



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

Evaluation report

2006

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**

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COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS »**

Evaluation report

25 January 2006

* 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.

They decided to draw up an annual report on the national actions carried out on the four priorities identified. Three annual reports were made public in 2003, 2004 and 2005².

In 2002, the social partners also decided to evaluate the impact of their actions on both companies and workers after three annual reports – this is the purpose of the present report.

The evaluation report comprises national evaluation reports jointly elaborated by social partners in the different Member States, which highlight the key features of social partners' work to promote the four priorities from 2003 to 2005. European social partners also report on actions taken at the European level separately.

In addition, a section entitled "main trends" summarises the information available on the initiatives taken from 2003 to 2005 and assesses the impact of the actions on labour markets across Europe.

The text of the framework of actions as adopted in 2002 as well as a list of contact persons from national and European organizations can be found at annex.

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

² These reports can be found on the websites of each organisation as well as on the European Trade Union resource Center (www.resourceetuc.com) and on the European Employers Resource Center (www.unice.org/erc)

Chapter I – Main trends

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this section are to highlight key features of social partners' follow-up of the four priorities for actions of the European framework of actions (I) and to assess the impact of their actions on labour markets across Europe (II).

National reports demonstrate that social partners have intensively debated the issue of competence development. This is the case in all Member States. It is nevertheless more difficult to assess follow-up actions in the new Member States as they joined the process only in May 2004.

Following on from their commitment expressed in 2002, social partners have taken actions to promote all four priorities, focusing on the areas in which their needs are greater. In accordance with their national needs and practices, employers' and employees' organisations have used different tools to foster the lifelong development of competences and qualifications at national, sectoral and company levels.

They reported on actions taken in three jointly agreed annual reports published in 2003, 2004 and March 2005. For the present report, they were asked to assess the work they have done and to select examples of initiatives to illustrate progress made at national, sectoral and company levels.

I./ ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN IN 2002-2005

The objective of the present chapter is to give an overview of the actions reported as being the most significant by national social partners. The intention is not to give an exhaustive list of actions but to highlight some examples of useful initiatives/tools developed by social partners.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

Identifying and anticipating competence and qualification needs is a complex matter. In order to help companies tailor their human resources policies to changing needs, employers' and employees' organisations have developed different tools to better identify individual needs such as:

- studies/surveys on companies' needs and consultancy services to help fulfil the needs identified in companies (Cyprus, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden)
- collective agreements in private and/or public sector including provisions on tools to identify and anticipate competence needs at company level, such as individual interviews, (the Netherlands, UK, Belgium, Austria, Finland, Denmark, Poland)
- action plans at sectoral level to guide companies in the sector (Denmark, Ireland)
- company awards to disseminate good practice (Austria, Germany, UK)

- awareness-raising actions towards companies on the importance of identifying and anticipating competence needs to anticipate industrial change (Czech Republic, Poland)
- trade union guidelines for negotiations (Portugal, Belgium)
- pilot projects to develop strategies to identify and anticipate competence needs in companies (Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Ireland).
- developing sectoral training providers and employers led sector skills bodies (Czech Republic, UK)

Social partners were also involved in the collective analysis of competence needs and the development of qualifications at national or sectoral levels. These actions were conducted either on a bipartite or tripartite basis. Examples include:

- monitoring of labour market trends and awareness-raising actions to make them known to the public (Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, UK, Belgium, Slovenia, Greece)
- evaluation of needs in view of reforming the existing education and training systems, with a focus on continuing vocational training system (Denmark, Spain), or on the apprenticeship system (Cyprus, Austria)
- recommendations to sectoral players following on studies developed by observatories, councils or committees (France, UK, Spain)
- national and sectoral collective agreements (France, Belgium)
- projects at national, regional and/or sectoral levels (Finland, Germany, Poland).

In some countries, the emphasis has been put on specific skills or on the needs of specific groups. This was the case for example in the UK where the focus was on low-skilled workers in Finland where the focus was on older workers, or in Luxembourg or Greece where the focus was on competence needs related to ICT.

Working in partnership with education and training institutions and public authorities at large is considered important by social partners. In most countries, social partners participate in tripartite agencies/councils entrusted with the development of human resources and qualification systems, where they give advice on national policies. In addition, they take a range of specific actions to better tailor education and training systems to labour market needs, among which:

- reform of existing qualifications and development of job profiles to make the outcomes of the education system fit labour market needs (Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Spain)
- reform of apprenticeship systems to foster competence development in real work situations at an early age and increase the employability of apprentices (Cyprus, Austria, Finland, Germany, UK)
- strategic planning of education and training provision to match labour market needs (Denmark, Norway, Slovenia, Greece, Poland)
- analysis of the practical impact of the training delivered to increase the efficiency of systems (Cyprus)

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The recognition and validation of competences is essential for the employability of workers and for competence development policies in companies. Social partners

reported numerous activities aiming to promote the establishment of means of recognition and validation in their countries.

The following initiatives can be mentioned:

- further development of competence based qualifications systems (Finland, France, Lithuania, Spain, Norway)
- development of systems to accredit prior learning (non-formal, informal) in view of obtaining a (first) qualification (the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Slovenia)
- collective agreements including provisions on concrete tools to foster validation in companies (France, Belgium)
- mapping exercise on existing means of validation (Germany)
- certification to respond to labour market needs (Cyprus, Germany, Poland)
- sectoral initiatives, for example to develop occupational standards, (Sweden, UK, Poland)
- influencing legislation (vast majority of countries).

Social partners make use of their participation in national qualifications authorities/councils, often of a tripartite nature, to influence national policies regarding the validation of competences. It is important that these policies take into account the realities of enterprises, as they are the place where competences are developed. A number of national social partners also reported initiatives to enable adults without basic qualifications, immigrants, older workers and unemployed people to step into the qualifications system (Norway, Portugal, Denmark, France).

When developing means of validation and recognition, social partners keep in mind the necessity to ensure that those systems must remain transparent in order to enable geographical and occupational mobility. Social partners therefore heavily engaged in discussions on National Qualification Frameworks and how to ensure transparency/permeability between education, vocational training and higher education systems (Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, UK). They are also discussing European tools such as Europass, the European Qualification Framework and the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Training (Germany, Austria, Czech Republic).

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

In order to ensure that employees and enterprises can pursue a strategy for competence development, it is necessary to enable workers and employers to access all the necessary information and advice and to tailor information and guidance to their needs. With this objective in mind, social partners undertook to review their existing information and guidance systems and to tailor them to labour markets needs.

They mentioned in particular the following activities:

- influencing national guidance strategy, for example developing guidance for people at work, (Austria, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland)

- awareness-raising actions on training opportunities and labour market needs to tackle skills mismatch (Cyprus, Finland, France, Czech Republic, Belgium, Greece, Poland)
- awareness raising actions on learning opportunities and individual development plans in order to attract high performing staff (Denmark)
- actions to raise workers' motivation for learning; the focus being either on specific target groups such as low-skilled workers, young, older and unemployed people or on a specific set of skills such as IT skills (Denmark, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Norway)
- providing consultancy services to companies, for example helping companies to take advantage of funding schemes for competence development, (Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden)
- company awards to strive for excellence and disseminate good practice (UK)
- developing and/or financing information, guidance and support facilities, for example advisers to guide companies and workers, trade union learning representatives, one-stop-shop facilities, e-information etc. (Italy, France, the Netherlands, UK)
- collective agreements and/or good practice guidelines including provisions on practical tools to inform on learning opportunities and raise motivation of workers, for example individual development talks in companies, tutors or competence screenings for older workers, (Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, UK, Belgium)
- tailoring actions towards SMEs (Germany, UK)
- actions to bring closer the world of education to the world of work by providing business training to teachers (Austria).

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

Mobilising resources for the lifelong development of competences is a key issue, which cannot be regarded as depending exclusively on social partners. In all countries, social partners discuss with public authorities on how to mobilise resources more efficiently and how to develop new and diversified sources of investment (funding, time, human resources). They took a range of specific actions which were introduced through collective agreements or other means, depending on the countries' practices.

In several countries, social partners developed win-win strategies implying a shared responsibility and co-investment in competence development from workers, companies and public authorities. Initiatives include:

- the development of individual learning accounts (Austria, the Netherlands, UK)
- tax incentives and deductions for companies and for individuals undergoing competence development (Austria, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Spain, Greece)
- pooling resources to maximise efficiency in a single competence development centre at regional level working in close cooperation with sectors (Belgium)
- reduce apprenticeship grant in order to increase number of apprentices in companies (Germany)
- development of an apprenticeship system for university students to maximise exchange of knowledge and expertise (the Netherlands).

Financing lifelong competence development is a constant concern of social partners. Numerous and diverse initiatives were taken in this field, including:

- influencing the design/reform of the financing system for education and training (Czech republic, Finland, Spain)
- development of tools to ease access to learning, such as learning vouchers, learning leave, learning grants, e-learning, (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK)
- monitoring and promoting companies' investment in competence development, for example by agreeing on minimum levels of investment in collective agreements, (France, Cyprus, Sweden, Belgium, Ireland)
- awareness-raising activities on available sources of funding for companies and/or workers (UK, Luxembourg, Sweden)
- cooperation with education institutions at sector/regional level (Sweden)
- development of bipartite or tripartite training funds to finance companies training plans (Spain, Italy, Czech republic, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Poland)
- use of EU structural funds (Cyprus, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Ireland, Poland)
- development of union learning fund (UK).

II./ IMPACT OF THE FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS

The framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications was the first ever adopted by the European social partners. European social partner negotiations resulted in the definition of four priorities for actions common to all national social partners and a work plan for future follow-up. The framework of actions has had the merit of delivering a clear message and a sense of focus to national social partners in most countries. It has created impetus for change, supported pre-existent social partners actions on competence development, and helped bring about concrete actions to promote lifelong competence development in all Member States.

European social partners support the cooperation process on vocational training initiated in Copenhagen and Maastricht. Through their work on the framework of actions, they were for example able to influence the content of the Maastricht Communiqué adopted in December 2004, which is the European roadmap for vocational education and training policies. They believe that the process of policy coordination undertaken at the European level would gain in clarity, effectiveness and attractiveness for stakeholders if it was more focussed on a few priorities – as it is the case in European social partners' framework of actions. European social partners call on the Commission and the Council to fully take into account their discussions, proposals and priorities for work.

Concerning the follow-up, the annual reports do not aim at being exhaustive but highlight the most significant actions taken by social partners at national, sectoral and company levels. Social partners agreed on a selection of examples to illustrate progress made, which give an indication of the priorities set in their work. A clear evolution can be observed in the actions reported from the first report (2003) to the latest one (2005). The first year, a significant number of actions were geared towards dissemination and awareness-raising on the European text and its priorities

at national, sectoral and company levels (conferences, debates, websites, booklets, media etc.). Over the years, more and more actions have been taken to promote the priorities themselves.

For the period 2002-2005, among the most relevant initiatives reported by social partners, more than 350 examples were given which were spread as follows:

Priority 1: identification and anticipation of competencies and qualifications needs	108
Priority 2: recognition and validation of competencies and qualifications	89
Priority 3: information, support and guidance	53
Priority 4: mobilising resources	100

Among the initiatives reported, over 70 concerned companies' good practice examples. Moreover, discussions on the national follow-up to the European framework of actions have led to important decisions on national social partners joint actions, such as:

- creating or reforming forums to discuss national labour market and education policies with public authorities (7 initiatives reported)
- launching or relaunching national social dialogue on lifelong learning (5 initiatives reported)
- organising European events to share good practices with social partners from other Member States (4 initiatives reported)
- making joint translation and dissemination of the European text (almost all countries).

Looking at the content of the reported initiatives, it appears that the first concern of social partners was to better tailor education and training to labour market needs, in order to improve both the employability of workers and the competitiveness of companies, and to make education and training systems sustainable. These actions correspond to priorities 1 and 4. Concerning the mobilisation of resources, unfortunately the number of innovative solutions to promote co-investment in terms of funding, time and human resources was relatively limited. Social partners' second concern was to open-up existing systems, make them adopt a lifelong learning perspective and fully integrate work-based learning outcomes. These actions correspond to priority 2. Fewer actions were taken under priority 3 and several countries acknowledge that more has to be done to spread tailored information and raise motivation for competence development from the part of both companies and workers.

Even if the follow-up was intended to be primarily done in Member States, European level social partners also reported a number of actions. They widely disseminated the text and made its core elements known to EU public authorities and European sectors. They also promoted the involvement of the social partners from the new Member States by organising a specific seminar in May 2004 and by raising awareness on the priorities and follow-up mechanism through their joint integrated programme of technical assistance to the new Member States started in 2002. Finally, they collected and raised awareness on good practices from European sectoral social partners (11 initiatives reported)³.

³ For more details, please refer to the European Fiche

To conclude, the considerable amount of work done by national and European social partners to follow up on their initial commitment has made it possible to raise awareness on actions taken at national, sectoral and company levels, exchange experiences and gain understanding on the practical solutions sought by social partners. The compilation of shared good practices which was done annually enables to learn from others' experiences.

The European process both gave impetus to social partners for new actions and a framework to national social partners for discussions be it bilaterally or with public authorities. In some countries, in particular the new Member States, it encouraged social partners to get involved in national discussions on lifelong learning and to make their voice heard in debates which were mostly led by public authorities.

Even if social partners' actions still remain influenced by national policies and overall political context, and therefore mirror the current difficult situation of Europe, the reported initiatives demonstrate that social partners understand the challenges of the ageing of the population, globalisation of markets and rapid technological change in an increasingly similar way and that comparable solutions are successfully developed in different countries in south, north, eastern or western Europe.

The follow-up work has also enhanced perception of competence development as a shared interest for employers and employees and helped finding concrete solutions to modernise education and training systems. In most countries, it has clearly led to increased understanding and better cooperation between social partners as well as to a sense of shared responsibility.

The influence of the framework of actions on social partners' activities will continue in the future. It also depends on the ability of social partners at all levels to disseminate and raise awareness on the results of this evaluation exercise.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Three years after the adoption of the framework of actions, Europe's economic and employment situations have worsened. With almost 20 million people unemployed, weak growth and insufficient productivity rates, the overall impact of the framework of actions on the functioning of labour markets is difficult to assess.

Policies to develop lifelong development of competences and qualifications can contribute to solving labour market problems but it is also crucial that all aspects of the European growth and jobs strategy are implemented effectively. Developing lifelong learning therefore remains an essential priority if Europe is to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy and society in the world.

European social partners believe that the four priorities identified in 2002 remain valid and essential building blocks to improve the functioning of Europe's labour markets. They reaffirm the need to continue their dialogue and deepen their discussions on the lifelong development of competences and qualifications. Furthermore, they want to look at lifelong learning in the wider perspective of the functioning of labour markets in Europe.

Chapter II – National evaluation reports

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; CEEP Austrian section / VÖWG (Verband der Öffentlichen Wirtschaft und Gemeinwirtschaft Österreichs), member of CEEP

The Social Partners have been very active in promoting lifelong learning in Austria. Apart from their role as an important provider of continuing vocational training, it was mainly the Social Partners that developed models for the promotion of LLL. In addition, it was a Social Partner organisation, namely the Federation of Industry that developed a comprehensive concept for establishing a LLL strategy in Austria. This LLL Whitebook is the result of an intensive LLL process including several expert meetings, an expert round table and finally a LLL conference that involved companies, social partners, experts as well as main stakeholders in the field. The LLL Whitebook (see also www.iv-net.at), published in November 2004 defines objectives and cornerstones of a LLL policy until 2010.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

The Austrian Labour Market service (AMS) has organised a series of conferences on future skill needs and developments. The conference themes have been developed together with the Social Partner organisations and their research institutes ibw and öibf. Social Partner organisations contributed to the conferences via expert and financial input. The results of these conferences led among others to the development of the *Qualifikationsbarometer*, an online instrument with which labour market trends and developments in skill demands are monitored and presented to a broad public (www.ams.or.at/qualifikationsbarometer).

The Chamber of Labour organised in total seven conferences dealing with the new challenge of Lifelong Learning, for example "Financing Lifelong Learning", "The consequences of PISA for Lifelong Learning", "Lifelong Learning: The Swedish Model", etc. This series of conferences called "LLL" will be continued in the future.

The Social Partner organisations WKÖ and AK/ÖGB play an important role in the provision of continuing vocational training via their training institutes Wifi and bfi. Wifi offers about 25,000 courses per year with 300,000 participants, bfi about 15,000 courses per year to a total of 160,000 participants. Austrian trade unions also undertake a number of training centres aimed at one or more connected professions where union members can get training, receive or professionalise their vocational skills. This direct link between Social Partners and the provision of training ensures a high degree of responsiveness to skill demands in the labour market. Wifi has advisory boards consisting of representatives from companies and regularly conducts

surveys on training needs of WKÖ member companies. The Chamber of Labour Tyrol established a so-called *Kompetenzzentrum* (Competence Centre), which – apart from formal qualifications – identifies non-formal and informal obtained skills and competences. Others were to follow; in Vienna bfi introduced the *Kompetenz-Check* in 2005.

Furthermore, Social Partner organisations are strongly involved in modernisation of the dual apprenticeship system, as regards content (updating of curricula and the development of new trades) as well as structure (e.g. current modularisation proposals).

Supporting companies in their efforts to improve quality and effective investment in the development of human resources, the Federation of Austrian Industry has introduced the internationally recognised standard 'Investors in People' (IIP) in Austria. The standard is one of the most developed, experienced and effective tools in supporting companies in their Human Resource Development (HRD) efforts. IIP is a certified framework to improve performance, to better exploit a company's human capital and to further develop human resources. The pilot project - started in March 2004 with financial support from the European Social Fund - has involved 12 companies ranging from private services to public service, industry and biotechnology, which are being supported to achieve the IIP label by 2006. The project was selected as an example of good practice for ESF in action (see also www.investorsinpeople.at).

Studies in the field of lifelong learning are ordered and financed permanently by all Social Partner organisations, for example "Company-based Vocational Training in Austria", "Providers of Lifelong Learning in Vienna", "Educational Leave Schemes in Austria", "The Costs of Second Chance Programmes", etc.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

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

The Social Partners have been working together towards increasing permeability within the education and training system. Qualifications obtained in the dual apprenticeship system now count towards the award of the *Berufsreifeprüfung*, a certificate that grants university access. This new element of the Austrian education system is highly appreciated: 8,000 candidates are preparing themselves for the additional four exams to be taken (2005), and 5,500 already obtained the *Berufsreifeprüfung*. This without any doubt is one of the most impressive examples of educational policy initiated and shaped by the Austrian Social Partners.

The apprenticeship offices of the Economic Chamber, which administer the apprenticeship training and the final apprenticeship examination, have significantly

increased the number of people taking exceptional exams leading to a skilled worker qualification. With this examination people with informally obtained competences receive the same qualification as people who have undergone regular apprenticeship training.

Due to an initiative of the Chamber of Labour a specific working group headed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (bm:bwk) has been implemented with the task of developing an Austrian quality seal for the vocational training of adults (*Österreichisches Gütesiegel für Weiterbildung*). The Social Partners are represented in this working group.

Wifi and bfi, have both founded institutions accrediting skills by international standards primarily in the area of welding and Quality Management.

The Social Partners followed closely the development of ECVET. Apart from regular meetings organised by the Ministry, an expert of the employer's research institute ibw was involved in the EC working group and contributed to development of the scheme. The Social Partners are very positive about the result of this working group; however, it is recommended that the scheme be tested in pilot companies before being widely promoted.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

The professionalisation of guidance (on education and carrier paths) by setting up independent guidance agencies and by developing specific training for consultants and teachers is one of ten key measures defined in the LLL Whitebook of the Federation of Industry (see above). This concept is also supported by the Chamber of Labour. Recently, the Social Partners have been involved in the career guidance group set up by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in order to develop a national strategy on guidance.

The Economic Chamber is an important player in the provision of guidance and counselling. The regional Chambers run guidance centres which every year attract thousands of people. Traditionally these services were focused primarily on young people. In the past years people in employment have become a more important target group with a number of services especially geared to them.

In addition, the Chambers provide a comprehensive information tool that is accessible online (www.bic.at) and which is used by 160,000 persons per year. Furthermore they supply schoolteachers with supporting material for the teaching of business-related subjects. In order to promote contacts and projects between schools and companies the Economic Chamber set up a special unit (*Bildungsclusterbüro*) with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture being the main partner.

The Austrian Chambers of Labour provide vocational guidance in all Austrian Länder. Among them the Chamber of Labour Vienna is the biggest provider with more than 20,000 contacts each year, also organising events like *L14* (Which educational path to take at the age of 14?) and *Beruf-Baby-Bildung* (focusing on training for members in parental leave). The Austrian Trade Union Federation and craft unions took part

in numerous fairs offering advice and service concerning all levels of education, including lifelong learning – ranging from BEST, Austria's largest fair on education to small, regional fairs. A special project called *Arbeitswelt & Schule* (Working Life & School) trains teachers to work with their pupils on work/life-related topics.

