rate of early leaving is lower than previously thought.



The role of VET in reducing early leaving from education and training



Keeping young people in (vocational) education: what works?



CEDEFOP'S **NEW** WEBSITE

better-looking and

just as rich!



NANCY TOUSSAINT

CEDEFOP WEB MANAGER

By the end of the year, the Cedefop website will have undergone a major makeover. While keeping all its content, it will have several new features, be easier to navigate and will look fresher and more colourful. Cedefop's web manager Nancy Toussaint has overseen the transformation and explains why the change was necessary:

Cedefop has to raise awareness of vocational education and training issues and provide a forum for our key stakeholders. The website aims to showcase the content Cedefop produces to engage users. At the same time, we want to create value; we want people to interact with us. The website is the best means to disseminate information because it can reach the global audience we serve and is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The need to change it derives from the need to be up-to-date. We have to go with the technology. We want to make it much more dynamic and

interactive, to be much more user-centric and provide what the user needs.

What will the new website look like and how easy will it be for users to access the vast amount of information produced by Cedefop?

At the end of the day, it's quality of content that stimulates and engages our audience. But we need to offer the best platform possible for the user to reach that content. In the new website, we have organised the information a little differently. It will be modular, which means that users will be able to access different content types from various entry points following their own way of thinking. The entry points will be themes, publications and resources, events and projects, news and press, and country data. New content types in which users showed interest, such as statistical data, presentation slides, infographics, videos, webinars and discussion lists will be further developed.



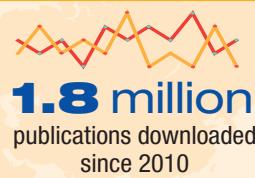
Cedefop's web team (left to right):
Michael Ioannides and Nancy Toussaint



Sneak preview: the website's new home page will look something like this!

How will users be able to interact?

We are introducing more visuals, more multimedia elements, such as video, podcasts, etc. Users will be invited to interact by posting comments and/or participating in discussion lists to gain direct access to our experts and allow us to monitor their interests closely.



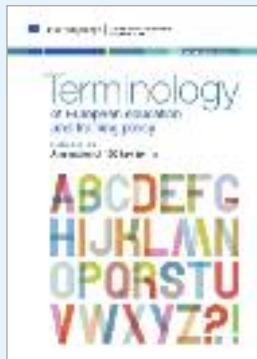
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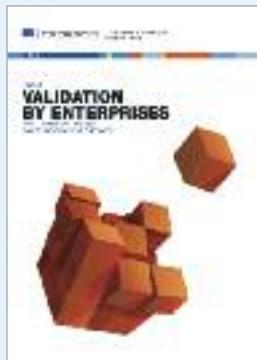
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IN FOCUS



TERMINOLOGY OF EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY

What is the difference between skill gap, skill needs or skill shortage? Is underqualification a synonym for undereducation or underskilling? What is the meaning of green skills? This multilingual glossary defines 130 key terms used in European education and training policy. An extended and updated version of *Terminology of European education and training policy* (2008) and *Terminology of vocational training policy* (2004), it also takes into account new priorities of European Union policy, mainly in skills and competence needs analysis. New definitions have been developed with cooperation of experts from Cedefop's research and policy analysis team. You can request a printed copy. Scan the QR code above for details.



USE OF VALIDATION BY ENTERPRISES FOR HUMAN RESOURCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

For European companies, correctly assessing skills and competence is a crucial factor in recruitment and human resource management. But enterprises do not focus equally on all staff. Competence assessment practices predominantly target executives and technical specialists, and company size influences the way assessments are carried out. Moreover, outcomes of such assessments are mainly used for internal company purposes; validating employee skills within the company is thus of limited help to people seeking alternative employment or further learning. Based on a survey of 400 enterprises, 20 in-depth case studies and interviews with human resource experts in 10 countries, this report analyses the main purposes of competence assessment, the standards and methods applied, the employee groups targeted and the way results are documented and used.



Download the publication you wish by clicking
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OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

- Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions
- Qualifications at level 5: progressing in a career or to higher education
- Annual report 2013

coming up



For more information on what's coming up
go to the events page on the Cedefop website:
www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/events.aspx
or scan this QR code

IN FOCUS

BUILDING EUROPEAN VET – TIME TO MOVE ON

29-30 SEPTEMBER

THESSALONIKI, GREECE



How shall Europe maximise the potential of vocational education and training (VET) to address its long-term strategic goals? This question will be the focus of a conference organised by Cedefop and the European Commission in September. ‘Building European VET – Time to move on’ will be based on results of Cedefop’s VET monitoring report on progress towards aims of the common EU strategy on VET, as set out in the Bruges communiqué (2010). Cedefop will briefly present major findings of the report, after which discussions will shine a light on specific issues affecting progress towards the Bruges objectives. Participants will share country examples, exchange experience from the 2010-14 period and come up with valuable knowledge that can be used in countries and at EU level to move closer to common goals.

OTHER EVENTS

SEPTEMBER	15-16	ROME, ITALY	Forecasting skill supply and demand in Europe: setting the scene for 2016 forecasts
OCTOBER	13-15	ROME, ITALY	Meeting of Directors-General for Vocational Education and Training
	20-24	TURIN, ITALY	Skills needs anticipation and matching course
	21-22	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop workshop on designing, implementing and supporting effective work-based learning
	23-24	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop workshop on quality requirements for new forms and contexts of teaching and learning
	27	BRUSSELS, BELGIUM	Summit on education in the digital era
NOVEMBER	27-28	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop conference ‘Stepping up the pace’ – The next stage of European tools for transparency, recognition and quality in education and training

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