



*skill*set AND *MATCH*

*CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE
PROMOTING
LEARNING FOR WORK*



CEDEFOP

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MAIN STORY:

**EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS
WEEK**

INTERVIEWS:

ANDREAS KAZAMIAS, DANA-CARMEN
BACHMANN, UNA BUCKLEY

FEATURES:

#CEDEFOPPHOTOAWARD
EU JOBS AND MOBILITY ROADSHOW

MEMBER STATES: **MALTA**



CEDEFOP

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

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

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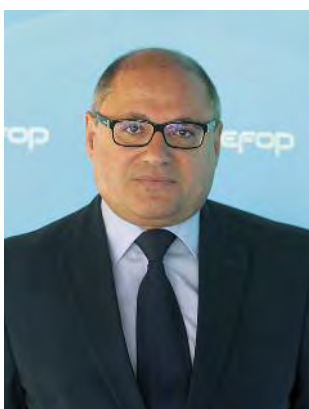
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walking

the talking

JAMES CALLEJA

CEDEFOP DIRECTOR



*European VET
is evolving, but more
needs to be done.
There is no time
for hesitation,
procrastination and
disorientation*

”

The *New skills agenda for Europe* is an opportunity to walk the talking. It challenges stakeholders to reduce the number of unskilled adults, increase employability and deliver quality vocational education and training (VET). European VET is evolving, but more needs to be done. There is no time for hesitation, procrastination and disorientation.

From Copenhagen to Riga, a lot of talking and walking have taken place, but it is time to walk faster and together. We need to find new pathways for implementation.

Cedefop's Brussels-based seminars, online platforms and policy learning forums are some of the initiatives that support walking the talking. The European vocational skills week was an opportunity to make VET more visible. Cedefop's policy learning forum on the writing of learning outcomes offered VET providers a practical pedagogical journey from education to employment. The draft handbook on the writing of learning outcomes is a pragmatic step. The Cedefop conference and publication of four booklets on validation are tools which can be adopted and adapted for those needing recognition of skills, including migrants arriving on the shores of Europe.

The increased engagement of trainees and visiting researchers at Cedefop is another sign that we do what we preach. Young people need exposure to the real world of work. Researchers require contact with practitioners to recognise that theory and practice can be strangers. The same holds for practitioners; analysis and new knowledge require foresight and research.

This is why support to the skills agenda is now necessary if VET quality is to grow as Professor Andreas Kazamias (pp. 8-9) insists upon, if VET is to become more attractive and more relevant, and if we aspire to make VET a first option for parents, learners and workers.

It is time for actions to speak louder than words. Citizens expect solutions. Skills can save jobs, increase competitiveness and stimulate equity, inclusion and social cohesion.



VET IN THE **STONE AGE:**

toolmaking and the evolution of human language

”

Did toolmaking make our ancestors smarter, enabling them to make better tools, or did they make better tools because they became smarter for other reasons?



photo: © Shutterstock_MoCoCa

Today's technological age is changing language. Words such as 'podcast', 'streaming', and 'digitise' were unknown a generation ago. And, according to research by Dietrich Stout, Professor of Anthropology at Emory University in the United States, outlined in an article in *Scientific American*, in April 2016, Stone Age technical revolutions in making axes and other tools may have helped stimulate primitive forms of communication.

Two Stone Age technologies (the Oldowan and the Late Acheulean) came at the beginning and the end of the Lower Palaeolithic Age, some 2.6 million to 200 000 years ago. Anthropologists tell us that, during this period, the brains of hominins (humans and our extinct ancestors) tripled in size. Professor Stout and his team set out to discover whether demands made of the brain due to developments in

technology had contributed to the growth of our ancestors' brains. They did this by scanning what happens to the brain when a 21st century human beats – or 'knaps' to use the archaeological term – a shapeless piece of stone into an axe.

SIMILAR CHALLENGES

The professor soon discovered that 'knapping' isn't easy. Students participating in the experiment had 100 hours of training to learn to go back to the Stone Age. The challenges for today's Stone-Age toolmaker are similar to those faced by our ancestors millions of years ago. Abstract thinking is required to imagine what the tool will look like. This needs to be combined with the technical ability (and patience) to use a stone, antler or bone to shape a stone into an axe by chipping away at it for hours on end. The stone needs



photo: © Shutterstock, Sementer

to be struck powerfully and accurately. The force with which the stone is struck also needs to be adjusted at various times to form the tool into the correct shape.

Acheulean toolmaking technology is much more sophisticated than Oldowan toolmaking and replaced it around 1.7 million years ago. As this change took place over the course of a million years, teardrop-shaped axes appeared. Edges became more regular and sharper: Stone-Age knappers had become more skilled. By monitoring the process through brain scans, Professor Stout found that Acheulean toolmaking requires a higher level of cognitive control. This period of producing Acheulean tools coincides with the era when some of the fastest increases in brain size occurred.

KEY QUESTION

But the evidence of how toolmaking progressed did not answer the key question: did toolmaking make our ancestors smarter, enabling them to make better tools, or did they make better tools because they became smarter for other reasons?

To answer this question, Professor Stout examined whether toolmaking can cause the types of changes in individuals that are consistent with human evolution. He found that knapping does produce predictable brain changes; this, in turn, enables species to innovate and produce evolutionary change. It is, therefore, possible that toolmaking could have driven brain change as part of the evolutionary process.

Quite how our Stone-Age ancestors learned knapping is not clear. Certainly one way was to watch, practise and learn through trial and error.

However, learning through some form of communication between teacher and student would certainly have helped the process.

LEARNING CHOICE

It is not yet known when or why human language evolved. But it is possible that prehistoric masters of toolmaking passed on their skills to the next generation by accompanying exhibitions of knapping with a nod, a wink and a grunt of approval or disapproval to guide their primeval apprentices.

