

Live and Learn

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EU Commissioner:

Education is a powerful tool in stopping future conflicts



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EDUCATION MUST BE REORIENTED TOWARDS ACTUAL DEMANDS

The current trend in EU foreign policy converges on the traditional partner countries of the ETF, the countries surrounding the European Union. This, together with the increased role of human resources development (HRD) in EU foreign policy, points towards a larger potential role for the ETF in EU foreign assistance. With the new Neighbourhood instruments on the launch pad, Live and Learn has interviewed the EU Commissioner for External Relations, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Reading in the footsteps of former Commission chief Romano Prodi, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner has said that her top priority during her term in office will be to create, through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), a ring of friends around the borders of our enlarged Union. We asked her why she feels it is important to invest so heavily in the development of our neighbouring regions.

“The enlargement of the EU has contributed to the creation of a large zone of democracy and prosperity in Europe,” Ms Ferrero-Waldner said. “The political, economic, social and environmental gaps between the Union and its neighbours to the East - Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the Southern Caucasus - and to the South - in the Mediterranean - are large, however, and in certain cases increasing. We want to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours.”

“The European Neighbourhood Policy is our main strategic framework for promoting stability, prosperity and European values between our close neighbours. The ENP represents a new approach in the EU's relations with its neighbours that goes beyond cooperation, giving added value and enhancing our partnership. We want to draw our partners into an increasingly close relationship with the EU using the jointly agreed action plans,

based on common values and interests. The implementation of the action plans will be supported with significant financial and technical EU assistance.”

“The EU has a strategic partnership with Russia, our

largest neighbour. We have just agreed on road maps for four common spaces setting out joint priorities in the fields of freedom, security and justice; external security; research, education and culture; and the economy.”

Ms Ferrero-Waldner is a veteran in foreign affairs. From 1984, when she left a career in the private sector, she served the Austrian Foreign Service in Madrid, Dakar and Paris, later as Deputy Chief of Protocol in the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 1994, she became Chief of Protocol of the United Nations in the Executive Office of the UN under Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. On 4 May 1995, she became the first female State Secretary in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a position she held under the governments of both Vranitzky and Klima. In February 2000, she became the first female Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.



Photo: EUP-IMAGES

Cooperation in education and training is a way of strengthening partnership and mutual understanding and promoting European values

Investment in HRD

Recognition of the importance of human capital in development has increased dramatically in the past few years. It is a priority within the European Union but it also plays an increasingly important role in external relations. Asked what potential she sees for human resources development in EU foreign policy, Ms Ferrero-Waldner said there is no doubting the importance of human resources development in our support to partner countries, but that aims and ways of working will vary depending on the level of development of the partner country and region as well as the degree of proximity and EU interest. "For all of the regions, but in particular for the European Neighbourhood countries," she said, "cooperation in education and training is a way of strengthening partnership and mutual understanding and promoting European values. Support for upgrading educational systems concerns various levels. It includes basic as well as higher education and

demand-driven vocational education and training. Support for educational exchanges and cooperation helps to spread European values and build people-to-people partnerships. Several instruments need to be used in parallel to respond fully to the needs of our external actions. Sector programmes need to be complemented by programmes that focus directly on exchanges and partnership building."

"Enterprises must be provided with the right skills and training. Education must be reoriented towards actual demand. This is a challenge and already a major priority of our Neighbourhood cooperation programmes. In the Southern Mediterranean countries, support to education policy reform is a major theme. To the East, we have so far mainly focused on reform of higher education through the Tempus programme. We have now also increased our activity in vocational education. Tempus is of course also active in the Southern Mediterranean."

"Support to basic education is a key priority in our cooperation with the least

developed and other low-income countries. Achieving primary education for all and eliminating gender differences in education are key Millennium Development Goals. Education is important in its own right - for example, for strengthening democracy - but has also been shown to be one of the most effective ways of promoting development and reducing poverty."

"With middle-income regions such as Asia and Latin America, we focus more on stimulating the exchange of knowledge and promoting awareness of European education in order to build a partnership with these countries and regions. An example is the Alban programme of scholarships for Latin America. At the global level, the Erasmus Mundus programme has similar objectives. With our close neighbours, we will develop similar exchanges, building also on the successes already achieved by such programmes within Europe."

Towards the full potential

Asked whether she feels that the potential role of human resources development in external relations has been fully exploited in recent years, Ms Ferrero-Waldner said: "Human resource development is already a major component of our current cooperation with the Neighbourhood countries, but more needs to be done."

She believes, however, that the new instruments offer good scope to boost recognition of the importance of human capital to the level that best serves the global aims of EU foreign assistance. "Education and training are important elements of the ENP action plans," she said. "In the Communication on the Tenth Anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which has just been adopted, the commitment is made to increase the proportion of bilateral assistance that goes to education and training by at least 50%."



In the Southern Mediterranean countries, support to education policy reform is a major theme.



Photo: ETF

Education has shown to be one of the most effective ways of promoting development and reducing poverty.

“The new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument will from 2007” give us access to the full range of tools in the whole region. The programming for 2007-2013 should ensure that country-specific sector reform programmes linked to policy dialogue remain a major vector for support to the South and are introduced in the East. Sector support will be complemented by cooperation between the EU and partner countries’ educational institutions as well as people-to-people exchanges, Tempus being a key programme for the latter.”

“Mobility and people-to-people exchanges should be strengthened further to aid these developments. In this context, the participation of partner countries in certain Community programmes that promote cultural, educational, environmental, technical and scientific links is being considered.”

New instruments

Asked what she considers the main priorities for DG Relex in the field of human resources development within her term as commissioner, Ms Ferrero-Waldner said: “To design and implement a new generation of instruments and programmes to achieve our objectives; these include internationally established targets, such as ensuring access to primary education for all, and key aspects of the European Neighbourhood Policy, such as enabling national university qualifications to become compatible with EU standards.”

“As I mentioned, we will continue focusing our aid on systemic reforms, but I would like to stress the importance I attach to increasing the level of people-to-people exchanges with the Neighbourhood countries. Equally, it is clear that education and training will remain vitally important in our cooperation with all countries and regions.”

Human security

In her address to the European Parliament of October 2004, Ms Ferrero-Waldner spoke of “a broader agenda of human security” that she was keen to develop. We asked her how she views the link between human resource development and security.

“It cuts both ways,” she said. “In brief, human resource development requires security, and security requires human resource development. We need to develop the broader agenda of human security to respond to the full range of threats afflicting the most vulnerable in societies across the world - hunger, deadly diseases, environmental degradation and physical insecurity. This means also addressing the root causes of conflicts and terrorism. Poverty, alienation and lack of hope are among the most important of these root causes.”

Development requires security, and security requires human resource development

The EU is a leading example, if not the leading example, of how to build lasting peace between countries and peoples.

“Education and training broaden horizons and increase opportunities for participation in society and the economy. Support to this area is therefore a key ingredient in a strategy for human security. Experience also shows, unfortunately, that education is among the sectors worst hit by conflicts; this underlines the importance of post-conflict reconstruction and of linking relief, rehabilitation and development.”

Conflict prevention

The European Commission has often voiced its strong belief that EU values can play a role in preventing conflicts. But values are a sensitive matter - spreading the word should not be confused with preaching. We asked Ms Ferrero-Waldner how she feels the promotion of EU values can contribute specifically in conflict

environmental policies, and cooperation with international partners and NGOs, as well as the new instruments in the field of crisis management. Through these means, the EU is already heavily engaged in conflict prevention based on the promotion of European values.”

“On a more philosophical level, the EU is a leading example, if not the leading example, of how to build lasting peace between countries and peoples. Enlargement is but the latest expression of this fact. The European Neighbourhood Policy aims to contribute to extending this zone of peace. The European experience is also one that recognises the importance of process, of beginning with less controversial but mutually beneficial steps and gradually building confidence and creating forces for further progress. I firmly believe that this experience can be used in other regions too.”

EU's external actions - in particular, the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as adherence to international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution. These values are essential to prevent conflicts and to build genuine peace. The process of implementation and follow-up of the action plans will create a strengthened dialogue between the EU and the partner countries concerned.”

ETF involvement

Finally, we move our focus to the European Training Foundation. The Commission has invested heavily in HRD expertise development at the ETF in Turin since 1995, and we asked Ms Ferrero-Waldner how she envisages Commission services making use of this expertise in the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

“The neighbouring countries clearly face major challenges in human resource development, in modernising vocational education and training in particular and in labour market reform more generally; Europe has much more experience of these issues. There is a need for an interface between the EU and the neighbouring region, and this is the role of the ETF.”

“Over time the ETF has built up a solid knowledge of vocational education, training and labour market development in the partner countries as well as in the EU. As a centre of excellence, the ETF regularly provides expertise to Commission services in the design of cooperation programmes. The ETF is now providing DG Relex with a series of highly valued country analyses as support to the programming of assistance for 2007-2013. Through seminars and conferences, the ETF also serves as an essential forum for EU and Neighbourhood professionals in the field. These different roles will continue to be important, not least for the Commission in the context of the Neighbourhood Policy, both at the programming and operational levels.”



Photo: EUP-IMAGES

EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner foresees an important role for the ETF in the context of the new Neighbourhood policy, both at the programming and operational levels.

regions such as the Middle East.

“Violence in the Middle East continues, and the EU must still play its part in supporting conflict prevention efforts. The initiative and ultimate responsibility rests of course with the national actors in the countries concerned,” she said.

“The list of the means we have at our disposal for the prevention of conflict is long.

We have diplomatic instruments and political dialogue, external assistance, humanitarian aid, trade, social and

“Resolving conflicts by peaceful means is explicitly mentioned in the action plans. More broadly, the privileged relationship with neighbours that the ENP will create builds on mutual commitment to common values such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, including minority rights, good governance, good neighbourly relations, and the principles of the market economy and sustainable development.”

“Commitments also relate to certain essential aspects of the

LEARNING AND LIVING DEMOCRACY

2005 - European Year of Citizenship through Education



Last year in June, voters for the new, enlarged European Union were asked to go to the polls to vote for the people who would represent them in the European Parliament. It was billed as a great day - the moment when some former communist countries came into the fold. But as the votes were counted, it became obvious that the real winner was apathy. On the day, only 26.43% of people bothered to turn out.

Voter apathy is only one symptom of a general lack of interest in democracy. The Council of Europe - not the European Union but a completely separate organisation of 46 European Member States - has taken up the challenge of reasserting democratic values and promoting public participation in democratic processes throughout Europe.

Democracy is one of the pillars on which the Council of

Europe was built. Along with protecting human rights, safeguarding the rule of law and promoting cultural diversity, democracy is one of our *raison d'être*. It is something to which we have given great priority since 1997, when we first pledged to work on education for democratic citizenship. We have made 2005 the European Year of Citizenship through Education to spread our message that democracy needs to be protected and fostered, and to plot a path for a future where each citizen of Europe is able to truly live and experience democracy.

Democratic citizenship is more than access to the ballot box. It is the skill we need to live well in a community. It shows us how to resolve disputes in a friendly and fair way, how to negotiate and find common ground, and how to make sure that everyone's rights are respected.

*Along with protecting human rights, safeguarding the rule of law and promoting cultural diversity, democracy is one of our *raison d'être*.*



Mr Terry Davis (United Kingdom) took up his duties as Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 1 September 2004, following his election by the Organisation's Parliamentary Assembly on 22 June 2004.

Mr. Davis has been a member of the Parliamentary Assembly for 12 years, and President of the Socialist Group in the Assembly (2002-2004). Furthermore he has worked as the rapporteur on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh for the Assembly's Political Affairs Committee.

The Secretary General has the overall responsibility for the strategic management of the Council of Europe's work programme and budget and oversees the day-to-day running of the Organisation and Secretariat.

A democratic citizen knows the ground rules of society and the personal responsibilities that need to be respected.

These skills need to be learned, and this is why the role of teachers is pivotal. Teacher training is one of the main areas on which our work will focus during the next few months, with a teacher training seminar for 120 teacher trainers from all over Europe organised to take place in Strasbourg in June. We are also looking at the possibility of setting up a special European centre for training the people who train teachers in education on history, human rights and democratic citizenship.

These topics, much broader than the classic 'civics' education, can equip young people to value our common past, better understand and appreciate different cultures and take an active part in public life. The Council of Europe has already trained thousands of teachers in human rights and

history teaching in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Chechnya and the Southern Caucasus and has helped countries to rewrite history books to ensure that children see the past in a clear and non-prejudiced way; this is a powerful tool to stop future conflicts by healing the wounds of the past.

Throughout the Year of Citizenship, the coordinating committees in each of the Council of Europe Member States are organising a wide range of activities based on the priorities and concerns of their own countries within a common European framework. To take only three examples: an all-Ukrainian children's forum, 'The State That Hears Children', was organised in January by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, with the aim of enhancing students' social and legal activity; in March, an innovative event, 'EURU?', organized in central London by

young people and for young people for the purposes of discussing Europe, featured a graffiti wall, electronic voting sessions, performances (rap, song, comedy and dance), a video competition and a celebrity speaker; and in November and December, Days of Human Rights Education - featuring education events, workshops and exhibitions - will be held in Austria.

As Nelson Mandela once said, education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. With the European Year of Citizenship through Education, the Council of Europe aims to put those words into action.

Terry Davies,
Council of Europe,
Secretary General

Find out more:
<http://www.coe.int/eyce>



Photo: CoE

Through the European Year of Citizenship through Education, the Council of Europe will spread the message that democracy needs to be protected and fostered.



Photo: CoE

Launching conference of the European Year of Citizenship through Education - Sofia, Bulgaria - 13-14 December 2004

New EC programme “Citizens for Europe” for the period 2007-2013

As part of the new generation of Community actions programmes for the period 2007-2013, the European Commission has adopted a new proposal for a programme for the promotion of active European citizenship. This programme, with a budget of EUR 207 million for the whole period, will take over the current programme coming to an end in 2006 and is a contribution to addressing a major challenge of the European Union, namely how to bridge the gap between the citizens and the European Union.

Commissioner Ján Figel' has stressed the need to involve citizens in the development of the EU: “One of the major challenges of this Commission will be to have European citizens develop a sense of belonging and forge a European identity, so that they can become more deeply involved in the development of the European Union” he said, adding : “I believe that the future programme on active citizenship, rooted in our common history and culture and promoting and celebrating our shared values, such as freedom, fairness, tolerance and solidarity, will act as cement towards a more citizen-friendly Europe.”



Photo: ETF

EU Commissioner Ján Figel' has presented the new programme “Citizens for Europe”

Find out more:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/activecitizenship/new_programme/new_programme06042005_en.pdf

ETF LAUNCHES NEW MODEL FOR PARTNERSHIPS

'The ETF developed its own unique expertise - a combined knowledge of European policies [...] and the ambitions and sensitivities of the partner countries'

European Training Foundation expertise is primarily employed in support of European Union policies. But the services of the ETF can also be called upon by individual donors who wish to add a European dimension to their bilateral and multilateral activities.

Small countries or specialist organisations may excel in one field and seek specialist complementary knowledge that is not available among their own staff. Others may seek a partner to coordinate or evaluate multilateral initiatives. The ETF can help them to improve both the content and management of their support to human resources development in the countries with which they work.

Old partnerships...

Obviously, the ETF is not new to working in partnership with EU Member States. It works from the premise that the European Union is the world's best nursery for education and training policy developers. No other region in the world can showcase such a versatility of solutions to current, generic challenges in education and training - how to keep adults in 'learning mode', how to finance continuing training, how to guarantee ongoing dialogue between employers and trainers.

This versatility is important for ETF partner countries. Although it is generally acknowledged that policies cannot be copied, this doesn't

mean that every country tackling training reform must reinvent the wheel. Good practice can be translated, but translating appropriately is a process of making choices; the more informed these choices are, the better the end result will be. Making informed choices requires exposure to a variety of solutions. Providing the opportunities for this exposure is what 'sharing expertise in training' has meant for the ETF throughout the past ten years.

EU Member States have been instrumental to the ETF's prime objective of sharing expertise in training. For example, when the Phare VET reform programmes were launched in what today are the new Member States, staff of the national Programme Management Units met every six months in whichever Member State held the EU presidency.

Over a number of days, they typically went through an intensive programme of study visits and seminars. The experience they accumulated over the years gave them an insight into the diversity of European Member States that few even within the European Union possessed. Today, many of them have started to pass on their knowledge to those who need it in other partner countries.

Impending accession also brought an immense need for capacity building in the candidate countries. Access to the European Social Fund (ESF) could only be exploited in a meaningful way by people who were aware of how best to use it. Within the framework of the ESF

Special Preparatory Programme, the ETF fostered liaison between those with experience of working with the ESF in the Member States who needed to learn how to use it in the candidate countries. The ETF convened regional workshops where people who worked with the ESF on a daily basis shared their experiences and organised study visits throughout the European Union for civil servants and social partners from the candidate countries.

... new ways

During this time the ETF developed its own unique expertise - a combined knowledge of European policies and practice on the one hand, and the ambitions and sensitivities of the partner countries on the other. It is this expertise that is now in increasing demand among Member States seeking to establish a working relationship with the ETF. The ETF helps them to fit their bilateral support activities into the broader framework of European external support to human resources development.

The immediate benefits are obvious: the impact of small projects - targeting, for example, just one region or sector - is likely to be much higher when these are carried out within a cooperative environment that, in parallel, sees activity in other regions or sectors or by other donors.



Pooling expertise

Over the years, the ETF has demonstrated the capacity to link up multilateral teams with a collective expertise that could not have been mustered by any of the EU Member States alone. A flagship example of this is the North-West Russia Project, a six-year undertaking that contributed to the reform of vocational education and training in four sectors crucial for the economy of north-west Russia and involved a total of six EU Member States as well as the ETF and the International Labour Organisation.

The original idea was that the involved Member States would be responsible for sectors, while the ETF would take responsibility for the horizontal issues. There were serious communication problems among the different project teams, however, and in the first years progress was slow. In the second phase of the project, the ETF took over the project management. It coordinated the project design, developed the framework and organised a two-week visit to the region with 20 people from the participating teams. From there the project grew to become the flagship reform example it is today.

It is now one of the initiatives whose results are in greatest demand throughout Eastern Europe and even Central Asia.

Tapping expertise

Each country has an interest in the development of its neighbours. On the issue of migration pressure, for example, Italy has worked on human resources development in Albania for many years. Because Albania is one of the ETF partner countries, the Italian government draws on ETF expertise in cases where it funds activities that are within the remit of the ETF. Since 2000, the ETF has worked with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a series of cooperation agreements that have broadened in recent years.

Under the first of these agreements, the Italian authorities asked the ETF to implement a human resources development project in the field of small to medium-sized enterprise development in Albania on their behalf. Following a positive evaluation of this first project, the Italian authorities have recently asked the ETF to help design and implement a follow-up project. The latter will be paid for through a bilateral cooperation agreement between Albania and Italy. It is a financial assistance programme supporting small businesses in Albania through the establishment of credit and loan schemes to the tune of almost EUR 30 million. The ETF will coordinate the required capacity building for the successful implementation of these schemes.



EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS
IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*ETF publication
describing the new
model for partnerships
available from
www.etf.eu.int*

'From 2007 onwards, many of the co-funding opportunities managed by the European Commission will demand a strong 'Neighbourhood' component'

Cooperating in clusters of linked activities has the potential to considerably streamline multilateral efforts, not only because the ETF can liaise with different partners but also because the ETF can constantly keep partners updated about other donor activity in the field or region. At the very minimum, this can avoid duplication. More positively, however, it supports much-needed synergy among bilateral and multilateral support activities.

Strengthening bilateral support

ETF expertise can be accessed by Member States and employed for the benefit of their own bilateral and multilateral activities. This may be suitable when an EU Member State has programmes that complement both EU external relations priorities and the mandate of the ETF. It may also be suitable

when an EU Member State has identified a key objective but lacks the required expertise and field resources to design, implement, monitor or evaluate measures to reach their objective.

This approach has been used by countries such as France, Italy and Switzerland and by organisations such as the World Bank. The terms for cooperation agreements of this type are negotiated on a case-by-case basis according to the nature of the project and the expected weight of the role of the ETF in the project.

Neighbourhood instruments

With the new Neighbourhood instruments around the corner and a bias in EU external support that increasingly directs funds towards human resources development, such cooperation between the ETF and EU

Member States may also prove to be instrumental in maximising the effect of multilateral support to regions neighbouring the European Union. From 2007 onwards, many of the co-funding opportunities managed by the European Commission will demand a strong 'Neighbourhood' component.

Groups of European countries and organisations who wish to be active players in the new EU programmes will want to secure expert knowledge of education and training in these regions. The ETF is prepared - and keen - to engage in such partnerships, be it for broad coordination or as a contributor of just the sort of expertise that can make the difference between a good consortium and an excellent consortium.

TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN VET REFORMS

Interventions in the VET reform processes of partner countries are usually aimed at modernising the organisational frameworks of VET systems and bringing them in line with emerging labour markets. School development and teacher and trainer training do not usually receive the appropriate amount of attention. Teacher and trainer training is very often sidelined; it is bracketed together with the development of standards and assessment procedures, and used as an instrument for improving their implementation.

Even if there is a strong interest within a partner country in upgrading VET teacher and trainer training, the focus tends to be on teacher training institutions. Sometimes groups of teachers are introduced to new teaching methods but face huge difficulties using these methods in their daily work because their schools have not developed an appropriate organisational framework to facilitate the reform of teaching and learning processes.

The ability of the VET system to play a crucial role in society depends on whether its institutions respond to change and whether teachers are prepared to incorporate the complex reform measures into their daily work. A major challenge in the reform of the VET system is therefore to choose an approach that fully involves teachers and trainers.

Teachers and policy

Systemic reform often assumes that policy instruments will drive the necessary reform in schools. But that remains conjecture, for there is little evidence of a direct and powerful relationship between systemic policy initiated at the national level and actual practice in schools. Moreover, systemic reform seems to assume that teaching is a relatively homogeneous activity that can be driven by a small set of easily accessible policy instruments. But experience shows the contrary: learning is context-bound, and teaching takes place in the school, which is a highly complex institution driven by a context-specific mixture of interrelated

rules, values and beliefs. Individual schools are based in local environments that vary widely, even within the same region or town. Different schools also attract different kinds of students with different individual learning needs.

In spite of powerful forces for change, schools in partner countries appear remarkably untouched and exhibit many structures and practices from years gone by. One reason for this might be that change has usually been something done to teachers as opposed to something done with them. But the overarching reason seems to be that schools are seen only from the perspective of the classroom and are not viewed holistically as human organisations with their own structural and cultural rules. It is not enough to train teachers in new methods and the development of standards; rather, it is essential to widen the strategic view, increase the focus on organisational goals for change, and view increased organisational capacity for change as one of the central outcomes.

Theory and practice

In most partner countries the traditional way of teaching divides the learning process into theoretical and practical subjects. The content of the old curricula was - and often still is - systematically broken down into small basic units and terms that can be learned separately. The 'connection' between learning and work is often reduced to irrelevant theory or unrelated 'doing'. The task of aligning teaching and learning processes with the needs of the labour market is hampered by a lack of real-life practical experience among teachers and trainers and by outdated teaching and learning material and VET school workshops.

ETF support for VET reform in partner countries

The ETF's work on developing teacher training in the partner countries has been carried out in the context of plans for broader VET reform. Its main approach to

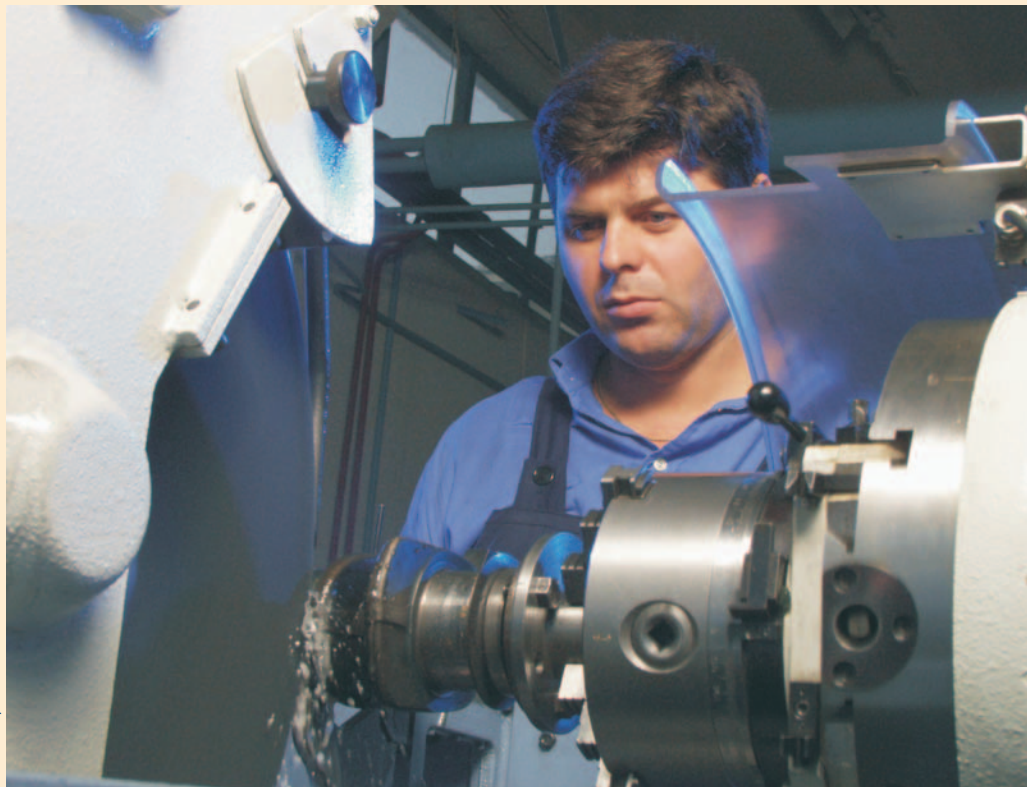


Photo: European Commission

A major challenge in the reform of the VET system is to choose an approach that fully involves teachers and trainers.

VET reform has been curriculum-driven and delivered through a pilot school model. ETF work on curriculum development, which started in the mid-1990s, immediately led to a sharper focus on the role of teachers. In 2000, an internal ETF study group on VET teacher training was set up, and in 2003 this was transformed into a group on teaching and learning processes that included teachers and trainers.

In its own work, the ETF aims to make teacher and trainer training support a strategic goal of any VET system reform policy. Over time this perspective has become more operational, and a number of more specific principles have been developed in order to guide and give better focus to the ETF's future work.

Development projects initiated in 1996 aimed to pilot innovation through close cooperation between neighbouring partner countries. The initial aim was not so much learning from each other but rather learning with each other.

Learning through pilots

Usually, the overriding aim of a pilot project is to build regional or local capacity for VET innovation. The ETF, however, took up the challenge of using the pilot approach as a preparation for nation-wide change in teacher training. Working alongside policymakers, project teams had to develop measures for setting up a national structure on which the experimental results could be generalised.

Launched in 1997, Integration of Work and Learning (IWL) was the first ETF project of this type. It included cooperation between teams from Hungary and Slovenia, who worked on all core issues in VET reform: the project groups selected schools that were aiming to overcome the gap between 'theory' and 'practice'; they identified companies that were interested in introducing learning processes in the workplace; and they brought together schools and companies that wanted to make a link between learning at school and work in the company.

One lesson in particular would become decisive for the ETF's future development work on the topic. Especially in Slovenia, it was felt that centralisation of the education and training system was the main obstacle to improving the integration of work and learning. More decentralisation would challenge social partners to make better links between work and learning and to support the mobility of teachers between schools and companies.

The most important challenge, however, related to teachers. Because they were mainly accustomed to working with predefined programmes, intensive work-based training would be needed to acquaint them with modern teaching methods. In addition, the school itself would have to face new challenges with regard to its organisational culture, its management and its ability to define and implement an innovative school programme, for which it would be accountable.

Change agents

The project Reshaping the Focus and Structure of Teacher and Teacher Trainer Training, which started in 2000 in Latvia and Lithuania and was funded by Finland, Denmark and the ETF, capitalised on the lessons learned in the IWL project. It took into account the importance of work-based learning for staff of an organisation and the necessity of developing organisational learning capacity in order to be prepared for future socioeconomic challenges and demands. Its focus was on teachers and university educators, on VET schools and their interaction with teacher training institutions, and on teacher-training policy.

A strategy had to be developed to induce both individual and organisational learning in such a way that the individual development of teachers and the organisational development of the school could complement each other. For this purpose the project established a 'driving force' that could support this process. The idea of using change agent teams (CATs) - in which key persons from the pilot VET schools worked together - as the core element of the project was an innovative solution with very positive results. CATs helped participants to work more effectively within their home institutions. They lowered the threshold between VET schools and universities and increased interaction between them. New ideas and the inspiration and motivation of CATs were transmitted further within the pilot VET schools, and some CATs have since organised workshops for teachers of other schools in their region.

Subsequent discussions reflected on what had been learned in terms of work-based learning and problem-solving competences as key ingredients for developing organisational learning capacity in schools and as a condition for developing a lifelong learning perspective among teachers. However, despite the positive results achieved in the project there remained a feeling that if schools and teachers were to play a truly active role in the VET reform process, they should not simply adapt to change in the outside world. Schools and teachers had to be much more directly involved. They had to be more proactive, creative and outward-looking.

New work order

These discussions coincided with a more systemic debate. There were some doubts as to whether existing VET systems in partner countries really fulfilled the demand of their societies to increase



Photo: European Commission

The idea of using change agent teams was an innovative solution with very positive results

the employability of individuals, as the systems were still shaped around classical employment concepts. Consequently the ETF became concerned with the challenge of developing a VET system that would prepare for both waged employment and self-employment, so that graduates would be capable of responding to the demands of the market, whether as employees or as employers.

Such a system should not simply be equipped to give its students the choice of acquiring and maintaining competences for dependent employment. It should also take account of their lifestyles and personal interests, and empower them to make broader employment choices, which should include setting up and running a business. Modern VET concepts and methods, with such keywords as 'integration of work and learning', 'problem-solving capacity' and 'project-based learning', as well as the use of CATs in VET school teacher development, could be linked to this new approach.

Entrepreneurship

In order to achieve this it was necessary to transform the approach to VET from its traditional focus on training individuals to follow the instructions of others, towards an approach promoting individual creativity and the ability to cope with change and innovation involving higher levels of uncertainty and complexity.

Piloting such a transformation is the aim of the ETF project Entrepreneurship in Education and Training in Russia and Ukraine. At its core the project is a fundamental search for a reorientation of school culture and teacher behaviour within a lifelong learning perspective. Entrepreneurial learning differs from the traditional approach in that its primary focus is on personal abilities rather than functional competences. The learning approach is more experimental and experiential, and less oriented towards a fixed routine. It is aimed not simply at imparting know-how for solving technical problems, but at assessing the uncertainties of real-life situations and economic developments, finding creative solutions and implementing them. Accordingly, in order to promote a pedagogy of entrepreneurship or enterprise, significant shifts of mentality are needed from teachers, who are accustomed to the command structures of centrally controlled schools. These shifts towards broader competences are identical to those advocated in new active learning theories.

Lessons learned

The debate on which is more important - modernising the policy framework of the VET system or developing new practices for VET institutions and their teachers and trainers - does not appear to move matters forward. ETF projects and the discussions during related workshops have shown that only a triangular approach that integrates government policy with the practice of teacher training institutions and VET schools is capable of bringing about sustainable reforms. Teachers and trainers need to be recognised as educational professionals and stakeholders in education reform.

Scale does not seem to be the most important issue. Medium-scale pilot projects in which selected educational institutions are involved together in an innovative project, as well as large-scale projects which try to establish system-wide change, will only succeed if they implement this integrated approach.

If a new approach to teaching and learning is planned, it is advisable to test the water and pave the way through a pilot project in which teachers can discover and experience their own new role in the reform process before large-scale changes are made. The projects in Hungary/Slovenia, Latvia/Lithuania and Russia/Ukraine in particular have produced strong evidence that pilots can do much to change the behaviour of teachers and directors and to make improvements in schools, especially through the development of an entrepreneurial approach. They also help to strengthen political awareness about the important role of the teaching profession in VET reform.

There is a clear potential in using teachers as agents of change and not simply as instruments in, or objects of, VET reform. However, this potential can only be tapped if the focus and structure of education and training are reshaped. There is also evidence that work on developing permanent and institutionalised cooperation between universities, VET schools and enterprises should be intensified.

The ETF projects demonstrate the importance of intertwining teacher development with school improvement. Teachers learned that integrating new active learning approaches in schools demands organisational change, both around the school and in the classroom.

In order to overcome the high degree of technical specialisation of teachers it is necessary to get rid of the highly subject-structured curricula. Teachers must be encouraged to team up with other



Photo: European Commission

There is a clear potential in using teachers as agents of change in VET reform.

colleagues. Last but not least, schools must be open to partnerships with employers in order to gain an understanding of the needs of modern work processes.

The project in Latvia and Lithuania emphasised the importance of universities developing a project-oriented approach to teacher education that should bridge the different worlds. It also confirmed - as did the IWL project in Slovenia and Hungary - the necessity of having sufficient research capacity to support the triangular approach to reform.

All projects confirmed that the work environment of teachers should be seen as a learning opportunity. It should thus be organised accordingly. This will be difficult to achieve, however, - schools, teacher training institutions and companies must help to integrate learning into the daily work of their staff.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

LESSONS LEARNED FROM AN ETF PILOT PROJECT

‘The EET project has rendered highly relevant and useful results that made a real difference to the pilot schools’

Today, economic growth in transition and developed economies is characterised by a rapid product cycle, fast technological change and high competition among firms on a regional or global basis. Within this context, managers and workers are challenged to develop competencies and engage in continual learning in order to maintain their performance in an era of economic and technological change. In addition to competencies aimed at working effectively within enterprises, specific knowledge and skills are needed to establish a company or for self-employment.

The concept of entrepreneurship in education and training (EET) refers to the need for VET systems to adapt to these challenges. EET can be characterised by two key objectives:

- VET that imparts and develops core skills and knowledge, such as communications ability, personal initiative, creativity, critical reasoning and adaptability;
- VET that develops skills and knowledge assisting the learner to establish a personal enterprise or succeed in the process of self-employment, such as

business planning, risk analysis and opportunity analysis.

EET is receiving increasing importance at European Union level. The Lisbon Agenda emphasises the need for making Europe a global reference for education and training by 2010, and links progress in VET to overall progress towards building a competitive, knowledge-based society. The European Charter for Small Enterprises (ECSE) reinforces this link, stating that: “Europe will nurture entrepreneurial spirit and new skills from an earlier age. General knowledge about

Photo: NAVIGATOR Consulting Group Ltd



Interactive training in the classroom: learning circles, the Anton Makarenko Kiev Professional-Pedagogical College.

business and entrepreneurship needs to be taught at all school levels. Specific business-related modules should be made an essential ingredient of education schemes at secondary level and at colleges and universities.”

Since 1999, the European Training Foundation has been making a valuable contribution to the field of entrepreneurship in education and training in the partner countries. Between 2000 and 2003, a three-phase pilot project entitled “Entrepreneurship in Education and Training in Russia and Ukraine” has been implemented by the ETF in conjunction with the National Observatories, EU experts and other partners in both countries. This project has recently been evaluated by external evaluators¹, and some of the main lessons learned for the ETF as well as other actors in this field are presented here.

The project

The EET pilot project occurred in the regions of north-west Russia and Kiev Oblast between 2001 and 2003, and involved three phases. In Phase I, the ETF worked with school administrators and teachers to develop personal enterprise and general business understanding. Phase II provided insights into working in an ‘intrapreneurship’²-driven organisation, while Phase III dealt with the creation of capacity to start new business ventures.

There were four main types of project activities:

- A total of six action-learning training programmes were held for the VET schools by EU trainers. Subjects included ‘Fostering entrepreneurship in the organisation of schools’ and ‘Fostering entrepreneurship in the classroom work of teachers’.

Photo: NAVIGATOR Consulting Group Ltd



Interactive training in the classroom, the Anton Makarenko Kiev Professional-Pedagogical College.

- Extensive workshops and consultations with policymakers and stakeholders were held to further define the concept of entrepreneurship in the VET system.
- New methods and resources were developed, including training approaches, new curricula and options for class organisation. Manuals such as Principles of Entrepreneurship and How to Set Up your Own Business were written.
- Small-scale surveys and labour market analyses were carried out to determine methods of working more effectively with employers and determining curricular needs.

A total of nine vocational education and training institutions took part in the project, including initial, secondary and tertiary levels.

Key project elements

The EET project contained a number of elements and innovative approaches that contributed to its success.

These included:

- **Preparation:** The ETF prepared extensively for the project. Roundtables and a regional meeting on entrepreneurship were held throughout 1999 and 2000 in the NIS region, with the attendance of EU and partner country experts.

This enabled the detailed preparation of a project logical framework and terms of reference that were grounded in specific needs and expectations. The National Observatories and other project beneficiaries and actors were involved and consulted at each stage of preparation.

¹ *The complete report is available in English and Russian from the ETF at www.etf.eu.int*

² *‘Intrapreneurship’ refers to the process of acting entrepreneurially when employed in a salaried position.*

'The EET project made a significant short-term impact [...] within the Russian and Ukrainian pilot schools'

■ **Focus on schools as the loci of change:** The fact that the project focused on the level of the school provided a powerful force for change. Schools participated voluntarily, with very little material funding. Over the course of three years, it was possible to achieve results at the school level that led to a sustainable change in learning methods and school coordination. This 'bottom-up' approach enabled changes to take place in practice rather than focusing on the policy level, where change may take longer to implement.

■ **Use of change agent teams in schools:** In order to embed the change process firmly in schools, change agent teams (CATs) were developed. These comprise groups of teachers and administrators who attended EET project activities and training programmes, and were then responsible for disseminating and cascading these in their respective institutions. The teams were useful in that they formed a traditional link with the role of school pedagogical councils. When the evaluation was implemented in late 2004, it was found that the CAT groups had continued their work, in many cases through the pedagogical councils, and that innovations in teaching and learning were well under way.

■ **Use of innovative training methods:** The project was able to successfully apply innovative teaching methods in the classroom. These included learning circles, virtual training companies, case studies, and problem solving. These methods placed the emphasis on the student, and his/her capacity to design and apply solutions. A major effort was made to find ways of enhancing self-confidence and communications ability, which are vital for the modern workforce.

The results of the project were supported by the appropriate context. VET schools in Russia and Ukraine are critically aware of the need for change, and have carried out numerous entrepreneurial or innovative changes themselves. These include contracts with companies for continuing training of students, fundraising, introduction of new curricular fields to meet with demand, and participation in various donor-funded projects. This was very much the right project at the right time.

Project evaluation

The evaluation was carried out by external consultants in conjunction with the ETF's Project Monitoring and Evaluation Unit between October 2004 and February 2005. Field visits to St Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev were implemented by the evaluation team, and a detailed evaluation report was submitted.

The evaluation found that the EET project made a significant short-term impact in terms of its LogFrame Objectives within the Russian and Ukrainian pilot schools. The pilot schools and teachers are disseminating the EET approach at conferences, educational events, and school training events in Russia, Ukraine and other NIS countries. At the policy level, key stakeholders have become informed and made familiar with the subject of EET, while recommendations for integrating EET into national legislation have been produced.

The evaluation report also drew the following conclusions about the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the pilot project:

■ **Relevance:** The EET project correctly defined the need for supporting entrepreneurship as a key focus of national economic development. It has defined the need to reform VET schools as a

key driver of change, and within the schools it focused on administrators, teachers and students. The project's external emphasis on developing relations with employers as well as creating a common vision and understanding of entrepreneurship are highly relevant to actual development needs and potential in both countries.

■ **Efficiency:** There has been a strong delivery of results, and the project was able to utilise synergies between its activities and those of the ETF VET reform projects in Russia and Ukraine. It is also noteworthy that the total budget disbursed was only EUR 388,825, and that in fact a higher budget allocation of EUR 425,000 had been planned. Future pilot projects should include a greater allocation of resources required for developing materials and supporting pilot institutions and teachers, as their financial situation and resource availability should not be taken for granted. Future project efficiency should review the possibility of developing a financial monitoring framework that includes cost efficiency and benchmark ratios between pilot projects. The overall time allocated by ETF staff to a pilot project should also be reviewed.

■ **Effectiveness:** The project achieved strong results in "LogFrame Objective 2: Revising curricula and introducing EET-based learning processes", and "LogFrame Objective 3: Introducing an entrepreneurial approach to teacher training". Future project effectiveness should be monitored more comprehensively through definition and analysis of key performance indicators. Future effectiveness initiatives should include the establishment of a knowledge management system to ensure continuity of performance and learning within the ETF; this will ensure that staff turnover does not affect organisational performance.

■ **Impact:** A strong impact is seen on the pilot institutions and individuals involved. There has been a real change in mentality, curriculum structure and school operations. Schools and teachers continue to work with EET development, both internally through their pedagogical or methodological councils and externally through projects, dissemination initiatives and contracts with other schools. In order to assure a broader, societal or system impact, it will be necessary to actively link the EET project with larger technical assistance projects such as the World Bank-supported Educational Reform Project or the various Tacis initiatives. At the system level, it will be necessary to continue the project of policy reform and to focus on key points in the system such as teacher training and certification. EET does not feature extensively in the current national policy reforms of either Russia or Ukraine.

■ **Sustainability:** The policy initiatives have met with general agreement, but there has been limited support from national and regional policymakers. Changes in governments and competing VET priorities resulting from regionalisation play a role here. Financial sustainability is high - the project results and methods have been integrated into VET school operations without extensive funding and with no external financial changes (e.g. tuition raises, funding from other donors). The training materials and methods are still being used in the schools and further afield. The role of creativity, personal interaction and personal analysis should strengthen the ability of men and women in the national labour market, as well as the national development capacity of the countries involved.

A further important finding was that the number of pilot

schools, policymakers, teachers and students that have participated is too small to make a sustained difference at the system level. Resources are too limited, and there are too many challenges to adaptation. Without additional support designed to bring the lessons of EET to a significantly larger population of schools, teachers, administrators and companies, the societal and economic impact of the project on the two target countries will be limited.

Conclusions and future recommendations

This project illustrates the transformation role that the ETF can play in the larger world of VET. The ETF has been able to leverage resources and define a small-scale pilot project that has (a) correctly identified a thematic area with critical application to the NIS region; (b) mobilised the energy and resources of experts in the EU and in two target countries and implemented a three-stage project; and (c) gained valuable experience and knowledge on the institutional adaptation of schools and the personal adaptation of teachers and administrators in the VET system.

The EET project has rendered highly relevant and useful results that make a real contribution to the pilot schools. Valuable information and best practice has also been developed for the wider teaching profession, the VET system, and the labour markets in each country, although the impact in these fields is limited. The resources, results and best practice of the EET project should not be lost: the ETF, together with other international donors and national authorities, should extend the work on a national scale in Russia and Ukraine, and begin activities in other partner countries.

Photos: NAVIGATOR Consulting Group Ltd



Virtual training company presentation: fashion design, the Anton Makarenko Kiev Professional-Pedagogical College.



Virtual training company presentation: travel agency, the Anton Makarenko Kiev Professional-Pedagogical College.

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OPENING UP VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

A VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

There's a city where the main square was totally flooded with Greek flags on the day of Greece's triumph in Euro 2004. In the same city, the street that's lined with Italian restaurants was awash with Ferrari flags on the night of the recent Grand Prix. The same city has wide, tree-lined streets in its shopping district that are modelled on the boulevards of Paris. And, significantly for this article, the same city has an education and training system that's modelled on its historical ties to Britain.

The city is Melbourne, the state capital of Victoria, one of the eight states and territories that make up Australia's federal system. Victoria is the south-easternmost state on the mainland of Australia, with a population of 5 million, of which 75% live in Melbourne and its surrounding suburbs. Melbourne is a very multicultural city - as well as large communities from almost

every European background, there are sizable communities with cultural and family connections to South-East Asia, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East.

One of the penalties of an education system that draws on the traditions of the countries of the United Kingdom is that academic success seems to be valued much more highly than vocational success. This contrasts with the tradition in many parts of mainland Europe of seeing vocational schools and apprenticeships as high-status pathways. In Victoria, and in Australia more generally, there has been a steady change in the expectations of school leavers as the proportion of the population enrolling in universities has risen. The value system that sees academic pathways as superior to vocational pathways has therefore been reinforced, despite the fact that the majority of school leavers in Victoria do not enter university. The other options open to them, such as studying at a vocational college, taking up an apprenticeship or finding employment, have not carried the same status or respect as a university course. This creates two challenges.

First, there is growing evidence in Australia of skill shortages, especially in the traditional areas covered by apprenticeships such as the construction crafts, manufacturing and automotive engineering. Could a stronger vocational focus in schools encourage more young people to take up pathways involving apprenticeships in these traditional skills and therefore

help deal with these skill shortages?

Second, too many young people in Victoria have been failing to complete their senior secondary school certificates, with many leaving school even before the beginning of study for the certificate. This was an issue of great concern to the current Victorian government when it came to power in 1999 because all the evidence suggested that such students put themselves at a major disadvantage in their future education and employment options. So the new government set a target - to increase the number of young Victorians who



Photo: VQA



Dr Dennis Gunning is the Director of the Victorian Qualifications Authority and is a former Development Director of the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Photo: VQA

academic focus. So how could many more young people be attracted to stay on in education and training if an academic course didn't meet their needs? And, if the answer was to offer a more vocational approach, how could it be designed to be highly respected and highly valued, rather than being seen as second class?

That existing Victorian senior secondary school certificate is the Victorian Certificate of Education - or, to most Victorians, simply 'the VCE'. The VCE is one of the family of senior secondary school certificates in the Australian federal system. It was originally designed to provide options for a wide range of students but, rather like its equivalents in the other Australian states and in the countries of the UK, it has become dominated by its use as a pathway into university.

Victorian Qualifications Authority

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) was set up by the Victorian government in 2001.

successfully completed their senior secondary certificate or its equivalent from a little under 75% in 1999 to 90% by the year 2010.

However, the existing Victorian senior secondary certificate was unlikely to be attractive to such a wide range of students because of its perceived

Its first task was to review the options available to young Victorians to see if changes could be made that would encourage more young people to stay in education and training and complete their secondary school certificate. One option was to change the design of the VCE - but because of its strong links to university entrance, any changes would have required extensive consultation and might have taken many years to implement. A quicker solution was needed.

So, in late 2001, the VQA proposed to the Victorian Minister of Education and Training, Lynne Kosky, that a new senior secondary certificate be introduced to sit alongside the VCE as an alternative option. The proposal arose from the VQA's observation that many Victorian secondary schools had already introduced their own alternatives - and these alternatives had many features in common. In particular, these included a vocational orientation, strong links with local employers and community organisations and a significant proportion of the learning taking place outside the school.

'The aim of this mix was to ensure that students would develop the basic skills to progress in the future'

Chris Gates – a senior secondary school student at Doveton Secondary College, Dandenong, Victoria

Chris Gates, who is 17 years old, always wanted to become a mechanic but was unsure how to achieve his goal. "I was going to try to get an apprenticeship but didn't know how I would go. But then I found out about the VCAL." Chris believes the hands-on experience in his VCAL course will help him achieve his dream of becoming a mechanic. "I feel really lucky to be able to do the VCAL," he said.

As part of his VCAL course, Chris studies Automotive Technology and additional modules in light vehicle automotive and panel beating, which are being offered by Chisholm Institute, a vocational college in Dandenong. To complement this learning, he is undertaking two weeks work experience with the town's Ford dealership.

Doveton Secondary College is in Dandenong, a town on the southern edge of Melbourne. "Our VCAL students work one day per week in industry throughout their course", said Trevor Crellin, Assistant Principal at the school. "The VCAL enables students like Chris to gain a broad range of skills before leaving school and entering

the workforce," Mr Crellin said. For example, Chris will be able to show employers that, through his VCAL course, he had developed skills and knowledge of the automotive industry, including parts, component manuals and servicing

Des Piggott, operations manager at the Ford dealership, believes that the VCAL's applied learning prepares students for the workplace. "They've got realistic expectations about what the job involves," he said. "The training and work experience they receive in VCAL gives them a clearer understanding of the job role, so there will be fewer surprises and they'll be more likely to stick with it."

Doveton Secondary College has been providing vocational training for students for several years. But according to Trevor Crellin the VCAL offers students and employers even greater benefits. "It allows students to study a program that directly links work experience with apprenticeship modules and with subjects offered by the school," he said. "The VCAL is helping make students feel good about themselves and their future," he said. "A number would have left school if they hadn't had the option of the planned pathway VCAL offers."

Photo: VQA



Duncan Storr – a senior secondary school student at Corio Bay Senior College, Geelong, Victoria

Duncan, who is 16 years old, didn't think that the VCE would help him get a job as a landscape gardener and so he thought he might leave school as soon as he could. "I like physical hard work and hands-on learning, and I didn't think the VCE was going to suit me," Duncan said. "But when I heard I could do the VCAL I decided it would be worth staying at school," he said. "I thought I would have a better chance of getting an apprenticeship if I completed Year 12 and left with a qualification."

Corio Bay Senior College serves an area of Geelong, Victoria's second biggest city and an important industrial centre. Duncan's VCAL course at the school is designed to give him practical hands-on experience in horticulture and a chance to learn some of the technical skills required to become a landscape gardener. Duncan already works one day a week in a local nursery doing manual jobs. As part of his VCAL course he is working on a local landscaping and horticulture project where he is learning the technical side of the job through a structured learning program. In the Personal Development Skills part of the course, he is doing voluntary work with the Australian Conservation Volunteers Program. "I have voluntarily helped out on the revegetation project at the Bowen River and worked with animals at the Serendip Sanctuary," he said.

With his interest in learning renewed, Duncan is keen to go on to vocational college and do further training in order to complete an apprenticeship in landscape gardening.

But the schools involved said that these courses, although beneficial to the young people involved, lacked incentive because they did not lead to a formal, state-wide certificate that recognised the students' achievements.

So the VQA designed a new certificate around these successful local initiatives. In recognition of the new certificate's different approach to learning, it was called the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. Like the VCE, the new certificate has quickly become known just by its initials, VCAL.

Questions

This was a radical step for a number of reasons. Victoria would be the only state in Australia offering two different senior secondary school certificates. How would students, parents, teachers and employers react to a certificate based on applied learning and on vocational purpose? Would the successes of schools' existing

alternative courses be enhanced by having a state-wide certificate available? Would other schools be able to develop the successful partnerships with employers and community organisations needed to provide real-life relevance for the studies?

To try to get answers to these questions, the VQA set up pilots of the new certificate, involving 500 students in 20 schools and two vocational colleges. The new certificate was designed to be available on three levels, in order to cater for the range of abilities of students that might enrol in the certificate - these were called 'foundation', 'intermediate' and 'senior'. Each level was designed to take a full year to complete successfully - and each level was designed around the same structure. This required each student to have a course built of fully accredited and quality assured units and modules chosen to meet their needs and level of achievement so far.

The choice of units and modules in VCAL courses had to follow specified design rules. The units and modules had to cover

four curriculum areas - and achievement to the appropriate level in each of the four was a requirement for successful achievement of the certificate. The four areas were literacy/numeracy, personal development, general pre-employment skills, and industry-specific skills.

The aim of this mix was to ensure that students would develop the basic skills necessary for progress in the future, such as literacy, numeracy, personal confidence and the ability to work with other people, and at the same time gain experience of work in specific vocations, such as hospitality, tourism, manufacturing, multimedia and the automotive industry.

So VCAL was not intended to produce young people with full workplace competencies. Instead, the aim was to equip students with the basic skills necessary for all workplaces and give them a range of workplace experiences so that they would be able to make better-informed choices of pathway. For VCAL, these future pathways for students were either

further learning (such as a higher-level VCAL course or a course at a vocational college) or employment (such as an apprenticeship or a job).

Above all, VCAL was intended to show young people who had not responded well to an academic curriculum that they could achieve success through a different, more practical approach to learning - and that this success would encourage them to look for, and achieve, more success. VCAL, therefore, aimed to prove that the old saying 'success breeds success' could work for these young people.

The results of the pilot of VCAL in 2002 were simply amazing. The independent evaluation of the pilot carried out by one of Victoria's university education faculties showed that many of the young people involved had boosted their confidence, their skills and their chances in life through the new courses.

It showed that schools had risen to the challenge of building strong partnerships with employers and community

organisations and adopting more flexible timetables and rules. It showed that parents who had, in some cases, given up on their child as far as school was concerned were overjoyed that the same child was now achieving success and opening up new doors for the future. It showed that employers were delighted with their experience of young people in their workplace and were prepared to offer apprenticeships or jobs to those young people.

Many of the young people involved in the trial had been ready to leave school but had decided to give VCAL a try. At the end of the trial year, only a handful of these young people did not have a positive outcome.

To some parents' astonishment, some young people who had been ready to leave school at the end of the previous year now wanted to enrol for a second year of VCAL. To other parents' delight, young people who had been destined for unemployment were being offered jobs or apprenticeships. In trying to analyse what made

VCAL such a success, the students themselves saw it as a simple answer - "VCAL is a hands-on course". That seemed such a perfect message that the VQA has used it ever since as VCAL's slogan on publications and publicity material.

With such great results, the Victorian government decided to make VCAL available right across the state in a phased implementation programme backed by nearly AU\$50 million (EUR 30 million) to support the development of VCAL courses in schools and the development of partnerships with local employers and community organisations. Now, in 2005, that implementation programme is nearly complete, with 350 secondary schools running VCAL courses. Vocational colleges and adult and community education centres have also taken up VCAL, bringing the total number of VCAL centres to nearly 400. And the total of 500 students in 2001 is likely to grow to over 10,000 VCAL students this year.

Photo: VQA

Rhonaleigh Ryman – a senior secondary school student at Eumemmerring Secondary College, Victoria

At age 16, Rhonaleigh thought she was ready to look for work, but employers told her she didn't have high enough qualifications. "Employers wanted people who had a recognised qualification, which I didn't have," Rhonaleigh explains. "I didn't want to do the VCE, but I didn't want to be unemployed either," she says. "I heard about the VCAL and thought it would be really good because it involved practical work experience and I'd have a chance to find out more about a variety of jobs."

Rhonaleigh began studying her VCAL course at Eumemmerring College, a secondary school in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Her VCAL course included work experience in retail and office administration roles where she has learnt cash management and developed telephone and computer skills. Meanwhile, she has continued to improve her literacy skills and numeracy skills by undertaking modules in English and Mathematics. Rhonaleigh also studies one day a week at Chisholm Institute, a vocational college, and has completed hospitality modules which also count towards her VCAL. However, she says hospitality is only a back-up option for the future.

"I've discovered I really enjoy office administration and would really like to get a job in that area." Rhonaleigh's enthusiasm and developing office skills have helped her to secure a part-time role as office administration assistant with a local employer one day a week. "I'll gain my VCAL certificate at the end of this year," she says. "If I don't get a full-time job next year I'll either come back and do a higher level VCAL course or go onto to further training in business and office administration at the vocational college."



For further information:

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Interestingly, there are considerably more male than female VCAL students - and twice as many VCAL students per head of population in rural parts of Victoria than from the Melbourne conurbation. That balance reflects the fact that secondary school success rates had previously been much lower for males and for students in rural Victoria.

The VQA hasn't rested on its laurels, though. Instead, it worked on another old adage - 'develop or die'! So variations on the VCAL theme have been developed - for adult learners; for indigenous peoples, whose children tend to have very poor educational outcomes; and for students who want to specialise in one vocational area. All of these have been independently evaluated - with positive results - and have now been implemented alongside the original VCAL design. The VQA is now working on new pilots designed to build even better pathways from VCAL into apprenticeship - and discussing with universities how opportunities might be created for VCAL students whose new-found success encourages them to aim for a university course.

VCAL has continued to be evaluated and monitored very closely, as is appropriate for a new senior school certificate. The VQA has collected destination data on the 5,000 students enrolled in VCAL in 2002 and the 8,000 enrolled in 2004. Remarkably, despite the increase in scale compared to the pilot year in 2001, the success rate of VCAL has remained very high, with around 90% of VCAL students going on to further learning or employment in the following year. For the 2004 VCAL cohort, the most common student pathways were to the highest level of VCAL (over 1,000 students), to an apprenticeship (over 1,000 students) and to full-time employment (over 800 students).

The variety of pathways taken up by the rest of the students was wide, including the VCE, courses at vocational colleges, part-time work and, for a few students, university.

Despite all this continuous development and huge increase in the number of students, the core features of VCAL have stood the test of time and the regular independent evaluations. VCAL remains a course designed to open up vocational pathways for young people into further courses, an apprenticeship or a job. VCAL remains a course designed to give students the crucial basic skills and experience of the world of work so that they have more self-confidence and are better informed when they come to make their choice of pathway. VCAL remains a course built around partnerships between schools and local employers and organisations.

As everyone discovers sooner or later, networks are a really important feature of working life. For many students, VCAL helps build a network between them, their school, local vocational college, local employers and local apprenticeship centres. The result is often an offer of a place on a course, or a job or apprenticeship. This is another core feature of VCAL - it is a certificate that opens up local pathways for young people because generally, for students with vocational pathways in mind, it's local knowledge and local networking that opens the doors.

So, in Victoria, students can now choose a course that suits their favoured approach to learning, whether it's academic or applied, and their chosen pathway, whether to university or the world of work.

Inevitably, there's a temptation to compare the two Victorian senior secondary school certificates - VCE and VCAL - and to ask if they are 'equivalent and have parity of esteem. The VQA's answer to that question has been to ask if a banana and an orange are equivalent and have parity of esteem. The key question that needs to be asked, in making a judgement of status and value, is whether the certificate is well designed to, and whether it actually does, create pathways for young people.

The VCE is a well-designed certificate that has been used successfully over many years to open up pathways for young Victorians into universities throughout Australia and beyond. It is fit for its purpose and should therefore have a place in the Victorian education system. Its younger sibling, the VCAL, has been shown in every year since its launch to open up pathways for young Victorians into vocational courses, apprenticeships and jobs. It is also fit for its distinctively different purpose and should also have a place in the Victorian education system.

So, just as Victoria is a very diverse state, it now offers a diversity of certificates to its senior secondary school students. Whether VCAL will change the culture that puts academic success above vocational success, only time will tell. In the meantime, though, VCAL has made an important contribution to achieving the Victorian government's target of having more young people successfully completing secondary education.

And what is undoubtedly true is that VCAL has given hope to parents who had thought that their children had failed. It has connected schools and employers in a way that might be at least part of the answer to solving employers' skill shortages. And, above all, VCAL has opened up pathways for young people that they didn't think were possible and has improved their commitment to learning and their future chances in life. That's not a bad start for a new certificate that's still less than four years old!

Dr Dennis Gunning
Director, VQA,
Australia

ETF: HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

A PRIORITY FOR THE ENP

If you give people access to education, you are giving them hope for a better future and a stake in the present well-being of their societies. In countries under the strains of transition, investing in education and training is particularly important as it can help increase employability and social cohesion. For this reason, the European Commission has long seen human resource development (HRD) as an essential ingredient in underpinning development in transition economies. With the coming of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2006, HRD can be expected to play even more of a key role.

With the details of how the ENP will work still being decided, the ETF has contributed to the debate by publishing a position paper on the role of human resources development in the ENP. "HRD represents a strategic investment sector for the EU to achieve its policy priorities in neighbouring countries," says the ETF in the paper. "HRD is not only an essential element in the process of economic development in partner countries, but also a prerequisite for providing the countries

and their citizens with the competences to access the EU internal market and benefit from cross-border cooperation. It is fundamental for fostering active citizenship, promoting social cohesion and combating discrimination."

The ETF firmly believes, however, that investing in HRD is not so much a matter of what you do but how you go about it. The draft instrument of the ENP outlines several broad areas in which HRD is expected to make a contribution. In its position paper, the ETF puts some flesh on these bones by suggesting specific ways in which HRD can help meet the policy goals of the ENP.

First, HRD can contribute to the development of the market economy. For instance, lifelong learning strategies can keep young people learning after graduation and help them acquire new skills in line with changes in the labour market. Another area is that of migration - as well as producing positive effects at home, efficient education and training systems in Neighbourhood countries can help lessen skills shortages within the EU by preparing future migrants properly.

Thus, HRD investment should focus on developing transparent systems benchmarked with EU schemes and on ensuring that competencies are recognised across borders.

HRD can also act as a key tool in the fight against poverty. Boosting participation rates in basic education clearly benefits young people, giving them a better chance of finding work. The ETF believes efforts should be made to increase average attendance in Neighbourhood countries to meet the EU/OECD standards of nine years of obligatory schooling. For adults, active labour market policies such as retraining or job creation through supporting the development of small to medium-sized enterprises can be very effective. HRD can also help improve the poor institutional capacity that plagues many Neighbourhood countries - benchmarking against European standards can be useful in developing the institutional capacity required to manage the education and training systems of these countries.

Finally, Tempus has shown its worth in promoting cooperation between higher education institutions and understanding between cultures. Thus, the ETF believes that Tempus should be reinforced and used to consolidate links between people in the EU and their neighbours.

For all these reasons, the ETF believes that HRD in Neighbourhood countries is indeed a strategic investment for the EU. It will benefit not only Neighbourhood countries but also the EU. The ETF position paper says: "HRD represents an attractive win-win field of investment through which both the EU and the partner country can agree on clear long-term benefits." If the return on investment is to be maximised, HRD must be fully integrated into broader development policy, especially in areas such as migration, reducing poverty and cross-border cooperation. This is the challenge facing everyone involved in deciding the details of how the ENP will work.



HRD can contribute to the development of the market economy.

Photo: European Commission

PREPARING FOR ACCESSION

THROUGH HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

With the Lisbon agenda taking an ever more prominent role in European social and employment policy development, developing human capital has become a key priority both within the European Union and in external support to the EU's neighbouring countries. One of the proposed new EU instruments for external support, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), offers an excellent opportunity to capitalise on the extensive experience of preparing for accession through human resources development that the ETF has developed over the last ten years.

Policymakers see human resource development as an essential ingredient underpinning the development of transition economies. In countries with relatively weak education and labour market systems, the return on investment in human capital can be especially high. A number of the countries aspiring to EU membership still have education and labour market systems that require intensive development. In the new set of instruments that from 2007 will come to govern EU external support, these countries will receive EU assistance through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

"Experience in the new Member States has amply demonstrated that human resources development can make a considerable contribution towards achieving the broader goals of European pre-accession assistance," says Muriel Dunbar, Director of the ETF. "It is therefore considered an important ingredient in the current draft proposal for the new instrument."

In April, reacting to the broad policy objectives outlined in the current version of the IPA proposal, the ETF published a background paper with a set of recommendations outlining how the measures proposed in the draft IPA can be implemented to ensure effective and sustainable reform, and what contribution ETF

experience and expertise could make to this process.

Summarising the results of the ETF's country monographs and its 2003 publication *Thirteen Years of Cooperation and Reforms in Vocational Education and Training in the Accessing and Candidate Countries*, the paper highlights the positive contribution that human resource development has made to the accession process in the countries that became full EU members in 2004. In its overview of the current state of affairs, the paper leaves no questions about the enormity of the task faced by some of the pre-accession countries. Employment rates are still far below those in the EU 25.

In education - with the exception of Croatia - the gap between EU benchmarks and the reality in the pre-accession countries is also still very wide.

The core message of the paper is that important lessons have been learned in the past ten years and that these must not be wasted. The paper highlights in particular the need to approach reforms in human resource development in a comprehensive and systemic way, involving all sectors and aspects of education and training.

In the paper, the ETF recommends that comprehensive and integrated lifelong learning strategies be designed for all countries and that these include adequate resources for the different components of such a strategy, especially adult learning and work-related training. These lifelong learning strategies are made a key component of employment action plans based on the European Employment Strategy.

Referring to successful past practice, the ETF recommends the continued use of instruments, principles and references developed by the EU and its Member States, as well as EU education benchmarks and employment targets in education and training reform in pre-accession countries.

"We believe that, as the main instrument supporting the development and implementation of education, training and employment policies in pre-accession countries, the benefit of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance can be optimised with targeted help from the ETF," says Muriel Dunbar.

Finally, the ETF recommends an increase in the proportion of resources devoted by the IPA to human resources development to 25% for the candidate countries and 15% for the potential candidate countries.



Photo: ILO/P. Deloche

The ETF recommends in its position paper that comprehensive and integrated lifelong learning strategies be designed for all countries.

HRD IN COMPANIES IN A LIFELONG LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

RECENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN THE EU AND ITS PARTNER COUNTRIES



On 17-18 January 2005, the ETF held a seminar in Turin on 'HRD in companies in a lifelong learning perspective: Recent trends and challenges in the EU and its partner countries'. The aim of the seminar was to update ETF staff on some of the recent developments in Europe concerning HRD in companies, particularly in small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and to open the discussion between EU and ETF experts on the specific challenges appearing and on possible approaches to be taken when designing and implementing activities in our partner countries.

The EU approach was put forward by Pascaline Descy from Cedefop, as well as by Petri Lempinen from the European Trade Union Confederation and Heikki Suomalainen from the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe. Particular focus was put on EU countries' experiences in France (with Françoise Davesne from the Union des Industries Metallurgiques et Minières, Philippe Mehaut, researcher at the Laboratoire d'Economie et de Sociologie du Travail, and Jacques Terrenoire, expert from the consultancy company Bernard Brunhes Associés), Ireland (with Lucy Fallon Byrne from the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and Mary Fitzpatrick from the University of Limerick), Norway (with Sveinung Skule from the Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research) and Spain (with Ricardo Guisado from the Fundacion Tripartita).

This seminar was seen as a good opportunity to learn from a range of ETF projects and initiatives already implemented, design projects and better prepare further actions. Particular focus was put on initiatives taken by enterprises, at company or at sector level, on the role played by public policies and by the social partners when supporting or initiating such activities, and on the impetus given by EU policies in education and employment. Two aspects received particular attention: the SME sector, and the identification and

Photo: European Commission

Experience in lifelong learning in the EU Member States can be widely disseminated and used in a policy learning perspective in EU neighbouring countries.

validation of non-formal and informal learning (and their complementing role with training activities). During two days, presentations and debates were structured along the following challenges and questions.

At company level, the main challenge is to move from the need to have skilled workers to the need for workers to develop their skills, competences and employability in a lifelong learning perspective, and for companies to contribute to this by investing in human resources as the most relevant factor in improving their own competitiveness - in other words, changing the perception of training from cost to investment for employers and employees. Key questions were: How can we increase companies' awareness of the benefits of investing in skills development? How do we remove barriers to training? How do we develop and spread the practice of competence development plans for all employees in the workplace?

At the public policies level, the main challenge for most ETF partner countries is to move from an administrative approach - organising things centrally, as was done previously with large state-owned companies - towards a facilitating role, setting the right incentives and ensuring an optimal mix of public and private involvement and resources. Key questions were: How do we set up and implement comprehensive policies based on partnerships and aimed at promoting both competitiveness and employability, combining financial with non-financial incentives including validation of non-formal and informal learning? How can we increase the quality of education and training systems and make them more flexible and responsive to the needs of the labour market, individuals and society?

At the social partners level, the challenge is to enhance their involvement in education and training and to support the development of a real social partnership at company level as well as at the sectoral, local, regional and national levels. Key questions were: How can we develop social partners' professionalism in issues linked to human resources development in companies, particularly SMEs? What is the best way to set up a real dialogue between employers' organisations and employees' unions on issues linked to training in the workplace?

The main findings and lessons for the ETF centred on the fact there is no EU model for skills development in companies to be disseminated to other countries, but a series of good practice developed in national contexts according to different cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, globalisation,



Photo: European Commission

At company level, the main challenge is to move from the need to have skilled workers to the need for workers to develop their skills, competences and employability in a lifelong learning perspective.

developments in the EU labour market, preparation for the knowledge economy and achievement of the Lisbon objectives create common goals for all companies. Learning in the workplace, skills development in SMEs, specific actions for low qualifications, and validation and recognition of prior learning are increasingly receiving attention from policymakers.

A specific problem for the ETF is that it acts in countries where, in most cases, there are no traditions of industrial relations as developed in the EU. Governments in these countries play a leading role in all matters related to education and training; they are the focal point for technical assistance and policy advice. Thus, the formal education system is dominant and social partners are weak and not well structured. It is crucial that the ETF insists on involving social partners as much as possible in cooperation with ministers and other state agencies. Actions must be taken step by step, by identifying the key stakeholders and involving them in projects at national, sectoral or regional level, aimed at awareness raising and capacity building.

The Copenhagen and Maastricht messages and related documents, particularly the document on promoting the work environment as a "learning conducive environment", as well as the follow-up reports of the EU social partners framework of actions for the lifelong development of skills and competencies, are important tools. They can be widely disseminated and used in a policy learning perspective in the candidate countries as well as in the pre-accession countries and other countries involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy.

**Jean-Raymond Masson, ETF,
Department for Enlargement
and South-Eastern Europe**

REVIEWING PROGRESS TOWARDS EU ACCESSION

Regional cooperation and the integration of European policy developments in vocational education and training into national structures are integral parts of South-Eastern European countries' preparation for accession to the European Union.

South-Eastern European countries' progress towards EU accession has recently been reviewed by a pioneering ETF initiative known as Peer Reviews. The ETF Peer Review programme involves experts from old and new EU Member States pooling their skills and experience with leading representatives from South-Eastern European countries. In small teams, these experts visit neighbouring countries in order to assess progress on vocational education and training reforms and recommend new developments.

To ensure the continuing relevance of the initiative to South-Eastern European countries and to keep the highly complex process on track, the ETF took the bold decision to 'take a cold look in the mirror' and commission an external evaluation of the Peer Review process by the Paris-based Institute for Education and Social Policy (IESP).

The results of the Peer Review evaluation were presented to ministers, international experts and delegates from eighteen countries at a conference in Zagreb on 17 and 18 February 2005. The conference, entitled 'Outcomes of ETF Peer Reviews on implementation of VET policy in South-Eastern Europe and dissemination of the Copenhagen process', had the feel of something special about it. The unique convergence of so many high-level participants at an ETF conference - with the important opportunity to judge how far their countries had moved towards EU targets - served to underline the significance of the event.

The conference was held against the backdrop of a call to the Western Balkan countries by members of the European Parliament to coordinate their regional infrastructures more effectively in order to facilitate EU integration. This co-working

approach is to be underpinned by a philosophy known as the 'open method of coordination', the purpose of which is to provide a coherent strategy while at the same time respecting the subsidiarity principle.

There have been some very positive signs. One idea for greater regional cooperation, for example, has emerged from Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro. Among their joint proposals is the development of regional qualifications in professions such as tourism and construction. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria, on the other hand, have proposed greater co-working between countries on the difficulties faced in adopting the Copenhagen principles. "We must not think too much about how far we are from the benchmarks," said one representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina, "but focus

on our priorities and keep encouraging each other."

It is true that the Copenhagen process has introduced challenging and hard-edged EU benchmarks, such as the aim of reducing the percentage of early school leavers to 10% by 2010. But these benchmarks - which are currently some distance away for the majority of Western Balkan countries - are useful for measuring exactly how countries are progressing.

The EU is strongly committed to making its support to Western Balkan countries more responsive through, for example, organising national seminars, helping countries prepare action plans and creating national monitoring committees.

These events and the Copenhagen Declaration in general are especially relevant for South-Eastern Europe, because the guidance can be used as orientation for national policy. Additionally,



Photo: ETF

"We must capitalise on the richness of the debate," Muriel Dunbar, ETF Director, stated at the conference attended also by (left to right) Zelimir Janjic, Secretary of State for Secondary Education, Dr. Dragan Primorac, Minister for Science, Education and Sports, and Enrique Aguado-Asenjo, EC Delegation in Croatia.

What exactly is the Copenhagen Declaration? Copenhagen was an agreement made by ministers in November 2002 to enhance European cooperation on VET and help meet the Lisbon objective to “make Europe the most competitive knowledge-based society in the world by 2010”. The declaration prioritises a series of actions that include: a single framework for transparency; cooperation in VET quality assurance; a VET credit transfer system; common principles for validation of non-formal learning; strengthening lifelong guidance policies and practices; addressing the learning needs of teachers and trainers; and increasing support to develop qualifications and competences at sectoral level.

“South-Eastern Europe can now participate in EU programmes as part of its preparation for accession,” explains Jean-Raymond Masson from ETF.

But how well is the ETF’s Peer Review process contributing towards South-Eastern European countries’ progress? This was the question addressed by researchers from the IESP who were asked to carry out an evaluation study of the process. Their overall conclusion was that the ETF had undertaken “a highly complex exercise in challenging local contexts with objectives at different levels.” Despite the technical and political difficulty of the task, the researchers found that the overall conceptual framework was well defined and that crucially, Peer Reviews responded to a need identified by the beneficiary countries. The process had, they concluded, provided value for money as it had stimulated debate, established new networks and developed capacity.

A number of recommendations were made for improvements, however. They included the need to:

- ensure that Peer Reviews are undertaken with groups of partner countries that have comparable difficulties;

- time reviews to dovetail with each country’s budget or policy review cycles;
- produce better written briefing on the roles of members;
- ensure that key stakeholders back the Peer Reviews;
- give a realistic timeframe for producing the reports;
- increase the impact of reviews by holding more regional workshops;
- monitor outcomes more closely.

At the ETF conference in Zagreb, countries were given their first opportunity to give feedback on the Peer Review initiative and its evaluation. What did they think of the process and its outcomes? Their overwhelming response was that Peer Reviews are “significant, important and useful”. One sign of South-Eastern European countries’ enthusiasm for the whole project was that in addition to the researchers’ recommendations, they were eager to contribute actively towards improving the process.

Among the suggestions made was a strong desire to see a ‘variety of owners’ of the Peer Review process at the outset because, without this, key initiatives could easily be lost in times of political change. To ensure the implementation of the recommendations, it was strongly

suggested that countries should have to provide feedback to the ETF - perhaps after two years - on what has been achieved in relation to the previous Peer Review report.

Another suggestion in order to ensure that maximum benefit was gained from the “excellent model” provided by the Peer Reviews was for countries to use the method to carry out self-assessment. Additionally, many thought that each country’s National Observatory could play a much bigger role in monitoring progress towards the stated objectives.

The importance of bringing in new partners, such as representatives of the unemployed and NGOs, was also stressed.

“We must capitalise on the richness of this debate,” said ETF Director Muriel Dunbar. “The ETF will take on board these recommendations when we start the next round of country reviews in 2006.” But she also had a challenging message for the South-Eastern European countries: “It is up to you to look for answers and respond to the challenges that Copenhagen poses.”

Paul Rigg, International Correspondents in Education



Photo: ETF

Participants in Zagreb follow the discussions on the Peer Reviews

THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION LOOKS TO FUTURE CHANGES

The ETF today is quite a different institution than it was 10 years ago. In its first years, it suffered from arriving too late at a scene that was already set. Much has already been written about this, most notably in our publication Ten Years of the ETF, published in conjunction with our tenth anniversary in 2004. Today, almost 11 years after its establishment, we can be proud that the ETF is recognised as the European expertise centre in its field: cooperation with third countries in HRD for social and economic development.

Dr Ulrich Hillenkamp will retire from the ETF in June 2005. He spent nearly 11 years of his career in Turin, where he was Deputy Director since 1994. His last article for the ETF magazine is both reflective and forward-looking, describing recent changes to the EU's human resources development (HRD) policy and the resulting development of the ETF mandate. Dr Hillenkamp closes the article with some more personal conclusions from the time he described as "the most challenging and exciting of my working life."



Photo: ETF

'The strategy for lifelong learning was revitalised and became the leading concept for development in education, training and employment promotion.'

One decisive development has contributed very much to this result: the changing role of education, training and employment promotion within the European Union and in the context of the European Union's external relations policy.

In the first years of European integration, education and training was almost exclusively the responsibility of the Member States. Over the years, this has changed - most dramatically in Lisbon in 2000, when EU heads of state and government

formulated the common goal to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. They freed the way for education and training to move to the forefront of European policy development and gave education and training due recognition not only as key promoters of economic performance, employment and social inclusion, but also as the core investment in each individual citizen's quality of life.

The strategy for lifelong learning was revitalised and became the leading concept for development in education, training and employment promotion. Concrete action plans were developed, both in Brussels and in the individual Member States. Developing human resources became a focal point of EU policy - recognised as an investment, not a cost.

Around the same time, and partly as a result of these developments, EU Member States agreed to look at the performance of their education and employment systems in a policy coordination approach using what is called an 'open method of coordination', with instruments like benchmarks or Peer Reviews. The purpose was to learn by looking for best practice and to disseminate that best practice, and thereby achieve common political goals like reducing the number of early school leavers or increasing the participation of adults in education and training.

A changed role for HRD within EU external relations

The higher political profile of education and training had a decisive impact on the work of the ETF. Within the EU, the approach to innovation and reform in education and training became more comprehensive, no longer focused on just one part of the education system but increasingly on human resources development as a whole.

It was only logical that over time, EU support to education and training in the ETF's partner countries would be broadened and would come to cover the hot

topics in European human resources development: the lifelong learning agenda, employment promotion and active labour market policies, social inclusion and personal development.

Indeed, current EU external relations policy increasingly takes education and training as a subject of priority for cooperation with the outside world. There are two main arguments for this.

The first concerns the European profile in a global context. The European ambition, evident in the Lisbon and Barcelona aims, is to make the EU "a world reference for quality and relevance of education and training", attracting scientists,



researchers and talented young people from all over the world to study and work in the countries of Europe.

The second is outward-looking in a double sense, and is somewhat different for candidate and potential candidate countries, the 'ring of friends' - the countries surrounding the European Union that are the main target of Europe's new Neighbourhood Policy and other development cooperation.

Actual and potential candidate countries must adopt what is known as the *acquis communautaire*. In education and training, this term was used ten years ago only with reference to

legal obligations, such as those related to mutual recognition of diplomas. Increasingly, however, alignment efforts in the candidate countries have come to cover less clearly stipulated areas: the EU's lifelong learning and employment strategies, employment promotion through education and training, the promotion of economic and social cohesion, and active citizenship. These are often referred to as the soft *acquis*. In practice, candidate countries were included not only in EU education and training programmes like Leonardo da Vinci but also in important European policy developments such as the Lisbon and Copenhagen processes. The soft

acquis sets much of the agenda for ETF work in Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey and in the potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans.

In countries targeted by the newly defined Neighbourhood Policy, the European Commission wants to improve access to 'EU added value' or EU achievements - EU targets, approaches and experience in education, training and employment that draw on the diversity and richness of EU Member States as well as on collective political decisions, capitalised experience and agreed approaches, frameworks and actions. "Progressive economic integration" and "developing a zone of shared stability, security and prosperity" are key aims in this region. They warrant a far more prominent role for cooperation in human resources development and exchange of experience in future cooperation.

The Neighbourhood countries themselves have obvious reasons to follow EU developments closely. These countries may want to strengthen links with the EU for improved cooperation, mobility, migration and trade, but they also have an interest simply in making better-informed decisions in their own development processes.

In developing countries - some of the Neighbourhood countries and others further afield - the situation is somewhat different, but these countries too have an articulated interest in being informed and understanding European approaches. They too are affected by the globalisation processes that have increased mobility of capital and labour. For these countries, the European Union has made education and training, human and social development and poverty reduction political priorities going beyond the Millennium Development Goals. The further development of these aims will likely reinforce the importance of human resources and skills development beyond universal primary education in the context of poverty reduction.

'Indeed, current EU external relations policy increasingly takes education and training as a subject of priority for cooperation with the outside world.'



Photo: European Commission

For both groups of countries - Neighbourhood and developing countries - it is important to underline the fact that cooperation has to follow a systemic approach that looks at the whole of the education and training system and the way it links to other policy areas. Top-down and bottom-up approaches must be combined.

What are these EU values?

Without quoting or repeating all the political processes and decisions linked to cities like Lisbon, Barcelona, Luxemburg, Copenhagen, Maastricht and Bologna, I would like to add a word of explanation on what is or can be seen as EU values or achievements in education, training and employment promotion. I am thinking of achievements related to education, training, employment, social cohesion and personal development. Some are linked to political targets, such as becoming the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in

the world or reaching maximum employment levels in Europe. Others are politically agreed benchmarks to measure the quality, performance and achievements of the national education or employment systems, such as the benchmark of 85% of youth in the 20-24 age bracket having completed at least upper secondary education by 2010, the benchmark of 12.5 % of the adult working-age population having participated in lifelong learning by 2010, and the benchmark of 70% employment by 2010. All of these benchmarks demonstrate the importance of skills and qualifications for young people and adults. They also demonstrate the budding development of a European model of cooperation, increasingly building on mutual trust.

Perhaps the most important point of value for our partner countries is the agreed strategy on lifelong learning in its broadest sense. It requires coherent and comprehensive approaches in education and training and includes objectives

like employability and entrepreneurship, social inclusion and personal development for active and creative citizens. An important pillar of this strategy is the need for a substantial increase of public and private investment in education and training. The return on such investment is high and visible. Another pillar is the validation of non-formal and informal learning - people learn at different places throughout their lives, and all learning is valuable for work and personal development.

Further important common issues in the European Union are providing access to education for all; linking school and the workplace for learning purposes; establishing open pathways in education and training throughout life; improving the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training; improving the responsiveness of education and training to labour market needs; investing in early identification of skill needs (with a special focus on the knowledge-based society); strengthening lifelong guidance and counselling; enabling teachers and trainers to act as change agents; promoting mobility through transparency; and strengthening the role of social partners in all aspects of education, training and employment promotion.

Policy learning

In providing access to European experience, values, innovation and best practice, the European Training Foundation remains committed to the 'policy learning' approach it launched at its *Learning Matter* conference in late 2003. This is particularly true for our cooperation with the Neighbourhood and developing countries, but as a principal approach also for candidate countries defining their national policies. This approach aims to help relevant actors in partner countries to make informed decisions on policy formulation and the implementation of reform objectives by sharing knowledge and experience. The approach



Photo: ETF/A. Rannella

Deputy Director Ulrich Hillenkamp and Director Muriel Dunbar welcome EU Commissioner Ján Figel' at his visit to the ETF in February 2005



Photo: ETFE. Decorato

The ETF has proven that it is able to act as the European know-how centre

duly recognises national contexts, cultures and traditions, the necessary involvement of public and private stakeholders, and the principles of 'embeddedness', ownership and sustainability. Policy learning also takes into account that reform is a long-term process that needs time and continuing commitment from all sides. The ETF acts as a collective memory of reform processes, as a network builder and a network member and even as an institution that can enrich EU reform processes by providing insight into innovative processes in the partner countries.

The European Training Foundation finds itself an active partner in the middle of these exciting developments. Its work in the past 11 years has enabled the ETF to play a prominent and unique role in cooperation with third countries.

A changed role for the ETF

The ETF has a proven and acknowledged track record in promoting and employing 'EU

added value' outside the European Union by sharing experience in support of innovation and reform. This is demonstrated by an increasing number of substantial requests from Commission services and by a growing interest among individual EU Member States to use the ETF's expertise and services for the benefit of their own bilateral and multilateral cooperation targets in partner countries. The ETF's track record is also acknowledged by the partner countries themselves, who increasingly ask for policy advice in their reform endeavours.

The ETF has proven that it is able to act as the European know-how centre in and quite far beyond its originally envisaged field of work. It has consolidated its way of working. Its lean and efficient administration has proven its worth and the ETF has provided reliable technical assistance to the Tempus programme, through which it has gained an insight into higher education reform processes.

The ETF has also gained valuable experience in working with the target countries of all of

the three new Commissions' instruments and already provides input into the programming processes of these instruments.

The time has therefore come to acknowledge the developments described above in clear terms and adapt the ETF's Council Regulation accordingly, changing the mandate of the ETF to include the whole field of human resources development and related issues of employment promotion and labour market policy, and - with reference to the three new instruments - offering an opening to development cooperation. The consequences of this have to be reflected in the ETF's work programme and budget, and in the mid-term perspective for the year 2007 onwards.

Leaving the ETF, I am happy to state that this institution was and is able to strengthen and enrich cooperation between the EU and its partner countries in a field that I firmly believe to be the most important one for the future of citizens in the partner countries. I credit the ETF staff with this and am grateful for the time I have been allowed to devote to this real challenge.

Ulrich Hillenkamp

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