



CEDEFOP SKILLSNET NEWSLETTER

editorial

Cedefop's network Skillsnet has, in the last year, yielded some useful results on a European scale. The medium-term forecast of occupational skill needs in Europe produced interesting and challenging conclusions. Future employment in Europe is not only characterised by trends towards up-skilling and an increasing need for more highly educated workers – both at academic and vocational levels – but also by an increasing demand for elementary occupations. These preliminary findings point to the need for further research into polarisation of jobs, skill upgrading within occupations and possible skill mismatches on the labour market. Cedefop-Skillsnet obtained support from the European Commission, the Directorate-General of Employment, to continue work on forecasting. By the end of this year results of a skills supply forecast (carried out by Cedefop) will be available and make it possible to compare them with the demand forecast.

This project will be run in parallel with another Cedefop/Skillsnet initiative exploring the feasibility of measuring development and changes in the demand for skills, skills gaps and shortages in the workplace, at enterprise level. This initiative was discussed among, and supported by, experts from 13 EU Member States in June 2007 at a workshop in Bucharest. Skillsnet will verify several possibilities. One option is to enrich existing EU-level surveys by including common core questions in existing national surveys. Another option is to launch a Europe-wide enterprise survey to shed light on skill needs, gaps and shortages in Europe from the point of view of public and private enterprises.

On 21-22 February 2008 Cedefop's Agora conference 'Skills for Europe's future' in Thessaloniki will present the network's results and discuss future plans. Cedefop's Skillsnet intends to develop more initiatives at European level, build on the results achieved and carry out more in-depth analysis in future. Continuity of work and cooperation with network members and partners are the guiding principles for making progress in identifying and anticipating skill developments at European level.

Cedefop's Skillsnet coordination team



New Cedefop initiative – Enterprise surveys as a tool for identification of skill needs

The dynamics of change in the workplace imply that timely and reliable information is needed on how skill needs develop. Information on future skill and competence needs in Europe is essential for employers and also effective labour market policy making at national and European levels. Such information cannot be obtained by pure quantitative forecasting methods; they need to be enriched by other sources of information, and enterprise surveys might be one of them.

There are many enterprise surveys relevant to identifying skill and training needs in the EU Member States but they are mostly not comparable. Cedefop/Skillsnet launched a new initiative to find a common European approach to enterprise surveys to identify skill needs and skill gaps. To this end an expert workshop was co-organised by Cedefop with the National Labour Research Institute in Bucharest and with the support of Romanian Ministry of Education on 21-22 June 2007 in Bucharest. Participants from 13 Member States and several European institutions and organisations discussed how to:

- map existing surveys at European level looking at their potential for skill needs analysis;
 - compare and discuss questions in Member States existing enterprise surveys examining their potential comparability and compatibility;
 - agree on future steps on the feasibility of a common approach to enterprise surveys to analyse skill and, eventually, competence needs across Member States.
- Member States' experts were invited to

submit brief information on national enterprise surveys. Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and England conduct some kind of enterprise surveys relevant to identifying skill and training needs. The surveys however differ greatly in their objectives, regularity, sample sizes and many other questions covered in questionnaires. (An overview is available for Skillsnet members on the website www.trainingvillage.gr/skillsnet.)

Objectives of enterprise surveys in various Member States can conditionally be divided into five broad categories, although in practice surveys pursue more than one objective:

- (a) design of initial and continuing (vocational) education and training policies;
- (b) design of VET training programmes and standards;
- (c) identification of skill deficiencies according to level and type of education/training;
- (d) work organisation, operating environment, business and technological changes and their impact on the company's skill and training needs;
- (e) human resource management/development (HRM/HRD) and recruitment practices and problems, skill gaps and labour shortages.

Many countries conduct surveys in specific sectors/industries/occupations or territories. Some target small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland,

Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and England have carried out, or are carrying out some sort of a nationwide survey. Most countries have regular enterprise surveys, but periods vary (monthly, annual, biennial).

Although methods and tools used for enterprise surveys differ there are some similarities. All countries use structured questionnaires, many use face-to-face interviews, others combine online, postal, e-mail and telephone interviews. In their analyses Member States widely use international classifications, such as NACE, ISCO-88 and ISCED. Respondents are mostly human resource managers/officers; owners of smaller enterprises, directors or top managers. Some Member States complement surveys with focus groups or additional surveys among social partners and other groups such as regional/local representatives.