See Investors in People above.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

Following up the priority of mobilising resources, further tax incentives proposed by the Federation of Industry were introduced by government for companies investing in education and training: these companies can obtain up to 20% tax credits for both internal and external training. Furthermore, companies which do not make enough profit to benefit from the tax deduction but invested in education and training can claim a training benefit. This training benefit amounts to 6% of the actual expense. The acceptance of these instruments is confirmed by a poll among member companies of the Federation of Industry, showing that 81% of them apply the incentives. Furthermore, 57% of these companies responded that they have increased their training activities in the last three years (2001 –2004).

Furthermore, training expenses of employees are treated as deductible expenses in the framework of the individual's tax declaration. This instrument has been enlarged: expenses for long-term training measures leading to a broad vocational re-qualification (i.e. leading to completely new qualifications) can now also lead to tax deduction. This was a proposal of the Chamber of Labour.

LLL-supporting instruments are going to be enlarged further: A new model (mentioned in the LLL Whitebook and developed by the Economic Chamber) has been proposed for Individual Learning Accounts. This proposal suggests that individual savings for training should receive a special premium of at least 30% from the state. It is reckoned by the Economic Chamber that such a system would attract additional private resources and thus give public resources an important leverage effect.

The Chamber of Labour developed and proposed a model for a national, income-related benefit for lifelong learning (*Staatliche Bildungsprämie*). The formula is simple: € 750 - 2% of annual gross income. This model targets low-income groups that cannot benefit from the tax-incentive for employees and neither are they able to afford high participation fees.

Already in 2002, the Chamber of Labour launched the initiative *AK Bildungsgutschein* (Learning Voucher of the Chamber of Labour), a new demand-led co-financing instrument. All three million members of the Chamber are entitled to a voucher worth € 100 per year (with an extra bonus for those on parental leave). The voucher can be used up for defined courses provided by selected training institutes. This new instrument proved highly effective in motivating for lifelong learning: for example, 24% of all users in Vienna participated in a course for the very first time. In all of Austria 200,000 vouchers had been used up until the end of 2004. Since 2003 the Chamber of Labour has been a member of ELAP (*European Learning Account Partners Network*), which is working on the economics of lifelong learning.

All Austrian trade unions offer subsidised courses and seminars aiming at further personal and professional education of union representatives and union members – the arrangements differ from union to union. Some unions have set maximum subsidies per person per year, others offer a fixed percentage of refund and others offer their courses at highly subsidised but constant fees.

Initiatives on mobilising resources were accompanied by several conferences such as “Financing Lifelong Learning”.

COMPANY EXAMPLES:

- **voestalpine: Project LIFE**

In order to enlarge its capacities at the headquarters in Linz, voestalpine calculated a need of about 1000 new staff members. Against the background that it is more and more difficult to find new labour force on the labour market, as society is continuously getting older, voestalpine has given priority to older staff members and plans to keep them in work longer.

In 2002, the voestalpine Executive Board agreed on the implementation of the programme LIFE, which was prepared by an external institute during a six-month analysis phase and further developed together with eight expert teams. The programme also received support from the European Commission in the framework of the Leonardo Programme.

At the core of LIFE is the so-called "Formula 33": every staff member has the possibility to use 33 hours per year for training and development activities (details to be defined in the plant agreement). "Formula 33" also means "three pillars for three generations", i.e. young staff will also be integrated, in order to promote teamwork. LIFE will be implemented in the different companies of the voestalpine group via plant agreements. Specific models will be developed for the 4,500 shift workers.

- **Wiener Stadtwerke:**

- to identify and anticipate competence and qualification needs:
 - Computer-based methods to identify employees' skills, talents and potential
 - Customised Assessment Centres, Development Centres and Hearings
- to recognise and validate competences and qualifications:
 - Computer-supported methods to describe and evaluate requirements, performance and ratings based on MbO (Management by Objectives).
- to inform, support and provide guidance:
 - Leadership guidelines for basic orientation
 - Intranet: Employees are provided with information about all matters of interest, including lectures, organised by the human resources development department
 - Workshops and customised development projects adjusted for particular purposes
 - Courses for apprentices in addition to the obligatory vocational school
 - Special measures at subsidiary company level to support learning “near the job”

- to mobilise resources:
 - Incentives for extraordinary performance and achievements (currently being implemented).

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

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

This question was largely addressed at the October 2003 national conference on employment. The agreements concluded between social partners and federal government on that occasion concern notably the flow into professions characterised by manpower shortages. The strengthening of training efforts is expected to give appropriate training to 10,000 persons in 2004, and to give young people financial encouragement to follow these courses.

2. At sectoral level

At the national conference on employment, sectors, in liaison with placement services and taking account of the situation on each labour market, were asked to follow developments in professions and skills from time to time and on a forward-looking basis, and to increase specific training efforts for sensitive functions. In concrete terms, identification and anticipation of needs often bring together on the ground funds and/or sectoral training centres as well as public training operators to provide the link between the training service offer and the sector's needs. The skills centres in which the partners are involved also play an important role.

Sectors are currently negotiating collective labour agreements to address these priorities as well as possible. It will be recalled that initiatives have already been taken during the period under consideration. It emerges from the reports filed by sectors in March 2004 that in 2003 44,946 sectoral training courses related to a critical function. These data are currently being updated.

By way of example, we refer to the following initiatives taken by sectors among the initiatives directly targeting identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs:

- In 2003, the social partners in the banking sector launched the Compass initiative (skills in the field of insurance). This is an orientation instrument which workers in the sector can use to determine which skills can be prioritised;

- In the textiles sector, CEFRET, the sector's bipartite centre, carries out telephone and written surveys and visits companies in the sector in order to give optimal orientation to the content of training courses offered in the sector.
- In 2003, Cefora (training centre of the national auxiliary bipartite committee for employees) examined the structure of wholesale trade professions. For companies, this is a practical instrument for describing vacant positions more precisely and for refining their in-house training policy.

3. At company level

In some cases close cooperation is organised between the sector and companies in definition of objectives and the resources to be deployed for worker training. For instance, some collective labour agreements make provision for companies to draw up a training plan.

However, these plans are generally discussed and drawn up in the framework of an agreement between the employer and the trade union delegation (often in the works council).

Approval of the training plan by the social partners at sectoral level is sometimes also required, and training may then be given by training funds or the sectoral training centre. The links that exist between companies and the sector, notably for drawing up training plans, enable companies to make their training needs known and influence the training service offer so as to take account of their real needs on the ground.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

The 24 July 2003 cooperation agreement on validation of competences in the field of continuing vocational training, concluded between the French-speaking Community, the Region of Wallonia and the French-speaking Community Commission as well as the Flemish decree dated 20 April 2004, have put in place the legal framework necessary for implementation of the validation process.

2. At sectoral level

Sectors have been encouraged to validate training courses using sectoral certification systems or "vocational training passports". The social partners are involved in the work which should soon result in preparation of the first lists of priority trades in both the north and the south of the country.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

These features vary from one sector to the next. Information may take the form of brochures and reports, or may be provided via a website or targeted information

campaigns. It usually involves sectors, training centres and funds, skills centres or regional placement services.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

Commitments made in the last cross-sectoral agreements, confirmed at the October 2003 national conference on employment, must make it possible to achieve a total training effort by companies equal to 1.9% of salary mass by the end of 2004. This commitment has to be met while maintaining the specific effort of 0.10% targeting employment and/or training of persons in groups at risk.

The evaluation of the resources devoted to training will be refined with establishment of a new indicator bringing together mainly the social balance sheet, the survey on work forces and the report on activity in the sectors (follow-up of recommendation n° 16 of CNT)⁴.

The national conference on employment set the new objectives in quantitative terms: the social partners committed to ensure that, by 2010, one worker in two will receive training; all persons concerned will make efforts to ensure that each year 60,000 additional workers are involved in a training effort. Efforts are currently being made with a view to meeting these objectives.

Lastly, at regional level, the Wallonia employment service has been developing a network of skills centres since 1998. These centres are geared to the activities of a specific sector and are therefore usually set up close to companies in the sector. They dispense training on the basis of the most recent technologies in the sector and work with all the players concerned: employment service, sectoral organisations, education community. In a number of sectors, universities and research centres are also involved. Skills centres dispense training not only to managers in the sector but also to jobseekers and schools. In this way, they succeed in matching the training service offer to labour market needs. These centres also play an important role in the area of critical functions. They can give information on the sector and they promote jobs linked to the new technologies vis-à-vis their target public. The centres are networked through the employment service. Skills centres are also organised in Flanders by VDAB and in close liaison with sectoral social partners.

Generally speaking, these centres make it possible for the various players to pool resources with a view to anticipating, monitoring and meeting the training needs of companies in the different sectors.

The resources used by these structures may consist, for example, in 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, in determining a certain percentage of the work timetable to

⁴ Une première évaluation a été réalisée entre les partenaires sociaux et le Gouvernement concernant le suivi de cette recommandation en juin 2004. Une soixantaine de rapports ont été ainsi établis couvrant près de 75 % des salariés, illustrant par là l'implication des partenaires sociaux dans une dynamique nouvelle. Le nouveau rapport est attendu dans les prochains mois, les négociations étant toujours en cours au niveau des secteurs.

be devoted to vocational training programmes, or in putting in place concrete training and employment programmes for particular target groups.

Of the sixty sectors that filed a report in March 2004, forty-three have developed a training service offer for workers, thirty-one in the framework of education, thirty for jobseekers and twenty-seven for employers.

On this basis, in 2003 the sectors trained 254,208 workers (with 19 hours of training on average), 11,314 jobseekers (381 hours on average), 6,022 students registered in an alternance-based training system and 32,947 pupils in full-time secondary education. It should be noted that 44,946 of training courses related to a critical function.

Among the numerous initiatives developed by sectors, the following initiatives should be mentioned by way of examples:

- **Banking sector:** the collective labour agreement provides for development of a right to training for each worker. In small and medium-sized banks, this right is two days a year. In large institutions, this right increases to three days. To stimulate and support this plan, the elanplus initiative (www.elanplus.be) has been created. Among other things, this initiative allows free participation in seminars on various subjects linked to the banking sector.
- **Cleaning sector:** in partnership with literacy associations (reading and writing), social partners in the sector have agreed to put in place free training courses for workers during working hours and without loss of pay. The aim is to teach workers in the sector to learn to read and write without being embarrassed about their difficulties.
- **Workers with employee status falling under the national auxiliary bipartite commission for employees (CPNAE or CP 218):** the 15 May 2003 sectoral agreement gives the right to a minimum of four days of training during the period 2004-2005. The training can be in-house or external.. In concertation with the trade union delegation, the employer can introduce his own training plan or add to the sectoral standard plan. If training takes place outside working hours, the employer must give the worker the equivalent time off in lieu. 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 given an additional day of paid leave for each training day not granted.

Cefora (this sector's training centre) organises the "check-up 45+". This is a voluntary and joint initiative by one or more workers older than 45 and their employer whereby an external consultant screens the specific training needs of these workers. This upgrade action places emphasis on identifying the skills and aptitudes of these workers with a view to offering training which is likely to anticipate change.

Cefora has trained 3,717 jobseekers including 714 for functions in the wholesale trade which are particularly difficult to fill. Almost four out of five participants have found a job in six months and around half have secured a contract of indeterminate duration. Industrial apprenticeship has attracted 312 students in three years. Fifty-

five obtained a certificate in 2003 and 70% of them have found work, e.g. for the functions warehouseman, wholesale goods packer or counter vendor.

- **Hairdressing and beauty care sector (CP 314):** establishment within the sector of a highly structured training system influencing pay, without touching systems for classification of functions. This training takes the place of the courses generally offered by brands of products specific to the sector. Creation of a qualifications card for each worker, serving not only for the recording of training credits but also for monitoring. The system is managed by the sectoral existence security fund which grants an extra end-of-year bonus to workers on the basis of hours spent in training. Training courses are closely linked to the tasks to be performed (hair-dressing, beauty care or communication techniques) and can be followed with recognised training agents whose names are accessible to training candidates via a website which they can access using a password (<http://www.coiffure.org/>). The system involves educational institutions and takes account of the needs of trainees in the sector.
- **Paper production sector:** almost 95% of companies have used their drawing rights to the fund constituted with contributions paid by companies in this sector. In this way, more than 2,500 workers have benefited from training. The training effort in this sector reached 2.62% of salary mass in 2003.
- **Construction sector:** the emphasis is placed on flanking new workers with little experience through godfathering to a qualified worker in the company.

The duration of this godfathering with a view to training varies from one to six months. Three thousand godfathers have spent an average of two hours a day flanking young starters in this sector. In parallel, the training fund's resources have been spent on various types of training actions.

- 1) 350 godfathering contracts have been concluded between the sectoral fund and affiliated companies; flanking in the company is complemented with training courses of one or two weeks in a training centre.
- 2) Organisation and financing of paid alternance-based training (two years) for young people from 16 to 25 years of age (1,400 contracts a year); this is co-financed by the company in question and the sectoral fund.
- 3) Top-up training organised by the sectoral fund in a centre approved by the fund and in concertation with the companies (17,000 beneficiaries in 2003).
- 4) Intense collaboration with professional and technical schools via partnership agreements.
- 5) Payment of grants to jobseekers and to training centres in cases involving retraining for a construction trade.

All of these actions represent more or less 2.2% of the sector's salary mass; this percentage does not include all the actions taken by individual companies.

- **Insurance sector**: more than 3,400 persons employed in forty companies in the sector had training paid for out of the sectoral fund. In addition, for many years the sector has endeavoured to develop recruitment and training of young jobseekers. In the framework of the 2003-2004 agreement, the insurance sector undertakes to recruit, for a total period of one year, 150 young jobseekers and to give them additional training during working hours for a period of three months with a view to subsequent placement in the sector. Realisation of this plan is evaluated regularly in the bipartite commission. Lastly, by virtue of the 2003-2004 sectoral agreement, a training credit of four days a year (internal or external) is determined collectively at company level in 2003 and 2004. This credit increased from three to four days when the last sectoral agreement was concluded. This is a “common pot” which will be shared out as a function of workers’ real needs. A report on this subject is presented annually to the works councils.
- **Textiles sector**: the sectoral fund constituted by employer contributions partially reimburses to companies the expenditure linked to training of their personnel (drawing rights) within the limits of their contributions and on the basis of a training plan.

In 2003, almost 368 companies introduced a training plan.

In addition, training courses were organised and financed by the textiles sector’s sectoral fund; in 2003, 142 companies participated in this action for blue-collar workers (including 41% SMEs) and 137 companies for white-collar workers (including 39% SMEs).

Collaboration agreements were concluded with the public training centre (VDAB) as well as with individual companies with a view to providing training for workers in the sector.

The employer federation “Febeltex” made a particular effort to disseminate information using via various channels (circulars, mail, specialist press) about the existence of these various instruments, notably targeting companies but also other organisations that might be concerned by these training courses.

- **Steel sector**: according to the annual survey carried out in companies and whose results are evaluated bilaterally by the sector’s social partners, it transpires that blue-collar workers in the sector spent 588,790 hours in training, which represents 2.7% of the total hours worked by this category of workers. The cost of these training courses represents 3% of the salary mass of the workers concerned.

2. At company level

Companies act directly in mobilisation of resources (payment of contributions, allocation of working time, etc.). It should be recalled that collective labour agreements concluded at company level may implement a sectoral agreement and, in the absence of a sectoral collective labour agreement, apply directly the provisions specified at cross-sectoral level (notably regarding the obligation regarding groups at risk).

Among initiatives by companies, we highlight:

- A trade union organisation has developed a toolbox comprising practical fiches with a view to negotiating training plans in companies. This action is based on the principle that a right to lifelong training must be granted to all workers, in-house or externally, via a training plan to be drawn up in concertation with the social partners. This action gives concrete form to the training efforts defined for use of the employer contribution of 0.10% for groups at risk and the employer commitment to spend 1.9% of salary mass for in-house training. Three fiches are devoted to the objectives (0.10%, alternance and training plan with the objective of requalification and continuing training) and two fiches deal specifically with the company training plan.
- A trade union organisation has developed for use in the metal-working sector an internal vocational training code based on the following rights: right to vocational training to give access to, maintain, develop and retrain in employment, the right of all workers (young, vulnerable, old, women, immigrants, low-skilled, temporary, etc.) to fair vocational training, i.e. realised in the framework of collective negotiations, without loss of pay and appropriate in terms of content and methodology.
- In dialogue with VDAB, UNIZO has started to put in place the project "Dutch at work" in SMEs. In the framework of this project, SMEs can offer training in the Dutch language at work to their workers who do not speak the language and who are often foreigners.

Cyprus

Sources of information

- Trade Unions: SEK (Cyprus Workers Confederation), member of ETUC
- Employers:; OEB (Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation), member of UNICE; CCCI (Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry), member of UEAPME

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

As mentioned in last year's report on Cyprus, actions to identify and anticipate competences and qualifications needs in Cyprus are primarily undertaken by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), as far as the adult population is concerned, i.e. the target group of interest to employee and employer organisations. In addition, but to a much lesser extent, there exists the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC).

The HRDA's mission is to create the necessary prerequisites for the planned and systematic training and development of human resources of Cyprus. The main strategic objectives of the HRDA for 2004-2006 include:

- Participation in the formulation of a national strategy for the promotion of lifelong learning.
- Adjustment of the training system to the needs of the labour market with the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the training provided.
- Formulation of an integrated policy and promotion of the gradual establishment and operation of a System of Vocational Qualifications in Cyprus.
- Conducting research studies and surveys.

The social partners in Cyprus (employer and employee organisations) participate in the Board of the HRDA and hence in the decision-making process of the Authority which is a semi-state organisation in nature and operates on a tripartite basis.

The actions that the HRDA takes to identify and anticipate competence and qualification needs are:

- Analysis of the changes in the labour market through research studies on issues of strategic importance, which examine particularly human resource development, issues at the level of the economy, the level of economic sectors and occupational categories. Emphasis is also placed on employment forecasting. A study entitled "Employment Forecasts in Cyprus 2005-2015" was completed and published in May 2005. The study covered 44 sectors of economic activity and 27 occupations.

Additionally, on the basis of the same methodology, two more forecast studies were published in 2005 entitled "Forecasts of Prospects of Employment in Higher Level Professions in Cyprus 2005-2015" (managerial positions) for 144 professions and "Forecasts of Prospects of Employment in Medium Level Professions in Cyprus 2005-2015" for 90 professions.

- Annual investigations for the identification of skill needs with the involvement of the social partners. Such a study was carried out in 2005 as well.
- Preparation of an annual document (in consultation with the social partners) that contains the thematic priorities for multi-company training programmes. Such a document was prepared for 2005 as well.
- The conduct of human resource studies focusing on the characteristics of selected groups such as the employed, the unemployed, the economically inactive, women, etc. Such studies were conducted in 2005 as well. In addition, the implementation of schemes (co-financed by the European Social Fund) to provide through personalised guidance, core skills to disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, economically inactive women and young secondary school-leavers.

The above-mentioned actions of the HRDA help all actors to anticipate needs and direct resources in the right directions.

During the present time, the HRDA is conducting, for the first time in Cyprus, a survey for the ex-post evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of its training programmes for the period 1998-2004. Up until now the impact of training of any form has not been properly measured by any body conducting training in Cyprus. There are some indicators but they are not precise, and specific measurements are absent. The social partners evaluate as a rule the training they provide (through special evaluation forms) where the trainees are also asked to evaluate the expected impact of the training on their enterprises. However, the actual impact is not measured / evaluated.

The Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC) is a department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance that is involved in assisting private and public organisations to utilise their human and capital resources in the best possible manner, with a view to increasing their productivity.

Even though the CPC is a governmental organisation, it has incorporated in its areas of responsibility the operation of the Apprenticeship System. The Apprenticeship System, which is governed by a tripartite council, was previously under the Labour Office. This is believed to improve / benefit the System and give a new momentum to VET at the level of secondary education, as the CPC is better equipped both in human resources and expertise. The activities of the System are financed by the HRDA. The CPC has now undertaken the task of identifying competence and qualifications needs in respect of the Apprenticeship System so that the System is further improved and put on a healthier basis. The CPC will also be evaluating the impact of the System on the economy.

In addition, the social partners also conduct annually surveys amongst their members to identify their training needs so that they can proceed with the provision of the necessary training to them. Such surveys were conducted in the period 2002-2005 as well.

2. At Sectoral Level

These mostly include the relevant HRDA activities that deal with sectoral research / analysis as outlined above.