Similarly, Stone-Age students may have used such gestures to pose questions to improve their technique, or to express the wish that they would rather do something else and explore other, albeit limited, career options. Such instances of vocational education and training (VET) may have provided the settings to stimulate the precursor of human language.

Perhaps 2.6 million years from now our successors will look back to see how our children spending hours surfing the internet was the precursor to some development that enabled us to colonise the planets. Evolution is an amazing and unpredictable process. However, for the moment, it is interesting that the European Commission's *New skills agenda for Europe* calls on us to make VET our first learning choice to ensure our future prosperity. Evidence indicates that our prehistoric ancestors did precisely that.



New skills agenda for Europe

Bringing theory and practice closer

“

Cedefop, within the limits of its capacity, works increasingly to match theory and practice, learning processes and citizens' needs



LOUKAS ZAHILAS

CEDEFOP HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
FOR VET SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS

There is a famous Albert Einstein quote: 'In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice, they are not.'

This is a smart way of describing a long-existing problem: the gap between education and training policies and labour market needs. In theory, in Europe we have been working for years to close the gap, either by discussing common languages and tools that aid communication and cooperation or by creating feedback mechanisms that make the differences smoother. Although progress can be measured and a paradigm shift in policies and practices can be

observed, we are still far from the point where the two meet.

At the same time, the world is changing dramatically and so is the learning process. Millennials have grown up using high-tech devices; they are often addicted to them and they demand receiving everything in lightning speed. Students and employees are no different in their desire and need for information. Increasingly, however, they see traditional long training sessions, workshops, and huge manuals to read as outdated and boring.

CHANGING NEEDS

What they need is short shots of learning, small and interesting portions that they can engage with in their own time. They are not opposed to getting involved in training and new learning: they just want more control about how, where and when they do it.

It seems that the future will be really challenging for all of us working in education and training.

Many say that there have been observable changes in human behaviour and biology. A recent Microsoft Canada study showed that people, especially young people, now generally lose concentration after eight seconds, highlighting the effects on the brain of an increasingly digitised lifestyle. This is even shorter than the nine-second average attention span of the notoriously ill-focused goldfish. It seems that since 2000 (or about when the mobile revolution began) changes are at an accelerated pace, also showing positive trends as individuals have become much more multi-tasking exploiting the possibilities provided by modern devices.

These fundamental transformations play a crucial role in the way learning is conceived and in adaptations needed by systems. Cedefop operates in this extremely complicated area, bringing new knowledge, monitoring progress, and making evidence-based recommendations to its stakeholders, the European



Commission, Member States and the social partners. In recent years a new strand of activities has been added, a knowledge-broker function bringing together the results of research and analysis with the practical needs Member States have, to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to create an exchange of ideas and practices that can meet the new demands.

SHARING INFORMATION

Apart from policy learning forums, Cedefop recently initiated events, organised in cooperation with the EU Presidency countries in Brussels, which give the opportunity to disseminate the main findings of the agency's research in a practical way to European stakeholders.

The first such event was a joint seminar by Cedefop and the Netherlands EU Presidency in June 2016, in which experts and stakeholders from around Europe discussed policies for matching

better skills in better jobs. It was an opportunity for European stakeholders to get the main findings of Cedefop's continuing research on skill mismatch, most prominently the Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, carried out in 2014 across approximately 49 000 EU adult employees.

The second seminar, organised in cooperation with the Slovak EU Presidency last December, took as its starting point the findings of the joint Cedefop-UNESCO-ETF comparative study on vocational education and training (VET) qualifications. Looking at 10 commonly found VET qualifications, the study identifies the technical and transversal skills and competences covered by each qualification in each country. Looking at 13 European and 12 non-European countries offers an insight into the differences in their expectations of VET candidates. Representatives from Member States and from international

organisations commented on the study findings and reflected on whether we need European and/or international standards for VET or more national and sectoral diversity.

Striving for simplicity, clarity and usefulness should be at the heart of EU VET policies. Cedefop, within the limits of its capacity, works increasingly to match theory and practice, learning processes and citizens' needs. The Presidency events also aim to bring clarity and simplicity to policy-makers.

The challenges VET faces in a digitised, ultra-connected – but simultaneously diverse and uneven – world can be summed up by another wise Einstein quote: 'Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius (and a lot of courage) to move in the opposite direction. Everything should be made as simple as possible. But not simpler...'

educating the soul for a more human world



ANDREAS KAZAMIAS

*As Aristotle said,
educating the mind without
educating the heart/soul
is no education at all*

PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Acquiring skills for jobs is a necessity in today's fast-paced world, where competition for employment is intensifying. But how about the tools of the heart, or *paideia* (education) of the soul as Greek-Cypriot Professor **Andreas Kazamias** puts it? Known for his long and distinguished career in the United States and Greece, Professor Kazamias was invited to a Cedefop workshop on promoting quality in learning delivery to make his argument for more emphasis on studies that cultivate the soul, such as humanities and arts. His presentation provoked lively discussions and he then spoke to *Skillset and Match* about his view of the world.

You spoke very passionately in your presentation about 'paideia of the soul'. In this day and age, how realistic is it to build a world around it?

It is very difficult because of the forces in control. We live in a techno-scientific knowledge cosmopolis, a neoliberal capitalist system with all its economic accoutrements: liberalisation of markets, privatisation and so on. It is a 'philistine empire' dominated by a 'philistine ethos', and a 'philistine', according to the Oxford Dictionary, is 'a person deficient in liberal culture; one whose interests are material and commonplace.' This is also supported by international organisations and business groups. But there is nothing irreversible in history. If we believe that what is needed to humanise the world, is a '*paideia* of the soul', we've got to try to do it.

Is there any room in your concept for what you advocate to be combined with current reality? Can technological advancement and *paideia* of the soul, be combined in a way that people benefit from what you say but are also able to get a job and sustain themselves?