Despite methodological differences and objectives of enterprise surveys all experts in the workshop were willing and prepared to discuss and to look for ways to make their results comparable to similar surveys in other countries. It is particularly important that even countries with a long-established tradition of enterprise surveys appear ready to make some sacrifices to achieve broader European comparability.

The following alternatives were suggested, namely to:

- modify or enrich enterprise surveys that already exist or are planned at European level (rather longer-term solution);
- adjust national surveys in selected (volunteering) countries to achieve comparability of results (subject to interest, support and funding from national and/or EU sources);
- initiate an European-wide enterprise survey (again subject to interest, support and funding from national and/or EU sources).

Results of national, sectoral and occupational surveys should be explored and possibly compared. This was suggested as a topic for a follow-up workshop.

An important question is whether companies can identify future skill needs. They usually know their current needs but may have difficulties looking into the future. While enterprise surveys themselves might have limited reliability in terms of identifying future skill needs, regular surveys provide time series and so become a valuable source of information on trends and developments of skill requirements.

Skillsnet will examine different options on how to complement national surveys with comparable data across Member States. The coordination team will follow-up the interest of Member States to agree on common approach and will look at ways to proceed. The next expert workshop on this issue will take place in 2008. The workshop may also focus on detailed evaluation of national surveys and the available results, on identifying some common core questions (variables) for national enterprise survey, on a voluntary basis and, at a later stage, possibly in an EU-level enterprise survey.

In parallel, Cedefop and its Skillsnet network will continue to explore and discuss with Member States the relevant contacts whether and how to include a module of specific questions in existing EU surveys, such as Eurostat's continuing vocational training survey. In cooperation with the Commission and Member States, Cedefop will initiate discussion on the feasibility of developing and implementing a specific regular enterprise survey on skill needs in EU-27. Subsequent work and discussion will centre on several of workshops aiming to agree the organisation, content, concepts and methodology of the survey (including, for example, framework questionnaire, data collection modes, sampling, survey frequency, etc).

It can be concluded that the new initiative of Skillsnet to find a common European approach to enterprise surveys to identify skill needs is timely and necessary.

Medium-term forecast of occupational skill needs in Europe: the project continues



Two of the series of expert workshops on anticipating skill needs across Europe were held in 2007 to verify interim and draft final results

of Cedefop's medium-term forecasts of occupational skill needs in Europe. The forecast was carried out with the Institute for Employment Research at University of Warwick, Cambridge Econometrics and the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) in Maastricht. The objective of the first workshop in Maastricht in May 2007, was to get feedback from country experts on the interim results. The workshop reported on developments towards producing a Pan-European forecasting model, presented interim results and discussed with experts related data quality issues, possible scenarios and approaches to modelling replacement demand.

The second workshop, in Vienna in November 2007, aimed to take this process a further step forward, focusing on the draft final results of the forecast. The workshop presented the draft final results in detail, including the methodology, and discussed and verified with Member States country-specific data, the scenarios applied and the (preliminary) outcomes of the medium-term forecast. In addition, participants discussed identified obstacles and data gaps and possible ways to fill them in the future.

Comment and discussion were very constructive at both workshops. Such a challenging task cannot be accomplished in a year. Progress so far marks the end of only one particular project phase. Although the development of a medium-term forecast of occupational skill needs in Europe is approaching its end, it is in fact the beginning of a longer and very demanding process.

The forecast's results will be discussed at Cedefop's Skillsnet Agora conference in Thessaloniki on 21-22 February 2008.

More information about the workshops and the project is available (in the section "Forecasting") from: www.trainingvillage.gr/skillsnet.

Council resolution: new skills for new jobs

The EU Education, Youth Affairs and Culture Council met in Brussels on 15 November 2007 and adopted a resolution on new skills for new jobs. Placed in the broader discussion on the European strategy to promote jobs and growth, this resolution emphasises practical steps to be taken in the area of education and training to provide citizens with better opportunities to succeed on the labour market. The emphasis is on three points. First, equipping people with the skills necessary for new jobs. Second, the importance of work on validating competences, transparency of qualifications and identification of training needs. Third, the need for better anticipation of skill needs and gaps on the labour market. The Council invited the European Commission to strengthen the European network for the early identification of skill needs (Cedefop's Skillsnet) and the European forecasting system on employment trends.

