


*getting to work
on*

LIFE LONG LEARNING

POLICY, PRACTICE & PARTNERSHIP

EN

Summary conference report



Getting to work on lifelong learning: policy, practice and partnership

Summary conference report

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

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

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Europe 123
GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)

Postal address: PO Box 22427
GR-551 02 Thessaloniki

Tel. (30) 23 10 49 01 11, Fax (30) 23 10 49 00 20

E-mail: info@cedefop.eu.int

Homepage: www.cedefop.eu.int

Interactive website: www.trainingvillage.gr

Edited by: Cedefop
Lynne Chisholm

Published under the responsibility of:
Johan van Rens, *Director*
Stavros Stavrou, *Deputy Director*

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Foreword

Six years from now, Europe wants to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world - and, no less, to become a more cohesive, inclusive society in a Union that is set to grow to twice its current membership in the coming decade. Raising the level of and extending the reach of investment in human resources is a key element of the strategy for achieving what have become known as the Lisbon goals ⁽¹⁾.

In order to meet this challenge, a solid consensus of principle exists amongst policymakers and researchers throughout Europe and internationally on the need to make lifelong learning a concrete reality for all. How precisely to do so most effectively is still under debate, but there is no doubt that the time has come for practical action.

The overarching objective of Cedefop's own Medium-Term Priorities for the period 2003-06 is the implementation of lifelong learning (Cedefop, 2003b), and this has been one of the most frequently consulted topics on Cedefop's European Training Village. Within this context, Cedefop's June 2003 conference *Policy, Practice and Partnership: getting to work on lifelong learning* ⁽²⁾ offered a forum for professional, practice-based exchange of information and experience, particularly in the vocational education and training world, which is Cedefop's mandated area of expertise and action.

The full conference proceedings are a lengthy document ⁽³⁾. In view of the high priority that has been given at European level to making lifelong learning a concrete reality, Cedefop decided to produce this summary conference report. It presents the main issues and outcomes, and sets these into the flow of policy development at European level as this had developed by mid-2003

⁽¹⁾ All documents relevant for the Lisbon Strategy with reference to education and training, including lifelong learning, can be accessed via: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html. Documents later cited in this report that are accessible through this address are not separately referenced.

⁽²⁾ The conference was held in association with the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of the Regions and the European Training Foundation (ETF). The Asia-Europe Meeting's Lifelong Learning Initiative (ASEM-LLL), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the European Social Partners and the Greek General Secretariat of Adult Education also took an active role in the meeting.

⁽³⁾ The conference proceedings are available for downloading at Cedefop's ETV: <http://www.trainingvillage.gr>. A printed version is available from Cedefop as long as stocks last via info@cedefop.eu.int.

and as it continued to unfold between then and early 2004, when this summary report was drafted. The 2004 joint interim report on Education and Training 2010 specifies that by 2006 Member States should have developed and implemented coherent and integrated comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. Cedefop hopes that this document will provide a useful source of reference information as implementing lifelong learning is fully taken on board within the integrated Education and Training 2010 process.

Johan van Rens
Director, Cedefop

CHAPTER 1

The conference context

1996 was the *European Year of Lifelong Learning*, which signals the starting point for the European Union's active promotion of lifelong learning. High unemployment rates throughout the Union led in the same period to the establishment of the European Employment Strategy (EES) ⁽⁴⁾, whose guidelines and reporting have consistently underlined the importance of improving education and training participation rates, especially for the low-qualified and the unqualified, for whom labour market risks are high and rising. European Commission policy documents in all areas emphasise the importance not only of strengthening European competitiveness by human resource development but also of strengthening social cohesion in a diverse and integrating Europe.

The current generation of Community action programmes in education (Socrates II), training (Leonardo da Vinci II) and youth (YOUTH) share the same preamble, which places them under a common umbrella of promoting lifelong learning ⁽⁵⁾. They were launched just as the Lisbon goals were set in spring 2000. Later that year, the Commission prepared a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. A large-scale consultation process followed before the publication of the Communication *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality* towards the end of 2001. During the same period, the European Council (Education) had delivered a key report on the *Concrete future objectives of education and training systems* together with a detailed work programme prepared by the Commission. In June 2002, the European Council had also adopted a *Resolution on lifelong learning* calling both for concerted action in this area and recommending its integration at European level within the follow-up to the Objectives report. In early 2003, the *Presidency conclusions* of the Barcelona European Council established the overall target of making Europe's education and training systems a world reference by 2010, and pointed to the need for further specific action in vocational education and training to accompany that already underway for

⁽⁴⁾ All relevant reports and documentation on the European Employment Strategy are available via http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/index_en.htm.

⁽⁵⁾ Information on the current generation of action programmes are available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/guide/liste_en.html.

general education. By the latter part of 2002, policy forces had gathered solidly around the flagship agenda Education and Training 2010, in which implementing lifelong learning is a guiding orientation. By the beginning of 2003, thematic working groups had been established for what is called the Objectives Process and for the follow-up to the 2002 *Copenhagen declaration on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training* ⁽⁶⁾.

As the Commission's documents on lifelong learning were under preparation and discussion, EES reports had made explicit reference to the need for Member States to make more progress on developing coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning policies, without which it is more difficult to make concrete progress on the ground. Cedefop's own latest policy report (Bainbridge, S. et al., 2003) had, on the basis of its review of the evidence, also concluded that lifelong learning policies would need to be consolidated and put into practice rapidly, were the Lisbon goals to be achieved on schedule. Just ahead of the 2003 Cedefop conference reported here, the European Council had agreed on five concrete benchmarks for Education and Training 2010. They include important markers for the progress to be made in implementing lifelong learning, such as cutting the rate of early school-leavers to an EU average of no more than 10% and raising the EU average level of participation in lifelong learning to at least 12.5% of the 25-64 age group.

Cedefop responded to the policy importance attached to lifelong learning by defining this as the overarching objective of its work for the period 2003-06. Within this objective, three strategic themes were identified:

- improving access to learning, mobility and social inclusion;
- enabling and valuing learning;
- supporting networks and partnerships in an enlarged European Union.

These became the overall guidelines for the conference held in June 2003, which forms part of a series of linked activities to support the process of

⁽⁶⁾ The working group themes are: basic skills, foreign language teaching and entrepreneurship; ICT in education and training; increasing participation in maths and science; making best use of resources; mobility and European cooperation; open learning environment, active citizenship and inclusion; making learning attractive and strengthening links with working life and society; teacher and trainer education; validation of non-formal learning; a European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET); lifelong guidance; quality in VET; developing single transparency framework (new Europass). The last four groups have been placed specifically under the umbrella of the follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration and the first nine within the Objectives Process framework, although in practice all themes are relevant to a greater or lesser extent for both general education and vocational education and training. Cedefop manages a series of virtual communities serving these groups, which can be accessed at <http://cedefop.communityzero.com/>.

implementing lifelong learning in Europe. The activities have also included four thematic workshops ⁽⁷⁾ in early 2003 and the co-preparation, with the European Commission, of a Eurobarometer public opinion survey on lifelong learning (Cedefop, 2003a). A Cedefop key reference publication on lifelong learning will appear later in 2004, as will a detailed analysis of the Eurobarometer survey findings ⁽⁸⁾.

The approach to the conference began from the conviction that living and working in 21st century Europe is about living and working in the Knowledge Age. Creating one world of lifelong learning is a strategic part of this vision that brings together personal development, social integration, community involvement and economic growth. This means that everyone should have the chance to develop their potential to the full throughout life and in a variety of ways. What matters now is how to make lifelong learning successful in practice, and this is why the conference title included the phrase 'getting to work on lifelong learning'. This phrase emphasises the need for concrete action, and it also serves to highlight the fact that Cedefop's job is to serve the vocational education and training world, which is naturally related to the world of employment and economic activity. These concerns cover only part of the vast remit of lifelong learning as a whole, and there is no suggestion that they alone should dominate the implementation of lifelong learning, although there can be no question of their importance within the greater picture.