In addition, a number of Sectoral Associations, e.g. Association of Cyprus Travel Agents, Cyprus Hotel Association, Association of Commercial Banks, Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus, Cyprus Federation of Business and Professional Women, etc., conduct regular research amongst their members with a view to identifying their training/ competence/ qualifications needs.

3. Actions taken at Company Level

The major banking and accounting / auditing institutions of Cyprus, through their competent departments, are continuously monitoring the training/skills needs of their personnel particularly in the light of the changes taking place in the banking/financial services / accounting and auditing / tax environment, and provide the necessary training to their staff on a systematic basis.

Furthermore, more and more companies, mostly the large ones rather than SMEs, actively try to identify competence and qualification needs and provide further training for their staff to increase their competences and thus increase productivity and fully capitalise on the use of the increased capabilities of their staff.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At National Level

The HRDA has responsibility (by law) for the promotion and gradual establishment of a System of Vocational Qualifications. More specifically, the law clearly places the power and authority on the HRDA to “set standards of vocational qualifications for any category or categories of persons employed, provide for the assessment and issue the relevant certificates of vocational qualifications”.

The assessment of the findings of a special feasibility study, the formulation of an integrated policy and the promotion and gradual establishment of a System of Vocational Qualifications in Cyprus, in cooperation with all other competent agencies, is one of the Strategic Objectives of the HRDA for 2004-2006, formulated on the basis of Cyprus's strategic goals.

The feasibility study was conducted in 2004 and a monitoring committee was formed in which all the social partners participated. During 2005 the HRDA has proceeded to establish the general framework of the System of Vocational Qualifications in Cyprus. At the moment, a consultative process is under procedure with the

government to set the implementation framework. This has the full support of the Social Partners that participate in the Board of Directors as mentioned previously. In parallel, the procedure for the European Qualifications Framework is in the consultative process where all social partners will be involved in the very near future apart from their involvement as members of the Board of Directors of the HRDA.

In addition, the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) is operating a scheme in Cyprus (the only one of its kind run by a Cypriot organisation) whereby it certifies competence in a number of computer-related subjects (e.g. Word-processing, Spreadsheets, Databases, Presentations, etc.) through its own professional examinations.

The impact of the above actions has been very positive insofar as setting the appropriate framework is concerned. The impact of the Vocational Qualifications System will be evaluated when the System is in place. The impact of the Chamber's certification scheme has been extremely positive on Cypriot enterprises, according to an evaluation conducted by the CCCI.

2. Actions taken at sectoral level:

Two good examples in as far as recognition and validation of competences and qualifications are concerned, comes from the banking sector and the accounting / auditing sector.

The Cyprus Association of Commercial Banks, with the agreement of the Bank Employees Union of Cyprus, recognises the qualifications awarded by the Chartered Institute of Bankers of England and Wales and the American Institute of Bankers.

Also the Documentary Credits Certificate awarded by the International Chamber of Commerce. The recognition leads to salary increases and promotions.

Similarly the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus and its member accounting / auditing firms recognise the qualifications awarded by the Institutes of Chartered and Certified Accountants of the U.K. as well as the American CPA qualification.

This has led to a tremendous increase of participants in these schemes with all the relevant benefits.

Also the certificates awarded by the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry certifying competence in computer-related subjects are recognised for employment purposes by leading companies and organisations in Cyprus.

3. Actions taken at company level:

The examples of best practice are again from the banking and the accounting / auditing sectors. The sectors as a whole but also the individual banks and accounting / auditing firms recognise the qualifications mentioned in the relevant part of "Actions taken at sectoral level" above. Most of bank and accounting firm employees participate in the programmes of the various institutes mentioned above and thus add on their qualifications and at the same time add value to the banks and the accounting firms and the corresponding sectors as a whole.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. Actions taken at National level

The social partners are primarily involved in the relevant activities of the HRDA, through their participation in its Board of Directors.

The HRDA has prepared a web page with information and advice on training opportunities. The HRDA also displays its research studies on the labour market, which include medium-to long-term occupational forecasts up to 2015. The HRDA presents the results of such studies and information on its schemes and the options available to parents, to secondary school students and to young secondary school graduates doing their service in the National Guard. Moreover, the HRDA, through its Consultancy Services Scheme, aims at increasing the productivity and improving the competitiveness of enterprises through the development and better utilisation of their human resources. This scheme helps enterprises identify the training and development needs of their human resources and prepare/implement a training plan.

The annual reports show an increase in the participation of people in the different training programmes that address almost all professions and all levels of education qualifications of people.

In addition, the social partners inform and provide guidance to their members on a regular basis concerning the training opportunities that are available in Cyprus.

2. Actions taken at Sectoral level

The Sectoral Associations mentioned above provide relevant information and guidance services to their members.

In particular the Institute of Certified Accountants of Cyprus operates the system of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). As an Association, they follow up any changes occurring in their profession and support continuous training. ICPAC also publishes a quarterly magazine, 'Accountancy Cyprus', which is distributed to all-important accounting offices.

3. Actions taken at company level

Several large companies provide information and guidance to their staff. These include the leading banking institutions, accounting firms, IT companies, training institutions and private sector enterprises dealing with health and social welfare (the public sector has its own internal systems of providing guidance and support to its staff).

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. Actions taken at national level

The activities of the HRDA are financed by the Human Resource Development Fund where enterprises are obliged to pay a levy amounting to 0,1% of their total payroll. The funds are mainly used to subsidise initial and continuing vocational training for the employed as well as other developmental activities. In 2003, HRDA's total expenditure was £5.3m (€9.1m), out of which £4.8m (€8.3m) represented expenditure on training activities. The impact of the levy on the anticipation of competences and the satisfaction of training needs has been quite substantial.

A new form of funding is the co-financing of vocational education and training measures with the ESF as formulated in the Single Programming Document for Objective 3 - Human Resources for 2004-2006. As far as training is concerned, three new schemes have been developed and put in operation by the HRDA, co-financed by the European Social Fund (50-50%). These schemes aim to promote the training and employability of Young Secondary School-leavers, the Unemployed, the Economically Inactive and Women. The impact of these schemes will be evaluated at a later stage.

In addition to the levy paid to the HRDA, it is estimated that the employers in the private sector spend an additional 1-1.5% of payroll on training measures for their staff.

Finally, the government as an employer finances the training and development of civil servants. It is estimated that an amount of £0.5m (€0.87m) was expended in 2003 for this matter.

2. Actions taken at Sectoral level

Resources in Cyprus are mostly not mobilised at sectoral level but at national level through the levy to the HRDA as mentioned above.

It is however mentioned that employers in the private sector are estimated to spend 1-1.5% of their payroll (in addition to the HRDA levy) on training measures for their staff, while the government as an employer also finances the training and development of civil servants. It is estimated that an amount of £0.5 m (€0.87m) was expended in 2003 for this matter. Also the large commercial banks and accounting / auditing firms systematically dedicate a share of their budget for the training and development of their employees.

3. Actions taken at company level

As already mentioned, the large commercial banks and accounting / auditing firms dedicate a share of their budget for the systematic training and development of their employees.

Czech Republic

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CMKOS (Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: SPCR (Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic), member of UNICE; Union of Employers' Associations of the Czech Republic, member of CEEP

An efficient and sustainable concept of lifelong learning remains one of the main priorities of the Czech Social Partners.

Despite certain efforts by the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic, the basic problem of a complete legislative framework for continuing education and its interconnection with initial education still has not been solved. This fact is therefore mirrored in this report, influencing the situation at all levels.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

In 2003 the Government Council for Human Resources Development in the Czech Republic was established. Its main objective is to develop the Strategy of Development of Human Resources and to ensure its implementation. This means proposing and pushing through changes in legal regulations concerning employability of workers in labour markets - knowledge and skills of school leavers and their structure, complementing and widening the qualifications of the rest of population.

The social partners representatives asked that the strategy was followed by a concrete programme of its implementation. This proposal was approved by the Czech government. The programme of implementation will be developed in the near future.

Czech social partners collaborated in the preparation of the new "School Act", Act for Pedagogic Employees and in the preparation of 21 regulations for implementation of mentioned acts, namely in more precise defining of regulations concerning regional education.

Concrete activities in legislation in the past period with positive impact on development of human resources: initiation of "Act on Continuing Education", the draft of which was - following the agreement of social partners - adapted in April 2005 to the "Act on Validation and Certification of Continuous Education Results"; changes in the employment laws aimed at support of employment of school leavers and persons with difficulties in finding jobs; initiation of changes in new labour law regulation in support of employers to encourage them to further train their employees; initiation of changes in the laws on income tax. But this act includes only a part of life long learning and this is why social partners hereafter ask to prepare a complete law on life long learning.

Social partners have the opportunity to participate in the development of individual ministries' drafts and intentions with impacts on initial and continuing education, especially through membership in the above Government Council for Human Resources Development and through the Working Group for Education and Human Resources Development, which is an inseparable part of the Council of Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic (RHSD CR).

Concrete participation of social partners in application of legislation: participation of social partners in the sectoral groups working under the auspices of the National Institute for Vocational Education, which itself is one of the organisational units of the Ministry of Education. Twenty-five sectoral groups monitor the development of qualification requirements for occupations and career positions, take part in the establishment of profession profiles and supervise coherence between qualification requirements and proposed educational programmes. Through participation in specification of framework educational programmes and through completing the so-called "Integrated System of Type Positions" social partners at national level take part in ensuring that the profile of a graduate of a certain school and his/her training corresponds to employers' requirements and employability is improved.

2. At sectoral level

Social partners at sectoral level follow the development of employment in individual sectors, collect information on required and non-required professions and on qualification and competence requirements.

With regard to varying needs of regions from the point of view of required professions, efforts continue to establish regional councils for human resources development - with the participation of social partners. One of their roles should be to bring the structure of schools in a given region into harmony with employers' needs for individual professions and also to assist in contacts between schools and employers.

3. At company level

Identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs at company level is necessary for companies to have the required structure of employees in terms of numbers and qualifications.

Main activities include: regular surveys of employment development in the company, expected changes in production programmes that will influence the structure of employment. Social partners at the company level consult training programmes containing training activities for individual groups of employees - graduates, older workers, gifted young managers and others. When a wider restructuring of a company workforce is necessary, social partners at company level deal not only with financial compensation for redundant employees but also with retraining programmes for those who need only complement their skills in order to stay in the company.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

Social partners take part in creation of legislative drafts concerning requirements of employees profiles, make comments on these drafts on the basis of practical experience, etc. The present Act on validation and certification of continuous education results corresponds to the needs and interests of the labour market.

The first institution to address and to deal with the area of validation and certification of competences and qualifications in the context of the labour market was the State Employment Service in cooperation with the firm Trexima s.r.o. Trexima has established a wide range of cooperating experts from practice who have already been working together for 5 years, preparing the so-called „Integrated System of Type Positions“. This system is now in its final stage – undergoing verification via the Labour offices. The system is based on the analyses of qualification segments of more than 1,600 professions in such a way that the available job positions can be compared against the available workforce.

The completion of the whole system with its ability to function depends on the evaluation processes combined with verification. Within this context also belongs the start of the EUROPASS project in the Czech Republic. The National Institute for Vocational Education has been designated as the responsible authority.

The Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic organised two seminars focused on the entrepreneurial sphere with an expert concentration on this area. The representatives of 20 school associations (members of the Union of Employers' Associations) and also delegates of some employers' associations take part in national “accreditation commissions”; their main task is to evaluate proposals of school education programmes and to look after their harmony with national framework education programmes and – of course – also with actual needs of our labour market. Social partners are members of the Steering Committee, which has been preparing the EUROPASS project in the Czech Republic and has begun to cooperate on the EQF proposal.

The employers' associations and CMKOS and also some sectoral associations and unions have their own institutes or systems for education and training which are used also for these purposes.

2. At company level

The activities depend on the size and economic possibilities of the company. In large companies the evaluation of employees' competences and qualifications is a part of company's personal policy. The company education policy concerns not only the training itself but also monitoring other educational activities of employees - whether they are certified and recognised and thus increasing the employees' credit in the labour market. The situation is more difficult in small and medium companies where the systems of personal management and human resources development in many cases do not exist and the validation of competences and qualifications is not done.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

The main subject providing the support, guidance and information in the sphere of human resources development, education and employability is still the State. The main role in this is played by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Labour offices in the individual regions of the Czech Republic and Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

Social partners make use of this system both by the individual participation of their own representatives in the advisory bodies to the Labour offices and also via their own advisory method realised through the regional structures.

Guidance for choice of occupation has been already for several years a part of curricula at basic schools. Its main purpose is to motivate students to choose further education and a job according to his/her capacities and jobs available in the given region.

2. At sectoral level

Social partners take part in sectoral programmes of restructuring (for instance steel industry, energy sector, etc.)

3. At company level

Information and guidance are a part of social dialogue and form part of company culture.

The area of providing information and guidance will require a stronger effort from the social partners' part in the next period.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

The efforts still continue to develop a new system for financing the continuous education enabling to split the financial burden between the employer, employee and State – not to expect that the employer will be the only financing party in the process of continuing vocational education.

Therefore it is necessary to:

- a) create, adopt and implement the programme of life long learning which would motivate all the participants (schools, employers, employees and trade unions);
- b) motivate employers through the possibility of using preferential arrangements (tax assignments, retroactive deduction of the investment from the tax duty, reimbursement of the certified programmes from the tax duty);
- c) within the Council of Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic, continue the discussion on the establishment of an educational fund on the basis of a percentage of payroll. The rules for its establishment and use are to be specified by a new legislation;

- d) motivate the employees to co-finance their own education and training by the deduction of the education investment from the basic income (as for example in case of the mortgages-supporting tools);
- e) motivate also the employees for an active approach to lifelong learning as an indispensable basis for a flexible, widely applicable workforce

As a conclusion of this part it is necessary to state that the issue of financial motivation of employees and employers is a complex one. However creation of an independent training fund administered in a bipartite or tripartite way requires that the employers' contribution to the employment policy is reduced. Should it mean only a higher tax burden, then this form would be generally unacceptable for the employers. As the most feasible can be considered the deduction of costs for own education and training by individual employees.

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), KTO (association of local government employees organizations), 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

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.

Together with public authorities at national level these challenges are also notably addressed within the Council for Vocational Education and Training and the Council for Vocational Adult Education and Training. At sectoral level 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 these bipartite or tripartite settings at sectoral level for years, new challenges are easily identified and the social partners jointly develop solutions to new challenges in education and training.

Also at company level the Danish model has a long tradition of cooperating to find solutions for competence development and this is therefore often a basis for close cooperation with local or regional educational institutions.

In autumn 2004, the Danish government and social partners set up a committee which, until the end of 2005, will undertake a thorough review of current provision in the field of adult and continuing vocational training (CVT). The Prime Minister invited the social partners to talks about how to upgrade the competences of Danish workers in order to deal with the effects of globalisation. All social partners responsible for this report participated in this committee.

Since the Danish model has been working in these structures for years the evaluation report will be structured in accordance with these structures, meaning that the report will be divided into the different labour market sectors – state sector, Local and regional public sector and private sector.

1. State sector

The state sector personnel and management policy was published in 2003⁵ with staff members' competences as an essential perspective, as skilled and qualified staff play

⁵ The personnel and management policy is available in English on the website www.perst.dk.

a key role in the provision of services to citizens and businesses. According to the policy, skills must be subject to continual refinement, and skills enhancement in the institutions of the state sector must continue to be both strategic and systematic. Strategic, via the implementation of a strategy for skills enhancement that is grounded in the goals and tasks of the institution, and systematic, via the regular use of tools such as individual development plans. Using a broad range of skills enhancement methods – from creating good learning environments in the daily work environment to extended supplementary training – it is the aim to ensure that state sector employees are given real opportunities to live up to the ambition of continual development. At the same time, it is the continuous aim of the state sector to be able to attract staff that is best suited to the tasks it performs, by offering attractive, individual possibilities for development.

The effort to embrace change and assist continued development at the individual workplaces has been made, and a number of specific initiatives have been launched as well in an action plan to be executed throughout 2004 and 2005⁶. The purpose of these initiatives is to provide the individual state sector institutions with useful tools to work strategically with development of staff skills in accordance with the specific tasks and aims of the institution. Among specific initiatives, the following can be mentioned:

- Provision of various mobility-promoting measures with the purpose of enhancing and consolidating the skills of state sector employees,
- Development of inspirational material on how state institutions can offer focused career guidance to their staff,
- Establishment of development programmes and other initiatives for new and future managers,
- Establishment of specific training courses for project managers and personnel consultants, and
- The use of different measures to identify and develop state sector employees' individual and professional talent.

The social partners consider integrating competence development into daily working life to be a very important task and a joint responsibility. In 2004, the evaluation of the "competence package" (part of the collective agreement in 2002) showed, that in general the development of staff members' competences is carried through, and the development of staff members' competences at individual workplaces have undergone profound progress. Thus, several individual workplaces have strengthened their strategic and systematic competence development, and employee development interviews are carried out in almost every workplace in the state, including written personal development goals. Moreover, more than 50% of the employees stated that they have had their needs for development and further education identified within the last two years. Important motivational powers for competence development are the employees' personal ambitions and wishes and new demands from outside. Just under half of the employees experience barriers to competence development, mostly lack of economic resources and/or time limitations.

As a result of the collective bargaining in 2005 the social partners decided to continue the joint efforts in order to enhance competence development in the state sector. This includes a renewal of the collective agreement on strategic and systematic competence development, in which connection it is emphasised that the

⁶ The action plan is available in English on the website www.perst.dk.

joint consultation committees play a central role in laying down guidelines for the competence development strategy at individual workplaces. The Centre for Development of Human Resources and Quality Management, which was established as part of the collective bargaining in 1999⁷, will continue to exist and thereby support in an innovative way the continuous enhancement of competences and quality measures of state sector institutions. The social partners also agreed to make a special effort within the next agreement period to strengthen the competences among older employees, e.g. by launching a project on clarification of career possibilities. In addition, competence development of less well educated employees will be emphasised, in order to meet their needs for development of general, technical and professional skills, and thereby also to strengthen their position in situations of organisational change and introduction of new tasks.

A special agreement has been reached on establishment of specific jobs of maximum one year's duration for ethnic minorities, in order to encourage integration by supporting their motivation and basis for education and possibilities for future employment. Education and/or training must extend over an average of 20% of the normal work-time. A plan for these activities is mandatory and must be prepared at the beginning of the employment period. At the individual workplaces the joint consultation committees discuss the guidelines and principles for education and training, and the employing authority and the trade union representative agree upon the specific appointments. In addition, a target has been set to increase the number of trainee jobs in the state sector by 25% (from 1,300 to 1,600) by 2007.

By the end of the current agreement period, the social partners plan to launch an evaluation of the elements and initiatives which have been agreed upon in 2005 within the field of competence development.

2. Local and regional public sector

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

The local and regional public sector predicted early in 2002 the need to strengthen competences and qualifications in the local and regional sector as already stated in the previous reports. This recognition was put into the collective agreement made by the independent social partners.

The collective agreement sets a frame for the local and regional social partners and encourages them to fill out the frame with local agreements at company level based on specific needs at the workplace.

The agreement encourages setting an individual task for each worker for the potential to be developed.

An independent consultant has evaluated the use of individual agreements on competence development. The evaluation shows that a great deal of competence development takes place in the local public labour market in Denmark.

⁷ Detailed information about the Centre is available in English on the website www.sckk.dk

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

Every third year and this time with only two years in-between a huge conference with a focus on workplace policies, e.g. education and lifelong learning is arranged by the social partners. ("Det personalepolitiske Forum")

The general renewal of all collective agreements in 2005 resulted in a continuation of the activities to promote lifelong learning.

It was agreed in the new agreement at general level that:

"It will be possible to offer leave with normal pay over up to two months or half salary up to four months for relevant additional learning."

Knowledge about the agreement for additional learning is fairly high in the public sector.

The resources have to be found at local level in connection with concrete setting of the individual plan.

The social partners in the local and regional area have noted the agreement at European level on the framework of actions on lifelong learning. Its content corresponds well with the attitude shared by the social partners already trying to improve the level of competences through collective agreement and social dialogue.

At the same time the social partners are happy to have this opportunity to engage in an exchange of information on national practices about how the social dialogue can contribute to a well functioning labour market.

3. Private sector

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

There is a long tradition of working with planning of education and training based on the identification of needs for future competences – some examples:

Social partners within the "Electricity and Plumbing sector" have agreed to develop a new coherent system for training after completion of upper secondary vocational education and training. The principle is to be able to move from basic competences to specialised competences within a given subject, e.g. from basic competence in automation to specialist knowledge in programmable motors. The system has been structured to allow for flexibility for the workforce and for companies in order to coordinate training activities with the strategic development of companies. Social partners agree that time spent on unnecessary subjects should be avoided.

