

Executive Summary

Introduction

Learning is the key to Europe's future. In a society and economy increasingly based on the use of information, the skills and knowledge of people are a determining factor in future prosperity. Learning is a high priority for the European Union (EU), its Member States and the social partners.

Each Member State has its own traditions and approaches to learning, not least in the area of vocational education and training. But if the pace of technological, economic and social change has made learning more important, it has also made it more complex. Consequently, there is much to be gained from exchanges of information and experience between those involved in vocational education and training at all levels. Such exchanges can stimulate debate, generate new ideas and promote improvement in vocational education and training systems to ensure that they meet modern needs.

The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)** was set up to assist the European Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational education and training, and to contribute to the work of the Member States and the social partners, through the promotion of exchanges of information and the comparison of experience on issues of common interest.

Aims of CEDEFOP

CEDEFOP aims to be a point of reference providing policy-makers and practitioners, at all levels in the EU, with information to promote a clearer understanding of developments in vocational education and training, and so enable them to take informed decisions for future action. CEDEFOP also aims to stimulate researchers to identify trends and to promote research into themes relevant to policy-makers.

CEDEFOP activities in 1999

CEDEFOP's activities take forward the three major themes in its medium-term priorities for the period 1997-2000 (see annex 1), agreed by its Management Board. These themes are:

- promoting competences and life-long learning;

- ❑ monitoring developments in the Member States; and
- ❑ serving European mobility and exchanges.

The activities in the Work Programme 1999 fall under three headings:

- ❑ Developing knowledge - outlining the themes and content of CEDEFOP projects and setting out the activities of CEDEFOP's thematic networks;
- ❑ Exchanges and dialogue; stimulating debate - covering the study visits programme and other activities to promote discussion amongst and between policy-makers, researchers and training practitioners;
- ❑ Keeping people informed; information and dissemination - detailing CEDEFOP's information services and dissemination activities.

Each is discussed below.

Developing knowledge and expertise

Twelve projects will be taken forward in 1999. They are listed below under the theme to which they relate. The titles of the projects are shown in bold.

Under the theme ***promoting competences and lifelong learning***, CEDEFOP is monitoring the development of the skills needed to provide a basis for lifelong learning to facilitate integration into the labour market and to enable people to adapt to changing needs. In 1999, under this theme, there are four projects.

Despite their different systems, Member States have the common aim of developing those competences which promote employment and career prospects. Drawing from four transnational projects under the Leonardo da Vinci programme in this field, I in its project on **key qualifications and curricular renewal of vocational education and training**, CEDEFOP is examining the different approaches to “key qualifications” in the EU, how they are identified and how they are learnt and incorporated - in different national contexts - into curricular.

Management and workers in SMEs need a wide range of skills, as they have to deal with many different problems and decisions affecting the financing and organisation of training compared to large enterprises. The project on **learning in SMEs** aims to provide practical support for managers and workers in SMEs . It will examine the role of the various advice and support mechanisms available to SMEs to help them adapt to economic, technological and social change. It will also examine the influence of national and sector contexts (including collective bargaining and the participation of workers representations) on SMEs and the development of their human resources.

Last year CEDEFOP’s work on the **identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning** provided an overview of the methods used in Europe and raised the key question of their value. No matter how sophisticated the method if it is not accepted on the labour market then it is of little practical use. This year, the project will compare private and public sector approaches to assessment. It will also examine how vocational qualification standards are set and the approaches of different economic sectors.

The project **skills and the information society** will investigate skill needs arising due to the impact of the increasing use of information and communication technologies on work organisation. It will seek to identify new approaches for future skill needs analysis and describe developments as to how skill needs are met in different sectors

Under the theme of ***monitoring developments in vocational education and training in the Member States*** CEDEFOP will report on both general and specific developments in the Member States. In 1999, under this theme, there are five projects.

This year CEDEFOP will complete and update its information on the descriptions of vocational education and training systems and arrangements in the Member States and make it available on CD-ROM. CEDEFOP will also work with Eurydice and the European Training Foundation (ETF) to publish summary descriptions of the initial education and training systems both in the Member States and in the accession states of central and eastern Europe..

Capitalising on and exploiting innovation is essential to ensure that high quality vocational education and training is provided. will be used systematically. In 1999, CEDEFOP will continue to support the European Commission in **observing innovation** by helping to identify and disseminate innovative ideas, in particular those developed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

To provide a clearer understanding of the patterns and different vocational education and training programmes across Europe, CEDEFOP will continue to work with the European Commission and with Eurostat to improve statistical data in vocational education and training. This year will see the publication of a special **Key data on vocational training in the EU**, on the transition from school to work. In addition, CEDEFOP will work on the development of indicators relating to the effectiveness and costs of vocational education and training.

The question of **financing vocational education and training** and the respective responsibilities of governments, enterprises, individuals and the role of the social partners is a subject of much debate. CEDEFOP will contribute to the debate on the type of funding mechanisms used to allocate resources to vocational education and training by providing information on the financing structures for vocational education and training in the Member States. The project will also explore further the relationship between costs and benefits within continuing vocational training activity.

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This year CEDEFOP will publish its first **report on vocational education and training policy in Europe**. It will look at policy development at the European level by bringing together the key messages of the European acquis in vocational education and training. It will seek to identify the main trends in vocational education and training policy development to take forward the acquis and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of policy at European level in addressing the challenges facing vocational education and training.

Under the theme of ***serving European mobility and exchanges*** CEDEFOP aims to improve the understanding of different qualification systems and provide information about mobility. In 1999, under this theme there are three projects.

. The project on the **transparency of qualifications** will improve understanding and co-operation in this area through the creation of a European Forum to provide an opportunity for an exchange of information and views. The Forum will support Member States and the European Commission in their efforts to establish permanent and reliable mechanisms for promoting mutual understanding of qualifications. In addition the project will provide an overview of current developments in Europe in the field of transparency and recognition of qualifications and contribute to the dissemination of the work carried out under the Leonardo da Vinci programme,

. Mobility is often associated with exchange and placement programmes. CEDEFOP's project **mobility in Europe: support and information** will investigate the long term effects of transnational placements and the integration of international qualifications into in-company development. It will explore how to promote 'transnational employability' and the development of curricular, vocational guidance and the information needed to support it. It will also analyse behavioural aspects that affect mobility.

. Developments in Europe resulting from economic and social change have major implications for the skills needed for the future and the policies needed to ensure that they are acquired. Often, given the pressures of immediate problems, a strategic overview can be overlooked. To provide such a strategic overview, in 1999 CEDEFOP will outline **scenarios and strategies for vocational education and training** to encourage debate on the development of vocational training policies in Europe, including the applicant countries.

Contrasting with the project work, which is linked to specific priorities, CEDEFOP's two thematic networks cover the three priority themes, in relation to **trends in occupations and qualifications**, and the **training of trainers**. The networks facilitate contact with and between key people and organisations and stimulate discussion and co-operation at European level. They also provide expertise and a means to transfer information, innovation and good practice.

Exchange and dialogue: stimulating debate

CEDEFOP has developed different ways to facilitate discussion of a wide range of vocational education and training issues, including the results of CEDEFOP projects.

The **study visits programme** encourages exchanges of experience and information between experts from different backgrounds and countries by enabling them to visit another Member State. There will be more than 750 places on the programme this year, including places for experts from countries of central and eastern Europe. In the first half of the year, traditional visits, looking at systems and arrangements in particular countries, will be organised. The second half will concentrate on specific thematic workshops. The programme is addressed primarily to vocational training specialists working in public administration and organisations run by the social partners.

The **“Agora” Thessaloniki** provides an opportunity for the worlds of research and policy development to confront each other with their different points of view. Each year CEDEFOP organises three “Agoras” which bring together some 30-50 participants from the EU Member States. Participants represent researchers and academics, policy makers, employers and employers’ organisations, and employees and trade union representatives. Each “Agora” focuses on a particular theme and provides researchers with feedback from policy makers on the impact of the research, while policy makers have the opportunity to consider the implications of research for their policies.

As a **partner in policy development**, CEDEFOP will continue to support the European Commission, the Member States and the social partners, by providing information for their discussions. In 1999, particular attention will be given to identifying and responding to the specific needs of the social partners. CEDEFOP will continue to try to improve contact and co-operation with other organisations especially Eurydice, the European Training Foundation and the OECD. In providing **support for research co-operation** CEDEFOP will encourage comparative research and analysis and disseminate information on results, through the European Research Directory, which provides summaries of vocational education and training research being carried out in the Member States, through preparation of the second report on vocational education and training research in Europe, and in bringing together different transnational networks on vocational education and training to exchange information and experience.

Keeping people informed: information and dissemination

CEDEFOP's information and communication policy aims to provide a balanced range of information services and publications, in electronic and hard copy form, to a wide audience. CEDEFOP's non-periodicals include descriptions of national vocational education and training systems, as well as reports on the outcomes of CEDEFOP's project work.



CEDEFOP has two **periodicals**. **The European Journal for Vocational Training**, which appears three times a year, in German, French, English, Spanish and Portuguese and publishes the results of transnational research and information on developments in vocational education and training with a view to stimulating debate from, a European perspective, amongst and between policy-makers, researchers and practitioners in Europe. In 1999 the Journal will be restyled. Each issue will no longer cover one specific theme (although the occasional single-theme issue may be published) and instead will treat a range of different topics in each issue.

The second periodical, the **CEDEFOP Info** which also appears three times a year, in German French and English and provides - free of charge - information on developments in vocational education and training in a newspaper format.

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CEDEFOP's information service is supplemented by its **library and documentation service**, which provides information to CEDEFOP's partners, clients and staff on a wide range of questions on vocational education and training. Since 1998 the "**Electronic Training Village**" (ETV) has become a central platform to promote exchanges of information and discussion between vocational education and training specialists. The ETV promotes the exchange of information through on-line forums, conferences and directories. The ETV provides a structured access to information databases on vocational education and training and provides village "residents" (registered users) with a selection of topics on which they can receive information as soon as it is available. The village has (in November 1998) around 1,500 residents and it is intended to increase this further and develop the services provided in 1999. In addition, CEDEFOP's **Internet site** provides more general information for larger public and practitioners in a wide range of languages. During 1999, the site will be developed to provide information in more EU languages.

Conclusion

The work programme for 1999 is again a challenging one. It reflects the ambition of CEDEFOP to make an impact on the development of vocational education and training policy and practice through work of high quality and relevance to its partners.