The importance attached to furthering equal opportunities and social cohesion as Europe makes the transition to a fully-fledged knowledge economy and society in the coming decades set the tone for the conference programme and its discussions. The central question was how to make lifelong learning an integral element of knowledge-driven development through that transition. In this process, overcoming barriers to learning at both individual and institutional levels would be a crucial factor. In a variety of ways, education and training systems on the one hand and the full range of their stakeholders on the other hand have to find a more effective and positive articulation with each other. Within this, the conference programme followed three strands: access and social inclusion, new pathways and

⁽⁷⁾ These workshops dealt with the topics of integrating people with disabilities into training and employment, the potential of adaptive hypermedia for lifelong learning, the roles of time and money in engaging individuals for lifelong learning, and workplace-based learning for older and low-qualified workers. The workshop reports are available together with the conference proceedings at <http://www.trainingvillage.gr>.

⁽⁸⁾ The European Commission will also repeat the Eurobarometer lifelong learning survey for the new Member States in autumn 2004, with initial findings available by the end of the year.

pedagogies, and making learning attractive. Together with the outcomes of a pre-conference day seminar entitled *Europe grows up: learning for life in the transition from 15 to 25* ⁽⁹⁾, the three plenary sessions and nine workshops gave space to a wealth of information and exchange of views. These form the basis for the summary that follows, which provides a synthesis of the presentations and discussions as a whole.

⁽⁹⁾ This title was chosen both to highlight the upcoming accession of ten new Member States in May 2004 and to draw attention to the continuing importance of young people and adults to building a Europe of knowledge, given the tendency to equate lifelong learning solely with adult learning rather than the 'cradle to grave' concept that underlies both a well-developed culture of lifelong learning as well as the reach of its practice. The outcomes of this pre-conference seminar are also integrated in the conference proceedings summarised in this report.

CHAPTER 2

Summary conference report

Implementing lifelong learning is the paperclip that holds everything together – it lies at the heart of an integrated and coordinated approach to meeting the Lisbon goals.

Johan van Rens
Director of Cedefop

In line with Cedefop's role as Europe's reference centre for vocational education and training, contributions and discussion at its conference *Getting to work on lifelong learning* centred on work-related adult learning. Particular attention was given to the learning needs and demands of low-skilled workers and disadvantaged groups, with a specific highlight on the training and employment situation of people with disabilities.

Given this explicit focus, conceptual debates about the definition and remit of lifelong learning did not deflect attention away from the main purpose, which was to bridge policy with practice. Three broader kinds of issues were, however, taken up in a number of contributions:

- What kind of education and training do knowledge economies and societies require?
- How can rates of return on investment in education and training best be envisaged and assessed?
- Can public policy as currently practised cope well with implementing lifelong learning?

The view that lifelong learning is vital to Europe's future development was in no dispute, nor that social and economic change now threatens to outpace institutional change, not least in education and training. Many – but not all – commentators are convinced that 'the global knowledge economy is transforming the demands of the labour market in economies throughout the

⁽¹⁰⁾ Quotations in the text are taken directly from contributions to the conference proceedings available at www.trainingvillage.gr. Text inserts comprise summarised extracts from specific contributions, and the text of this summary report itself synthesises from the full range of contributions.

world' (David Fretwell, World Bank) ⁽¹⁰⁾. The extent to which citizens in Europe are already experiencing the employment and working conditions that are routinely described in policy documents was queried, given that the majority of the active population still experience greater continuity than change in this respect. The picture may well look different twenty years from now, as younger age cohorts whose trajectories into the labour market are definitely more prolonged, diversified and fragmented move forward through active life. This process will show whether greater change and discontinuity in occupations, employment and career development patterns become characteristic for people of all ages.

No less importantly, current changes have implications for what it is that people need to be able to know and do. For example, IT prompts the redefinition of literacy, not only by adding digital literacy but also by introducing the negotiation of diversity into everyday learning processes. Debates over the importance of old vs. new basic skills are misleading, since both are essential and interdependent. In reality, they are intertwined to make up diverse layers of skills and hence literacies of wider scope than in the past. These developments require new approaches to teaching, training and learning throughout life, which will ultimately 'create new persons able to plan their personal life and shape the social future' (Christos Doukas, Greek General Secretariat for Adult Education).

Certainly, the 2003 Lifelong Learning Eurobarometer findings show that too many people do not feel comfortable with IT, science and technology, and languages. European citizens are aware of the much-debated 'skills gap' – but for many people, everyday lives at home and work do not yet provide any immediate urgency to change the situation. The Eurobarometer findings also show, however, that motivation to learn begins from the personal and the social, not from instrumental or narrowly vocational reasons. Therefore, employability as such may not be the most promising way to sell lifelong learning to citizens, even if it is a crucial outcome of continued participation in learning throughout active life.

The increasingly central role played by human capital in the economic success of nations and individuals was not in any dispute, either, but many took the view that more attention should be paid to the role of social capital, that is, that social relationships as well as individual attributes play a critical role in economic activity and human wellbeing. Individuals, society and economy all have something to gain from investing energy, time and money in learning throughout life. This implies shared responsibility on all sides, including for its costs – although what the balance should be and how contributions should be made is nowhere near a consensus solution.

Indeed, there was some doubt about whether the returns on investment in learning are as high as has been declared in some of the research and policy literature, otherwise many more people would invest their time and money to do so, expressed most strongly by Frank Coffield (University of Newcastle; now at the University of London Institute of Education) in arguing that ‘economists have seriously over-sold the significance of individual and social rates of return to education. It would be more accurate to claim that investment in education appears to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for economic growth.’

On the whole, although education and training may be framed by economic development and change, their quality and effectiveness are certainly not economically or indeed technologically determined in a direct or simplistic manner. Gerhard Bosch (Institute of Work and Technology, Gelsenkirchen) pointed out, for example, that barriers to lifelong learning are found not only in the education and training system but also in other subsystems such as work organisation, labour and product markets, industrial relations and innovation policy. Removing barriers to learning is a crosscutting task that requires cooperation between actors from different subsystems and cannot be left only to education and training specialists.

The major challenge is to develop consistent policies in these different fields, but it is no less important to foresee analysis, monitoring and assessment of their potential impact, consequences and side effects from the outset. By definition, lifelong learning is a major policy challenge because its logic goes beyond that of organised learning in the public – and publicly funded – domain. To what extent will the scope and nature of policymaking itself need to change, if it is to respond appropriately to the differently structured organisation and culture of knowledge societies? This was a question that went well beyond the remit of this conference, but in the light of parallel debates on new forms of governance is one worth posing, especially given the diversification of education and training provision.

2.1. Raising investment and encouraging partnership

Most important of all: there is a clear need to invest more in human resources. In spite of this, public investment in education in the EU has not been increasing in recent years. To start with, existing resources will have to be used more efficiently.

Otto Dibelius

*European Commission Directorate-General
Education and Culture*

The majority view at the conference concurs with the research and policy consensus that investment in human capital contributes to productivity, furthers technological change and certainly does not detract from – and may positively contribute to – social cohesion. However, doubt was expressed on whether the EU can reach a common view on the roles and responsibilities of the state and public authorities over against those of the private sector, industry and individuals with respect to the provision of learning throughout life.

In middle-income countries throughout the world and in the transition countries of central and eastern Europe, the last decade or so has seen a rapidly growing private education and training sector that both complements and challenges public sector provision. Some take the view that this trend will spread across Europe as a whole in the coming years. The question of whether such developments are desirable or possibly inevitable was hotly debated amongst participants, but the balance of opinion underlined that whatever the role of private provision might or should be, the primary responsibility of the public sector is a fundamental principle of education and training policy and practice in Europe and should remain so.

From the employers' perspective, lifelong learning strategies must ensure that training provision corresponds to companies' needs, whereas the main responsibility for maintaining employability lies with the individual, facilitated by incentive measures. At the same time, it was agreed on all sides that the Social Partners can and should promote continuing training through dialogue, collective bargaining and agreements. These can cover a range of incentives (such as saving accounts for training or learning-driven pay incentives) and special measures (for example, for low-skilled workers) as well as cooperating to design curricula and qualifications or agreeing changes in work organisation to facilitate participation in learning. The new Social

Partner Agreement in Ireland, which includes special reference to the low skilled and unemployed, was cited as an example of good practice.

