

Promoting Social Partnership in Employee Training

First Cluster Seminar (AT, CZ, ES, NL) - Summary

5/6 July 2017, Imperial Riding School Renaissance Hotel, Vienna, Austria

Participants

See participants list

Day 1

WELCOME - MAXIME CERUTTI (BUSINESSEUROPE), AGNES ROMAN (ETUC) AND LILIANE VOLOZINSKIS (UEAPME).

Maxime Cerutti (BUSINESSEUROPE), Agnes Roman (ETUC) and Liliane Volozinskis (UEAPME) opened the seminar by introducing the aims and objectives of the project and the topics that would be discussed during the seminar. It was also mentioned that the project is taking place together with CEEP, but that the representative could, unfortunately, not attend at the last minute.

EU WIDE OVERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE TRAINING – STEVE BAINBRIDGE (CEDEFOP)

Steve Bainbridge, senior expert at Cedefop, started with a first presentation. He pointed out that there is no systematic way of collecting actual data on employers' and employees' need for training in Europe. This is a major challenge, e.g. for the identification of skills needs and demands. With regard to the role of the social partners in employee training he presented three governance models:

- Unregulated employer-led
- Semi-regulated corporatist
- Top-down led

Independent of the type of governance, Steve Bainbridge emphasized that there is scope for new partnerships with regard to improving employee training in all countries. Even though there can be no EU-wide guideline on how to implement this, there can be success criteria to measure and compare outcomes.

PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS – MICHAEL ZIBROWIUS AND REGINA FLAKE (IW COLOGNE)

Michael Zibrowius and Regina Flake from the Cologne Institute for Economic Research, which has been commissioned by the project steering committee as the expert coordinator for the preparation of the country reports, presented the methodological proceeding and first results from the country-specific as well as comparative analysis.

The country reports show that the significance of employee training in the four countries differs. While Austria and the Netherlands have well-established systems of employee training, Spain is (due to far-reaching legislative reforms) in a transitory phase and the Czech Republic is still in an early stage of establishing a systematic approach of employee training.

Nevertheless, examples of best practices as well as challenges have been identified in all four countries. The heterogeneity of governance approaches in employee training shows that there can be no “one-size-fits-all solution” in promoting social partnership in employee training. However, there are functional equivalents and huge potentials to learn from each other.

DISCUSSION - PLENUM

The impulse presentations were followed by an active discussion in the plenum which was led by the question “Where to go from here?”

Spanish representatives highlighted the strong impact the current legislative reforms constitute in Spain. They claimed further that in Spain collective bargaining on sectoral level needs further strengthening and broadening, e.g. on state level. The discussion was not about sectoral vs. multi-sectoral or national vs. regional regulations all are needed.

Representatives from the **Czech Republic** stated that the Czech country report gives a good picture from the reality today. In 2010, the Czech Republic faced the peak of the crisis. Since then, there have been major legislative amendments, which, however, did not lead to an improvement of the situation.

Austrian representatives cautioned that in international discussions it is very important that there are no misunderstandings between the countries, i.e. to make sure that everybody talks of the same thing when talking about employee training. It was emphasized that it is important to also consider allocation mechanisms in training. Austria has, for example, a market-approach which stands in contrast to institutionalized solutions. Another important question is how digitalisation will impact employee training.

Dutch representatives referred to the particular role of low-skilled employees in training. They stressed that in this target group “learning anxieties” are common and that it is important to create security for this group. The recognition of competencies should be extended and organized in a more efficient way. One central question in the Netherlands is how to convince initial VET schools to participate in employee training.

The country representatives thanked the authors for their country reports. Minor changes, referring mainly to up-to-the-minute changes in country-specific regulations, were remarked and will be considered for the final country reports.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEE WORKSHOP

The discussion in the plenum was followed by separate workshops for employers’ and employees’ representatives.

NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

The first conference day ended with separate country specific workshops. These were moderated by the experts from IW Cologne. The main results were registered on flip charts (initial problem, ideal situation, barriers, and solutions). As there were no employers’ representatives from the Czech Republic, the employees’ representatives took the opportunity to discuss the country report in more detail with the author, Michael Zibrowius.