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. 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 intermediate 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.

Management is seen 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. 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 was started in which management and leadership were to be integrated in some form or other into the curricula to give a basic knowledge and a better understanding of how organisations develop.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The social partners, including the local and regional authorities, cooperate with the Ministry of Education, sharing responsibility for the dual system in Vocational Education and Training. This co-operation guarantees dynamic development and tailoring of vocational education and training in step with the rapidly changing qualification need of trade and industry. To ensure the possibility of a formal vocational education for adults with very little or no education, the so-called GVU has been introduced. It means that an adult with experience within a specific area of work can have his or her informal qualifications (real competencies) assessed and compared against 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.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

In order to develop practical solutions to the question of guidance and motivation a number of projects have been initiated. One of them is The Network Locomotive which 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.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

In March 2004, collective bargaining in Denmark's main private sector bargaining area was concluded when the central organisations, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA), signed a three-year settlement.

In the agreement there is a special commitment to discussing issues related to Globalisation and especially Lifelong Learning issues. The agreement states that: "Globalisation necessitates an adaptation of companies' competitiveness, amongst other things by means of a strengthening of the flexibility as well as the adaptability of the labour market and workers' skills. LO and DA emphasise a strengthening of the international competitiveness of Danish companies and want to contribute to supporting a stable labour market through the continuous development of an efficient system of cooperation and bargaining which is supported by a national vocational training system for the labour market which is adapted to the new requirements arising through globalisation."

Finland

Sources of information

- Trade unions: SAK (Central organisation of finish trade unions), STTK (Confederation of Salaried Employees) and AKAVA (Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals), members of ETUC
- Employers: EK (Confederation of Finnish Industries), member of UNICE; VTML (State Employer's Office) and KT (Commission for Local Authority Employers) and The Commission of Church Employers of Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, members of CEEP

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

Social partners made several proposals to the Government to set up a high-level tripartite National Council for Labour and Education (TANKO) before it was agreed by the Government. Its aim is to anticipate and identify future needs in working life and how to tackle them. The basis is formed by the structural changes now taking place in society. The Council is looking over the limits of the different ministries and so trying to help strategic planning of how to use the resources for education and training. The Council has been working since November 2004, and the chairpersons are Minister of Education and Training and Minister of Labour. Members are from all social partners' organisations.

The Confederation of Finnish Industries is running two projects, "Services 2020" and "Education Intelligence", in order to find out the future needs for knowledge, skills and competences in companies. These projects have as active members representatives from all stakeholders.

The social partners' working group produced a paper on the challenges of education and training faced by adults. Globalisation, rapid technological development, demographic development and social and professional expectations of people are key elements influencing these challenges. The working group also dealt with concrete matters in the field of apprenticeships for in-company training.

Under the KARTUKE research and development project, in connection with performance evaluation, a model for competence assessment was developed by the Town of Kuusamo Health and Social Services; a strategic competence model was developed by the City of Helsinki Social Services Department and Education Department.

The objective of the national Veto Programme is to maintain and promote the attractiveness of work and working life. It is a programme for well-being at work and extending working life. The main responsibility for the programme will be borne by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, with active support from the social partners.

The Programme continues the projects that have been developing Finnish working life, like the National Programme for Ageing Workers and the National Well-being at Work Programme. Veto started in 2003 and continues until 2007. The social partners have been and still are actively involved in all these programmes

The workplace development programme Tykes supports the development projects of working communities. The projects promote simultaneously the fruitfulness of work as well as working life quality. The projects are implemented jointly by the management and the personnel. Approaches are developed at working places through experts and by utilising recent research data. Cooperation networks conveying skill and experience are maintained, e.g. at programme seminars. Information on achievements, best practices and cooperation potential is also conveyed through communication and in programme publications. The management group comprises e.g. representatives from the government and the social partners. One of the sub-projects of the regional human resources strategy financed by the TYKES -programme and carried out in the Helsinki metropolitan area is to predict educational and training needs so that education can be matched to meet the workforce demand.

2. At sectoral level:

Social partners are involved in 32 sectoral education committees which have been appointed by the Ministry of Education. These committees anticipate sectoral needs for competences and qualifications and participate in development of education and training and legislation concerning education and training.

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

3. At company level

In 2002 social partners recommended that their member federations promote the maintenance and development of the professional knowledge and competences with the help of best practice examples.

M-Real Company Kirkniemi Mills is part of a big paper industry company. The firm's annual capacity is 600,000 tonnes of paper, it has three paper machines and it employs 850 people. Management and employees agreed on a project called "The Paper mill of The Future - Kirkniemi 2005". The aim of the project is to estimate how the paper mill of the future will look and what are the new ways to work in the mill. The project includes a lot of training covering professional multiskills and cooperation capabilities tailored to the needs of everyday work practices and customer relations.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

The social partners set up a joint working group to further develop the competence-based qualification system. The social partners sent specific proposals to the Ministry of Education on this issue, and on the basis of these proposals the system was developed. The working group has also prepared a joint paper concerning the challenges which are facing the adult education and training system.

Most important field of social partners' work in recognition and validation of competences and qualifications takes place in exam boards which relate to the competence-based qualification system. There are more than 350 different qualifications in this system.

'Noste' is a programme implemented between 2003 and 2007 to raise the level of education and training among the adult population in Finland. The education and training offered within the scope of the Noste programme is intended for working adults aged between 30 and 59 who have no post-compulsory school qualifications. The aim is that the participants achieve upper secondary level vocational qualifications or improve their skills and competences in order to have better employability in the case of structural changes. The aim of the trade organisations is to train 800 people to act as advocates for the Noste programme in workplaces.

2. At sectoral level:

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.

In 2005 under the "Local Jobs 2010" project, a workbook on competence management in the local government sector and a recruitment guide were issued, both of which deal with future competence needs and provide the local authorities with a model for competence assessment.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

The social partners have set up a working group to deal with the information and guidance systems. It came up with the proposal that information for young people should be given earlier than is now the case. It found out that there is a need for special guidance and information for older workers and they need special support for their studies. It also stated the need to raise the quality of guidance and have quality assurance.

The social partners decided to set up another working group which deals with the issue of how to make the 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 Ministry of Education set up a working group on the proposal from the social partners concerning apprenticeship training for least advantaged groups in the labour market and to improve the function of the apprenticeship system for adults. The Group made several proposals which are now mainly operational.

The year 2005 is Ammattiosaaja year (Professional Skills) in Finland. The highlight of it was World Skills which took place in May in Helsinki. Social partners have contributed actively in these events to improve the attractiveness of VET.

2. 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.

3. At company level:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has prepared an information booklet called "Learning and guidance in working life" which looks at learning at work and related guidance tasks from the viewpoint of work within the church. The development of management is also discussed in the booklet.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level:

The social partners agreed to raise the grant by approximately 100 euros (it is now 330 €) given by the Educational fund to the persons who have undertaken competence-based qualifications. Some age limits of this grant were also changed.

In 2004 social partners agreed on operational model for employment and coping with change which has now been turned into law. This new system provides persons who have been made redundant with higher benefits for training purposes.

The social partners asked the Government to put more resources in the State budget for adult education and training. Specifically, the social partners wanted the Government to raise certain quotas in the competence-based qualifications system.

In vocational training for young people there will be a new system in which a young person shows in a real working situation the competences he/she has acquired. This requires particular measures and resources and the social partners asked the government to give the necessary resources for the new system.

The social partners also requested that the Government put aside enough resources for Higher Education in order to develop its capacity for high quality education and training. The social partners also asked the government to start to clarify how it would be possible to use individual retirement insurance for training purposes.

A recommendation for further education for health care staff was formulated in 2004 in national social and health care development projects. The recommendation is based on competence management. The legislation on social and health care services has been amended so as to include a so-called 'continuing education duty'. As for health care, the three- to ten-day continuing education duty was implemented in 2004. Local authorities can receive government aid assigned to these projects.

2. At company level:

"UPM-Kymmene Corporation, Kaukas mills in Lappeenranta" has, with its personnel, jointly created a training programme in order to improve well-being in work. The programme contains leadership training for supervisors, how to enlarge a job description and how to solve problems. Approximately 60% of the pulp mills' personnel have participated in the programme.

France

Sources of information

- Trade unions: CFDT/UNSA (French democratic confederation of work), CGT (General confederation of work), CGT-FO (Workers' force), CFTC (Confederation of Christian trade unions), CFE-CGC, members of ETUC
- Employers: MEDEF (Federation of enterprises of France), member of UNICE; CGPME (confederation of SMEs) and UPA (Union of craft), members of UEAPME

Introduction

Opened on 20 December 2000, negotiations on adaptation of the apparatus for vocational training culminated with an agreement concluded on 20 September 2003. This agreement was signed by all representative professional and trade union organisations at national and cross-industry level.

This text was then integrated in all the negotiated provisions in force to give rise to the 5 December 2003 national cross-industry agreement on worker access to lifelong training , the plan for which is attached to this report.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

With this agreement, the social partners wanted to see negotiations, at the level of each professional sector, on the conditions for implementation of a forward-looking observatory of trades and qualifications whose work must flank companies in definition of their training policies and workers in elaboration of their professional projects.

This agreement also provides that the national bipartite employment commissions (CPNEs) put in place in each professional sector periodically examine the quantitative and qualitative development of jobs and qualifications in their professional field, taking account notably of the work carried out by the forward-looking observatory of trades and qualifications.

The results of this examination, the conclusions drawn and recommendations made by the CPNEs regarding vocational training priorities are made available to company directors, institutions representing personnel and competent bodies in the professional sector concerned.

2. At sectoral level

At the end of June 2005, more than 250 sectoral agreements were concluded in application of the 5 December 2003 national cross-industry agreement.

These agreements define the conditions for implementation of the forward-looking observatories of trades and qualifications.

They also define vocational training priorities as provided for in the 5 December 2003 national cross-industry agreement.

By way of information, these sectoral agreements on vocational training broadly deal with the following themes:

- the list of professional diplomas or titles, qualifications established by CPNEs or qualifications recognised by the sectoral collective agreement, whose actions give rise to priority financial participation by the approved bipartite collecting body (OPCA) concerned,
- the specific publics or the nature of particular certificates or training courses for which the length of the professional training contract can be increased up to 24 months,
- the conditions for welcoming and inserting young people in companies from the angle of vocational training,
- the objectives and priorities in the area of apprenticeship in terms of trades, levels and numbers trained as well as the conditions for implementation of apprenticeship contracts,
- the categories of workers who can have priority for taking advantage of the professional training period, as well as the nature of training actions and the specific objectives of the professional training corresponding to these publics,
- the development of information to managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and craft businesses on the training apparatus, as well as the specific financing arrangements, by the OPCAs concerned, of action to inform young people and workers,
- the quest for appropriate responses to the specificities of training problems in small and medium-sized enterprises and in particular in those with fewer than ten employees,
- the general conditions for the OPCA concerned to take charge of the specific preparation and training actions which tutors can benefit from,
- the definition of training objectives and priorities which companies take into account when preparing their training plan,
- the nature of training actions and their order of priority,
- the recognition of qualifications acquired through training actions,
- the means earmarked for trade union delegates and members of works committees for carrying out their mission in the field of training,
- the training efforts that need to be made for workers with lower levels of qualification, notably to facilitate their professional development,
- the consideration to be given to professional equality between men and women in training actions,
- the arrangements for training time (length of posting periods, any financial penalties, etc.) bearing in mind the specificities of companies in the sector,
- any consequences of adjustments to working time on training needs,
- the arrangements for companies to take into account the provisions of and sectoral agreement resulting from the said negotiations,
- the definition of priorities for financing, by the OPCA concerned, of vocational training actions conducted in companies with fewer than ten employees,
- implementation of arrangements for validation of experience gained and issue of certificates,
- the conditions in which worker representative organisations are consulted, prior to agreement of commitments to develop training and of contracts on objectives, and are involved in their follow-up,
- the arrangements for taking into account the European dimension of training.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

The social partners have accompanied development of the new apparatus for validation of acquired experience (VAE) put in place by the law dated 17 January 2002.

In this regard, they have financed 111,200 validation actions benefiting workers, conducted between 2002 and 2005 in the framework of the apparatus for individual training leave.

The 5 December 2003 agreement has opened up priority access to a VAE action and a right to an assessment of skills implemented outside working hours for all workers after twenty years of professional activity and, in any event, with effect from his or her 45th birthday.

2. At sectoral level

With professional diplomas and titles, professional qualification certificates (CQP) constitute a certification system developed at sectoral level by professional sectors.

Between 2002 and 2005, numerous CQPs have been created or modified in several professional sectors.

In addition, representatives of professional and trade union organisations representing the different sectors of activity have participated, in the framework of advisory professional commissions (CPC), in the creation and renewal of professional diplomas and titles.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

The social partners have financed 400 developers, recruited by sectoral and cross-industry approved bipartite collecting bodies (OPCA).

These developers have strengthened the information and guidance activity conducted by the OPCAs' developers.

In the last quarter of 2003, 2004 and 2005, this information related to the content of the 5 December 2003 national cross-industry agreement and notably to the contract and professional training period as well as the individual right to training (DIF) and the various categories of the training plan.

Thanks to specific financing, trade union organisations have conducted information campaigns vis-à-vis company trade union delegates, but also vis-à-vis bodies representing personnel and workers. These information campaigns have taken the

form of training days, comic strips, guides or leaflets describing each of the new mechanisms one by one.

Starting in September 2005 and through into 2006, the social partners have decided to conduct a communication campaign designed to inform young people, jobseekers, workers and managers about the objectives of the vocational training reform and about the innovative mechanisms available to them to stimulate preparation of a professional project for each worker, integration of young people and jobseekers in companies, and development of company performance.

2. At sectoral level

After conclusion of their sector agreement, the professional and trade union organisations of each of the sectors concerned have conducted broad information campaigns targeting company managers on the one hand and trade union delegates and members of bodies representing personnel on the other hand.

As at national level, these information and communication campaigns have taken various forms (training courses, meetings, leaflets, etc.).

This sectoral information has then been developed by each of the sectoral and cross-industry OPCAs, targeting company managers and bodies representing personnel.

3. At company level

The new vocational training apparatus was covered in preliminary information to members of training committees, works councils or, in the absence of such bodies, personnel delegates, during consultation meetings on execution of the training plan for 2004 and the draft training plan for 2005.

In 2004 a good number of companies also provided information all their workers on the conditions put in place for the individual right to training (DIF) for 2005.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

According to the latest figures available, between 2001 and 2003 spending on training in companies with more than ten workers decreased from € 7,380 to € 7,275 million. In fact, this relative stagnation in the overall level of spending on training conceals a major improvement since, during this period, spending on training by companies with more than 2,000 workers decreased whereas that in smaller companies increased.

Nevertheless, it is the case that significant differences remain; in 2002, companies with ten to 19 workers had average spending on training corresponding to 1.64% of their salary mass, whereas companies with more than 1,000 workers had a level of spending corresponding to 4.07% of their salary mass.

Under the terms of the 5 December 2003 agreement, the social partners have decided that the minimum spending on training by companies with fewer than ten

workers should increase from 0.25% of their salary mass to 0.40% in 2004 and then 0.55% in 2005.

2. At sectoral level

A number of professional sectors have negotiated contribution rates, notably for companies with fewer than ten workers, which are higher than the amounts defined in the 5 December 2005 national cross-industry agreement.

3. At company level

Whereas the minimum rates for spending on training was 1.5%, companies spend much larger amounts on their investment in training, directly or through an OPCA. This is not simply a function of their size, but also of their professional sector.

Germany

Sources of information

- Employers: BDA (Confederation of German employers' federations), member of UNICE; ZDH (Central federation of German craft), member of UEAPME; CEEP/Verband kommunaler Arbeitgeber (VKA)
- Trade unions: DGB (Confederation of German Trade Unions), member of ETUC

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

The national education system in Germany faces many problems:

25% of all school leavers come out of the regular school system and do not have the necessary basic skills which would enable them to enter into a regular apprenticeship programme. But it is a completed apprenticeship leading to a skilled worker's exam which is the very basis for lifelong learning and for action by the social partners to enhance lifelong learning. If this precondition is not met, the social partners' ability to foster and promote lifelong learning is seriously limited.

The German social partners are intensively involved in the national network for the identification and anticipation of business qualification and training needs, FreQuenZ. Within this work they also cooperate closely with the respective European networks and science projects like SkillsNet.

Furthermore, Germany's Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung BIBB), an agency at national level with strong representation and involvement of the social partners, has granted a yearly award for innovative further education and training in order to encourage companies to establish training schemes oriented towards advanced qualification needs .

2. At sectoral level

Between 2002 and 2005, the German social partners jointly elaborated and restructured 107 training regulations (Ausbildungsordnungen) and 26 federal and numerous other (regional) further training regulations for job advancement (Fortbildungsregelungen), various master craftsman's regulations, involving vocational training experts from sectoral branch organisations and companies. They created 23 new job profiles, by which they also opened up new lines for training, like the fitness and wellness sector as well as the call centre business. The main purpose of this work is to adapt professions to business and technological development.

Between 2002 and 2005 several collective agreements were completed by the social partners including issues such as initial training. A good example is the agreement in the chemical sector in Western Germany:

Within the collective agreement "Zukunft durch Ausbildung" (future with initial vocational training) in 2003, the social partners agreed on an improvement of the initial training situation: When chemical companies offer 1.7% more apprenticeship places in 2004 compared with 2003, the social partners are obliged to discuss a freezing of training allowances. In 2004 the chemical companies in Western Germany offered 4% apprenticeship places more than the year before. In 2004 the social partners therefore agreed on freezing the training allowances for one year. In addition, they agreed on an increase of the apprenticeship places by 2% in 2005. Between 2003 and 2007, apprenticeship places are supposed to be increased by 7%. Within the collective agreement from June 2005 the social partners agreed on an increase of apprenticeship places by 1.6% in 2006 and by 1.7% in 2007.

3. At company level

In several partly EU-funded projects employers and trade unions promoted the concept of further development of skills acquisition and consultancy. In some cases of larger companies, a special unit was implemented in the company for identifying and anticipating competence and qualification needs.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNIZE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

The German social partners are intensively involved in both the development of a European Qualifications Framework and the setting-up of a German framework. This also includes the identification of measures for validation of informal, non-formal and prior learning. Furthermore they bring forward the debate and respective projects on permeability within the national education and training systems which also implies creating open learning pathways and access to further training offers.

In a joint address to the ministers meeting at Maastricht on 13.12.2004 the German Social Partners underlined their demand for an ECVET system in order to achieve more transparency and their willingness to participate in the discussions at EU level. They welcomed the Europass as a useful instrument to provide mobility of workers. The German social partners and chamber organisations provide consultancy on work and training periods abroad, which also includes the promotion of the Europass.

Together with the respective federal ministries the German social partners worked out a German-French and a German-Austrian declaration about the mutual validation/recognition of vocational diplomas. This declaration has been signed and follows up close cooperation with these partners in the field of VET.

2. At sectoral level

The German chamber organisations offer validation of informal and non-formal learning through access and admittance to official examinations (Externenprüfung).

3. At company level

The "Ausbilder-Wettbewerb" gives trainers in the chemical industry the opportunity to compete with innovative ideas. The competition started in 1988, took place for the 11th time in 2004 and is organised by BAVC and IGBCE, the social partner in the chemical industry.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

The social partners are involved in a national forum on guidance (Initiativkreis Forum Beratung) and have signed a "mission statement" (see attachment).

2. At sectoral level

The German chamber organisations and sectoral business associations offer guidance and consultancy services for human resource development and also individual career advancement, also for SMEs. Since 2001, as a result of a collective agreement, 820,000 metalworkers employed in Baden-Württemberg have also been entitled to co-determination with regard to continuing training, in the form of regular talks with the respective employer about workers' training requirements and desires. Preferably, these talks should take place once a year. Workers are to be released from work for training measures that are deemed necessary, with their employers absorbing the costs involved. A special agency "Agentur Q" gives assistance for SMEs in that field.

On 13 September 2005 an agreement was signed which covers 2.2 million employees and workers and another 100,000 employees of the federal public service. With this agreement employers and trade unions confirm the need for lifelong learning. Among other details the employees are now provided with the right to ask for a personal dialogue with their supervisors to identify qualification needs and to define appropriate measures.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

With regard to further education in the past four years there were no significant changes in Germany. Generally speaking, the willingness of workers and companies to invest time and money has to be strengthened. Nevertheless, instruments have been developed and improved over the years:

- Ausbildungspakt
- Meister-BAFöG
- Ausbildungsbeihilfe / Berufsvorbereitungsbeihilfe

2. At sectoral level

In a 1997 collective agreement covering the textile and clothing industry, which was extended in October 2004, measures are going to be taken to promote education and training of up to one week a year. Qualification measures will be paid for with a training contribution which the employer pays per employee and per year. Such an agreement could serve as good example for other sectors.