- Tri-party cooperation and social dialogue among stakeholders in the Cypriot education and training system is rated very highly. Following the adoption by the European Social Partners of the Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competences and Qualifications, Cyprus has begun implementation through its First Strategic Development Plan for 2004-06. It sets out five priorities, of which one of the most important is the development of human resources and the promotion of equal opportunities for social integration. The most important provisions include the introduction of second-chance learning options for adults, the development of lifelong learning and the adjustment of the vocational training system to contemporary technological and IT needs of the labour market. The aim is to foster multiple skills, flexibility and adaptability. A semi-governmental body, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), in close cooperation with the Cyprus Planning Bureau, holds responsibility for implementation in practice. Employers contribute to HRDA policy formulation, too, and they pay a 0,5% training tax on employees' wages into HRDA. In this way, the continuing training of employed adults is funded almost exclusively from employers' contributions. By regulation, continuing training is provided in working time and at the expense of the employer.

Charalambos Kammass

Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (www.oeb-eif.org)

Creating greater transparency in the training market would assist enterprises to achieve a better fit between their specific work organisation and training provision. Qualifications and certificates that are readily and widely recognised together with a quality assurance and 'quality label' system to regulate providers would encourage companies to invest more in training and with greater confidence in its value and benefit. Consultancy and specialist networks to support companies as they develop training programmes would be a worthwhile service that could be collectively financed in some form of public-private partnership.

Raising levels of investment in human resources also means that existing resources should be used more efficiently, and at the conference the majority

view was clearly that the available resources must be concentrated on those most in need.

- An across-the-board increase in educational spending irrespective of context may not be necessary, but additional funds may be required at lower educational levels and for the expansion of adult training. Targeted areas for efficient investment include:
 - extending education and training to ensure the availability of technical and scientific personnel;
 - supporting lifelong learning to counter the increasingly rapid obsolescence of skills in a period of rapid technological change;
 - concentrating public spending on improving the skills of those from disadvantaged backgrounds;
 - promoting action to improve educational outcomes (teaching programmes, methods).

The research evidence indicates that an additional year's schooling increases productivity by 5% on delivery and a further 5% in the long run (because of greater adaptability to technological change). For the individual it concludes that an additional year's schooling increases wages by an average 6.5% across European countries, while on-the-job training increases wages by 5% for each extra year. All this should convince national policymakers to look to education as an investment, and not as current consumption.

Key points from de la Fuente and Ciccone (2003)

From the individual point of view, the 2003 Lifelong Learning Eurobarometer findings show that only a minority of citizens think that they should individually pay for learning of whatever kind, and certainly not that they should cover all of the costs involved. One of the things that more people are willing to pay for is non-work-related learning of direct personal benefit. This does not mean that people are less positively motivated to learn for work-related reasons, but rather that they do not see this kind of learning as their sole financial responsibility (and perhaps not at all). Tapping motivation to learn is, in any case, essential, but providing the funds to do so is not the only trigger. People will be more prepared to devote time and energy to learning if it corresponds to their interests – that is, if learning brings a tangible return in the form of rewards and benefits.

Sharing responsibilities between all stakeholders, including citizens themselves as learners and beneficiaries of learning outcomes, is the fundamental principle on which policy and practice must be more effectively based in the future. Integrated and local level partnerships are demonstrably successful in generating innovation and raising the quantity and quality of participation in learning, most of all for those individuals and groups who have less opportunity, access and success. Partnership and shared responsibility require greater mutual openness between interest groups, sectors and responsible authorities.

- The Italian lifelong learning system is an integrated system, where both the allocation of public resources and the definition of training end users are discussed in the framework of a partnership between both the institutional actors and the socio-economic partners. The system tries to cover the financing not only of training that assures the competitiveness of enterprises, but also lifelong learning for all categories of workers. It makes use of equity initiatives under the European Social Fund to target measures on enterprises with under 15 employees; workers in the private sector with a fixed-term contract, aged over 45, with only primary level qualifications or in a company suffering from technologically-related unemployment.

Aviana Bulgarelli

Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

There was a firm consensus at the conference that partnership models are the linchpin successful implementation of lifelong learning policies, and these need to function at regional as well as national and European levels. Such partnerships can take a variety of forms: collective agreements; social NGOs and local authorities; social partners and social NGOs; local community learning partnerships; financial and risk-sharing partnerships. The active involvement of local-level civil society facilitates the development of sustainable, close-knit multi-stakeholder networks. Such networks have greater resilience when they are created in a process of active exchange and negotiation. Combining acquiring active citizenship skills with job relevant training opportunities in ways that are visibly related to the local community seems to offer a promising way forward.

- ADEDY, the Greek national federation of trades unions representing public employees, is carrying out an action project funded by Socrates II to support the establishment of local and regional partnerships for lifelong learning. Three partnerships (in Kozani, Kalamata and Xalxida) were initiated in 2003, with the aim of developing multifunctional learning centres that can respond to the economic and social circumstances of the locality. The first to be drawn up, Kozani's action plan is based on the assumption that community interests are best served by working together and by developing a lifelong learning community for all. The Kozani region has been relatively isolated until very recently, its local economy needs an upswing and participation rates in education and training are below average. The aim is that by 2010, Kozani will be a top-ranking prefecture for IT, languages, innovation, entrepreneurship and cultural capacities amongst citizens and in the community as a whole. The development hub will be the learning centre itself, the joint project of a broad-based body made up of representatives of civil society organisations and of the local and regional administration. The intention is to create synergy between existing regional structures, infrastructures and services in order to help the community to help itself – in other words, to generate sustainable development by using existing resources more efficiently and by forging strong partnerships between local government, education and training authorities, industry and commerce and local NGOs.

Christoforos Koryfidis

ADEDY European Affairs Section and European Economic and Social Committee

- Swedish folk high schools provide non-formal adult education. The system is built on co-operation between the state and NGOs, and each institution falls under the umbrella of a given social or political movement. It is important to focus on and work with the individual, but it is no less important to ensure that the state and public policy, with the active engagement of NGOs, enables change in the social and economic environment in which people live their lives, at work and in the family. We will make better progress if we ensure that organised civil society – social NGOs – are properly and fully involved at every step of the way.

Stina Sundberg

Women's Folk High School, Gothenborg

It could be argued that making lifelong learning a concrete reality would progress more effectively if what is already known to work well is shared and put into practice with greater synergy. The discussions at the conference on this point can be condensed into a virtuous circle of conditions and characteristics that together underpin motivation and turn it into action. This circle is made up of open framing conditions; shared principles; support; participation; symmetrical, process-based learning methods; concrete benefits; crossover culture (working across and between sectors, contexts and traditions); networking; institutional change;... and on to open framing conditions again.

Key points

- Raise investment in human resources, but above all more efficient and targeted investment.
- Ensure that participation in learning does bring concrete, tangible benefits and rewards.
- Aim for joint measures across policy domains and between sectors of provision.
- Actively pursue strategies to share responsibilities and expertises as collective resources.
- Make far better use of the experience and capacity of local and regional organised civil society.

2.2. Opening up learning and qualification pathways

Education and training systems must move more rapidly and consistently towards becoming open and diverse networks of provision and practice. The single most critical factor in generating the kind of change that is needed is to bridge the institutionalised and cultural divide between general education and vocational education and training sectors, pathways and qualifications.

*Outcome of the conference pre-seminar
Europe Grows Up...*

There was full agreement amongst conference participants that teaching, training and learning aims, content and methods have to change more decisively towards creating, applying, analysing and synthesising knowledge, together with engaging in collaborative learning throughout the lifespan, and that IT-based learning tools can contribute to the diversity and flexibility of approach. Practice-based learning was seen as of crucial importance for the renewal and adaptation of education and training in knowledge economies and societies.

The logical consequence is that the extent, nature and quality of initial and continuing training and professional development opportunities for teachers and trainers working in both formal and non-formal contexts must expand and improve. They are the filter and the medium through which content must pass and methods are realised, and they are the figures that significantly shape orientations towards knowledge and learning. Concern was expressed that current policy documents pay too little attention to how learning takes place and to what needs to be done to foster learning that develops the facility for critical intelligence and reflexivity.

- German federal and regional governments have long since issued recommendations, introduced regulations and established specific programmes for lifelong learning. Germany is also well known for its system of paid educational leave for employees and has begun to introduce the idea of learning accounts and voucher schemes. Germany is fortunate to have a well-established tradition of collecting and analysing data on participation in continuing education and training, which means that regular detailed reports are available to inform

policymaking and providers. Despite all this, lifelong learning is still not a mainstream reality in German educational, working and social life. To make more progress, we need to work on the following issues: motivating people and making it practicable; developing new learning cultures and innovative ways to learn; introducing better forms of quality assurance and certification; orienting financing mechanisms towards individualised schemes. The precondition is that we have better information about learners and their motivations and interests, the barriers towards learning that they perceive and experience, and about the outcomes and benefits they recognise as arising from the learning they do. This means that we need more research into learning itself.

Peter Krug

*Ministry of Science, Continuing Education,
Research and Culture, Rhineland-Palatinate*

To support institutional change more effectively, stronger encouragement and incentives to implement (sometimes well tried and tested) innovations are needed, such as: modularisation and part-time schemes, individualised courses of study, culturally sensitive curricula and teaching/training methods, multilingual learning centres, accreditation of prior and experiential learning, integration of exchange/mobility experiences, open and distance learning networks, workplace-based learning and, not least, the potential of e-learning tools and methods.

It was pointed out that adults who want to take up basic or vocational learning again are usually expected to complete the same course as a young person, regardless of their experience and learning accrued in alternative settings. On the other hand, in higher education the situation is rather different: here, the 'non-traditional' student is more typically placed in separate courses, but these do not carry the same academic weight and nor do they lead to qualifications of equivalent value. In both cases, the inadequacy lies in the relative incapacity of existing systems to respond effectively to individual needs and circumstances.

- Universities traditionally assured quality by final degree examinations and not by regulating admission, until the idea gained ground that standardised entry requirements would result in a homogeneous student body that would make it easier to produce excellence reliably.

The 1960s/1970s reforms aimed to open up this bottleneck, but 'non-traditional' students remained a tiny proportion of total enrolments, not least because adult and part-time students had to fit the rules that had been made for young and full-time students. In recent years, opportunities to transfer from vocational education and training to higher education and to enter university at a later stage of life by different routes have expanded. The higher education sector itself has become more differentiated and has expanded its capacity, but there is no obvious consensus across Europe on how best to meet current demands. Widening the spectrum of eligibility for entry to include vocational education and training qualifications can rest on credential-based, testing-based or market regulation approaches. Views diverge on whether people with non-standard entry qualifications should enjoy generalised or restricted institutional access, and whether they should be able to enrol in all programmes or in special ones. Finally, there is no agreement on whether the boundary between initial and continuing education should remain or fall, and whether continuing education should be integrated into regular departments or dealt with separately. Currently, it is not known for certain which options are more successful and on which terms, nor whether accepting a diversity of responses across Europe is preferable to acting on a common position.

Ulrich Teichler

*Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work,
University of Kassel*

The balance of opinion at the conference held that universities must address a greater diversity of learning objectives, hence meeting the needs of multiple target groups. This would imply: building networks of different types of educational institutions; creating regional but also cross-country networks to address specific issues and needs; and that universities should place greater priority on teaching and training those who are key figures for promoting lifelong learning in the future, that is, future teachers and trainers. Overall, universities should adapt so that they offer environments and opportunities that are acceptable and attractive for those who would like to study in them.

The 2003 Lifelong Learning Eurobarometer findings indicate that on the basis of their own experience, citizens think that learning best takes place informally and in social contexts. This does not mean that formal learning

settings are no longer appropriate, but that the methods used require a rethink. The learner-centred approaches and methods in non-formal youth and adult education are successful in releasing motivation and engagement, and the vocational education and training sector could benefit from these practices, especially with respect to developing workplace-based learning.

In learning-conducive working environments, communities of practice can develop collective learning processes that benefit all participants. However, the fear of learning amongst the lower skilled is underestimated and as a result, too little attention is paid to the need to build confidence, self-esteem and to the importance of personal development for the willingness to take on learning again.

- Danish research into the attitudes and motivations of older low skilled and unemployed adults shows that they are highly ambivalent to structured learning, which they only do when they have no choice. For such people, learning involves challenges to established identities and behaviours in psychologically vulnerable circumstances. Identities were built on the basis that not everything in life is possible, but stability of employment and working tasks could be expected. Under changing labour market and working conditions, biographical continuity has fractured. Personal responsibility is now expected for a future in which everything is theoretically possible, but realistically much is not possible. Under such circumstances, the purpose of learning and identity change is not obvious. It is remarkable how long such people continue to hope that they will succeed in keeping or finding a job despite very small chances of doing so. Successful learning will only take place if people subjectively accept and positively want to learn, which means it is crucial to overcome ambivalence and anxiety. Guidance and counselling on a consistent basis is essential to this. For the low skilled, learning should be built around practice, both as content and process, which underscores the potential of workplace-based learning. In addition, they want their achievements to be recorded and validated, which underlines the importance of developing methods for accrediting prior experience and validating non-formal learning.

Knud Illeris

Roskilde University and Learning Lab Denmark (www.ild.dk)

Developing workplace-based training for the low skilled is in the interest of both workers and employers. For workers, it offers learning opportunities in a familiar environment and with their own colleagues, which gives greater confidence and security, especially since many will have negative memories of schooling. For employers, relevant learning that is integrated into production and organisational processes takes place on site, minimising the loss to production time and enabling learning to fit around work schedules.

- The Leonardo da Vinci II project *Motivation of people with lower qualifications for lifelong learning* aims to provide information on how to improve the continuing education and training participation rate of employees with lower qualification levels. This means that the project will be looking at the learning styles and behaviours of the lower qualified to see where their specificities lie. It will also look at the strategies that companies and training providers adopt when designing and carrying through the continuing training they offer, with a view to evaluating whether these strategies correspond to the learning styles, needs and demands of this target group.

Daniela Harlinghausen

German Institute for Adult Education (www.die-bonn.de)

Language learning, for example, has not been a strong point in vocational education and training provision, but this must change given the rising importance of linguistic flexibility in working life in Europe. In this area, the methods used in primary education can act as a model for more effective adult language learning in the workplace. Up-to-date methods incite learners to use language to learn and to learn to use language. They ‘learn by doing’ in a context relevant for the demands of their everyday lives, gaining language skills alongside the confidence to use these in a practically meaningful context.

- The need to use more than one language in working environments is rising at an unprecedented scale in Europe. It has been argued that enterprises could improve their performance by 20% or more were their staff more linguistically versatile, and that the performance benefit to be drawn from having staff members competent in using a second

language reaches 10%. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL; www.clilcompendium.com) has been developed to respond to this issue. It implies that in a given education and training context – including at work – the medium for teaching and learning non-language content is a language that is not usually the first language of the learners, and the instructors are not usually language teachers. CLIL suits the schedules, immediate needs and the diverse aspirations of learners themselves, and it is especially appropriate for adult learners. It is a cost-effective, pragmatic and sustainable European solution to a European need, opening doors to languages learning for a broader range of learners and capable of achieving a range of tangible outcomes beyond language competence itself: development of intercultural knowledge, understanding and skills; preparation for internationalisation; and improvement of some aspects of non-language education.

David Marsh

University of Jyväskylä

One way to describe the difference between past and future learning provision – in Peter Rigney’s (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) words – is that whereas current education and training systems are like assembly lines, lifelong learning requires small precision engineering workshops that can deliver tailored and targeted products.

E-learning tools certainly hold great potential in this respect, since they can simulate the application of what is being learned to practice (for example, as in flight simulators). However, conference participants expressed a degree of reticence, even scepticism, about the educational and cost effectiveness of IT-related learning tools and programmes. This was largely because the evidence on learning outcomes in real-life contexts (as opposed to research laboratories) is mixed, and in addition, innovative e-learning projects are still more likely to be found in higher education than in schools and work-based learning environments.

Certainly there is a need to move away from what Simeon Retalis (University of Cyprus) termed the ‘techno-loving’ approach to e-learning, which begins from the technology and then thinks forward to its possible education and training applications, in favour of blended learning, which uses e-learning to complement and extend the potential of face-to-face learning. Much learning takes place as a social activity, in which peer learning is as important as guidance from the tutor or trainer. Education and training

practitioners remain to be convinced that e-sociability – which certainly exists – can work as effectively for learning purposes as face-to-face interaction.