More information: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/n/oj/2007/c_290/c_29020071204en00010003.pdf

Comprehensive sectoral analysis of emerging competences and economic activities in the European Union

Manuel Hubert, DG Employment, European Commission

A new project of the Directorate General for Employment aims to develop, at European level, a capacity to identify future skill needs in a fast-evolving economy. As part of the project, sectoral foresight studies will be conducted with a common methodology to allow comparisons across sectors. This European foresight cross-sector methodology, developed by Prof. Maria João Rodrigues with the financial support of the European Commission, includes the following steps:

- analysing the main economic and employment trends of the sector;
- identifying the main drivers of change and emerging or changing job profiles, skills and competences in the sector;
- outlining the main scenarios of plausible evolution;
- identifying implications for employment trends – new jobs in expansion, jobs in transformation and jobs in decline;
- outlining strategic choices to meet the sector skills needs;
- identifying specific implications of the skills needs in the sector for education and training;
- recommendations.

Some 16 sectors were identified and selected as sensitive to restructuring and skills needs. These are: non-energy extractive industry, textiles, wearing apparel and leather products; printing and publishing; chemicals, pharmaceuticals, rubber and plastic products; non-metallic materials (glass, cement, ceramic ...); electromechanical engineering; computer, electronic and optical products; building of ships and boats; furniture and others; electricity, gas, water and waste; distribution, trade; tourism including hotels, restaurants and catering; transport; post and telecommunications; financial services (bank, insurance and others); health and social work; other services, maintenance and cleaning.

The study will not limit itself strictly to the sector, but will consider the importance of the value chain and outsourced services.

Studies will be conducted between January 2008 and April 2009 and results submitted to a panel of experts in the sector and economic area concerned. The expert panels will provide knowledge and experience of key actors in the sectors, build consensus over the findings and ensure support to recommendations.

The final reports will be disseminated to political authorities at European, national, regional and local levels, and social partners to alert them to the prospects for their sector. A forum in 2009 will present the results to a wider audience.

Once the sector studies have been completed, a transversal analysis of sector studies will be launched in 2009. It will identify connections between sector activities and identify the main horizontal activities. The analysis should show possible transfers of occupations between sectors.

Results from Cedefop-Skillsnet's forecasting project can feed into the analysis (for example employment demand forecast by sector). The sectoral foresight project can provide the Skillsnet project with information on, for example, scenarios of evolution which could then be considered in the forecasting models. It will be interesting to see whether the results of both projects converge.

The foresight project will support national, regional and sectoral instruments of education and training. It is however not an end in itself, but is the start of a process to be performed on a regular basis. This task should be taken over by Member States, regional authorities, social partners and/or employers' associations. It should also serve as a springboard to stimulate dialogue, build partnerships and develop joint actions with a common goal of adapting the management of human resources to face future needs.

Skillsnet sector flash on agri-food

The latest Skillsnet sector flash summarises the main trends and related skill needs in the agri-food sectoral chain. It also informs on key outcomes of the linked Skillsnet workshop.

All sector flashes are available in electronic format on Skillsnet's webpage in the sections 'Sectors' and 'Publications and working papers'.



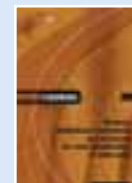
FORTHCOMING SKILLSNET EVENTS

- **Cedefop Agora conference 'Skills for Europe's future'** (21-22 February 2008)
- **Skill needs in health care sector** (May 2008)
- **Expert workshops on forecasting and enterprise surveys** (throughout 2008).

For more information visit regularly the Skillsnet webpage, section 'Events'.

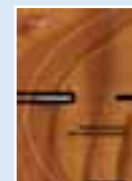
CEDEFOP PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO SKILLSNET

Published in 2007



Systems, institutional frameworks and processes for early identification of skill needs (2007)

Cedefop Panorama series; 135.
Available in English.



Towards European skill needs forecasting (2007)

Cedefop Panorama series; 137.
Available in English.

Skill needs in emerging technologies: nanotechnology

Online publication.
Available in English.

Coming soon...