3. At company level

Promotion of training: private and public banks are increasing the offer of trainee jobs in 2004 and 2005 by a total of 3%.

It was agreed in a company-level collective agreement at Volkswagen AG to reduce the wages for apprentices in order to be able to hire an additional 185 apprentices.

Greece

Sources of information

- Trade Unions: GSEE (General confederation of Greek trade unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: SEV (Federation of Greek Industries), member of UNICE

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

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

As a follow-up, SEV 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 in 23 and 24 May 2003.

The main objectives of the conference were a) to raise awareness and stress the importance of lifelong development of 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 employers and employee organisations as well as local employer and employee organisations.

The afore-mentioned 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. The objectives were a) to make a 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.

Meetings between the social partners concerning ways to improve efficiency in the operation of their Joint Account LAEK, for the promotion of vocational training moved forward into action. A working group that was set up by the social partners is currently working on a strategic planning for making a more efficient use of the

available and incoming resources for training and for promoting new LL programmes that will respond to the real needs of the labour market as well as its labour force.

In 2004 SEV conducted a research through questionnaires to industries under the title "Jobs in demand – Anticipation of needs of enterprises for 2005-2007". The main goal of this research study was to make widely known the particular needs of industries in professional skills and core competences of their personnel for 2005 - 2007. Other goals included: a) influencing the organising and planning of vocational training according to these needs as well as the reform of the educational system, especially higher education, towards the demands of the labour market; b) creating new and better jobs.

The results of the research showed that the educational system cannot deliver high quality personnel with competences and qualifications that meet the demand of the labour market.

The research has been widely publicised and will be updated in 2007.

The Labour Institute of GSEE has conducted an evaluation study on the effects of Active Labour Market Policies in Greece. The study was published in 2005.

2. At company level

Good practice example: Neorion Shipyards – Analysis and anticipation of training needs and skill requirements

When the oldest shipyard in Greece, Neorion went into a recession period 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 to reorganise, gradually restore and fully establish 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 dept. and competence
- Qualitative assessment of skills for 600 employees that were to be rehired
- Setting up a training / retraining program 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 and 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 at a regular basis defines new goals for achievement, ensuring further improvements for the development of competences of the company's workforce.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

The social partners worked jointly in laying the foundations of 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 lifelong learning, the development of competences and qualifications and their validation, was adopted in October 2003 by the Greek Parliament. The role of the social partners was very decisive in formulating provisions of the law. It is expected to be even more active in the operational phase.

In July 2005 the Labour Institute of GSEE organized and carried out a one-day workshop under the title: "Accreditation of Qualifications: The European Experience and the Greek Reality". In the discussion took part representatives from the Ministry of Employment - Ministry of Education- National Accreditation Centre of Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS), Vocational Education and Training Organisation (OEEK) and social partners' representatives (FGI, GSBEE, ESEE, GSEE). The main objectives of the workshop were: a) to raise awareness and stress the need for assessment and validation of informal and non-formal learning, b) discuss the problems arise in the effort to combine skills and qualification achieved through different training paths.

2. At company level

Good practice example: Aluminium de Grèce S.A.

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

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

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

At national level

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

The Labour Institute of GSEE has been conducting since 2004 an inquiry for collecting, ranking and disseminating the official standards for the regulated

professions in Greece. These standards are installed in a specific databank that is going to be published on the web page of the Labour Institute by the latest in June 2006 and every professional and/or firm will be able to get available information about more than 200 regulated professions in Greece.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

At national level

As a follow-up to the priority mobilising resources, SEV also issued a proposal to the government on tax incentives for enterprises and individuals to encourage investment in training and competence development activities.

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

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. Public and private investment in education, together with a commitment to excellence at all stages of the learning process, is essential to achieving a competitive and socially inclusive society. The technological developments and societal changes present challenges and require a new range of skills to enable individuals to adapt, communicate, interact and participate more effectively.

1. Actions taken at national level

The total budget for in company training is € 43.47 m. This excludes expenditure on apprenticeship which was € 130 m in 2004. € 24.45 m of the company training budget is spent by FÁS, the state training authority, with the next largest spends being undertaken by Skillnets at € 4.67 m and Failte Ireland which covers the tourism/ hospitality sector. The remainder is spent by specialist agencies which operate either at a regional level or at a sectoral level in agriculture and sea fishing.

FÁS, the Department of Education and Science, IBEC and ICTU have pursued a concerted approach in the allocation of ESF funds towards in company training. This involves steering resources towards new projects, and in some cases new providers. Implementation of the Report on the Task Force on Lifelong Learning, published in October 2002, continues to be a priority. The Expert Group on Future Skills with its reviewed mandate has completed a review on the spending on learning for those in work which will inform the actions of the stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

2. Actions taken at sectoral level

FÁS is in the process of reorienting its provision towards learning in the workplace. The details of this reorientation will be made known early in the New Year. Increased funds have been allocated to FÁS to improve workplace training in 2005. 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. This is an enterprise-led initiative designed to promote learning in the workplace. FÁS has launched a call for expressions of interest for large scale networked projects in

private sector workplaces. There have been significant expressions of interest in this proposal which will come to fruition in 2006

3. Actions taken at company level

Training continues to command increasing attention and priority at company level. The IBEC 2004 Human Resources Management Survey indicates that the average spend on training as a percentage of payroll is 3.15%, identical to the figure recorded in 2002. The issue raised in this report last year of training being concentrated at the higher level of educational attainment of the workforce has begun to be addressed, with low basic skills figuring prominently in the policy debate.

As part of a broader commitment to training and development, many companies provide financial sponsorship and support for various employee development and educational courses, leading to professional, academic and vocational qualifications. Almost all companies in IBEC Human Resources Management Survey provide such support to employees.

Trade unions for their part have developed an increased role in brokering and in some cases providing vocational training for their members. The existence of a single qualifications structure gives great potential for the linking pieces of certified learning towards an award. The ICTU has published a policy document entitled 'Lifelong Learning – everybody wins'

A Competence 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.

Good practice example

- **Skillnets**

Skillnets the training Networks Programme is currently running with the networks which were approved in 2003. A number of projects were run on the return on investment arising from training and on the key issue of low basic skills. A further call is being issued for proposals which will run during 2006

- **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 10 level national qualifications framework is now in place and all new higher education awards will be offered for all programmes commenced in autumn 2004. New awards are also under development in the field of further education and training. The framework is being 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). All the Social Partners have been involved in the final implementation of the ten-level structure. The evolution of this structure is particularly supportive of workplace training.

- **Actions towards the unemployed**

The Irish National Employment Action Plan (NEAP), adopted by the Government as its response to the European Employment Guidelines, includes a commitment to a more systematic engagement of the Employment Services with the unemployed. The core orientation of the Employability pillar in the EU Guideline, which is based on a preventative strategy, is focused on early and systematic intervention with unemployed people, re-integrating them into the labour market as quickly as possible, inter-alia by providing them with the necessary skills to improve their employability.

The National Employment Action Plan was further extended to target those long-term unemployed not previously referred under the NEAP as they were outside the referral thresholds as the programme began. Under this measure all persons aged 18-54, not previously referred under the NEAP and who are more than six months on the LR, are referred to FÁS for interview.

In 2005 approximately 60,000 clients will have been referred for interview, of whom, approx. 40,000 will have presented themselves for interview and received a service.

Special Initiatives developed in response to NEAP

- **The Pathways Programme**

The Pathways Programme is a two-week group guidance programme for clients identified under the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP). The aim of the programme is to identify the most appropriate development pathway for each participant in order to assist them obtain and maintain employment. The programme is delivered on a group basis in order to encourage a dynamic in which clients can support and learn from each other.

The programme is designed to be a highly positive and motivating experience. It adopts a cognitive-behavioural approach to learning, which aims to change the attitudes and actions of participants towards employment.

We estimate that approximately 1,500 NEAP clients will have attended Pathways Programme by the end of 2005.

- **The High Support Process (HSP)**

FÁS introduced a new High Support Process (HSP) to assist NEAP clients who are experiencing personal barriers to employment. Multi-Agency teams are in place, comprising representatives of the Health Boards, Education, Probation and Welfare, etc., to address non-vocational barriers, e.g. drug abuse, literacy/numeracy.

- **Customised Training Fund**

The Customised Training Fund was established to give Employment Services Officers greater flexibility in responding to the identified training needs of specific caseload clients. The need for such flexibility was highlighted through the operation of the NEAP where the specific training needs of some NEAP clients could not be met by FÁS, or could not be met by FÁS, within a reasonable timeframe.

An evaluation of the NEAP preventive strategy has been commissioned by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) in conjunction with FÁS and DSFA. The findings of this evaluation will greatly assist in the further development of the programme and also the development of appropriate and timely interventions/options for clients presenting themselves under the NEAP.

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; Italian section of CEEP

Introduction

The main elements that mark the context in which the framework of actions in Italy has been implemented in the past three years are:

- Adoption by the Italian government of a law on labour market and employment and of a law on education and vocational training systems, and several decrees for the implementation of those reforms. In this context, the social partners have an important role for implementation of the new labour contracts introduced by the labour market reform, with a different position of CGIL, by means of cross-industry agreements and national sectoral collective agreements.
- The process of Federalism in Italy due to the Constitution reform has determined the transfer of competences for education and training to the regional level. This has brought to a more active role of Italian regions and to an increase in most regions in the number of formal tripartite forums for discussion of education and training with local social partners' representatives.
- Concerning the resources allocated to vocational training, the Italian social partners play an active role in identification of cross-industry funds for continuing training, which started in 2003 and which now involve sectors such as industry, commerce, craft, banking/insurance, cooperation and professional offices. Further to the various bilateral agreements signed in the past, these funds are now actively contributing to the activation of training plans at various levels: sectoral, territorial or company.

This evaluation report is a summary and an update of information already gathered in the previous annual reports (2002-2005). For more information please refer to the single reports. Where possible the information has been integrated by economic data and indicators concerning each reference target .

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

In relation to competence and qualification needs, the social partners and the Ministry of Labour have identified in ISFOL⁸ the subject which will have the aim of

⁸ A Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour.

establishing a model for collating all the studies carried out since 1993 with a view to identifying and anticipating competence needs in various sectors. However, the activities carried out during 2004 are not yet concluded.

During 2004, the National Analysis of Training Needs managed by social partners on a bilateral basis, carried out in various sectors (*"National Bilateral Body of Handicrafts"* carried out by EBNA – National Bilateral Body of Handicrafts - composed of Confartigianato, CNA, Casartigiani, CLAAI and CGIL, CISL and UIL; *"National Analysis of Training Needs in Private SMEs"* carried out by ENFEA – National Bilateral Body for Training and Environment - created by Confapi and trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL; and similar National Analysis of Training Needs made by social partners on bilateral basis in industry, cooperation, banking sectors, etc.) were concluded with inclusion of the latest results.

The cross-industry funds for continuing training in different sectors (Industry – known as "Fondimpresa" and "Fondirigenti", Handicraft – known as "Fondo Artigianato Formazione", Private SMEs known as "Fondo Formazione PMI" and "Fondo Dirigenti PMI", and similar funds created in the commerce, cooperation, banking/insurance sectors and professional offices) have begun specific research to identify and anticipate competence needs of enterprises and workers.

This research uses the model and the results of the National Research on Training Needs, recently concluded in various sectors and have the aim to specify these studies at territorial (regional and local) level.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The "Training Portfolio" (so-called "Libretto Formativo del cittadino" which is something different from the portfolio of competences), a tool containing information, data and certification of experiences gained during professional, educational, training and social life, that individuals can use through their learning paths, professional growth and mobility, was recently formally approved by the Committee of State and Regions. The Training Portfolio, introduced by the labour market reform as the tool for the registration of formal, non-formal and informal learning, was elaborated by a working group in which participated public (National and Regional) and social partners' representatives with the technical support of ISFOL. The tool represents a significant step in development of the debate on recognition and validation of competences in Italy, where the lack of a national framework of minimum standards for competences only partially allows it to be identified as the set of tools for transparency and mobility defined in the decision proposal of EUROPASS. The tool will be implemented through an experimental phase managed by regions and constantly monitored by the ministries of labour and of education together with the social partners, and will involve identified target groups.

Following the training activities, the cross-industry funds for continuing training will issue to the participants a certificate that gives proof of the training received.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

Concerning actions taken to inform, support and provide guidance, it is important to make clear that in Italy such actions are managed directly by the public sector (State and Regions).

Furthermore, social partners are involved in actions to inform, support and provide guidance within the guidance and support activities provided for the start-up phase of cross-industry funds for continuing training. Actions taken to train the trainers of the bilateral funds, have involved during the years 2005-2006 almost 2500 operators of social partners at national and at local level. Support and technical guidance was given to develop professional profiles needed to implement the funds' main tasks.

The social partners have also taken part at national and at local level to a project of the Ministry of Labour and ISFOL for continuous training for the social partners, which has been organised with the support of four universities.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

During 2005 the cross-industry funds for continuing training in various sectors (Industry – known as “Fondimpresa” and “Fondirigenti”, Handicraft – known as “Fondo Artigianato Formazione”, Private SMEs known as “Fondo Formazione PMI” and “Fondo Dirigenti PMI”, and similar funds created in the commerce, cooperation, banking/insurance sectors and professional offices) published new calls for the introduction of projects for continuing training.

These projects are aimed at satisfying wishes and needs for vocational training, re-qualification, adaptation and updating of workers' professional skills and support, through economic crisis, restructuring of the enterprises.

The Italian social partners have concluded the discussion with Italian Institutions for reform of the continuing vocational training system therefore, at the present time, the entire amount of 0.30% of salary mass contributes to the financing of the cross-industry funds for continuing training.

In the last year, all the cross-industry funds have started their activities.

In 2005/2006, the amount of resources foreseen for continuing training of cross-industry funds will be about € 350/400 million, concerning about 500,000 workers.

Lithuania

Sources of information

- Trade unions: Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK)
- Employers: Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK)

1. Actions taken at national level

At national level social partners are involved in several initiatives, which supported the objectives of the framework.

The structure of the Lithuanian education system and the types of educational institutions and study establishments are defined by the Law on Education, the Law on Research and Studies, the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the Law on Non-formal Adult Education, and the Law on Higher Education. The state regulates and controls formal education, i.e. development, learning and studies, successful completion of which leads to a state-recognised diploma or certificate. Non-formal education is organised on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Education, the Law on Non-formal Education, and other laws and statutory documents.

The national strategy for lifelong learning in Lithuania and action plan was adopted on 26 March 2004. Representatives of social partners participated in the working group for preparation of strategy.

Social partners participated in discussions and preparation activities for Strategic Guidelines for Development of Education for 2003 – 2012, which provides a practical vision of Lithuanian education to ensure that it guarantees quality of education and lifelong learning. Among the aims of the guidelines: all residents of Lithuania not having acquired the required education and qualification are invited to study and acquire education and qualifications. This aim is achieved also through bridging formal, non-formal and informal education: introduction of module-based teaching in certain education links and developing the procedure for accreditation of modules on both formal and non-formal education, the system for formal recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal way.

In 2004 social partners participated in the conference “Transparency and Recognition of Qualifications: Challenges and Perspectives for New Member States” discussing the proposal for creation of National Qualification System Management Scheme. According to the scheme, a new Board of Qualifications should be established, which defines the standard for the qualifications framework as well as development principles; defines requirements for the structure of qualifications and accredits them (includes in the framework); defines requirements for occupational standards, coordinates their preparation and approves them; defines requirements for institutions awarding the right to assess qualifications of individuals and accredits them; monitors the activities of institutions awarding the right to assess qualifications of individuals.

According to the proposals, the Board will work together with institutions preparing occupational standards, Institutions awarding the right to assess qualifications of individuals and Institutions responsible for qualification assessment and awarding. These institutions should report to the Lithuanian Vocational Education Council,

Social partners have the possibility to participate in the Lithuanian Vocational Education Council, Lithuanian Labour Exchange Council, regional labour exchange councils, and working groups.

Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK) participates in the Equal project "Support Network for Pre-retirement Age People's Reintegration into the Labour Market in Vilnius and Utena Regions", planning to exercise the motivation, occupational orientation and education of pre-retirement age people, to prepare new models for re-skilling, to inform and support and provide guidance for them to obtain new competences and qualifications.

On 13 June 2005 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, trade unions and employers' organisations signed an agreement on tripartite cooperation. One of the priorities is development of vocational training and qualifications and creation possibilities of lifelong learning.

2. Actions taken at sectoral level

Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK) organises LPK Presidium sittings, consultative sittings, seminars about professional training. Participants of these events are human resources specialists and experts from the branch and regional associations. Seminars are carried out by experts in HR from Lithuania and Germany

Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK) has its own training centre: Fund for education support, which organises basic training for trade union representatives on legislation, collective bargaining, discusses national education strategy documents.

Sectoral Trade Unions of Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LPSK): Lithuanian Education Workers Trade Union and Lithuanian Nurses Union organises vocational education for their members giving them recognised certificates.

3. Actions taken at company level

Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPSK) has concluded several agreements with Lithuanian Universities and jointly organise trainings and consultative meetings in order is to create a basis for the lifelong development of qualifications for the members of the Confederation. LPK as a social partner recognises the great importance of training and qualifications improvement among both employees and managerial staff. LPK is involved in different actions targeted at the improvement of the quality of education in Lithuania.

Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK) has organised a number of seminars on the possibility to use EU funds in order to train employees. Great importance is attached to both professional training as well as general training, including language courses.

Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK) regularly sends its members to national and international meetings and seminars on development of vocational training and lifelong learning.

Training centre of Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK) organises continuing adult education which involves persons of different educational level and background by offering lifelong learning opportunities and participation in various programmes aimed at increasing competitiveness and developing businesses.

A number of collective agreements have been concluded at company level. Vocational training of employees is part of the content of mentioned collective agreements.

Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation encourages member unions at enterprise level to include questions of vocational training to collective agreements (needs, participants, financing, leave).

Luxembourg

Sources of information

- Trade unions: OGB-L/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; Fédération des Artisans; ABBL ; clc ; Chambre de Commerce ; Chambre des Métiers ; UEL

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

Initial training courses for apprentices and continuing training courses are provided by the professional employer chambers (IFCC – *Institut de Formation de la Chambre de Commerce* and *Centre de Formation de la Chambre des Métiers*).

In addition, employer organisations organise courses and conferences, notably on personnel delegations and posting of workers and courses in the Luxembourg language.

The two trade unions which are representative at national level organise training courses for personnel delegates as well as their members via the intermediary of their training centre IFES (*Institut de formation économique et sociale*).

The professional worker chambers have identified new skills needs. In order to meet these needs, they offer a broad palette of initial and continuing vocational training courses. The private employee chamber (CEPL) also offers higher-level training courses.

2. At sectoral level

Employer organisations organise training courses through their specialist institutes such as *Institut de Formation Bancaire de Luxembourg* (IFBL – banking) and *Institut de Formation Sectoriel du Bâtiment* (IFSB – construction). Created in 2002 by the construction and public works sector, IFSB has put in place training courses with the particular aim of integrating the unemployed in the labour market. Since its creation, IFSB has given training to more than 450 blue-collar workers 1,000 white-collar workers.

In addition, the social partners in the health sector have put in place and finance on a bipartite basis a continuing vocational training centre (CFPC Dr R. Widong).

An agreement has been concluded in the assistance and care sector and in the social sector. This agreement makes provision to set aside an annual quota of hours for

training needs for all the workers concerned in this sector. A similar agreement has been concluded in the automotive sector.

Furthermore, negotiations are under way to provide new continuing training courses in the financial sector.

In collaboration with *Chambre de Commerce*, in 2003 *Union Luxembourgeoise des Entreprises de Travail Intérimaire* (ULEDI – temporary work) put in place a first training cycle, held in 2003, for permanent workers in temporary work companies.

Since 2002, three studies on labour force needs have been carried out in the industry and craft sectors. In addition, FEDIL, in concert with *Association des Banques et Banquiers Luxembourgeois* (ABBL – banking) and *Confédération Luxembourgeoise du Commerce* (clc – commerce) / *Association des Professionnels de la Société de l'Information* (APSI – information) and in collaboration with *Chambre de Commerce du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, the Luxembourg Ministry of Education and Vocational Training as well as the Employment Administration (ADEM) is carrying out the third edition of the survey of short- and medium-term needs in professional fields in direct connection with information and communication technologies (ICT). The objective of these surveys is to give young people optimal guidance by telling them about short-term recruitment forecasts and adapting vocational training to the needs of companies.