- The project *Time2Learn* is an EU IST Thematic Network that aims to bring together the key actors and stakeholders in e-learning research and professional training, and two key findings so far are that (especially asynchronous) collaborative learning methods are widespread and that adaptive hypermedia learning systems are attracting high research priority (www.eu-projects.com/time2learn).

Simeon Retalis

University of Cyprus

- The Socrates-Minerva project *ADAPT - adaptivity and adaptability in ODL based on ICT* (www.wis.win.tue.nl/~alex/HTML/Minerva/index.html) focuses on developing e-learning support for virtual campuses, e-learning, students tutoring and services.

Alexandra Cristea

Eindhoven University of Technology

- The Socrates II project *POLE – Policy observatory for lifelong learning and employability* aims to gain a better understanding of how IT can enhance and amplify the results of lifelong learning policies, by identifying and reviewing indicative cases of lifelong learning measures that utilise IT in order to develop tools to assess their outputs, outcomes and impact (www.education-observatories.net/pole).

Nikitas Kastis

Lambrakis Research Foundation, Athens

Last but certainly not least, open and flexible learning pathways demand qualifications that can be ‘read’ through the vector of single reference frameworks. Reliable transfer and progression arrangements require common principles for modularisation, definition of modules and study-units, credit points and systems. This is only possible if there is large agreement on the common currency to which all will refer, and it also depends on the

willingness to accept equivalences between validated competences that may have been acquired formally, non-formally and informally. Many European countries are currently actively engaged in developing or updating competence-based national qualifications systems that also include systematic procedures for the accreditation of prior learning and experience. Several relevant examples were presented at the conference, as shown below (following the key points for this section).

Key points

- Find out more about learning and motivation, especially for the low qualified.
- Situate learning provision more firmly into real-life contexts, especially close to the workplace.
- Gain the positive support of teachers and trainers as gatekeeping partners for turning policy into practice.
- Lend strong support to national initiatives that are creating integrated systems of competence-based qualification and validation.

- For the 2002/03 academic year, 4.500 students in Norwegian universities and colleges were accepted for degree courses on the basis of recognition of prior knowledge and experience gained non-formally and informally. Monitoring studies show that such students perform quite well, including in comparison with 'ordinary' students. Norway is currently developing a national framework for validating informal and non-formal learning (<http://odin.dep.no/ufd/engelsk/education/competence-reform>), in line with the recommendations of the recent OECD adult learning thematic review for Norway.

Hanna Marit Jahr
Mission of Norway to the EU

- From 2001, basic adult education in Denmark offers opportunities for individual assessment and recognition, together with individual study plans for part-time vocational education and training programmes (http://us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse_dk/Alearning.htm). These options lend horizontal flexibility to the system, since modules can be combined to create flexible qualification pathways for adults across a broad spectrum of provision: continuing training for the employed; initial and adult vocational training; general initial and adult secondary education. Individual study plans can be designed using credit transfer and flexible validation. Everything fits into a five-level vertical qualifications framework of adult education, which has been designed to provide a transparent and coherent system of recognised competences, with well-known (identical or comparable) levels: adult education and training at all levels consistently ‘mirror’ the levels of initial education and training. The system offers well-defined possibilities for bridging across programmes and levels as well as for recognising non-formal and informal learning, especially workplace learning.

Annelise Hauch

Danish Ministry of Education

- The principle of the French qualifications system is to measure training, learning and experience against the same standards, so that certificates actually do represent common currencies. In the post-1945 reform period, many national ministries created their own parallel systems of qualifications, but all were designed for initial vocational education and training and were very closely tied to formal education and training provision. The continuing training sector developed its own distinctive system of qualifications as well, and a voluntary procedure open to all training providers was introduced, through which all these various qualifications could be placed in correspondence with each other, whereby the benchmark was set as the qualifications accredited by the Ministry of Education. In 2002, a new national Repertory of Certifications was introduced with the aim of creating an all-encompassing architecture of vocational education and training qualifications. Eligibility for registration in the Repertory requires meeting two basic conditions: qualifications must be accessible not only through training but also through the accreditation of prior experience (VAE); and it must be shown that the Social Partners were involved from

the start in the design of the qualification in question. In conformity with the common currency principle, all qualifications registered in the Repertory must be structured in terms of units of competence. The purpose of this new coordinating system is to bridge the recognition gaps between the various systems of qualifications whilst also imposing common quality criteria on all providers. In particular, possibilities for the accreditation of prior experience have been extended to all qualifications. As a precondition for the inclusion in the National Repertory, this has therefore gained a very important place in the French qualification system.

Annie Boudier

Céreq, Marseille (www.cereq.fr)

■ Through to the early 1980s, Slovenian qualifications were divided into two parallel structures that were not fully comparable: those awarded in school-based education and those gained through apprenticeship and on-the-job training. The 1980s saw the abolition of apprenticeship in favour of a strongly school-based vocational education and training (VET) system, which weakened links with employers and the labour market. New legislation from 1996 then introduced reforms in upper secondary education, which now lasts between two and five years and offers a choice between vocational, technical and general education programmes. Post-secondary technical courses have been introduced together with craft trades courses leading to a qualification as 'master craftsman'. However, dropout rates in the VET sector did not fall as had been hoped, so that further flexibility and decentralisation was needed. In this context, the national qualifications system that took effect from 2000 is an important step. The system is based on occupational standards of knowledge, skills and competences set at different levels, which can be obtained through formal educational programmes and also through validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences. It is clear that monolithic programmes lasting for three or more years are not adequate to the contemporary needs of students and not attractive enough for adults. Thus new programmes tend to be broad, are usually prepared on the basis of more than one occupational standard and are modularised. Each module consists of basic professional practical skills, connected theoretical knowledge and key competences. Modules give adults and drop-outs the possibility to enter

the labour market, to complete the full programme gradually and still get the major award, which then gives them the possibility to progress to the higher level of vocational education and training. Knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the formal system in non-formal and informal settings are achieving full legitimacy through direct validation via qualification standards and they will be respected as already acquired competences when entering a programme of study or training.

Slava Pevec Grm

*Centre for the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education
and Training (www.cpi.si)*

2.3. Widening access and participation

Education and training systems must adapt to those who use them as learners, and not the reverse...
People's own understandings of their real, everyday worlds are the key to identifying the main barriers to learning.

Conference workshop reports

There was full agreement at the conference that lifting barriers to access and progression is the most important way to make lifelong learning a concrete reality. For the majority of the population, the provision of relevant learning opportunities that are realistically accessible and offer tangible benefits will generate participation. In many cases, the problem will then soon become one of meeting the scale of demand in terms of both quantity and quality. The current consensus holds that a good quality general education and broad vocational education is the best foundation for all young people, leading, in the first instance, to a wide range of opportunities in broadly-defined occupations. The expectation should then be that further education and training will be needed on a regular basis throughout active life in order both to develop specialist knowledge and competences and to update and 're-tool' capacities and skills in line with changing occupational and work-process demands.

However, the increasing importance of human and social capital for shaping individual life-chances as well as economic competitiveness demands targeting particular efforts towards sectors and groups where barriers to learning remain strong. This applies especially to SMEs, for example, where internal resources (time, money, staffing levels, economies

of scale) make it difficult to provide or enable sufficient training. Social partner activities are often less well-developed in small-scale enterprises, which also reduces employees' networks for access and encouragement.

The 2003 Lifelong Learning Eurobarometer findings also show that a relatively small but significant minority of European citizens – at least 10% – are consciously distanced from organised learning and explicitly do not want to take up education and training again. Detailed analysis confirms that demotivation and disaffection with learning is closely correlated with educational level, employment status, age and – in specific circumstances – gender. Most particularly, these factors work together to cumulate favourable and unfavourable profiles with respect to participation in learning and motivation to do so. For example, older women with low education levels, especially if they live in rural areas or come from southern Europe, are very likely indeed to be non-participants and not interested in learning. This is a reminder that disadvantage is multi-faceted. Low-qualified men, and especially those in older age groups, are also less likely to participate in learning of all kinds and are difficult to engage in continuing training, but this should not lead to the conclusion that access problems for women have been resolved.