- **Trends and skill needs in agri-food and forestry-wood chains**
- **Future skill needs in Europe. Medium-term forecast: synthesis report**
- **Future skill needs in Europe. Medium-term forecast: background report**

Long-term e-skills agenda

The European Commission proposed on 7 September 2007 a long-term e-skills agenda and the following action lines at EU level:

- promoting long-term cooperation and monitoring progress;
- developing supporting actions and tools at EU level (European e-competence framework, European e-skills and career portal, quality criteria for industry-based training, new curriculum guidelines etc.);
- fostering employability and social inclusion;
- raising awareness;
- promoting better and greater use of e-learning.

The European Commission will organise a major conference in October 2008 to report on progress and discuss the way forward.

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

DISCO – European dictionary of skills and competences

The European dictionary of skills and competences (DISCO) provides online and hard copy terminological support in the conception, interpretation and translation of skill and competence profiles. The DISCO project is funded by Leonardo da Vinci and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. It and focuses on developing an internationally compatible classification of skills and competences based on international standards like NACE, ISCO and ISCED and approved by practical experience and expertise in eight European countries. The DISCO online services - especially the DISCO skills translator and the DISCO CV profiler - are available for testing under www.disco-tools.eu. In February 2008 a trilingual printed version of the DISCO thesaurus (English, French, German) will be published.

More information: mueller@3s.co.at

Work activities at medium qualification level in expanding services

The German institutes isw and IAT cooperated to research developments of work activities at a medium qualification level in various sectors: senior assistance, home economics, housing industry, tourism, creative industry, security service, barrier-free construction, medical technology and nanotechnology. Analyses in Germany give the first empirical evidence for expanding activities at medium qualification level (analogue skilled worker). Identified new or changed activities are (almost) always connected to new or higher skill needs. Mostly, activities became more complex, through enrichment of existing activities. For more information and results visit <http://www.frequenz.net>, Abicht, L.; Lehner, F. (2007), *Identifizierung von Tätigkeiten der mittleren Ebene - eine exemplarische Untersuchung am Beispiel ausgewählter Wirtschaftsbereiche* – Endbericht.

Successful implementation of the 'Labour Market Institute' project in the Czech Republic

The National Training Fund in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is successfully continuing the development of a system for labour market forecasts in the Czech Republic. As part of a project entitled 'Labour market institute' work has started on two sectoral studies of future skills needs in ICT and electrical engineering. The studies will provide an overview of global development trends in each sector, and of development opportunities in the Czech Republic, while focusing particularly on skill demands and changes in professional requirements in the next 5 to 10 years. An overview of foreign systems for early identification of future training needs has been prepared. It serves as a basis for

designing a similar system in the Czech Republic. This system should ensure organisation and funding to develop regular forecasts of skill needs in particular for employment services, but also other users. At national level, the quantitative forecasting model is being improved. It should be expanded to cover the regional level in the near future.

More information: Michal Lapáček (lapacek@nvf.cz)

Matching supply and demand: sector based approaches (peer review)

Peer review meetings are organised under the mutual learning programme of the European employment strategy. The core objective is to exchange good practice and experience between countries. This meeting in October 2007 in Cardiff, UK focused on a Welsh sector-based approach to matching skills supply and demand. It discussed different actions in Wales to gather intelligence on current and future labour market needs, current and future supply, and quality of provision of education and training.

In Wales this is done mainly through its research and analysis project, 'Future skills Wales'. Intelligence on skill needs is shared (via a learning and skills observatory) with colleges, employers and others to help them plan and equip the Welsh population with skills to meet the economy's needs. Sector Skills Councils (www.ssda.org.uk) in Wales are also using modelling techniques to identify trends in sectors, such as construction, and to design employment and upskilling strategies to respond.

More information: www.mutual-learning-employment.net or susan.edwards@wales.gsi.gov.uk

HOW TO BECOME A SKILLSNET MEMBER?

Cedefop/Skillsnet welcomes all those active in research or policy on early identification of skill needs to join the network. Currently, Skillsnet has around 160 registered members from all over the world. Most members are researchers, but ministries, social partners, businesses, training institutions, consultancies, policy-makers and various European and international institutions are also represented. Apply online on Skillsnet's website (www.trainingvillage.gr/skillsnet).



CEDEFOP

European Centre
for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
PO Box , GR-551 02 Thessaloniki
Tel. (+30) 23 10 49 01 03
Fax (+30) 23 10 49 01 17
E-mail: skillsnet-team@cedefop.europa.eu
www.trainingvillage.gr/skillsnet