A study on continuing vocational training needs in industry, carried out in 2004 on the initiative of *Chambre de Commerce* and FEDIL, made it possible to identify the specific needs of companies at the level of the offer of continuing training courses.

In response to companies' needs, training cycles for manufacturing agents, security agents and bus drivers have been organised since 2000 in collaboration with ADEM and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in order to promote insertion or re-insertion of jobseekers.

We can also cite organisation of continuing vocational training courses for passenger transport (buses and coaches), establishment, with the collaboration of ADEM, of a pool of replacement workers in the retail trade sector.

The Luxembourg School of Finance which was created by the Luxembourg State in collaboration with the banking sector offers highly specialised courses in the field of financial and economic research at the level of the third cycle (MBA).

Each year *Chambre des Métiers* (trades) concerts closely with professional federations in the craft sector and also carries out a series of non-formalised training audits with a number of companies in order to identify training needs. This approach makes it possible to adapt its annual training programme to meet the concrete needs of companies in the craft sector.

An agreement has been concluded in the assistance and care sector and social sector. This agreement provides for the availability of an annual quota of hours for the training needs of all the workers concerned in this sector. Similar agreements have been concluded, notably in the automotive sector.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

At sectoral level

In some collective agreements, pay increases depend in part on the hours of training followed by the worker (e.g. collective agreement covering garage workers and collective agreement covering workers in construction and public buildings).

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

At national level

Since 1 January 2000, Luxembourg companies can collect a contribution from the State for their investment in continuing vocational training. This takes the form of "direct aid" equivalent to 10% net of tax on the cost of the investment made in continuing vocational training, or a "tax credit" equal to 10% of this same investment cost. Many companies can encounter a number of difficulties, notably of a procedural nature, in conforming with the requirements of the law. *Institut National pour le développement de la Formation Professionnelle Continue* (INFPC – vocational training), in association with *Chambre de Commerce* and *Chambre des Métiers*, offers a one-day training course on the theme of the conditions and practical arrangements for gaining access to this public aid.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

In 2002 the social partners, i.e. UEL and OGB-L and LCGB, negotiated a professional agreement on individual access to continuing vocational training, which was signed on 2 May 2003. The agreement provides for the introduction, for workers wishing to follow continuing training courses, of some timetable flexibility, creation of a maximum of six months of unpaid leave under certain conditions and individual training leave paid for by the State in order to allow participation in the training courses provided for in the same agreement.

2. At sectoral level

In some companies, the social partners have negotiated agreements governing access to training measures for their workers and incorporate these arrangements in their collective labour agreements.

3. At company level

One of the largest companies in Luxembourg recruited around fifty unemployed persons at the end of an eight-week training cycle, on various subjects, notably giving them basic notions in computer literacy, first aid, chemistry, etc.

The Netherlands

Sources of information

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

Introduction

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

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

The social partners in the Labour Foundation support the development of an employability-policy at sectoral level and at company level to enhance the competences and qualifications of employees. Such a policy has to take into account both the future needs of sectors and companies as regards qualifications for work as well as the education and training needs of employees. For this, training funds at sectoral level and at company level can play an important role.

In the eyes of the social partners, it is important that governmental policy gives enough attention to the education level of the whole labour force when designing the knowledge economy, and not only promotes (the study of) sciences. This concerns not only primary education up to at least a first vocational qualification, but also the possibilities for lifelong learning later on in life. The Dutch government seems to be too passive and to make lifelong learning too much a responsibility of the social partners on the one side and of individual companies and workers on the other.

In 2002, the Labour Foundation took the initiative to investigate the investment by social partners in continuing training as well as in support for initial training. The report was published in October 2002. The investigation was focused not only on quantitative data, but also on new elements at sector or company level to reinforce lifelong learning. Examples: increased interest in instruments that appeal to individual responsibility (individual development budget); scan/monitoring of developments in the sector that call for new competences, development of assessment of prior learning, effort in career consultancy.

In November 2004, the government announced an action plan for lifelong learning. As a result of this, a common so-called project-direction (*project management*

team?) Working&Learning was set up by the government in early 2005, representing both the ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the ministry of Education. As a result, the original idea from the action plan to create a Task Force, of which representatives from the social partners would also have become members, to implement the action plan and to advise on further policies for lifelong learning did not come into being. Social partners embraced the decision not to create the Task Force but to create the project-direction in its stead: this decision showed that the government was prepared to take up more responsibility for lifelong learning than was the case earlier on. At the same time, social partners also want to stay involved in the matter; a possibility for this could be a possible future creation of a tripartite consultation body on lifelong learning, representing both the project-direction as well as the social partners.

The Task Force would have been asked to stimulate private HRD investments also being directed towards goals in the Lisbon perspective, such as to train the lower-skilled up to at least a first vocational qualification and to facilitate upgrading courses up to tertiary level. Another proposed action was to develop, with the involvement of social partners, a digital online market place for the supply of training courses.

2. At sectoral level

In a lot of sectors, so called training funds (O&O-fondsen) have been created jointly by the social partners. They offer training and education possibilities to employees employed within the companies of the sector concerned and are at the same time financed by these companies. Besides this, the training funds develop sectoral labour market projects, which from December 2004 on can be co-financed from ESF resources.

In the above-mentioned 2002 investigation by the Labour Foundation of continuous training as well as support for initial training, reference is made an investigation from the research institute IVA directed at training funds. This research showed that approximately half of the surveyed funds (35) not only finance training and education of other institutions, but also by themselves develop instruments to support policy development for education and training.

In 2005, in close cooperation with the Labour Foundation, the Max Goote-researchinstitute investigated sectoral schooling agreements and the situation of training funds in 2004. It was concluded that the current training funds are still not sufficiently geared to see education and training no longer as a responsibility of employers only, but also as a responsibility of every individual employee.

To encourage employees to become more involved in education and training and to increase their own responsibility, in the last few years some experiments have been carried out with a so-called Personal (Knowledge) Development Account (POR, Persoonlijke Ontwikkelingsrekening). These experiments show positive results; the training funds involved are also enthusiastic. The trade union confederations FNV and CNV call to make POR part of collective agreements and to give the training funds another role than just the role of a serving-hatch, which is the case in many instances until now.

The basic agreements to create training funds have been concluded as a result of sectoral collective bargaining. But collective bargaining also leads to other results. For example: almost every collective agreement nowadays contains agreements

about education and training, reaching 97% of all employees employed under collective agreements. Furthermore, some 40% of all training funds finance forms of extra-sectoral schooling.

In the 2005 investigation of sectoral schooling agreements and the situation of the training funds in 2004, the following is said about agreements on schooling activities in collective agreements.

Agreements about education and training in collective agreements are mainly directed at the field of work involved. Employability, schooling plans, company education plans and personal development plans (IOP or POP) are mentioned much less. Some 1/3 of the surveyed collective agreements contain the possibility of a reimbursement scheme for the costs of education and training, while half of the surveyed collective agreements contain agreements about compensation for the costs of education and training.

In the past, agreements on education and training were mainly intended to enhance the functioning of the involved employees in their own field of work. Nowadays, agreements on education and training in collective agreements are broadened to also provide education and training possibilities enhancing the employability of the employees involved. In this context, much more attention is also given to new aspects such as APL.

3. At company level

In the above-mentioned 2002 investigation by the Labour Foundation of continuous training as well as support for initial training, the following is concluded about this topic. Specific themes such as the enhancement of the employability of employees, age-conscious staffing policy, and career development more and more form the context within which agreements on education and training are concluded. This shows the broadening of agreements on education and training in collective agreements. In this context, new instruments such as company development plans, personal development plans and personal development budgets also play a role.

During the last few years, in fact, more companies have been providing their own employees with education and training, now some 90% of all companies. In particular, more SMEs (10-100 employees) provide their own employees with education and training (53% of all SMEs in 1993; 85% of all SMEs in 1999). In line with this development, substantially more money has also been spent on education and training by companies (see also below).

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNIZE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

The creation of a demand-directed open market for education and schooling, the promotion of the assessment of prior learning (APL) and the creation of an action plan for people without a first vocational qualification are important elements from an opinion of the Social-Economic Council, called "The New Learning" (Het nieuwe leren) from 2002.

In line with this, in 2004 the social partners recommended renewal of the arrangement for the national expert centre for APL. A new arrangement, lasting 3 to 4 years, should be set up, based on continuation of support from the government (the ministries of Education, Economic affairs, Social Affairs and Agriculture), but also on increased private income from services. The perspective is that APL should become an important instrument in lifelong learning policy and that companies and sectors will use it increasingly.

The government endorsed this line of thinking in 2005 with the adoption of the *Plan for the enhancement of the combination of learning and working 2005-2007* (Plan van aanpak Leren & Werken versterken 2005 – 2007), which focuses on APL and career guidance. In four regions a start will be made with the development of a coherent infrastructure for career guidance, APL and schooling/education. This will be done in good cooperation with regional partners such as schools or educational centres, the Centres for Work and Income (CWI) and municipalities. Primary goal is to realise 12,500 extra APL routes.

2. At sectoral and company level

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, initiatives have been launched in several sectors to implement APL.

It is worth noting that in all cases social partners use the added value of linking 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.

In the 2005 investigation of sectoral schooling-agreements and the situation of the training funds in 2004, it is concluded that only a few collective agreements contain agreements about APL. But for most employees coming under the surveyed agreements, arrangements exist to create or take part in schooling plans, company education plans or personal education plans. Some training funds connected with these collective agreements also subsidised employability plans.

Also in this investigation it is concluded that during the last few years especially APL has formed part of the offer of training funds more and more frequently. Almost half of all training funds have – in one way or another – something to do with APL (in 1999, this concerned some 1/3 of all funds). The funds concerned subsidise connected companies for providing APL and some of them make available advisers or instruments.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

As a centre to provide pupils and students with information about study-possibilities and to give them vocational guidance, during the whole reporting period, the Career Service Centre (LDC, Loopbaan Diensten Centrum) also gave good advice to employees within the framework of their career development.

2. At sectoral and company level

In many collective agreements, social partners agreed to provide employees and their managers with advice on inter alia schooling possibilities, career development and APL. This sort of agreement is commonly implemented by the above-mentioned training funds. However, where such funds do not exist, companies implement this sort of agreement by themselves.

Furthermore, it was concluded in the 2005 investigation of sectoral schooling agreements and the situation of the training funds in 2004 that many of these funds also invest in research and information.

Also it was concluded that the sectoral funds could direct their activities more at innovation within their sector. Some funds want to direct their activities more towards questions of content; they want to become providers of knowledge. These funds want to acquire knowledge in an active manner to improve the situation within their sector by disseminating this knowledge within their sector.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

In 2004, the social partners reported two government decisions from 2003, regretted by social partners, on reductions in the fiscal incentives due to budget restraints. The first is that the general fiscal facility for the deductibility of companies' training costs to support training in companies was abandoned. Also, some special measures were withdrawn, for example for employees aged 40+ and for employees of small firms. Only those fiscal incentives related to initial training and dual vocational education remained. However, the normal rule that training costs are deductible from pre-tax profits has not changed. New measures were added in the framework of combating unemployment, especially for those without a first vocational qualification. In connection with this, the Government decided in 2004 to introduce an exemption from taxation to stimulate companies to provide young persons with a first vocational qualification. But in 2005 the Government concluded that this fiscal provision for the time being is not being used very much.⁹

The second government decision from 2003 regretted by social partners is that the Government reduced considerably the support for employee saving accounts. Earlier, this was considered by the social partners and others (for example the Socio-Economic Council) as a possible instrument to include a component for individual learning accounts. Given government policy, this instrument is out of the picture now. But in 2005, the Government decided to experiment with an individual learning account again in the period 2005-2007, this time however only for very poorly schooled employees.

Beside this ambiguous government policy, in 2005 the Government decided to investigate the availability and accessibility of financial instruments for lifelong

⁹ SEOR, WVA-startkwalificatie: uitvoering, gebruik en effecten, Rotterdam, 2005.

learning. Apart from this, good practice examples of regional and sectoral projects or collaborations are being collected to disseminate the results.

2. At sectoral and company level

Three types of company spending on activities related to education and training can be distinguished: firstly, the contribution from companies to vocational training, secondly, the direct spending of companies on education and training of their own employees, and then thirdly, spending on activities related to education and training through social funds, including training funds.

Regarding the first form of spending, in the above-mentioned 2002 investigation by the Labour Foundation of continuous training as well as support for initial training, an investigation by the consultant firm KPMG BEA is cited. In that investigation it is stated that the net contribution from companies to vocational training amounts to approx. € 2.8 billion (apart from bearing the costs of education and training for their own employees). Given the assumptions of this investigation, a slight correction of this amount seems logical. In an earlier stage, another investigation found a net contribution of approx. € 2.3 billion to vocational training, which corresponds to some 1.9% of the total labour costs of companies in 2001.

As for the second form of spending, for 2001 Statistics Netherlands (CBS) mentions spending of an amount of 2.7% of the total wage bill of companies on education and training of their own employees.

Concerning the third form of spending, from an investigation by the Labour Inspectorate it can be concluded that approx. 2/3 of the resources of social funds (including training funds) are being spent on activities related to education and training. In the 2005 investigation of sectoral schooling agreements and the situation of the training funds in 2004, it was concluded that the average charge of social and training funds on the wage bill increased from 0.56% in 1998 to 0.66% in 2000. Since then, this charge has stayed more or less the same. So spending of 2/3 of the resources of social funds (including training funds) on activities related to education and training is equivalent to spending of 0.4% of the total wage bill of companies.

Based on court decision of the EU court, the Dutch Government considers the contribution of social partners to sectoral training funds as private contributions, which is important in the perspective of ESF rules. In December 2004 the EC also agreed with this interpretation and this stimulates sectoral training funds to intensify their investments.

These three types of company spending on activities related to education and training taken together mean an average spending of some 5% of the total labour costs on these activities. This means a substantial growth in spending compared with the situation a few years earlier.

In their joint evaluation report on 2004, the social partners concluded that more efficient training programmes that take into account the competences acquired from working experience would compensate the costs of APL.

Statistics

Source: Statistics Netherlands, Voorburg/Heerlen 2005

Participation in lifelong learning, 25-64 years old

Year	Absolute (*1000 people)	Relative (%)
2000	425	19.6
2001	453	20.1
2002	473	20.2
2003	492	20.9

Norway

Sources of information

- Trade unions: LO, Norwegian Confederation of Vocational Unions – YS. (Landsorganisasjonen I Norge), member of ETUC
- Employers: NHO (Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry), member of UNICE; NAVO, Norwegian section of CEEP, Norwegian Association of Trade and Services HSH

Introduction

The efforts of the social partners in Norway in relation to issues concerning lifelong learning are based on the importance of understanding and promoting the workplace as a venue for learning. The knowledge-production and information-spreading which is currently taking place in the workplace is becoming increasingly important in relation to the collective competence found in society as a whole. If we are to achieve our ambition of lifelong learning for all, it is essential that our efforts are based on learning at the workplace, and that we manage to develop good and flexible systems for interaction between this arena for learning and the formal education system.

Our efforts in this regard have concentrated on the following priority areas:

1. Vocational Training

Approximately 25-30% of young people are given their vocational training at the workplace, organised in close cooperation between the authorities and enterprises. The social partners are working in close cooperation with the companies in order to increase the number of young people in vocational training. The main model here consists of two years in school followed by two years of vocational training at the workplace, where one man-year is training and one is value creation. The government compensates enterprises financially for their efforts and the responsibility they accept as providers of vocational training.

2. Companies' responsibility with regard to competence development

Agreements between the social partners stipulate that the individual company, in cooperation with its employees, is responsible for assessing the company's needs with regard to required competences and the competences available. The company is responsible for implementing and financing measures designed to fill possible gaps between available competences and required competences.

3. The Competence Building Programme (KUP)

KUP was established in the autumn of 1999 as a cooperation project between the social partners and the authorities. The main objective of KUP was to contribute to innovation and further development of the market for further and supplementary post-graduate and refresher training. In total, KUP contributed to 739 local development projects from the year 2002 to 2005. Total funds

allocated are NOK 329 million (EUR 43 million). KUP is financed by the Ministry of Education and Research.

4. Documentation and recognition of informal and non-formal-competence
Well-functioning systems for validation and recognition of learning at the workplace are key elements in order to achieve good interaction between the educational system and the world of work. Throughout the 2002-2005 period this was a priority area for the social partners, and several projects have also been implemented in this field through KUP. (See below.)

Based on these key areas, a number of projects and schemes have been implemented within the four priority areas stipulated within the framework of actions:

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level

Reports have been written, inter alia in cooperation between the social partners and the universities (through Norway Open Universities) which, on a broad basis, provides an overview and an analysis of the competence market in Norway.

2. At sectoral level

The social partners in Norway are involved in the organisation of vocational training at upper secondary level in the counties. In cases concerning the dimensioning of courses offered, the relevant sectors advise the authorities in relation to expected labour requirements.

3. At company level

See point 2 above. Several of the projects which have been funded through KUP (see point 3) have been aimed at conducting surveys indicating the competence requirements of individual companies.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNIZE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

See points 3 and 4 above. Through KUP, several tools have been developed for documentation of informal and non-formal competences in cooperation between the social partners and the authorities.

2. At sectoral level

Based on general templates, tools for documentation of informal and non-formal competences have been developed especially for specific sectors.

A vocational testing system has been introduced, especially aimed at documenting the competences and qualifications of immigrant workers. The social partners participate in this effort through their work on vocational training at county level.

3. At company level

See point 2 above.

Tools for documentation of informal and non-formal competence (see above) are currently being used by individual companies.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

The social partners have taken an initiative vis-à-vis the Authorities concerning the testing of new ways of providing career guidance and vocational counselling. Regional trial projects are currently being initiated.

Through KUP (see above), several projects have been initiated aimed at adults with low literacy skills (approximately 20% of all employees). Personal motivation is regarded as a key factor with regard to improving the situation for this group. Consequently, guidance and information constitute an important part of these projects.

Through our efforts within the area of vocational training (see point 1 above) the social partners in Norway are involved in measures aimed at reducing the drop-out rate from upper secondary schools.

2. At sectoral level

The measures mentioned above are applied at the sectoral as well as the company level

3. At company level

The measures mentioned above are applied at the sectoral as well as the company level

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

Through KUP (See point 3 above), a trial project have been implemented relating to providing financial support to cover living expenses for employees who are granted educational leave for the purpose of obtaining further or additional training. The project is based on tripartite financing; with contributions from the authorities as well as the companies and employees involved.

Trial schemes in which students in higher education receive part of their education in enterprises have been introduced. In close cooperation with their relevant educational institution, the students shall alternate between academic tuition provided by the institution and training provided by the enterprises. The objective is to utilise the expert competence wherever it is found, whether it is in the educational institution or in the enterprises. The project is financed partly by KUP, partly by the companies involved.

Through the educational reform called "Kunnskapsløftet (Knowledge Promotion)", NOK 3 billion (EUR 391 million) has been allocated to additional training for teachers and instructors in enterprises providing vocational training.

2. At sectoral level

The measures mentioned above are applied at the sectoral as well as the company level

3. At company level

The measures mentioned above are applied at the sectoral as well as the company level

Poland

Sources of information

- Trade unions: NSZZ "Solidarnosc" (Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarnosc"), member of ETUC
- Employers: Polish Confederation of Private Employers (PKPP), member of UNICE; Polish Association of Craftsmanship (ZRP), member of UEAPME; Confederation of Polish Employers (KPP), member of CEEP

Introduction

Given the fact that the actions taken by social partners at national level are quite recent it is still difficult to evaluate the real impact of Framework of Actions on Lifelong Development of competences and qualifications. In the view of demographic change which is one of the challenges also for Polish society and high unemployment, Polish social partners consider development of skills and lifelong learning an indispensable answer to market requirements.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

1. At national level:

Polish Social Partners have been extensively consulted at both national level (Tripartite Commission for Economic and Social Affairs) as well as regional level on the reform of Polish educational system. High quality of education at basic level is the prerequisite for the quality of labour force.

Tripartite Commission is the forum to discuss both issues regarding general shape of education as well as LLL.

The high unemployment rate in Poland poses a big responsibility on labour market institutions to react properly and efficiently. Social partners at national level are deeply involved in a discussion on the reform of labour market institutions. We have jointly contributed to the introduction of an obligation for Labour Offices to identify competence and qualification needs of local labour markets.

Social partners were an important actor in consultations of National Development Plan; PKPP Lewiatan has organised a number of conferences on this issue, stressing the importance of the lifelong development of competences of the Polish workforce. Solidarnosc also consulted on the National Development Plan at all levels of the trade union structure, both regional as well as sectoral.