Austria (Susanne Seyda)

Guidance and counseling for low qualified employee	
STATUS QUO / PROBLEM	IDEAL
no access to low participation of low qualified employees	access to training for low qualified employees
BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS/FIRST STEPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → for employers: no return of investment → responsibility? → no appropriate access to guidance/ to information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → public policy (social partner involvement) (incentives, supply, finances) → guidance at the Workplace (with Works councils) → broker function

The main topic in the Austrian workshop was how to reach out to low-skilled employees. The focus laid on how to guide and counsel this group because the national experts agreed that a lack of information is one reason for the low participation rate. To reach the ideal of access to training for low qualified employees they saw three barriers:

- 1) The employers act under the return on investment thought and only finance employee training which also benefits them.
- 2) The responsibility for employee training is unclear – the individuals, the employer or the government?
- 3) Low-skilled do not have appropriate access to guidance and information.

To overcome these problems different solutions were discussed: public policy (with involvement of social partners) should act by giving incentives to do training, by supplying training measures and by giving financial support. The guidance at the work places, e.g. via the works councils, is seen as helpful, too. The works councils' members could fulfil a broker function.

Netherlands (Regina Flake)

How to connect low-qualified workers to the labour market?	
STATUS QUO / PROBLEM?	IDEAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if workers cannot be stimulated to participate in training they are at risk of unemployment often they have multiple problems (e.g. debts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer multiple (solid) support (beyond training) employers can be stimulated not only by training/educ.
BARRIERS	SOLUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of tailored offers lack of basic skills (due to cut in government financing) lack of cooperation between employers & educ. inst./ social workers money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raise awareness tailored training offers & more focus on enabling factors

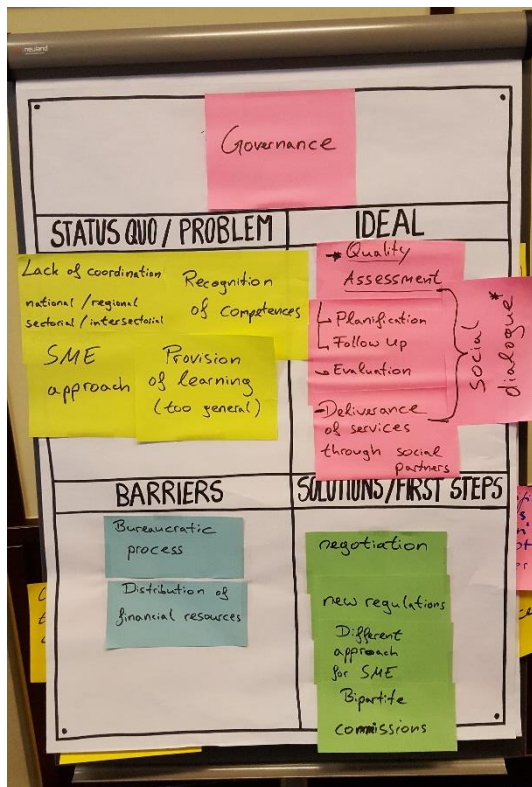
Recognition & validation of competences	
STATUS QUO / PROBLEM	IDEAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of knowledge about recognition possibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> voc schools recognize work & life exper. shorter way to a qualification recognition by employers/ labour market
BARRIERS	SOLUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of financial support for employers for recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> financing of VET schools: less dependence on no. of diplomas but on offers for adult learners financial support for guidance of employers & employees own certificates institutes which don't accept other certificates

The Dutch representatives discussed two topics: “How to connect low-qualified workers to the labour market?” and “Recognition and validation of competencies”.

First, it was underlined that low-skilled workers often face multiple problems (e.g. debts or health problems) and often are flex workers. In an ideal situation the training support would address these multiple challenges and motivate the low-skilled workers to develop themselves. Barriers are seen in financial restrictions, a lack of basic skills as well as a lack of tailored offers. As a solution, the awareness about the importance of training needs to be raised, training offers need to be adapted and there should be a stronger focus on enabling factors.

A second challenge is the recognition and validation of competences. A central problem is the lack of knowledge about this opportunity. Another problem is the lack of financial resources for employers and employees to finance the recognition procedures. To improve the situation it would be important that the social partners receive more support for providing guidance for employers and employees. The financing of vocational schools also needs to be reformed as the incentives to shorten training courses for employees who already have received certain competencies are very low given that vocational schools receive financial support per completed course.

Spain (Daniel Wörndl)



The main topic discussed by the Spanish social partners was the governance of employee training. The situation in Spain is currently dominated by the change in legislation in 2015, when a new law was ratified, redefining the way employee training is organised and decreasing the participation possibilities of social partners in the organisation of employee training. As a royal decree which defines the missing regulations corresponding to the new legislation of employee training was published at the first day of the conference, there was an urge to discuss this new decree. The social partners themselves do not share the same vision of organising employee training in all aspects. Solutions for the current situation, with which neither side can agree for the moment, were analysed during the workshop. The necessity was seen to negotiate new regulations and establish a different approach for SME in order to overcome numerous bureaucratic barriers and reach the ideal of a well-functioning social dialogue.

Day 2

ENTERPRISE PRESENTATIONS

The second day started with two enterprise presentations: **Barbara Spaete** presented the Siemens Learning Campus in Austria and **Daniela Sereinig** presented training activities in Dentsu Aegis Network.

Barbara Spaete highlighted the main challenges for employee training within **Siemens** in Austria: digitisation, globalisation, urbanisation, demographic change and climate change. One main aim of the Siemens Learning Campus is to customise training for the employees and the company. The Learning Board of the campus collaborates closely with the works council. There are meetings 4 to 5 times a year. According to Barbara Spaete, E-Learning is not the general future of learning but an important support.

During the discussion it was mentioned that managers at Siemens are in a continuous dialogue with the employees to identify training needs and that a training catalogue is open to all employees and the financing of courses is up to the individual departments. All training activities are documented within an internal platform. It was also mentioned that Siemens works with several internal certificates (standardised within Siemens worldwide) but that it also has some externally certified training offers (e.g. language certificates).

Daniela Sereinig presented the training activities of **Dentsu Aegis Network**, a consultancy with about 170 employees in Austria (SME). The agency is working in a very flexible environment with few structures. It has many own, non-formal training offers to be able to

react flexibly to new developments. In particular the importance of communicative skills was highlighted. To support training activities new employees get buddies which support the integration. Daniele Sereinig described training as a mutual commitment between employers and employees. Managers motivate employees in regular interviews to take part in training activities which build upon the individual strengths – independent of the formal education level. Every employee can participate at least five days per year in training. Dentsu Aegis Network does not have a works council with whom training activities are discussed.

REPORTING FROM NATIONAL WORKSHOPS AND PLENARY SESSION

In the afternoon, country representatives presented the main results from the national workshops (see above).

As there was no Czech workshop, Dusan Martinek summarized main results and challenges for the Czech Republic. Apart from digitisation which will cause a substantial demand for new skills, the implementation of a new law with regard to LLL is one of the important topics.

Gertrud van Erp, VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland, presented a joint advice from the Dutch Social and Economic Council (SEC) which had been presented to the new government. It contains five main fields of action:

1. Right of training support up to a Master degree
2. Implementation of an individual learning account
3. Introduction of a loan with low interests for a second Bachelor degree
4. Introduction of special support for SME (experiment: provide each company with an advisor for four days every four years)
5. Reform of the IVET system to open it more for adult learners

The Spanish employee representatives pointed out the importance for earmarked financial resources respecting employee training and endorsed to social partners activities and strategies at EU level to support national social partners in their countries.

WRAP-UP

The representatives of BusinessEurope, ETUC und UEAPME thanked all participants for the fruitful discussions and insights during the two day seminar which also served as a fact-finding seminar and cornerstone for the upcoming cluster seminars in Warsaw and Stockholm. A final conference in Brussels was announced and all participants were invited.