In education, in schools and universities, we can. We should try both to train people, that is to provide skills to get jobs, but also to educate them, because to be employed nowadays is not just a question of possessing skills. Employers also want people who are 'cultured'. Unfortunately, universities in many countries have become what Stanley Aronowitz in the United States has called 'knowledge factories'. They emphasise instrumental rationality and training for people to get jobs, and they underemphasise 'liberal education'. Schools and

Othello-Shakespeare



OTH—Out strumpet! Weep'st thou for him to my face?
 DESD—Oh, banish me my lord, but kill me not!
 OTH—Down, strumpet!
 DESD—Kill me tomorrow—Let me live tonight!
 OTH—Nay, if you strive—
 DESD—But half an hour!
 OTH—Being done, there is no pause.
 DESD—But while I say one prayer!
 OTH—'Tis too late (he smother's her)
 EN—My lord, my lord! What!

Constantine Cavafy in
Alexandria, Egypt--Walls

Without thought, without mercy, without shame,
 They built thick and high walls around me,
 And now I sit here and despair.
 I think of nothing else: my fate gnaws at my mind;
 For I had so many things to do outside.
 Ah! Why didn't I see them as they built the walls!
 But never a sound of building, never an echo came.
 Imperceptibly they shut me out of the world.

universities should not only train people by providing skills for employment; they should also educate them to be democratic citizens and live a flourishing life, a good life, what the ancients called *eu zein*, and what Aristotle meant by *eudaimonia*. And the skills necessary for democratic citizenship are not just intellectual/ cognitive skills, or tools of the mind; they are also tools of the heart, what I call *paideia* of the soul.

You mentioned some international institutions in your presentation, Cedefop among them, and, as I understand it, you believe that they have got their approach wrong.

No, I used the word underemphasise non-cognitive skills, tools of the heart, the *paideia* of the soul. As Aristotle said, educating the mind without educating the heart/soul is no education at all.

In that respect, where does vocational education and

training stand in your concept of the *paideia* of the soul?

At the moment it's just development of skills to get a job, to live (*zein*), but not to live well (*eu zein*).

But there's a school of thought which says that vocational education and training can be combined with other studies.

I want to know exactly what they mean by other studies, the content of those studies. When I talk about studies that cultivate the soul, I am talking about humanities and arts, by which I mean literature, language, poetry, philosophy, history, music.

These are taught in universities, aren't they?

Not to the extent that they should be. In training people for jobs, in vocational education, it's not done.

What can learning providers, who are the ones providing the knowledge, do to include what you are proposing?

I noticed that all the speakers in

the conference talked about learning, but, mostly, the type of learning to get jobs. What I would say to them is that they should also seek to promote learning that educates people in the sense of cultivating their minds and souls. Speakers talked about what the employers want, but they never got into the content of learning to be provided.

Given that most of us have to work for a living and based on what you believe, what would the world look like if you were able to implement your vision?

It would be a more human world, inhabited by educated democratic citizens – not just trained workers – with critical minds, cultivated souls and character; as Martha Nussbaum, the eminent American philosopher, has written in her book *Cultivating Humanity*, by 'human beings capable of love and imagination.'

Promoting quality in learning
delivery: the way ahead



young people

inspired



**DISCOVER
YOUR TALENT!**

European Vocational Skills Week
2016

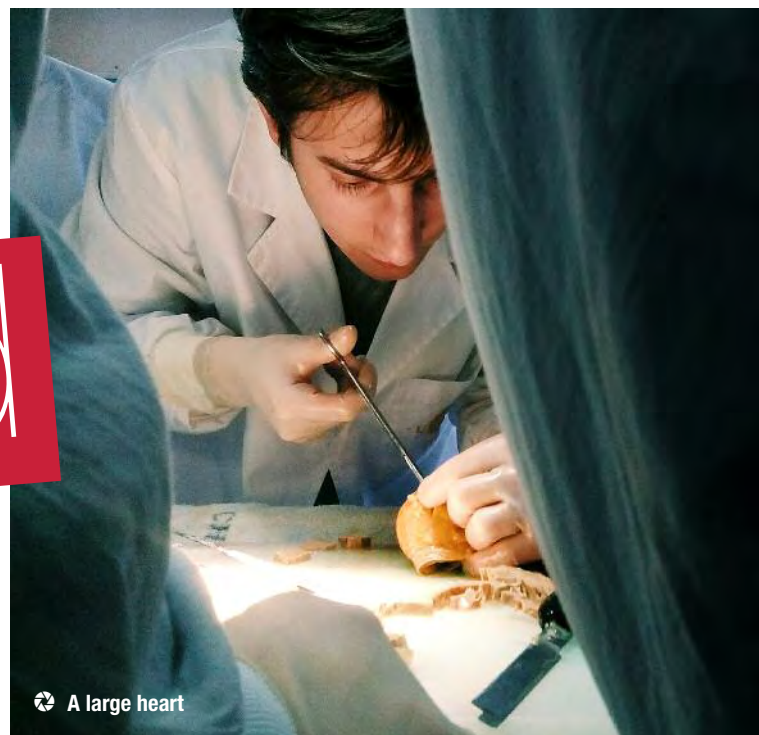


photo: © Raquel Pinto

A large heart

photo: © Nico Conti

The first #CedefopPhotoAward came to a conclusion with a special exhibition of the 20 best photos and an award presentation during the European vocational skills week in Brussels in December.

More than 200 photos were submitted during the competition's two phases. Young EU residents aged 18 to 30 had been asked to share photographic interpretations of their education and training experience on Instagram, with the aim of showing how education speaks to their individual talents.

The 10 best pictures of the first phase were exhibited at the European Parliament in Strasbourg during the European Youth Event 2016 in May. The two winners, Vasiliki Kalopita, 24, from Greece and Antía Varela Torres, 18, from Spain, joined the event and met with European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen.

Six months later, the winners of both phases were invited to the 57th Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Greece to attend the opening night and watch various movies over the first weekend as part of their prize.

The exhibition of the winning and shortlisted photos at the Thessaloniki Cinema Museum attracted many festival-goers. Speaking at the opening, Cedefop Director James Calleja thanked festival Director Élise Jalladeau for the cooperation with Cedefop, adding: 'When you look at the photos, they are all related to vocational education and training (VET), related to a career, and this is in line with what we preach and try to put into action.'

BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS

Ms Jalladeau congratulated the winners, noting that the photos 'are not only interesting, not only telling us about VET; they are also very beautiful.'

The winners explained the thinking behind the pictures that gave them the award and summed up their experience.

Vasiliki, currently a trainee at the European Parliament Office in Malta, singled out meeting Commissioner Thyssen in Strasbourg as the outstanding moment of the process: 'It was one of the best experiences in my life, which I'll never forget.'

Antía, a photography student, was equally impressed: 'I feel that this award gave me the opportunity to open my world. Going to Strasbourg was great – going to a foreign country and participating in the event at the European Parliament, giving my opinion on things, being listened to, meeting a lot of people. And then coming here; more travelling, meeting more special people, going to Cedefop.'

Second phase winner Raquel Pereira Sousa Pinto, 22, from Portugal, who studies medicine, added: 'It's been a great experience coming to Greece for the first time and visiting Cedefop where I learned many interesting things.'

Raquel was joined by Nico Conti, 24, from Malta – who was unable to travel to Thessaloniki – for the first European vocational skills week (see pp.12-14). The award ceremony in Brussels wrapped up an unforgettable experience for them.



 Vivification of self

SECOND PHASE WINNING PHOTOS

A LARGE HEART

Raquel Pereira Sousa Pinto, Portugal



This photo was taken during a pathologic anatomy class last March, in my third year of med school. I decided to capture a moment when a friend was dissecting a hypertrophic (enlarged) heart. I like the parallel between this pathology and the fact that med students need a big tough heart to pursue this career. We need it both to survive the difficult path we have chosen, and to care for our patients and treat them the best possible way.

VIVIFICATION OF SELF

Nico Conti, Malta



My recent works deal with elements of exaggeration in the human figure. I start off with what is traditionally considered beautiful and try to maintain that while intensifying certain anatomical forms. I often self-document to show my work process; here I am working on a sculpture taken with my tablet using time-lapse, as I wanted the result to be as authentic and true to how I normally work as possible.



Thessaloniki
International
Film Festival

I-r: Raquel Pereira Sousa
Pinto, James Calleja,
Élise Jalladeau, Antía
Varela Torres, Vasiliki
Kalopita and Gerd-Oskar
Bausewein at the opening
of the
#CedefopPhotoAward
exhibition in Thessaloniki
on 5 November



European vocational
skills week 2016



Find out more
about the
#CedefopPhotoAward



Watch an interview
with the winners

I-r: #CedefopPhotoAward
winners Raquel Pereira
Sousa Pinto and Nico
Conti with Commissioner
Thyssen at the European
vocational skills week
closing event in Brussels
on 9 December



photo: © Peter Seifert



photo: © EU 2016

FIRST EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK



'a huge success'!

”

More than 900 events took place across Europe and beyond, with more than 650 000 people involved

European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen has often talked about her vision of making vocational education and training (VET) 'a first choice, not a second option' for parents and young learners. A host of programmes and initiatives, including the *New skills agenda for Europe* launched last summer, work in that direction.

But making the case for VET to the end-user can be the most difficult mountain to climb. It was to address this that the European Commission, with Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) as partners, organised the first European vocational skills week last December.

More than 900 events took place

across Europe and beyond, with more than 650 000 people involved. 'It was a huge success,' enthused Ms Thyssen at the week's closing event in Brussels, adding that she wants more of the same.

Ms Thyssen stressed that the Commission works to improve VET attractiveness 'with expertise from our agencies, Cedefop and the ETF.' She also mentioned the newly adopted youth package, which promises a quality framework for apprenticeships and more EU support for longer-term VET mobility and apprenticeships in the Erasmus+ programme via a new ErasmusPro action.

At the Brussels events, ministers, MEPs and other high-level speakers, together with adult learners, representatives of social

partners, teacher and trainer organisations, and youth forums, debated VET, work-based learning and cooperation between the worlds of education and business. Examples from countries outside Europe were also presented.

Mobility scoreboards for initial vocational education and training, developed by Cedefop, and for higher education, developed by EACEA/Eurydice, were launched by the Commission during the European business forum on VET. The scoreboards show how different EU Member States create a favourable environment for learning and studying in another country. They provide comparisons and aim to encourage improvement.

Setting the scene on trends in VET-business cooperation at the





DANA-CARMEN BACHMANN

European vocational
skills week and
CedefopMobility scoreboard
for initial VET

HEAD OF UNIT, DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS & INCLUSION

As the week drew to a close, *Skillset and match* asked European Commission's Dana-Carmen Bachmann, one of the people behind the idea, to give us her first impressions:

'Looking at the number of events, we see the commitment from various stakeholders – be they VET providers, schools, international organisations, companies, or employers – to be part of the same community of VET converts, of

strong believers in the power of VET, and to pass the message to much wider communities and especially to learners and their parents.'

Ms Bachmann believes that the new initiative is the first step towards making VET a first choice: 'We will need to continue working in this direction, but seeing the reaction not only of the stakeholders but also of the youngsters who got involved, the social media activity and young people ready to come and tell stories

of what vocational training means to them, it's been a step in the right direction.'

As for what comes next: 'We already have lots of positive feedback coming from the stakeholders that this was needed, that they enjoyed it and it should continue. We'll look at the overall results and engagement, and we'll decide on the way forward; but the feedback we have received so far is: go for it!'

forum, Cedefop Director James Calleja said that 'if we look closer at the world of work and the world of education, they have one common goal: employability.' He added that countries where apprenticeships are strongly rooted in society have low youth unemployment. He encouraged all actors to work together, offering Cedefop's support.

As a partner, Cedefop supported the European vocational skills week

with work behind the scenes and a communication campaign. It also organised five related activities: a conference on how to make learning visible; a policy learning forum on professional development of teachers and trainers; the ReferNet annual plenary meeting; a second policy learning forum on learning outcomes; and the #CedefopPhotoAward competition 'youth in education and training'.

The winners of the

#CedefopPhotoAward second phase, Nico Conti from Malta and Raquel Pereira Sousa Pinto from Portugal, received their awards from the Commissioner at the closing event. They both spoke passionately about being inspired and grateful for the experience. Nico, a young artist, got the biggest cheer of the day when he urged participants to explain to their children and grandchildren the advantages of a VET career.





discovering the joy of learning at 50



UNA BUCKLEY

ADULT LEARNER



*Adult education is completely different to school [...]
we all learn from each other,
from our life experiences*

The European vocational skills week was all about advertising the advantages of having an education. It featured many examples of people who discovered the joy of education later in life. Una Buckley, from Ireland, is one of them, and the skills week organisers invited her to Brussels to share her experience at the adult skills conference.

Ms Buckley, now a 60-year-old grandmother, told *Skillset and match* her life story: 'I returned to formal adult education at 50 inspired by a line in a book that I was reading, which asked what happened to your childhood dreams and have you done anything about them? I realised that I hadn't. It was kind of a lightbulb moment. My dream was to be a teacher and, as I had to leave school at 16 because my parents were separated, all my

dreams were forgotten.'

Despite the initial challenges, Ms Buckley says she had 'a fantastic life and a successful career' working as a director and then general manager of a manufacturing company for nearly 30 years. But then came that 'lightbulb moment': 'I saw an ad in a local paper for an outreach programme from a university for adult and community education. I thought that was for teaching, but it was for adult education; I had nothing to lose at that stage and gave them the Martin Luther King I-had-a-dream speech. I got a place on the course and I never looked back.'

She started with a bit of a revelation: 'I thought I was going back to the desks I'd left, not realising that adult education is completely different to school. I think a lot of people don't realise that. We are all equals, even with

the tutors or teachers. We all learn from each other, from our life experiences, and it was the greatest fun. While I was there, a girl on the course worked for AONTAS, the adult learning organisation of Ireland; she asked me to go along to a meeting and then to another meeting, and I ended up joining AONTAS and becoming a learning ambassador. I also went on to complete a degree and graduate, and am now doing a course in governance.'

Now that she has the qualifications she always wanted, Ms Buckley has realised that 'it's not about getting the certificate or diploma. I thought my aim was to get that photograph on the wall, but it's still in the envelope. It didn't matter at all. It was the journey and the people: I'd have never met them if I hadn't gone back.'



Malta has returned quickly to steady growth after the difficult years of the global economic crisis. During the first half of 2016 the Maltese economy expanded by 4.1% in real terms, outperforming growth in the EU bloc. The current holder of the rotating EU Presidency has low unemployment (4.9% in the second quarter of 2016) and has shown versatility in adapting its economy to new realities. Along with the traditionally strong tourism, and retail and wholesale trade sectors, i-gaming, financial services, legal and accounting services and aircraft maintenance have become drivers of economic growth.

photo: © Shutterstock_Zoltan Gabor



REFORM WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH IN MALTA



National employee skills
survey (2016)



Employability Index 2015



by REFERNET MALTA
www.refernet.org.mt

The *Employability Index* (2015) shows that most graduates from Malta's further and higher education institutions find jobs that match their qualifications and their field of study. But employers encounter skill mismatches in highly-skilled occupations in the healthcare, financial and ICT sectors. In hospitality and tourism, demand is high for people able and willing to work in unskilled occupations.

Vocational education and training (VET) and employment policies aim at increasing the skilled workforce, to satisfy the expanding economy's current and future skill needs and to manage the impact of an ageing population. The focus is on further reducing early leaving from education and training and inactivity among the young (NEETs), and encouraging labour market participation of older people. Recent early leaving measures include new second chance options, better support for teachers and introducing vocational subjects in lower secondary schools to provide an alternative pathway to learners. Malta also adopted a *National lifelong learning strategy 2020* to empower citizens through more personalised and innovative approaches to adult education.

Reform planned for the 2019/20 school year paves the way for equitable quality learning in secondary schools. It aims at achieving parity of esteem between traditional/academic and vocational/applied learning tracks. Making learning inclusive, flexible and without dead-ends, the reform challenges the current compulsory one-size-fits-all schooling system and – by giving more young people opportunities to develop their employability and skills for personal and social development – is an important step forward.

validating validation

*Having a qualification that
I didn't have before,
I think that's a huge benefit*

More than 20 years after the first mention of validation of informal learning in a European policy document, a call for Member States to put arrangements in place no later than 2018 is focusing minds on what is needed to turn accepted principle into practice.

Lifelong learning, a feature of European employment and education policies since the late 1990s, distinguishes between formal, non-formal and informal learning. It is accepted that knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education are as relevant as those acquired within it, and it is necessary to make sure that this learning is made visible. The Council of the European Union approved in 2012 a recommendation setting 2018 as the date for Member States to have in place arrangements that allow individuals both to validate knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal experiences and to obtain a qualification (or parts) as a result.

CHALLENGES

So what are the challenges for validation at the start of 2017? A recent pilot project on recognition of prior learning as a route to a specific qualification – the Irish Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) electronic security systems level 6 advance certificate in craft – showed that systems of validation and qualification already set out may need tweaking to be fully effective. Some participants could not complete the pilot because the resulting qualification demanded elements they had not covered in past work. Others felt that completing the portfolio of their experience required writing/drafting skills which they would not have acquired in day-to-day work. And the support – or lack of it – from some employers was a reminder of structural issues faced by individuals in the process: ‘Employer support has been nil so far, not out of any badness. He said all the right things but people are busy ... this isn't going to make them any money.’

Despite such negative comments, there was positive reaction among those who took part. Hearing ‘it does open your eyes to what you've actually done’ and ‘having a qualification that I didn't have before, I think that's a huge benefit’ show how validation of informal and non-formal learning can help individuals appreciate their own capabilities, in addition to demonstrating them to current and potential employers.

The pilot outcomes listed several aspects that could prevent workers from completing the validation process, including lack of written communication skills, lack of access to/awareness of curriculum and standards, and insufficient employer support. These



*The whole process implies
a journey of self-awareness*



show how validation activities need to be addressed on all sides as development continues.

SUCCESSSES

If the challenges start to stack up as we approach the 2018 deadline, especially if some seem insurmountable, it is important to keep remembering the successes and what they mean for those involved. *Skillset and match* was happy to hear the story of Catarina Gaspar, a Portuguese production manager in the film industry, whose achievement of a completion certificate for secondary education was partly due to recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC). The certification was made possible by a mix of portfolio evaluation, presentation of self-evaluation, oral and written examinations, and has opened up the possibility of further study at the American Film Institute in the US.

There is little surprise that Catarina says she would 'highly recommend this process to everyone who intends to improve their careers' and that she sees it as 'an opportunity to grow as a person ... the whole process implies a journey of self-awareness.'

As EU Member States offer increasing support to individuals, training organisations and employers in their validation approach development, Cedefop will continue to offer its support to all those devising and implementing policy. As early as the late 1990s,

Cedefop was involved in validation: its 2000 publication *Making learning visible* has become a 'go-to' reference on the subject, it has developed European guidelines and has published, together with the Commission, five editions of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, with the sixth coming out shortly.

In November 2016 Cedefop staged a two-day conference on how to make learning visible. This brought together stakeholders from across Europe to discuss the main challenges in making the validation of non-formal and informal learning recognised, well-accepted and trusted. Making validation a reality implies a change of values, accepting that all learning is valuable, irrespective of where it happens. Despite an increasing commitment on paper, more needs to be done in terms of providing resources for implementation and raising awareness among citizens.



Cedefop conference –
How to make learning
visible



European guidelines
for validating non-formal
and informal learning



practising what we preach



By exposing European citizens to how EU agencies work, Cedefop also opens up its vocational education and training information and expertise to future workers

An organisation that promotes learning at work needs to make this happen in its own turf. Cedefop runs a longstanding and ever-expanding trainee programme, which gives young people from around the European Union the chance to spend nine months learning about what the agency does and getting paid.

Cedefop Director James Calleja is a firm believer in the programme: 'Cedefop practises what it preaches on work-based learning. More than 16 young trainees have been engaged in 2016-17 and four researchers have already benefited from a new programme for visiting researchers launched in 2015. By exposing European citizens to how EU agencies work, Cedefop also opens up its vocational education and training (VET) information and expertise to future workers. Anyone engaged in these activities at Cedefop can act as multiplier for new European initiatives that can make VET more attractive. Trainees and visiting researchers also serve as catalysts, promoting the value of learning by doing.'

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Daniela Strakova from Bulgaria is one of the trainees who joined last October. She has studied education methods to PhD level and came to Cedefop because her professional focus is closely related to the agency's mission. 'I am very familiar with the institution because I have used Cedefop's resources



Manish Joshi

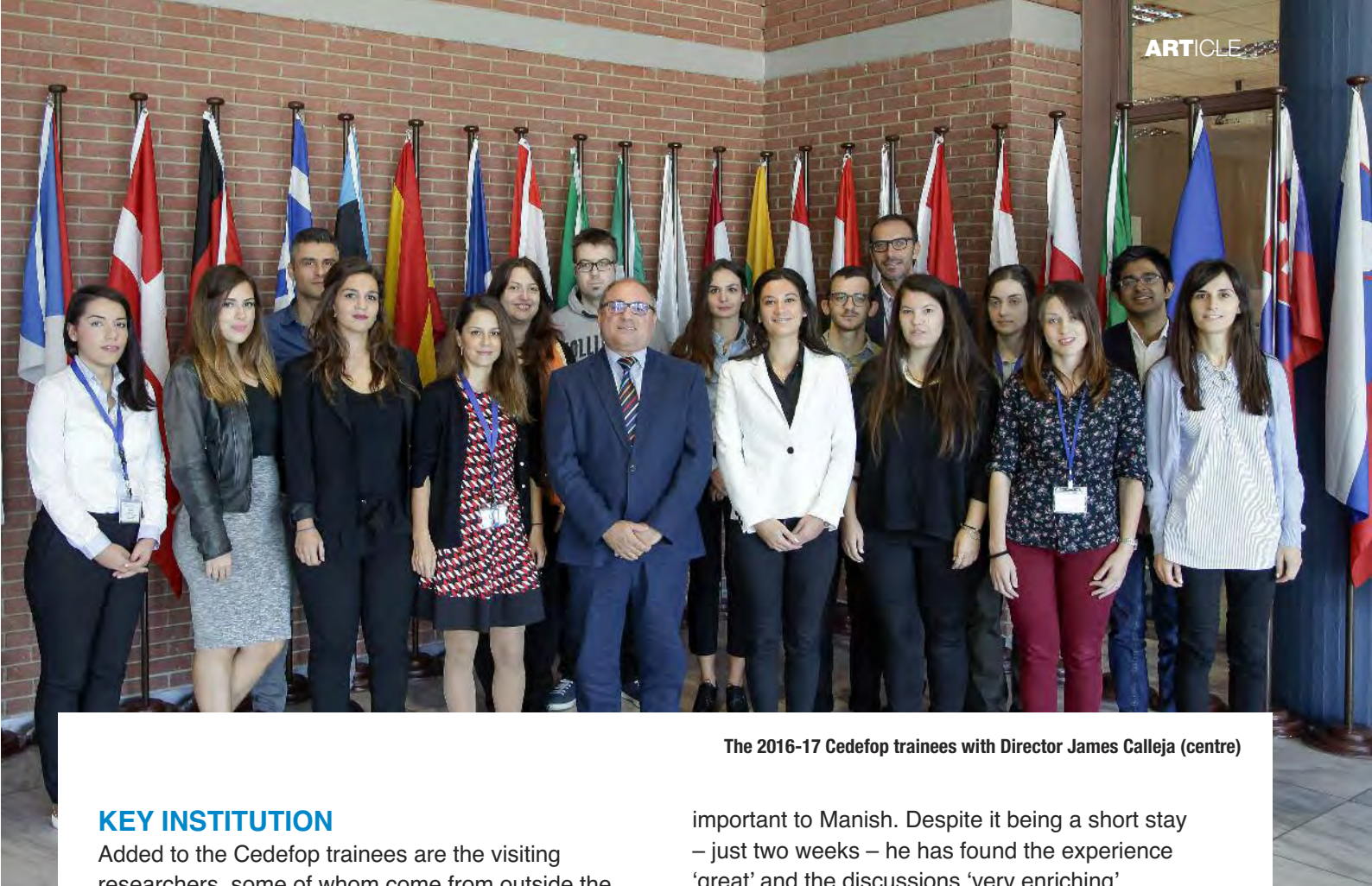
on numerous occasions during my academic studies,' she says.

And she takes what she does here seriously: 'For me, this traineeship represents a very serious advance in my career because not only do I have a chance to put into practice what I have studied but also because I get to experience the pan-European perspective. All the while, I am making the most of networking; everyone here is lovely and very friendly!'

REAL WORK SETTING

Konstantinos Kosmidis is one of many Greeks who apply to become Cedefop trainees every year. An IT graduate, he completed a master degree in communications and cyber security. The idea of work-based learning attracted him to Cedefop: 'I was searching for a job when I realised that working as a trainee for a European organisation could help me develop my IT security skills in a real work environment. Traineeships are an integral part of today's business environment and they really help increase cooperation skills.'

Konstantinos is confident that, once he completes his traineeship, he won't have a problem finding employment, 'for example as a developer or administrator' in crisis-stricken Greece, despite companies being 'more hesitant to recruit new employees.'



The 2016-17 Cedefop trainees with Director James Calleja (centre)

KEY INSTITUTION

Added to the Cedefop trainees are the visiting researchers, some of whom come from outside the EU, like Indian Manish Joshi. He works for the National Skill Development Corporation, a public-private partnership started by the Indian government in collaboration with industry to build capacity, create training programmes and engage the private sector.

Manish explains why he took the opportunity to visit Cedefop in October: 'Cedefop is one of the key institutions involved in monitoring and analysing what is happening in the EU Member States but also giving original input and doing research. I wanted to understand the European perspective, where VET is headed, what are the new developments. Also, I would like to understand some programmes where Cedefop is playing a key role. One of the most interesting is the *European alliance for apprenticeships* because it represents a good example of how to bring in the private sector, to enhance the supply and quality of apprenticeships. This is the challenge we face in India, where participation of the private sector in apprenticeship programmes is very low.'

Meeting Cedefop's experts, 'the people who have been doing this for many years, learning from them and understanding how their projects work,' was also

important to Manish. Despite it being a short stay – just two weeks – he has found the experience 'great' and the discussions 'very enriching'.

DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT

Italian Valerio Marcone took time out from his work at the University of Rome to spend three months at Cedefop for his PhD research: 'My work experience lies in vocational training and work-based learning, especially in educational processes involving apprenticeship schemes. I am looking to improve the chapters on stakeholder analysis for educational projects. I also want to improve another area of my research, that of VET systems in countries where vocational training is in development, such as Lithuania or Malta.'

During his stay, Valerio took part in Cedefop's policy learning forum on learning outcomes: 'I wanted to be here to examine this thematic up-close. I am constructing a pedagogical taxonomy with quality indicators related to work-based learning, which I would like to link with the thematic of training and apprenticeship.'

Valerio's overall experience has also been positive: 'I like this diverse environment. I usually work at the university and Cedefop is a completely different institution. I enjoy learning more about this approach.'



Valerio Marcone

JOBS AND MOBILITY: getting the right info as a first step

“

We had in mind the European citizens who live in the remotest areas and have every right to be informed



Cedefop stand in Kavala

The European Union is seen by many as an institution that fails to promote itself enough. The same goes for its programmes on fighting unemployment and helping students, graduates, entrepreneurs and the jobless to seek new opportunities. The first EU jobs and mobility roadshow in Greece, one of the Member States worst hit by unemployment, set out to reach people in some of the remotest parts of the country.

Three Europe Direct information centres organised the

week-long activity last October. The northern Greek towns of Alexandroupoli (close to the border with Turkey), Komotini, Xanthi, Kavala and Drama were the stops on the road to Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city. Cedefop supported the initiative with an information stand and staff presence throughout.

Georgia Intze, of Europe Direct Xanthi, came up with the idea: 'I had seen similar initiatives abroad and thought it useful to deploy such a good practice in our area. It was a big project but we took it on with great willingness because we had in mind the European citizens who live in the remotest areas and have every right to be informed.'

Her colleague from Europe Direct Thessaloniki, Chryssa Antoniou, adds: 'We decided, given the positive response of the European Commission's Representation in Greece and the European Parliament, to do something bigger, aiming at all citizens, not just the young. Our goal was to give people, in a single day, all the information they needed.'

They were rewarded with big

attendances in some of the roadshow's stops, and, perhaps more important, with requests for specific, targeted information.

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITIES

'The European Union is going through crisis, let's not hide from it,' says Ms Antoniou, 'but it also offers citizens many opportunities: there are programmes we can exploit, not only from a remuneration point of view, but also to develop our personality.'

Christos Derventlis studies Political Sciences and helps out at Europe Direct Komotini. He believes that 'through mobility you learn different ways of thinking, see how different systems function and get different ideas that you can bring back to your homeland; you have the opportunity to advance skills that are needed in everyday life and cannot be acquired at schools or universities.'

The events, mostly staffed by volunteers, were designed to offer practical information on mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ and on tools that help people get a job.



Roadshow organisers and contributors in Kavala

Development and communication consultant at the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH) Therapon Fakas showed participants how to write a cover letter when applying for a job and how to behave in an interview. He argues that 'in Greece, due to the situation, we believe that no initiative has results. These activities aim at challenging this kind of thinking.'

Lamprini Koletsi, the national representative of EU Careers in Greece, was also among the contributors. Her job is to inform people about the employment prospects in the European Union's institutions covered by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO): 'There is a lot of information on the internet but it is not targeted. I do one-on-one sessions with students and graduates, and organise seminars and conferences.'

GETTING THE INFO

Symeoni Lysseli, a civil engineering student at DUTH, who is thinking of going abroad after graduating, attended the – especially lively – Xanthi event: 'I

came to get information on my options: whether it is post-graduate studies, a traineeship or a job. I discovered EU activities I didn't know about and realised that learning is not limited to formal education.'

Athanasios Stavrianos, IT teacher at a secondary vocational school in Xanthi, says that his school 'has been looking out to Europe in the past two years,' because there is concern that its pupils will not be able to find work at local companies: 'They will definitely seek alternative employment opportunities abroad.'

In Kavala, career adviser Elena Flouda, came with a plan 'to find out more about European institutions I can relay the information to young people and their parents who could not be here.'

According to the organisers, people were most interested in Erasmus+. Europass also attracted a lot of attention because, as Ms Antoniou who presented it says, 'the platform gives practical answers; people don't have to scratch their heads to find what they need to write.'

A keen supporter of the activities of the 19 European information centres in Greece, Leonidas Antonakopoulos, Head of Office at the European Parliament Information Office in the country, addressed participants in Kavala. He told *Skillset and match* that, in his experience, 'there is a lot of interest from young people; and there are the tools to help. For example, we went to the remotest place in Greece, Kastellorizo, where, in a school of 15 upper secondary students, no one had heard of Erasmus. Now, they are all potentially interested in an Erasmus post.'

Mr Antonakopoulos believes Cedefop's presence at the roadshow is important. 'Through apprenticeship and vocational training, young people get a better chance of finding a job faster,' he says.

The organisers are confident that the roadshow, which was selected as European Commission's event of the month in October, will become a regular affair and are planning to expand it to other areas for its second instalment in 2017.

new

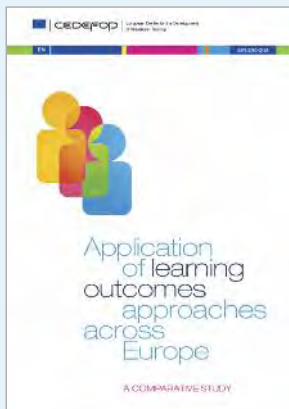
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IN FOCUS

APPLICATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES APPROACHES ACROSS EUROPE



This Cedefop reference publication maps and analyses the shift to learning outcomes in education and training policies and practices across Europe. Bringing evidence on the development of national policies from 33 countries, the study examines progress made in recent years (2009 onwards) and aims to capture the character of political reform at national, institution and local levels. Ten case studies in nine countries produce new empirical evidence on the presence of learning outcomes approaches in the design and delivery of programmes and curricula for teacher education programmes.



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- Improving career prospects for the low-educated
- Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage
- Labour market information and guidance
- Briefing note – Skill shortage and surplus occupations in Europe
- Briefing note – Supporting training and learning abroad: the EU mobility scoreboard for initial VET
- Vocational education and training in Slovakia
- Spotlight on VET – Slovakia
- Spotlight on VET – Poland
- Spotlight on VET – France
- Spotlight on VET – Sweden
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coming up



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IN FOCUS

SKILLS MATCHING POLICIES FOR THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

15-16 JUNE

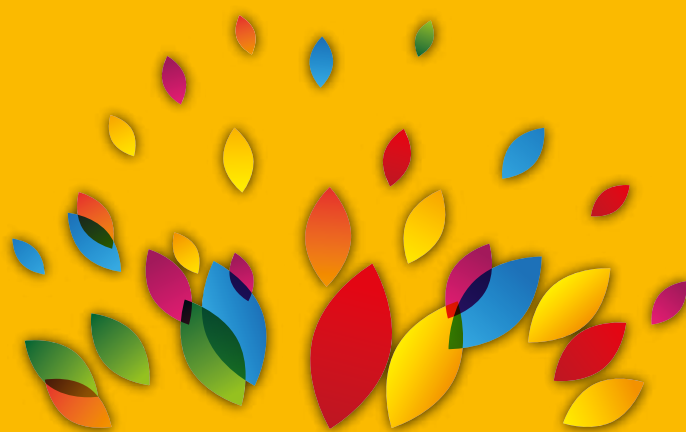
THESSALONIKI, GREECE



The aim of this Cedefop policy learning forum is to focus on the practical elements of a successful activation and skills matching policy that relies on better integration of the long-term unemployed into sustainable jobs. The forum will seek to put policy into practice by providing deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and triggers that can underpin effectiveness. It will serve as a platform for collecting innovative EU examples of skills matching policies and practices (both public and private) that can tackle long-term unemployment and aid mutual learning between key stakeholders.

OTHER EVENTS

FEBRUARY	16-17	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	VET in the 21st century – New pressures and changing expectations? Cedefop workshop on external drivers influencing European vocational education and training
FEBRUARY	23-24	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop's opinion survey on vocational education and training in the EU validation workshop
MARCH	22-24	VALETTA, MALTA	Meeting of Directors General for Vocational Training (DGV) and conference on 'High-performing apprenticeships: access to skills for jobs and social cohesion' in the framework of the Maltese EU Presidency



DISCOVER YOUR TALENT!

European Vocational Skills Week
2016



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