Structural funds are an important funding opportunity for companies willing to train their employees. Social partners have their representatives in the committees which evaluate training projects, this is how we have a direct influence on how EU money

is spent. A national campaign has been conducted both by social partners among their respective members and by the government in the media on the possibility of using European Social Fund to finance training and competence development programmes.

2. At sectoral level

Collective agreements signed at sector level include provisions on employee training and shared responsibilities in this area between employers and employees themselves.

In 2003 ZRP funded the Branch Council of Polish Craft. One of the priorities of this body is to prepare training projects for sectors (craft professions).

Lewiatan has been promoting innovative measures in management of training policies at sectoral level through regional seminars conducted by HR experts. Many sectoral associations have participated in those informative seminars and received advice on training possibilities in their respective sectors.

Employers Association of Lower Silesia (member of the Confederation of Polish Employers) is conducting a project focused on identifying and anticipating needs for training in Lower Silesia. The aim of the project is to gather information about the labour market in Lower Silesia and about prospects for development training programmes in the region. 350 companies are being analysed in order to develop tailor made development plans.

KPP is involved in a project which includes analysis of training needs. Questionnaire was sent out to KPP members which resulted in mapping companies' specific training needs.

NSZZ Solidarnosc is very much involved in training activities. Solidarnosc has established Training Centres in the Construction Sector in Warsaw and Gdynia.

Training is particularly important in sectors which are undergoing restructuring, e.g. shipbuilding. Especially in the event of collective dismissals, re-qualification and redeployment possibilities are important elements of collective agreements signed between social partners.

3. At company level

Many companies which are members of PKPP Lewiatan have taken advantage of the PKPP project which aims at proper anticipation of qualifications and training needs. "Confederates for Confederates" project helps consulting companies to prepare a tailor-made training offers which would most adequately suit companies' needs.

KPP has been working closely with training institutions and has been supporting companies to secure funding for LLL projects.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. At national level

Social partners have strongly supported Polish Government during discussions on the Recognition of Qualifications Directive. We strongly support free movement of labour force which needs to be attributed with recognition of diplomas held by both top specialist as well as lower level employees.

2. At sectoral level

Polish Association of Craft has competence to examine young workers after they have completed their practical education at company level. ZRP is involved actively in the whole process of examination together with certification of competences in particular branches. Certificates are recognised by employers on the labour market

Lewiatan carries out annual research into SME sector needs in the field of training. Results of this research are submitted to consulting companies that are afterwards able to adjust their services to specific market needs.

NSZZ Solidarnosc strongly supports the involvement of employees' representatives in the process of setting training plans, so that both sides know their respective expectations.

3. At company level

Big companies usually have their own unique system of competences validation. But many enterprises invest in employees' courses which are concluded by exams which are recognised by authorities. Employers, members of KPP co-finance external postgraduate courses taken by employees (Polish State Lottery, Polish Airports). Employees participate in language courses which are concluded with widely internationally recognised exams.

Private companies which are members of Lewiatan validate competences of employees on regular basis, rewarding those which manage to reach excellent results.

Lewiatan has been one of the founders of the reward Investment in Human Resources which was targeted at promotion of companies which actively promote the development of staff competences and introduce innovative HR management.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

1. At national level

Social partners have been actively involved in launching the National Plan of Actions for Employment in 2004. One of the priorities of this plan is to create a national system of information about opportunities of lifelong learning.

Social partners have been actively involved in the promotion of European Funding possibilities for lifelong learning initiatives. NSZZ Solidarnosc has been strongly

involved in the promotion of European Social Fund, as a way to introduce active labor market policies. Employees are informed about training possibilities and ways to finance LLL. Employment Offices run by trade unions are a good source of information on training possibilities for employees of different branches.

Polish Agency for Entrepreneurship Development has published guidelines for entrepreneurs applying for training funds.

PKPP Lewiatan under the framework of actions the board of Human Resources Directors was created which on regular basis discusses the new challenges of LLL and competences development in Polish companies. The forum which brings together specialists in the field of human resources is a think tank for PKPP actions.

2. At sectoral level

ZRP is holding on regular basis trainings, competence examinations and competitions on professional knowledge and competences.

KPP has organised a project which constituted of a series of sector seminars. Topics included training of staff. Sector representatives had the possibility to exchange experiences with foreign experts.

Solidarnosc got involved in training of trainers and teachers for computer courses.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

1. At national level

A significant number of training initiatives are being funded from the European Social Fund budget lines. Companies this way cover part of the investment in employees' competences development.

Centre of Social Partnership "Dialogue" provides room and meeting equipment to social partners at reasonable prices.

The new law on Employment and Labour market institutions was introduced. Art 67 - 69 of the above mentioned law lists the instruments of HR development. It says that employers are entitled to create within a company a "training fund" to cover LLL expenses. The training programme of the company is consulted with the employees' representatives. Following the application of the employer, regional authorities may reimburse 50% of training costs in case an employee is threatened with unemployment.

2. At sectoral level

ZRP educates workers in over 107 professions

PKPP has been actively promoting the internship programmes for students within its member companies. Social partners have been actively supporting programmes targeted at company –on-the-job training of young people (programmes co-financed out of public funds)

KPP is cooperating closely with Polish Personnel Company on development of new instrument supporting the labour market.

KPP members, company representatives responsible for training participated in CEDEFOP study tours in order to examine training and LLL methods in other countries. KPP member-Employers Association of lower Silesia together with Lubuskie Employers Association and German Partner are involved in a programme "Mentor" which is to work out tailor made solutions for companies.

3. At company level

Costs of company internal training are covered by companies budgets. Companies often participate in the co-financing of employees external training; e.g. postgraduate studies; language courses. Within KPP a special department advising members of European Funding possibilities fro LLL was established.

ESF budget lines are being used in cooperation jointly by employers and employees representatives. Just to give an example, employment and redeployment clubs co-financed by NSZZ Solidarnosc. Those initiatives are run jointly with foreign partners and they are

Portugal

Sources of information

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

Introduction

Main concerns regarding the period 2002-2004 (although some inputs are reported until August 2005)

Portuguese Social Partners have stressed the interest and impact of the European framework of actions on their national debates on the Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications. However, the Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications, signed by the European Social Partners in 2001, has not yet found the right conditions to be executed in an articulated manner among the Portuguese social partners.

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

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

At sectoral level - e.g. Tourism sector, Trade sector - the Social Partners are developing tools as a means to deal with some subjects included in the Tripartite Agreement.

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

APOCEEP has developed, among other initiatives, a project focused on vocational training as a factor for change, aiming for the acquisition of competences in the Information Society.

In 2003, UGT developed a Standard Contract where great importance is given to vocational training, competences and qualifications. The Contract is to be used as guidance for trade unions in the collective bargaining process.

The sectoral union structures of CGTP-IN defended, in the collective bargaining framework, the inclusion of issues concerning the improvement of lifelong competences, through the application of measures foreseen in the Labour Code.

At national level, the Portuguese Parliament discussed a proposal for a Labour Code during 2003, which had previously been the subject of negotiations between the Government and the Portuguese Social Partners over a period of about six months.

That proposal included some provisions which already were part of the existing law and that mostly had been previously agreed by the Social Partners and the Government in the Employment and Vocational Training Agreement signed in February 2001 and which had not yet been implemented.

The Code was approved by the Parliament on 15 July and came into force on 1 December 2003.

The Code includes two very important provisions, already existing in the Employment and Vocational Training Agreement signed in February 2001 - the establishment that companies must involve each year at least 10% of their workers in vocational training and that the workers must have a minimum of twenty hours of certificated training per year in 2003 and thirty-five hours per year in 2006.

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 was not agreed by Social Partners, CIP and Trade Union Federations.

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 draft bills were discussed, including one regarding vocational training. This discussion lasted for another seven months, and afterward the Parliament approved 38 bills.

Recently, it was established a special Commission to elaborate a Green Paper, and afterwards a White Paper on Labour Relations in Portugal. Within its scope, this special Commission will analyse the reasons why, as mentioned before, the Employment and Vocational Training Agreement is not being fully implemented.

On 6 December 2001, the National Advisory Committee for Vocational Training was created, with a tripartite composition, and considerable competences.

However, this National Advisory Committee, already foreseen in the Employment and Vocational Training Agreement, is not yet active.

The Government approved a General Law on Education in 2003, which was vetoed by the President, Mr. Jorge Sampaio. On 30 August 2005, legal changes were published to both the Law on Education (from 1986) and the Law concerning the financing of Higher Education (from 2003), in order to cope with the Bologna objectives. Nevertheless, Social Partners believe that it is necessary to introduce changes to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) System and legislation to meet the developments during this long period both in economy and in society at national and international levels. These changes must be the result of a nation-wide consensus.

Despite the fact that both versions of Draft Law on Vocational Training presented for discussion were never approved, there was a consensus around the principle inserted in article 4 of the first Draft Law regarding the need to elaborate a strategic document, designated as Pluriannual Programme for the Development of Vocational Training. The Government would approve this Pluriannual Programme following the

advice of the National Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. The Pluriannual Programme for the Development of Vocational Training would include the identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs, at national, regional and sectoral levels.

A discussion took place during 2003 and 2004 within the Standing Committee for Social Dialogue regarding a possible Social Pact for Competitiveness and Employment, proposed by the Prime Minister, aimed at identifying and adopting measures and policies which would contribute to an increase in productivity, competitiveness and employment, and would 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 were created, one of them specifically to discuss education and vocational training. However, due to shifts in Government, this discussion came to an end without conclusions.

Despite the unsuccessful attempts to come to effective agreements related to vocational training, Social Partners have recently reinitiated the discussion regarding their main concerns on this issue at bilateral level. In case of successful agreement, the Social Partners will try to get the Government involved in this issue.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

A Partnership – the “Strategic Plan for the Development of Human Resources in the Tourism Sector” – concerning the tourism sector was signed by several public authorities and by the tourism social partners during 2004. This Partnership aims at identifying competence and qualification needs, as well as at developing human resources for the sector for a period of ten years.

Another Partnership was created during 2005 concerning the Trade sector, aimed at keeping the right of every worker to have a minimum of twenty hours of certificated training a year in 2003 and thirty-five hours a year in 2006 by elaborating training modules for the sector. The training modules are based on competence profiles and comprise 35 hours of annual training, although their duration may be flexible. The modules are expected to be available in the fourth quarter of 2005.

Several occupational and prospective studies at sectoral level are being developed by the IQF (The Institute for Quality in Training). These studies are a fundamental tool for improving vocational training quality, since they make it possible to build reference frameworks concerning the necessary competences to improve competitiveness.

On the other hand, Employer Associations, and the Vocational Training Centres that are jointly managed by the IEFP and Employer Associations, have developed numerous activities in order to identify and anticipate competence and qualification needs at sectoral level. For example, the Vocational Training Centre (CINEL) jointly managed by the IEFP and the employer association for the electrical and electronics sector (ANIMME), has already identified vocational training needs for the sector in 2005, the methods to carry out training actions that correspond to those needs, and has also developed several training manuals.

In APOCEEP Activity Plan for 2005, it is foreseen that a survey will be carried out among its members to identify Good Practices in the field of lifelong learning.

In Portugal, medium and large companies have begun to implement a specific system to identify and anticipate competence and qualification needs. However, small and medium enterprises represent about 98% of all enterprises in Portugal and the great majority of this kind of enterprise does not carry out vocational training actions, except for the training that they provide to workers in a non-formal way.

It is important to stress that a number of projects involving both companies and trade unions, related to European programmes or initiatives, are being developed. These projects, mostly by the Trade Union Confederations initiative, concern both diagnosis of needs anticipation and developing vocational training in the following areas: Gender Equality; Equality regarding immigrants, disabled; Occupational Safety and Health and Drug Addiction.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNIZE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

In Portugal, the Social Partners participate in the National System for Professional Certification. This System aims at certifying the competences of workers, however those competences have been acquired, that is either through vocational training, labour experience or vocational training undergone in another country, namely within the European Union.

Within this System, representatives from Social Partners and from the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) continued their work during 2004 on approving occupational profiles and manuals for workers' and trainers' certification in the respective areas. Although a great effort has been made concerning this work a lot of work is still to be done.

The Network of Centres for Recognition and Validation of Lifelong Competences and Qualifications, created within the scope of the tripartite Agreement on Employment Policy, Labour Market, and Education and Training, signed in 2001, has been both reinforced and widened. These centres will allow the recognition and validation of competences of workers over 18 years old who do not have diplomas, in spite of having acquired competences throughout their working lives through informal or non-formal learning. Presently this Network system is still not well known. However, Social Partners value this Network of Centres and make efforts to inform companies and workers, since the system gives them the opportunity to obtain progress concerning both career and a new training directions.

Some Portuguese companies, which carry out vocational training actions, perform evolution tests at the end of the training actions, in order to recognise and validate competences and qualifications acquired by their workers. In the case of other companies, external training actions are provided by vocational training entities duly accredited by IQF (Institute for Quality in Training).

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

The employer association for the metallurgic and metal sector (AIMMAP) is currently collecting finance and technical resources in order to assume consulting functions in the area of vocational training for its associated companies.

CINEL has developed the “Rede Programme – Consulting, Training and Support the Management of Small Companies”. Through this Programme, CINEL supports and provides guidance to small companies’ management, aimed at enhancing their competitiveness.

Some Portuguese companies which carry out vocational training actions support and monitor the lifelong learning path of their workers, from the moment they begin to work in the company until the day they leave. Other companies disseminate, through their own private communication systems (e.g. intranet), procedures and other relevant information, as well as Seminars and Conferences on relevant themes of interest, to support and guide the activities of their workers.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

During the discussions regarding the Draft Law on Vocational Training and during the negotiations on the Social Pact for Competitiveness and Employment, CIP defended the view that companies which wish to carry out the training of their employees themselves should keep the disaggregated part of social contributions earmarked for the Vocational Training. CGTP-IN disagreed with that and, alternatively, proposed selective support to SME, according to the criteria to be approved by the future National Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. UGT has always considered that both enterprises and workers should be supported regarding vocational training through social security.

On the other hand, a recent study by IQF – “Finance Practices of Vocational Training in Portugal” – reveals that, among the Portuguese companies surveyed in that study, the large majority of companies that carry out vocational training actions finance them mainly with their own resources. The study shows that 11.8% of the total number of companies surveyed carry out vocational training. The latest survey of DGEEP (General Directorate for Studies, Statistic and Planning) reveals that, in companies with 10 or more employees (in a pattern of 5,284 companies), only 18.7% offer vocational training to their employees. This percentage is lower when we take into consideration companies with fewer than 10 workers. It is important to stress the Social Partners’ concern regarding the fact that Portugal is the country where the percentage of workers undertaking vocational training actions is the lowest.

Some SMEs co-finance or use public funding to provide training actions for their workers.

As mentioned before, during 2005, companies do not in general include specific clauses in their agreements regarding vocational training. Very few include some clauses as a means to stay within the law, as far as a minimum of hours of certificated training every year for every worker is concerned. Despite the above situation, there are some good examples.

As one of these examples, the publishing and bookselling sector has agreed that the companies shall finance all the expenses related to retraining and professional improvement training actions, provided that they are recognised as important to the worker's activity. These companies also offer financial support to workers under 25 years old who have not attained minimum schooling.

The goods transportation sector has agreed that enterprises must sign collaboration agreements with trade unions regarding execution of training plans. The company is expected to ensure that 10% of its workers are involved in vocation training actions (20 hours a year until 2005 and 40 hours from 2006 on).

The Trade Union Confederations consider that companies' investment in vocational training should be more intensified and better known, for it is fundamental to increase both their productivity and competitiveness and to improve workers' working conditions and career development.

CIP and APOCEEP considers that companies investment in vocational training, namely in informal vocational training, should be better known.

Despite the interest of the social partners regarding the European framework of actions, the practical results have not been satisfactory, due, largely, to the difficult political and economic situation in Portugal in recent years.

Slovenia

Sources of information

- Trade unions: Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, member of ETUC
- Employers: Employers' Association of Slovenia, member of UNICE; Chamber of Craft of Slovenia, member of UEAPME

Slovenia faces similar development changes and challenges which confront a majority of EU member states; that is ageing population, constant changes at workplace and in everyday life due to the rapid development of technology, scientific revolution and the globalisation process. The country is also characterised by increasing social stratification. It is precisely education and training systems that can help to reduce these discrepancies, thereby achieving personal growth, employment, prosperity and improved social security of an individual, and creating development, progress and social cohesion in society.

We have been actively participating in implementation of the Lisbon strategy since November 2002 and have thus assumed responsibility for implementation of these objectives. Slovenia has been an active participant in the Bologna process and the Bruges/Copenhagen process, and is implementing the lifelong learning process as a component part of life and work of an individual and society as a whole. Although the Slovene education and training system is fairly developed, with some targets and indicators already reaching or exceeding the EU average, Slovenia's effort – centred on greater quality, accessibility and openness of the education and training systems – remain a permanent task. The Concrete Objectives, together with the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and the lifelong learning process, have also been used explicitly to guide national policies.

Slovenia falls within the member states which already allocate quite a large percentage of GDP to education, with 6.02 % in 2002 and a slight increase in 2003, totalling 6.09%. Therefore Slovenia is close to the top member states in terms of percentage of public funds spent on education.

The expert coordination body under the name **Coordination for Education and Training 2010** was set up in 2004. The body was entrusted with the complex task of coordinating work on the implementation of the Lisbon strategy or the Education and Training 2010 work programme in Slovenia the work of Coordination includes the coordination of work on implementation of the Bologna process, the Bruges/Copenhagen process and lifelong learning process.

Slovenia organised numerous activities (Conferences, Consultations, Workshops, and Seminars) with the aim to promote the Education and Training 2010 work programme from 2003 to 2005, as these activities also constitute one of the basic tasks of Coordination.

Lifelong learning strategies

A comprehensive and radical reform was launched in 1996. This was also the year of lifelong learning. The process has encompassed all the sectors and levels in formal education: ranging from pre-school education, elementary school, VET and general upper secondary school (gimnazija), music education, programmes for special needs pupils and students to upper secondary vocational education and higher education, which is currently under reform. Transformation and upgrading of the system of non-formal learning in many fields also took root. The strategies for adult education and tertiary education have already been adopted. Lifelong learning continues an integral part of education and learning system is completely comparable with the other EU member states.

The complete system of lifelong learning is functioning well although a comprehensive and all-encompassing lifelong strategy has not yet been formulated, but the whole context and purpose of lifelong learning have been incorporated into legislation and are part and parcel of curriculum at all levels and in all sectors of education. The funding includes the networking of all stakeholders interested in providing accessible and high-quality system of learning and education underpinned with all necessary infrastructures (ICT, information and counselling centres, wide-ranging and accessible network and forms of learning and education, etc.).

The development of ICT is of particular importance in this context as the objectives linked to the lifelong learning concept would be completely impossible without this component. In the light of this, Slovenia has begun with the implementation of EPD, Phare and other programmes. Special measures had to be approved under national funding to enable financial support of the objectives so that the lifelong learning process would be put into effect, which especially applies to setting up of the system and structures sustaining the lifelong learning strategy by providing for more modern supply of education and training, training teachers and education providers, developing local/regional centres, spreading the quality assurance system, offering education assistance to adults with education deficit and reducing the drop-out rate.

Social partners are following strategic objectives within the national programme of lifelong learning. We are developing the culture of lifelong learning through collective agreements. We have raised the educational level and lowered the structural discrepancies on the labour market through education. Organisation of trade unions is through their representatives in companies encouraging and motivating workers to educate. We try to implement, on all levels of collective agreements, duty for the employer and right for the employee to lifelong learning.

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

Social Partners drafting this report consider the Framework of Actions to be a positive initiative that makes it possible to foster Social Dialogue on Vocational Training at national level.

The more relevant actions taken from 2002 to 2005 in the scope of the framework of actions are connected with the next key initiatives:

- Development of the Act on Qualifications and VET, adopted in June 2002. The Act introduces a new System for National Vocational Qualifications, as a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning, validation and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Development of this regulation is closely related with priorities one and two, at national and sectoral level.
- Reforms on the funding system for continuous training, built on social dialogue agreements. These developments are primarily related to priority four.
- National framework agreements on collective bargaining, endorsed by national social partners between 2002 and 2005, as a key reference for collective agreements. These agreements recall the four priorities to those in charge of bargaining at sectoral and company level.
- In July 2004, most representative employers and trade unions' organisations (CEOE, CEPYME, CC.OO. and UGT) endorsed, together with the present Government, the "Declaration for Social Dialogue 2004. Competitiveness, stable employment and social cohesion".

Improvements at national and sectoral level have been more visible and show a clear impact on the priorities. Actions taken at company level have been also valuable and showed significant good practices, but it is more difficult to assess the real impact and evolution across the spectrum of business, especially with reference to SMEs.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

The numerous activities carried out during these years have shown a clear impact from actions taken on this priority.