- *Job Active Methods* (www.job-active.at) is a Leonardo da Vinci II project that has developed and tested training modules to improve the labour market chances for older unemployed people and workers at risk of unemployment. Working together with partners in the Czech Republic, Germany, Finland and Spain, four training modules are now available: stabilising personalities, discovering new job opportunities, connecting to the Information Society and developing competence in applying for jobs.

Renate Janacek

ibis acam AG, Vienna

- In Sweden, women fill the adult education courses, so it is generally men who are seen as the educational problem group. However, women's average salaries still lag behind and occupational segregation by sex is still strong. One important reason for this is that they still carry more responsibility for childcare and housework. Both women and men have to contribute to changing this situation, and in the first instance we need to change how we create our selves. For women, it means developing identities in which professional life is an integral part of the self, and for

men it means developing identities that positively embrace family life. At the Women's Folk High School, our aim is that each and every woman should choose her own life in all respects, and this should include a role in the public sphere. Educational environments must provide explicit opportunities for such personal and social development. The state has a role to play here too, by providing appropriate and positive contexts for reflexive learning, and public policy should give clear signals that change in attitudes and behaviours is expected and encouraged.

Stina Sundberg

Women's' Folk High School, Gothenborg

Apart from the oldest cohorts of working age, European women are better educated and qualified than are their male peers, but they still have poorer access to initial and continuing vocational education and training, which accounts for their greater representation in general education. Neither do women reap the labour market benefits of their higher participation and greater success rates to the same extent as men do. This in turn depresses their participation rates in continuing training provided, supported or financed by the employer, since women are present in far fewer numbers in those occupations, sectors and levels in which provision and participation in continuing training are high.

2003 was the *European Year of People with Disabilities*, and so the conference set a particular accent on discussing disability-linked barriers to training and employment. The lack of an internationally agreed definition of disability makes comparative assessments of problems and solutions difficult, and in any case, people with disabilities are not a homogeneous group in the first place. However, it was pointed out that no less than one-third of European citizens could in principle be classified as having a mild disability, and that furthermore, age is more closely correlated with having or developing a disability than is commonly realised. The coming decades will inevitably see a rise in the proportion of the active population with disabilities, as demographic ageing in Europe takes further hold.

Unemployment rates among workers with a disability are typically at least twice or three times higher than general adult rates. The reasons include low levels of education and training; lack of awareness among employers of the needs and abilities of disabled persons; the physical inaccessibility of schools, training centres, workplaces, transport; and inadequate technical or personal supports.

■ In France, the unemployment rate for disabled workers in 1996 was three times higher than that for the overall active population. Over the previous ten years, the overall unemployment rate increased by 23%, but by 194% for persons with disabilities. Disabled workers who are unemployed tend to remain unemployed twice as long.

In (West) Germany in 1997, the participation rate for severely disabled persons was 37%, compared with 80% for non-disabled men and 63% for non-disabled women. The gap widened between 1994 and 1997. As in France, the duration of unemployment tends to be almost twice as long.

In Sweden, of those between 16 and 64 years of age with a disability in 1998, 60% were employed, compared with 72% in the general population.

In the United Kingdom, persons with disabilities account for almost 20% of the working age population, but only 12% of all in employment. Disabled people are over six times as likely to be out of work and claiming benefits as persons without disabilities.

Arthur O'Reilly

Rehabilitation International, Dublin (www.rehab-international.org)

The problem with most legislation aiming to improve this situation is that it begins from a deficit model of people with disabilities as a category of specially protected workers. In other words, such workers are defined as inferior to others, simply by being members of the category. Employers, however, will always try to recruit the best quality workers that they can, and so it is likely that many will try to escape compliance – for example, by paying a compulsory levy rather than employing the stipulated proportion of workers with disabilities. This is the weakness of quota systems, and there are no known cases where such systems have achieved their employment targets.

In principle, anti-discrimination legislation is more promising, because it begins from the assumption that persons with disabilities are able, like everyone else, to compete for jobs on their merits, provided the environment in which they do so does not discriminate against them because of their disability. The 2000 European directive on discrimination in employment prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on a number of grounds, including disability, and also applies to vocational guidance and vocational training. Employers are enjoined to take appropriate measures, where needed, to provide training, unless such measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.

- The Social Partners have an important active role to play in ensuring that vocational training measures specifically targeted for people with disabilities are consonant with the qualification demands of local labour markets. In this context, the high success rates reported for the 'practice firms' supported by Slovenia's Institute for Rehabilitation suggest that this is an example of good practice from which other countries might learn, especially since it is one in which trades unions are closely involved. In the Podravje region of Slovenia, practice firms for adults with disabilities have been established within an action research framework that follows a conscious cycle of problem identification, designing, implementing and evaluating solutions, and returning to problem identification. Solutions are sought and implemented through teamwork, collective processes and learning by doing. Over the three years 1999-2001, these projects have almost doubled their success rate at placing participants in regular employment.

Zdenka Witavsky

Institute for Rehabilitation, Ljubljana (www.consensus.upv.es)

- *alpha nova* provides a range of social services for people with learning or multiple disabilities in southern Austria and works closely with SMEs. In a previous Leonardo da Vinci project, training modules to support key competences for those with learning disabilities were developed, with the aim of supporting a self-reliant adult identity. The current Leonardo da Vinci II project *Jobwards* will collaboratively (with enterprises and target group members themselves) develop 100 CD-ROM learning modules at different levels and in five languages on five themes: adults' position in the workplace; rights and responsibilities as employees/workers; communication competences; conflict resolution and social competences; and IT use. Tailor-made combinations of modules will be able to address specific needs, and the modules can also be directly used in the workplace.

Melanie Rieger

Jobwards Project, Kalsdorf/Austria (www.alphanova.at)

Experts from this field made the point forcefully that people with disabilities have much untapped potential that it would be in the business interest to develop. Equipped with the right skills and in jobs matched to their interests and abilities, they can be excellent employees for whom adaptations and support in the working environment may be required, but not necessarily so. Mainstreaming is the way forward, leading to equal access to training on the same, but suitably adapted, terms, and carried through by properly prepared training providers, with quality assurance delivered through relevant training standards. However, successful mainstreaming requires effective coordination between ministries and agencies and high-quality preparation of training staff.

It is certainly possible to reduce and remove practical obstacles and constraints. It is no less possible to build people's confidence that they can learn, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the board so that as many people as possible will find learning a rewarding experience. This is applicable to all individuals and groups that are disadvantaged in and excluded from training and employment. Building self-esteem and confidence is a major training challenge, together with taking a positive approach to the personal and social skills people possess, regardless of the fact that they may also possess low levels of cognitive or technical skills. There is, however, too little concrete information about how successful adult basic skills programmes are in generating concrete outcomes, not least on the labour market.

- Following the adoption of the Lisbon strategy, six Member States (Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK) agreed that raising basic skills levels amongst adults is a priority for reaching the goals set for 2010. They carried through study visits in each country to look at policy and practice, prioritising measures to support the acquisition of foundation skills for the most disadvantaged and especially the long-term unemployed. The most effective policies and measures in this field are produced when education and labour ministries work together, and a series of key factors have been identified:
 - access barriers include: poor past experiences of education; lack of confidence; inappropriate teaching methods; the role of peer group expectations; and lack of childcare services for participants;
 - successful projects need to raise awareness of the need to raise basic skills levels and to work with community groups to achieve this;
 - successful learning experiences and outcomes are facilitated by:

flexible provision; agreeing on individual goals and methods of monitoring progress; and meeting individual learning needs;

- tutors should possess the necessary skills for empowering participants and raising their self-esteem, and in general projects should be designed to use incentives and sanctions in innovative ways to produce positive outcomes for participants.

The overall challenges for policy and practice are to reach those who will benefit most, to develop adult-friendly teaching and learning methods, to include family-based learning programmes, and to involve the Social Partners effectively. Work-based learning, implementing accreditation of prior learning schemes and hence developing appropriate assessment tools are equally important features. It would also be helpful to be able to refer to a European map of definitions and levels of basic qualifications, and for European cooperation to bring about appropriate assessment tools for basic skills learning. It is expected that the work that this six-country initiative has begun will be carried forward to the next phase of implementing the Education and Training 2010 agenda.

Pauline Charles

UK Department for Education and Skills

Access barriers are not necessarily related to individual and social disadvantage. They can equally result from lack of good fit between the established patterns and organisation of different subsystems. There is good reason to believe that the shape, rhythm and direction of people's working, living and learning lives are currently changing, following a relatively long period of stable and highly gendered patterns. The majority of people today still follow customary patterns, for example, a social life-course in which education/training, employment and/or family responsibility and then retirement follow a standard three-phase sequence. However, these patterns are fragmenting for some, especially amongst younger adult cohorts, and this may turn out to herald long-term changes.

At the same time, people are beginning to face the challenge of fitting in participation in education and training throughout life. Many commentators would add that the demands of working and family life are certainly not decreasing and that 'performance pressures' may be rising on both fronts. This accounts for the interest in the topic of 'work-life balance' and it raises the issue of how to release resources for learning across the life-course, and specifically time resources.

Current discussion centres on the idea of a ‘double flexibility agenda’ in which adults as workers and parents seek to achieve time sovereignty. Between the ages of 30 and 45, family and career phases meet at full throttle, whilst the need for an adequate household income rises to high levels as children grow up. Towards the end of this period, eldercare may enter into the picture and extend the high time pressure. Where time and money constraints prevent sufficient investment in learning at the right moments, this may increasingly affect longer-term employment and career chances.

This leads to rethinking the distribution of paid work, leisure and learning across time. Options mooted so far revolve around calculating what would be, or need to be, the time volume of an active life. This could then be divided into proportions available for learning, working, family responsibilities, voluntary work/civic engagement and personal development. Individuals could choose, possibly within certain limits, when they want to devote more or less of their time to which activities, singly or in combination. New forms of inter-temporal, inter-generational and inter-regional solidarities, arbitrated by public policies and services as ‘risk management’ support, might be introduced accordingly.

- Current Dutch policy measures are trying to respond to the challenges posed by changing life-course patterns. Firstly, they give explicit support to combining activities (such as learning and working at the same time). Secondly, attempts are being made to balance out how time is distributed across different phases of working life, with the emphasis placed on individual freedom of choice to organise this with the support of public services and facilities. The government report *Exploration of the Life-course* has recently recommended (www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/files/EF0364EN.pdf):
 - eliminating all distinctions between different leave arrangements;
 - tackling the risk of income loss combined with extended periods of leave by providing new income sources either via collective, sector specific or individual provision;
 - financing leave arrangements as an earlier phase of the life course by using a proportion of savings in pension funds, which would also encourage older workers to prolong their working life;
 - using existing workers’ savings schemes to finance further education and training;
 - encouraging transitions back into paid work, in particular for women and especially those of foreign origin;

- reducing early exit patterns of older workers by reducing their working time, giving financial incentives to employers when hiring older workers and using pension savings for paid exits in earlier life phases.

Hubert Krieger

Dublin Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

- A remarkable asymmetry remains between women and men with respect to their general participation in the labour market and their career development opportunities. The social responsibility to change this situation lies with employers, who must design more favourable training and working environments. This process of tailoring company responses to women's specific needs can be termed 'conciliation' and counts as a key factor of innovation for both the economic and social framework of organisational life. We need to create a complex system of women-friendly initiatives that together can lend us the opportunity to overcome Taylorist thinking and practice with respect to the division between working and 'free' time.

Lea Battistoni

Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Greater planned flexibility to suit individual needs in the organisation of paid working life alongside childcare/eldercare, together with holistic and lifelong information, guidance and counselling services, are preconditions for improving people's chances to achieve a satisfactory and reasonable work-life-learning balance. This would contribute positively to raising levels of lifetime labour force participation and to raising the quality of performance in working life. It would also mean putting more effort into improving synergies between social policy, employment policy and education and training policy. Once more, the Social Partners have a vital role to play in promoting, providing, brokering and facilitating learning and professional development opportunities. It was suggested that the development of a European directive or agreement establishing rights to learning leave would be an important foundation for making progress towards enabling better work-learning-life balance for all and hence in the interests of making lifelong learning a concrete reality for all Europeans.

Key points

- Implement positive incentives and support measures to dismantle access barriers, rather than relying on legislation and negative sanctions.
- Give greater priority to the importance of building self-esteem and confidence as a prerequisite for successful learning participation.
- Put more policy energy into designing flexible opportunities for releasing time and space for learning as an integral part of a balanced adult life.
- Develop much more precisely targeted measures to encourage and support return to learning for disadvantaged and excluded individuals and groups.

CHAPTER 3

Current policy developments at European level

In early 2004, the first joint interim report (*Education and Training 2010: the success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms*, 2004) from the European Council and the European Commission on progress towards the Lisbon goals for education and training was adopted ⁽¹¹⁾. It sets out four key messages.

- Investment in human resources through education and training is essential for Europe's future economic prosperity and social cohesion.
- Immediate action is called for in three crucial areas: securing greater and more effective public and private investment in education and training; making lifelong learning a concrete reality; establishing a Europe of education and training.
- Higher levels of participation in lifelong learning – more specifically, in learning in adult life – must be achieved.
- Education and training systems reforms must take hold more rapidly.

Lifelong learning – the guiding principle of education and training policies – is therefore given a prominent place, and there is open acknowledgement that deficits in this area need concerted attention in all quarters.

In particular, progress on meeting the lifelong learning benchmark ⁽¹²⁾ is far too slow and is stagnating at present, whilst rates also vary widely between countries. Comparable rates in the new (from May 2004) Member States largely fall well below the current EU15 average, whereas the highest rates in the current (pre-2004) Member States hover around over twice the

⁽¹¹⁾ This and other documents and initiatives mentioned in the following pages that are not otherwise referenced are available via: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html.

⁽¹²⁾ 12.5% of 25-64 year olds participating in education and training by 2010. Currently, participation rates are calculated on the basis of Eurostat Labour Force Surveys, which register participation in the four weeks preceding each inquiry. A purpose-made European Adult Education Survey will soon be launched, which will yield a fuller picture of participation in learning. This will facilitate the development of better quality statistical indicators for adult education and continuing vocational education and training for future Education and Training 2010 progress reports.

average⁽¹³⁾. European adult learning participation rates are lower than those of its major global competitors, whether in higher education, adult education or continuing vocational training. The report suggests that in Europe, adult learning is either too closely linked with employability or too strongly associated with compensatory education. In other words, it does not present itself as integrated within a coherent and accessible framework of lifelong learning that is open to and relevant for all. With respect to this concrete reality, the manifestly inadequate levels of human resources investment in the EU can only be improved by raising the contribution of the private sector, and by harnessing and harvesting the potential and benefits of diverse public-private partnerships.

The 2004 joint interim report also aims for a fully integrated Education and Training 2010 agenda by 2006, when the second interim report will be delivered. This means that the follow-up to the *Future objectives of education and training systems in Europe* report, the *Copenhagen Declaration on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training*, the Commission Communication *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All* and the European Parliament and Council's 2001 *Recommendation on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers* should all dovetail into a coordinated work programme, supported by the new generation of Community action programmes in education, training and youth that are due to begin in 2007 (*The new generation of Community education and training programmes after 2006*).

The diversity and specificity of vocational education and training systems has meant that it has so far proved more useful to follow through the Copenhagen Declaration in a distinct way, albeit within the overall perspective of implementing lifelong learning (*Enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training: stocktaking report of the Copenhagen Coordination Group*, 2003). Vocational education and training must be capable of responding rapidly to changing labour market competence and technological requirements, which distinguishes it from general education. Rapid progress was made during 2003 in gaining agreement on a new 'Europass', which coordinates and rationalises a number of existing instruments that make training, competences and qualifications more transparent and readable

⁽¹³⁾ The UK, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands record the highest participation rates (about 20%), Greece and Portugal the lowest (under 3%). For the new Member States, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Latvia cluster around the current EU15 average (8.5%). Participation rates in Cyprus, Hungary and Lithuania are a little higher (under 4%) than those in Portugal. (No information for Malta and non-comparable data for France; source: *Education and Training 2010*, annex, p.41.)

across national borders, using the European cv ⁽¹⁴⁾ as the anchor. Considerable progress was also achieved on the principles that should inform a credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET) that will parallel the existing system in higher education (ECTS). However, there is consensus that the quality of vocational education and training varies widely across Europe, and that the Social Partners are not sufficiently involved in policy and practice in this field. Furthermore, with few exceptions, young people are increasingly choosing to pursue general education pathways at upper secondary, further and higher education levels. They also find science and technology courses, at whatever level, as ever less attractive, whilst labour market demand in many related occupations is rising.

The joint interim report concludes that radical reforms are indeed needed if lifelong learning is to become a concrete reality. It proposes that efforts be focused on ensuring that everyone acquires the necessary key competences to permit them to participate actively in a Europe of knowledge, and that these include multiple language skills. To reach this goal, education and training must also make much better use of IT-related tools for teaching, training and learning. In order to raise motivation to participate in learning throughout life, education and training environments should become more open, more attractive and more accessible. This means they need to make better use of the potential of partnerships that can bring diverse expertise, resources and experience into the learning setting, to integrate IT-related methods more fully in order to respond to a wider range of learning preferences and circumstances, and to provide more varied opportunities for gaining recognised qualifications. Most particularly, efforts to attract more people into learning on a more regular basis should be targeted at disadvantaged groups, who are least likely to participate at the moment.

The position taken in the 2004 joint interim report on the need to step up sharply progress on implementing lifelong learning draws on the material provided by the Member States, EFTA/EEA and the ACC countries ⁽¹⁵⁾ in response to a systematic request for information from the European Commission in follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution on lifelong learning.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Information on the European cv is available at <http://www.cedefop.eu.int/transparency/cv.asp> and on the proposal for the 'new Europass' in the *Stocktaking report of the Copenhagen Coordination Group*. The new Europass is scheduled for adoption at the European Council in May 2004; further details are available via <http://cedefop.communityzero.com/transparency>.

⁽¹⁵⁾ EFTA/EEA: European Free Trade Area and European Economic Area (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland); ACC: accession and candidate countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia; Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey).

Analysis of this material (*Implementing lifelong learning strategies in Europe – progress reports*, 2003) shows that well-developed lifelong learning cultures reflecting wide public acceptance and participation are still very much a vision rather than a reality in most parts of Europe. Whilst the principle of lifelong learning is widely accepted, what this means for policy is another question, and in all cases practice falls well short of the mark. An inclusive ‘cradle to grave’ approach to lifelong learning has not taken sufficiently firm root: the focus lies primarily on the active population aged 25 to 64, with too little attention to early learning, to young people/young adults and to those of retirement age and older. It is also the case that some countries underline lifelong learning above all as a tool to enhance employability, whereas others see it especially as an instrument for promoting social inclusion.

It could reasonably be concluded that little real progress has been made since the large-scale consultation process (Cedefop, 2002; European Training Foundation, 2001) that was launched following the publication of the Commission’s 2000 *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. Indeed, ETF’s 2003 report for the ACC countries makes this point explicitly, adding that the lifelong learning coordination arrangements set up between relevant Ministries were disbanded once the consultation process was over. In these countries, education and training policies and reforms have been significantly influenced by a broader raft of pre-accession economic and social development support measures from the EU, most notably through Phare funding, but also from the UN and the World Bank.

EU and EFTA/EEA countries agree on the importance of basic competences – especially for low-qualified adults – and of diverse pathways to acquiring skills and qualifications at all levels. ACC countries largely continue to place most emphasis on formal education pathways and qualifications and they do not especially focus on renewing and updating teachers’ and trainers’ knowledge and skills. The EU and EFTA/EEA countries do underline the shared responsibilities of all stakeholders for making lifelong learning a reality, and they see the need for investing in the professional development of teachers and trainers so that they can respond well to new roles, methods and demands from diverse groups of learners. The ACCs place relatively more emphasis on developing IT-related learning tools and contexts, including through local learning centres.

On the whole, however, neither the ACC nor the EU and EFTA/EEA countries lend a strong accent to the potential of workplace-based learning, the role of Social Partner agreements or public-private partnerships – although these are elements of implementing lifelong learning that are of

particular importance for the vocational education and training field. There is, furthermore, little evidence of rising private sector involvement in funding adult learning, whereas the tendency is to see continuing vocational training as a shared responsibility between employers and individuals themselves. In ACC countries, the relatively low level of employer investment in continuing vocational training remains a particular cause for concern (European Training Foundation, 2004) ⁽¹⁶⁾.

On the question of equality of access, all national policies aim to improve the participation of the disadvantaged, but there is little solid evidence on precisely how they plan to do so. In EU and EFTA/EEA countries, gender inequalities are now seen as merely a question of attracting higher numbers of girls and women into IT, science and technology, whereas the low levels of participation in any kind of learning for low-qualified and especially older men receive little attention at all. Migrants and minorities, in contrast, are now mentioned rather more frequently as in need of targeted action to improve learning participation and outcomes. The ACC countries make special point of the urgent need to include their Roma populations more effectively in education and training, but otherwise approaches are disparate and measures are scattered. It has to be said that this is a scant policy harvest against the background of an established wealth of evidence from across Europe on socially linked participation patterns and the reasons for these as well as for under-achievement. More generally, lifelong learning strategies at national levels do not noticeably take up the role of lifelong learning for all citizens and denizens in learning to live together in diverse, mobile, multilingual and multiethnic European societies, although this is becoming an increasingly important aspect of working and community life everywhere.

It is clear that all countries in Europe have to take some action to make lifelong learning a concrete reality, but that most countries must act decisively and rapidly if they are to stand any chance of doing so at a level that would begin to satisfy the goals espoused by Education and Training 2010. The situation of the ACC countries is especially noteworthy, not only because of current performance levels – which are not consistently below those of EU15 and certainly not of some present Member States – but more particularly because their features often magnify that which tends to be the case in many parts of Europe more generally (Masson, 2003). In central and eastern European countries and the Baltics, it has been vocational education and

⁽¹⁶⁾ This and other ETF documents referenced in this report are available at <http://etf.eu.int> under lifelong learning.

training systems rather than general education that have faced the most deep-seated challenges since 1989 and have had the greatest difficulties in responding effectively. Policy and resourcing priority has been and largely continues to be given to general education and within this, to academic higher education. Participation rates, in general already higher than in the EU, have risen sharply and disproportionately in upper secondary and higher general education, to the relative disadvantage of vocational and technical education in most ACC countries. Indeed, secondary dropout and non-completion rates are generally lower than in EU15, except in the case of secondary level vocational education pathways. Post-secondary and higher vocational education and training provision, which is generally held to be a promising, future-oriented sector of provision, has too often found itself struggling with the higher education sector, which is concerned about the potential competition for enrolments.

However, access to initial and continuing training is poor for the disadvantaged, not least for the unemployed, whereas transfer and progression across and through pathways is poorly developed. Traditionally, learning and qualification pathways in the upper secondary sector were highly differentiated. This diversification has become even more marked since 1989, and has been accentuated by the rapid proliferation of private education and training providers and courses, frequently in sharp competition with each other. Chronic under-resourcing from both the state and employers has contributed in no small measure to the decreasing attractiveness of initial vocational education and training courses, whose quality suffers from outdated equipment, old-fashioned curricula and qualifications that do not respond to labour market needs. Continuing vocational training is severely underdeveloped in the majority of ACC countries, but the popularity of publicly funded community and adult education remains strong in many places, which could offer potential for regenerating adult learning altogether.

The progress of the past year at European level shows that the outcomes of Cedefop's conference *Getting to work on lifelong learning* usefully fit into the flow of supporting lifelong learning policy development by promoting relevant discussion between policy and practice actors working at the levels of transfer and implementation. Placed in the context of the themes that are receiving particular policy attention, the conference outcomes largely complement these. They also give specific emphasis to widening access for disadvantaged groups, the value of practice-based learning in vocational education and training, the importance of working together with the Social Partners and civil society, and enabling the achievement of working-learning-living balance across the span of active life. All these issues will continue to

be followed through in Cedefop's support for the Copenhagen Process and for lifelong learning within the Objectives Process.

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European Centre for the
Development of Vocational Training

Europe 123, GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
Postal address: PO Box 22427, GR-551 02 Thessaloniki
Tel. (30) 23 10 49 01 11, Fax (30) 23 10 49 00 20
E-mail: info@cedefop.eu.int
Homepage: www.cedefop.eu.int
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