There is a clear distinction between actions taken at national level, which have been led by Government but closely linked to sectoral level, and actions taken by companies, which have been developed mainly in the field of management tools and Human Resources Policies. There are also different actions carried out by Social Partners at sectoral level.

1. At national level

26 working groups, structured by sectors, were launched in order to identify needs and define competence standards, as well as associated training modules, for the new National System of Vocational Qualifications. Up to 2005, these groups have defined close to 250 qualifications, and they continue their work to define an estimated final Catalogue of some 580 qualifications, for 2006/2007.

The involvement of social partners in this job ranges from general participation in the definition of the system to the proposal of experts for each working group or the validation of the standards produced.

2. At sectoral level

In addition to the works on the new Qualifications System, more than 84 studies on sectoral needs, with the support of the Tripartite Foundation for Continuous Training.

Joint (Unions and employers) Sectoral Commissions for continuous training, have monitored these studies; at the same time they continue to define training priorities.

In a number of sectors (metal industry, building, etc.), employers and unions have signed agreements dealing with identification of emerging needs, including the creation of joint bodies.

3. At company level

A variety of practices illustrates the development of tools and management policies of companies addressed to evaluate skill gaps and define objectives and strategies for competence development. Nevertheless much still must be done, especially at the level of SMEs and low-skilled workers.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNIZE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Impact on this priority is also relevant and visible, especially at national level, although the complexity of some initiatives shows that we still have a long way to go.

As in the first priority, the above-mentioned distinction between national-sectoral level on the one hand, and company level on the other, is again present in this priority.

1. At national level

The Act on Qualifications and VET foresees the development of a system for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, using the reference of the National Qualifications Standards. In 2004 the first pilot practices concluded. Currently Government and Social Partners are discussing the general procedure to be established.

On the other hand and within the framework of workers training, an offer of training taking as a reference National Qualifications would make possible its formal recognition.

2. At sectoral level

A number of branches (building sector, etc.) have promoted some sectoral recognition, but the general trend has been to support the national approach as far as it is also based in sectors.

3. At company level

Actions are closely linked to the practices, tools and management policies, previously mentioned in the first priority. A number of companies have shown good practices in developing policies of permanent assessment of all their human resources. This has helped not only to identify gaps and define competence development activities, but to make the most of human capital and to better work better. Again, in this priority, SMEs are in a less developed situation.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

Social Partners have carried out a relevant work of dissemination on the priorities of the framework of actions, in various ways (seminars, magazines, e-media, exchange of good practices etc.). This clearly includes information, support and guidance for companies and individuals.

Nevertheless, the impact of actions taken by social partners on this priority, in the sense of developing permanent services of information and guidance for individuals and companies, has been less significant than the impact shown for other priorities.

1. At national level

Improvements have been made in relation to electronic information available on learning opportunities, within the national body linked to Ploteus. Guidance for the unemployed has continued with significant activity, with the participation of social partners. Nevertheless, much still must be done to create a real one-stop-shop facility, as recommended in the framework of actions, and to develop a comprehensive service for lifelong guidance, especially for workers in employment.

Scant improvements have been made in supporting companies, namely SMEs

2. At sectoral level

Some actions have been taken by sectoral social partners, developing studies and tools for information and guidance, supported by the tripartite foundation for continuous training and by the Ministry of Education.

3. At company level

Dissemination among Management of the framework of actions, specific tools and exchange of good practices has been a constant action of employers' confederations in these years.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

The most relevant actions taken on this priority are related to the reforms on the funding system for continuous training. The system is based on National Social Dialogue Agreements. It was reformed in 2002 and is currently being analysed in order to improve its scope and efficiency.

The figures of the system as an annual average are: 1,300,000 workers trained and € 600 million invested.

1. At national level

The agreements on continuous training support training actions funding actions at cross-sector, sectoral and company level. Since 2004 a system of social contribution reductions has been established in order to foster investments of companies, by co-funding these investments. The system provides special conditions for SMEs.

2. At sectoral level

Since 2002 as an annual average 450,000 workers have been trained and € 250 million invested, with the support of Tripartite Foundation for Continuous Training. In collective bargaining, some specific sectors have agreed investments on training in addition to the compulsory social contributions.

3. At company level

Since 2004, the regulation on continuous training has allowed companies investing in training, to reduce their social contributions. Until July 2005 almost 70,000 companies had used these incentives which are a percentage on their vocational training contribution. This percentage is calculated based upon the company size and it is more advantageous for SMEs than for big companies.

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

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

Social partners regard good initial education and access to lifelong learning as basic for sustainable growth and development and for enabling everyone to engage in society and to grow in professional life. National and sector organisations, as well as companies, have performed different studies focused on identifying and anticipating future competence and qualification needs in their respective areas. Some national organisations have financially supported their sector organisations' analyses.

The results of these studies are, apart from confirming the fact that job profiles are changing rapidly, that an increasing proportion of jobs will require more and new skills. New sectors are emerging and with them new professions, whose needs at present have not been sufficiently met by the regular public education and training systems. Increasingly there is a need for employees to acquire a broad and strong skills base. The need for changes in education and training programmes on secondary levels are obvious, as well as the need for new post secondary, advanced vocational training and tertiary level training. The social partners have communicated these findings and needs to government, administration and educators.

At company level, employers find intensive challenges in skilled trades, including their lack of appeal to young people and a legacy of adults in the workforce with low skills, which must be addressed in order to make them employable. Analyses of future needs of skills and competences have become a natural ingredient in large companies' strategic planning. These analyses are being performed in relation to the needs and demands for development in companies and activities. Strong forces behind the identification of new knowledge, skills and competences are customers'/patients'/citizens' needs and expectations, improvements in technical/medical and other areas, as well as market situation, political decisions, structural changes, etc. Smaller companies have to find solutions for their skills needs in flexible ways. Small business owners themselves are in need of new knowledge in order to meet new demands. To a great extent, employers perform separate dialogues with each employee in order to find out their need for skills development.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

At national level the social partners have engaged in the work of the government Authority for Validation (2004 – 2007). At national and sector level the social partners have started projects on validation for sector skills as well as in relation to companies' needs for specific skills. At company level it is usual to perform validation within the frame of the employers' separate dialogues with employees aimed at finding out their needs for skills development. In some companies validation is performed in connection with a market-driven need for certification of the skills of the employees. Gradually new models and methods for validation of real competence are being developed.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

Information has been distributed by the national and sector partners to employers and employees and some companies have asked for more information and made further analyses. Social partners at sector level work in close cooperation with companies. In these matters companies and employers are the driving forces. Websites, newsletters, seminars and working groups are instruments used at sector and company level. An increasing number of Swedish companies are looking very seriously upon questions regarding development of skills and competences and regard it as investments. Successively development of skills and competences are being performed more systematically. Efficiency improvements put higher demands on employees' skills and competences.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

At national and sector level employer organisations and trade unions have influenced sectors and companies to deal with the questions regarding mobilising resources in a more systematic way. Resources for skills development are now allocated and used more economically. Centres for sector competence (colleges) are gradually being built up, where sector organisations, companies, schools, universities and training institutions for advanced vocational training and municipalities in a region cooperate. Cooperation between universities, companies and trade unions has augmented: university courses are now being tailored to meet the needs in regions and or sectors.

Several companies have deepened their engagement in continuous training and skills development and developed flexible learning arrangements within the company. Local learning centres are gradually being more used to support flexible learning for companies and employees. E-learning is expanding. It makes it easier for employees to combine work and studies.

The 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

The priority for social partners throughout the review period has been, and continues to be, to work effectively with government to drive forward the Skills Strategy reforms. CBI and TUC are members of the Skills Alliance, which is charged with ensuring the Strategy is implemented in a way that raises skills to improve business performance and raises individual employability. The overarching aim of the Strategy is to attain greater labour market capacity, higher productivity and business performance and ensure that individuals have the skills they need for employment, progression and personal development. The key challenges for employers, unions, employees, government and the providers of education and training were agreed as:

- progress towards full employment and increase the employability of adults
- improve employee competence and achievement of qualifications at all levels
- raise demand for skills as part of improving innovation and business performance
- improve effective use and acquisition of skills by employers and employees at all levels.

The Skills Strategy and the social partners' work on ensuring that it is delivered effectively addresses all the priorities highlighted by the Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE THE COMPETENCES AND THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) have been the primary means at a national/sectoral level of identifying the competences and qualifications needed to ensure the UK workforce has the skills required to improve business performance and individual employability. The first SSCs were established in 2002 and there are now 23 SSCs licensed or recommended for licence, with a further 2 aspirant SSCs in development. The Board of each SSC has majority employer representation, and a minimum of one trade union representative. Social partners have been closely involved in their development – the CBI has facilitated series of discussion seminars with trade association members on current and future competence needs and the TUC has been involved in a range of activities to support union involvement in the sector skills agenda, much of which has been facilitated through the TUC's Sector Skills Council Union Network.

Each SSC is charged with drawing up a Sector Skills Agreement (SSA), in which employers and unions identify existing and future skills and productivity needs in their sector and the necessary actions to meet those needs. To date, four SSCs have published their SSA – e-skills UK (covering the IT and telecommunications),

ConstructionSkills, SEMTA (representing the engineering sector) and Skillset (for the audio-visual industry).

Skills for Life are also a significant issue nationally, with fifteen million adults with numeracy needs, and five million with literacy needs. Social partners have been very active in highlighting this problem and ensuring that tackling it remains a government priority. The CBI and TUC, in 2003, jointly launched a document of case studies to raise awareness of the impact of low literacy and numeracy in the workforce and highlight ways of addressing the problem effectively.

In 2004, a three-year collective agreement was signed by the social partners in the local government sector, which includes an agreed framework for training and development. It calls upon each local authority to actively engage in workforce planning, mapping existing staff competences against future service requirements. On the basis of this information, a Workforce Development Plan should be drafted to ensure future qualification needs can be met by providing adequate training to existing staff and developing recruitment strategies.

PRIORITY 2: RECOGNISE AND VALIDATE COMPETENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The social partners have participated in the review and reform of England's national qualifications framework to ensure it meets the needs of employers and individual learners alike. The aim of the reform is to create a 'Framework for Achievement' – a qualification system that rationalises the number of vocational qualifications, ensuring they are all fit-for-purpose and provide the skills required to perform a particular job. The system is to be based on a framework of credits and units to aid both horizontal and vertical progression of learners and enable employers to choose those qualifications or parts of qualifications that best meet their business needs and also support personal development of their employees.

The Framework for Achievement is designed on a similar basis to the proposals for the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit transfer system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). Consideration is also given to the role of informal training and the accreditation of prior learning, with further developments including 'Skills Passports' for individuals.

SSCs are also tasked with the development of occupational standards for their sector – to which the social partners have provided input – which will form the basis of national, fit-for-purpose qualifications that are valued by both employers and individuals.

Social partners have contributed to the work of the Apprenticeship Taskforce, charged with increasing take-up of apprenticeship programmes and recommending how apprenticeships can better meet the needs of employers and young people. The Taskforce was created in February 2003 and published its final report in July 2005. The Taskforce made a number of recommendations including the creation of 'sector champions', the use of brokers to identify apprenticeship opportunities, promotion of group training associations to help small firms and their employees access apprenticeship programmes, improving information, advice and guidance for young people and promoting increased diversity. The number of young people

starting an apprenticeship rose from 162,300 per year in 2001/02 to 192,400 in 2003/04. The social partners have been involved in promoting Apprenticeships – for example the TUC is conducting a campaign for unions to include Apprenticeships in their negotiations with employers to boost take-up and ensure high quality programmes.

PRIORITY 3: INFORMING, SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING GUIDANCE

The Investors in People (IIP) standard has gone from strength to strength over the period of this evaluation, with over 37,000 organisations achieving the standard, with nearly 25,000 committed to working towards it: this represents organisations employing almost ten million people – nearly 40% of the workforce. The TUC and CBI were closely involved in the recent revision of the standard, which was re-launched in November 2004. The social partners were also heavily involved in the development of the Small Firms Initiative, launched in 2003, to help small businesses use the IIP standard to identify and meet their skills needs – over 8,000 small firms are working with the standard. This arose out of a CBI/TUC Productivity Report, commissioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The CBI and TUC have also supported an employer guide to IIP, promoting the need for all employees to have the necessary Skills for Life to access company learning and development.

FPB have also been involved in numerous dissemination activities within different bodies:

- the Learning and Skills Councils have worked with FPB to develop guidance on the work of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in their relationship with local SMEs
- regarding participation in the Leonardo da Vinci Project on Lifelong Learning in SMEs, the FPB will report to the Institute of Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship Conference in November 2005, and conclusions will be presented by the University of Venice in 2006.

The 2004 local government collective agreement emphasises the importance of the development of clear skills pathways that seek to identify and map opportunities for career progression against the core competence levels required. A similar approach is adopted in the Skills Escalator Framework agreed by the social partners in the National Health Service. This sets out the skills required for progression and provides incentives for taking part in lifelong learning.

The CBI has, with government support, published a report entitled 'Employers collaborating to raise skills in supply chains and clusters'. The project was based on an employer survey of current practice of businesses working with supply chain partners or other firms with sectoral or local clusters to address their skills needs. The report also highlights 16 in-depth, good practice case studies of employer collaboration on skills across all sectors and company sizes. The CBI is currently working on an employer guide to collaborative working on skills, providing firms with practical steps to take to benefit from these methods of addressing skills needs.

The CBI is also at present developing 'Benchmarking Guidelines on Skills' – this report will be based on around twenty employer case studies that exhibit excellent practice in training and employee development. These are informing a set of good

practice guidelines for employers that they should consider when developing programmes for employee development.

There are currently almost 12,000 Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) opening up access to learning for thousands of workers around the country. This is a 50% increase in ULRs over the past year, and is in line with the Government target of getting 22,000 reps in place by 2010. In the last year alone, over 67,000 people have benefited from learning through unions, taking up courses ranging from Skills for Life to continuing professional development.

The TUC is developing a union academy, which aims to help unions bring more high quality learning opportunities to their members. The Government is providing £4.5 million for the development phase. A union academy will provide a single coherent structure and brand for all union learning, ranging from Skills for Life to professional qualifications. It will increase the scale of union learning, aiming to roughly double total current numbers and reach some quarter of a million learners within five years.

PRIORITY 4: MOBILISING RESOURCES

The social partners have been closely involved in the government-funded Employer Training Pilots (ETPs). ETPs are now running in 18 Local Learning and Skills Council areas (around a third of the country), with the first established in 2002, and are testing ways to improve access to training, specifically tackling the market failures that prevent employers from offering their workers opportunities to train and deter employees from taking up training that is available. Employees without a first full level 2 qualification and/or without basic skills are eligible.

To date, around 15,000 employers and over 100,000 learners have participated in the voluntary pilots. They are successful in reaching out to smaller employers – 70% of the firms involved employ fewer than 50 staff.

The social partners have fully supported the development of the pilots into the National Employer Training Programme (NETP), which will be rolled-out between April 2006 and 2008. Social partners welcome the increased emphasis on higher level skills with the NETP – brokers will be tasked with developing and sourcing a 'package' of training for employers covering all skills levels, some of which will be publicly funded and some that will require increased employer contributions. However it will be important that NETP retains the emphasis on overcoming market failure in the provision of training to the low-skilled. Piloting of funding for level 3 training will be undertaken in two regions to assess its viability.

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) continues to provide unions with a framework for continued growth and expansion in the area of learning and skills. The current budget is £14 million for each financial year. There are currently 81 life ULF projects involving 32 trade unions. During 2004/05, projects achieved over 67,000 people brought into learning, almost 20,000 Skills for Life assessments, almost 10,000 Skills for Life learners and around 4,500 NVQ achievements at levels 1-3. In the past year there were also 278 new learning agreements with companies.

Social partners are also active within the public sector. For example, they agreed a Knowledge and Skills framework within the National Health Service, linked to annual

development reviews and personal development plans. Resources included £50 million for the continuing professional development of staff and £70 million for NHS Learning Accounts, NVQs and adult literacy, numeracy and language skills. Social partners were also involved in the Department setting up the National Health Service University, providing virtual and face-to-face training for all NHS employees.

The local government agreement entitles employees – both full- and part-time – attending required training to paid time-off and assistance with the payment of required course costs. Authorities are encouraged to identify additional funding opportunities, for example through Learning and Skills Councils. ULRs have played an important role in the implementation of Workforce Development Plans at local level.

The European level

Introduction

The aim of the European social partner organisations in adopting the framework of action was to:

- make an effective and specific contribution to the realisation of lifelong learning in the context of the Lisbon objectives;
- give impetus so that the development of competences 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 competence development and promote their cooperation;
- acknowledge the need for a close concertation with public authorities as well as education and training institutions at all levels.

Follow-up actions on the four priorities identified in the framework of actions was intended to be primarily done in Member States through member organisations of UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC. European level social partners nevertheless undertook a number of actions, focusing mainly on dissemination of the framework of actions to reach as wide and diverse an audience as possible and to influence European policy.

Evaluation of the actions taken by the European social partners

Among the actions and projects, which the European social partners carried out to promote the priorities of the framework of actions, the following can be highlighted:

- In May 2004, UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC organised a special seminar with the aim of informing and fully involving social partners from the new Member States in the follow-up process. Participants discussed the framework of actions, its content and rationale, and shared good practice examples of follow-up in different member states;
- In 2002-2003, UEAPME and ETUC conducted a joint pilot project on the social acquis and SMEs in the candidate countries, which included presentations and translations of the framework of actions;
- In 2003, CEEP, UNICE, UEAPME and ETUC launched a pilot project to help national social partner organisations 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 and the implications of its promotion by social partners in each national context have been discussed. This initiative is in its second phase and is still ongoing in the ten new Member States. They notably developed practical tools for employer and trade union organisations to assess their employees' competences and design competence development initiatives tailored to their needs.

Furthermore, European Social Partner organisations have participated jointly or separately at various seminars and conferences on education and training / lifelong learning, organised by the EU Commission or other EU level bodies, where they have

promoted the framework of actions and shared examples of good practice developed by social partners in Member States.

ETUC, UNICE, CEEP, and UEAPME assess their work on dissemination and awareness-raising as very successful. They welcome for example that in the report 2005, which was the first integrating contributions from new Member States, social partners from nine out of the ten new Member States jointly participated.

They have noted with great interest that a number of European sectors have used the priorities identified in the framework of actions as a source of inspiration and/or direct reference for their own discussions and initiatives on lifelong learning, which include joint agreements, joint declarations and/or joint statements, joint studies, exchange of good practices, joint pilot projects, and mentioning lifelong learning as part of their joint work programmes. Details on these actions are published in the different annual reports.

European social partners have also been successful in influencing the policy developments at European level, notably the content of the Maastricht Communiqué adopted in December 2004 and which is the European roadmap for vocational education and training policies.

Finally, European social partners' initiatives to disseminate the European text (conferences, debates, websites, booklets, media etc.) led to increased interest for social partners' work on competence development, which was reported in numerous European level publications and analysis, in particular those of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) and CEDEFOP.

ECEG / EMCEF contribution

Education, Training and lifelong learning is an important issue in the bi-annual working programme of the social partner dialogue of the European Chemical Employers Group (ECEG) and the European Mine, Chemical, and Energy Workers Federation (EMCEF). A working group representing both ECEG and EMCEF is drafting an analysis of the status regarding skills, qualifications, vocational (further) training and lifelong learning in the industry, and to facilitate an exchange of information and good practice in order to support the further development in these areas.

In the 5 April 2005 meeting of the working group on qualification and lifelong learning of the chemical industry social dialogue committee, presentations were given by EMCEF and ECEG, and a questionnaire proposal prepared to collect information. While during the 9 September 2005 meeting, the Leonardo FACE (Forum for Advancing Chemical Education) project was envisaged as tool for the Chemical industry social dialogue committee.

Along these proceedings in which ECEG and EMCEF deal with these matters in their European sector social dialogue committee, a survey is being conducted on education, training and lifelong learning. It will be followed up in the sector social dialogue committee of chemical industry.

Annex I – List of contact persons

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Annex II

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

14 March 2002

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

I./ CHALLENGES

1. The 21st century is beginning with changes, the extent of which it is difficult to assess at present for enterprises and employees, as well as for society as a whole.
2. New information and communication technologies represent one factor in speeding up trade flows. Markets globalise and simultaneously segment in order to retain increasingly mobile customers. Businesses will have to adapt their structures more and more quickly in order to remain competitive. The intensive use of 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.

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

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

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 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 foundation¹⁰, with which individuals are equipped during their initial education.

¹⁰ 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.

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 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 ETUC¹¹ 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.

¹¹ The ETUC delegation includes representatives of the Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee