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Cedefop is a link between research, policy and practice, helping policymakers and practitioners, at all levels in the European Union, to have a clearer understanding of developments in vocational education and training and to draw conclusions for future action. It stimulates scientists and researchers to identify trends and future questions.

The *European journal of vocational training* is provided for by Article 3 of the founding Regulation of Cedefop of 10 February 1975.

The journal is nevertheless independent. It has an editorial committee that evaluates articles following a double-blind procedure whereby the members of the Editorial Committee, and in particular its rapporteurs, do not know the identity of those they are evaluating and authors do not know the identity of those evaluating them. The committee is chaired by a recognised university researcher and composed of researchers as well as two Cedefop experts, an expert from the European Training Foundation (ETF) and a representative of Cedefop's Governing Board.

The *European journal of vocational training* has an editorial secretariat composed of experienced researchers.

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Editorial

Jean-Raymond Masson
European Training Foundation – ETF
Member of the Editorial Committee

Bulgaria and Romania have now joined us. These two countries acceded to the European Union on 1 January 2007.

To welcome them, Cedefop and the Editorial Committee of the *European journal of vocational training* decided to devote a small feature in issue 41, May-August 2007/2, of the European Journal to their vocational training systems. The Journal would like to review the extent of preparation in education and vocational training in these countries at the time of accession, and assess the efforts we must still make together before we can achieve the objectives Europe laid down in Lisbon, at the European Spring Summit of 2000: to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010.

With the transition to democracy, which started after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the vocational training systems of Bulgaria and Romania have been largely transformed. Like the ten countries which joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 ([1]), Bulgaria and Romania have embarked on wide-ranging reforms of their education and training systems, and in particular have decompartmentalised technical and vocational education in secondary schools, developed access to higher education, established bridgeheads with general education structures, and renovated curricula and the teacher-training system. At the same time, measures have been taken to train adults better, in particular unemployed workers severely affected by industrial restructuring. Efforts have also been made to involve the social partners in drawing up and implementing reforms. Lastly, increasing responsibilities have been devolved to regional authorities and to schools and training bodies. A private training sector is rapidly being developed in response to short-term labour market needs.

More recently, Romania and Bulgaria have been fully involved in European policy developments in education and vocational training, notably in the context of the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and the Education and Training 2010 work programme. Thus Romania in particular is in the forefront in terms of implementing the Europass tool, a quality assurance mechanism for vocational training based on the European Quality Assurance Framework and the sectoral approach to vocational training. It has

([1]) The vocational training reforms in these countries were discussed in issue 33, September-December 2004/III of the *European journal of vocational training*, cf : http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=404

also been working for many years now to establish a national qualification framework. Both countries benefited from European assistance with the preparations for participation in European employment policy and the implementation of the Structural Funds, in particular the Social Fund. The Lisbon objectives and the guidelines on growth and employment adopted in 2005 constitute the target for national employment and social cohesion policies.

Better still, the experience acquired by Bulgaria and Romania in implementing European policy, operating principles and tools is an example that the Western Balkans will now follow. The aim for the latter is to streamline their strategies to prepare for accession to the European Union in the future and to ensure that they do everything they can in this learning process to show that they are credible candidates.

An examination of European monitoring indicators for the Education and Training 2010 work programme shows mixed results, however. These indicators show that Bulgaria and Romania are in a critical situation as regards certain fundamental aspects, compared with the European average, and even with the ten new Member States. A lot remains to be done. Thus, according to the results of the PISA survey in 2000 on the reading performances of fifteen-year-old pupils, over 40 % of pupils were at the bottom of the table compared with the European average of 20 % ([2]). The number of school-leavers without qualifications still stood at over 20 % in 2005 ([3]), which is in fact close to Italy and considerably better than that observed in Spain, Malta and Portugal, but significantly higher than the European average, which was approximately 15 %. It is true that the rate of completion of secondary school studies among young people aged between 20 and 24 was almost on a par with the European average of 80 % in 2005 – thus, in this case too, above that of countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta – and that the rate of access to higher education in the fields of mathematics, science and technology was encouraging, being slightly higher than the European average. However, the rate of access of adults to lifelong learning is among the lowest of all European countries.

These mixed results must be seen in relation to the level of public investment in education ([4]) – 3.5 % in Romania and 3.6 % in Bulgaria – which is considerably below the European average of 5.2 %, as well as in relation to expenditure on training for the unemployed and on continuing training organised by undertakings for their employees ([5]).

In other words, despite the considerable reforms carried out and the extent of European assistance since the start of the 1990s, mainly granted under the Phare programme, a number of fundamental aspects of education and vocational training systems still need to be developed. These in-

([2]) At the same time, the results of the TIMSS survey on the performance of students in the 8th grade in mathematics and science show a stagnation in Romania and a considerable decline in Bulgaria between 1995 and 2003, at the bottom of the list of the European countries concerned.

([3]) However this is a slight improvement on 2000

clude issues relating to governance, the smooth running of administrations responsible for education and training, the right balance between the authorities in different ministries and between public responsibilities and those that come under the aegis of decentralised structures, and above all the real involvement of the social partners and the effective sharing of roles with the state as regards preparing reforms, analysing and prospecting the labour market and managing the system. Closely related to the issue of governance is the question of resources and the need to grant more public and private resources in the context of active efforts to obtain cofinancing and more effective public expenditure. There is also the question of the vital need to bring the current reforms under the mantle and management of a real education and lifelong training demand-led strategy which promotes access to training and to the labour market for all, with a view to building a knowledge-based economy and society. Lastly, there is also the question of involving all the actors concerned, in particular teachers and trainers, in the preparation and implementation of the reforms.

The special feature in this issue of the European Journal is intended to throw light on this situation. It consists of four articles.

The first one, by John West and Madlen Şerban, Fit for purpose? The Romanian system of VET, takes stock of the Romanian vocational training system, its adaptation to the ongoing developments on the labour market and its skilled labour needs, as well as the relations between the vocational training system and the general educational system.

The next two articles describe the new trends in vocational training in Bulgaria. One presents the main features of Bulgarian initial training and current developments: this article is by Penka Ganova and is entitled *New trends in initial vocational education and training in Bulgaria*. The other article, by Elka Dimitrova, *Challenges and perspectives to the adult training system in Bulgaria*, describes adult vocational training in Bulgaria.

Lastly, to conclude the feature, we present an article of a more general nature on the vocational training situation in a larger set of countries than simply Bulgaria and Romania, but whose problems they share. The article is by Jean-Raymond Masson and deals with *The contribution of European vocational training policy to reforms in the partner countries of the European Union*. The author discusses the feasibility and adaptability of the vocational training policies promoted by the European Union in the new Member States, in the candidate countries and those wishing to become candidates, notably the Western Balkans, as well as in the countries to which 'strengthening the neighbourhood policy' applies. Without pulling any punches, he describes the problems encountered by our partners and those they still have to face as they seek to adopt the message and instruments of the European Union and in the very real efforts still to be made to integrate these

(4) Measured as a % of GDP in 2002.
(5) See ETF 2006: *Financing Vocational Education and Training in the New Member States and Candidate Countries*.

instruments into national situations that are sometimes very different and very remote from those of the initial core countries of the European Union.

Cedefop is naturally intent on playing its full role in supporting and advising our new partners by making available to them all the experience and expertise it has accumulated over thirty years of working for the development of vocational training. ■

Fit for a purpose? The Romanian system of VET

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Key words
Upper secondary education, post-secondary education, educational reform, vocational qualification, international cooperation, eastern Europe

SUMMARY
The Romanian system of initial vocational education and training is examined from three different points of view: its relevance to the labour market; its relationship with other parts of the national education system; and its evolution from the past to the future. While there are some major current mismatches between the school system and the labour market, the longer-term perspective seems reasonable as there is a surplus of highly qualified graduates which may prove useful if skill requirements increase. Much has been done recently, with some success, to maintain a progressive vocational route, though the relationship between higher vocational studies inside and outside the university sector is not entirely clear. Romania's IVET system is largely school-based, familiar to some European VET traditions. Romania is participating in EU initiatives, where these can be used to promote modernisation nationally.

Introduction

We often hear that vocational education and training (VET) needs to be 'fit for a purpose'. But if this phrase is to have any meaning, we need to specify the purposes for which VET has to 'fit'. There are three different purposes which a VET system needs to support if it is to make a valuable contribution to society. These are:

- the labour market: there are obvious expectations that VET will relate to the world of work - if not, it will not be performing successfully;
- the wider education system: initial VET in particular, is seen by participants as a component of the general education system. It is expected

to 'count' in the educational scheme of things as well as on the labour market;
- the historical position: at any point in time a VET system is on a trajectory of adaptation from what went before towards new social and economic circumstances. Too violent a departure from tradition risks causing mistrust among stakeholders. On the other hand, failure to adapt to the new world will result in disillusionment.

This article looks at the Romanian system of VET from these three perspectives, briefly describing the system first. By this we mean the schooling and qualification structure and the roles of various actors, rather than matters such as the level of resources, numbers and status of teachers, etc.

We also focus largely on the system of initial vocational education (IVET). In common with many other transition economies, Romania has a long tradition of IVET, and of interest is the extent to which this has developed to meet the challenges of a more fluid labour market and of a democratic society in which the aspirations of individuals - as students and as parents - are rising.

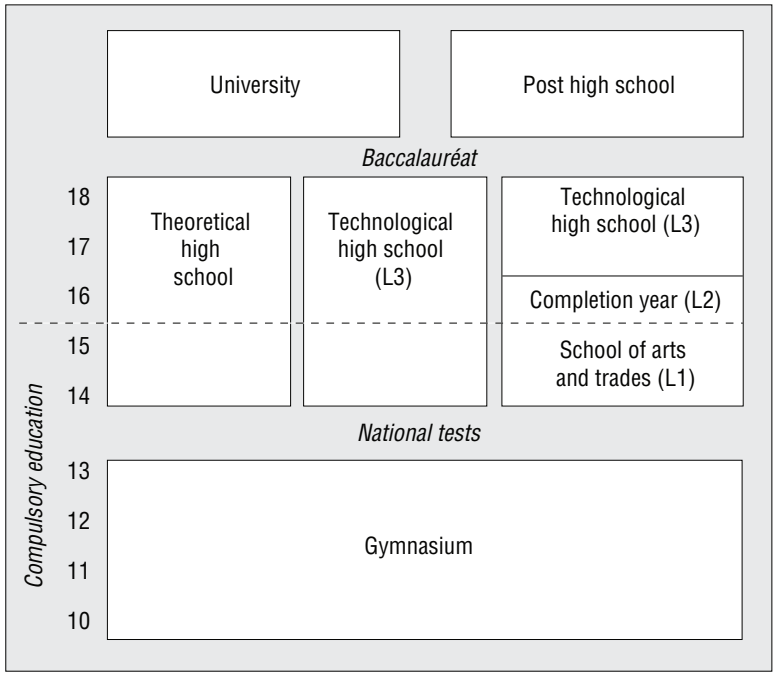
Romania's continuing vocational education (CVET) system is far less developed, with limited performance in numbers of individuals and enterprises participating ([1]), and in the formal structures which govern it. Although we make some references to CVET - particularly in relation to the links between it and IVET - it merits its own evaluation.

The Romanian system

Since the reforms of 2003, the Romanian upper secondary school system consists of four pathways, illustrated in Figure 1:
- a general academic stream at academic high schools (*Licee Teoretice*) leading to a *baccalaureate* (upper secondary leaving diploma), taken after four years' schooling at around the age of 18;
- a technical stream at technological high schools (*Licee Tehnologice*). This also leads to a *baccalaureate*, as well as - and in parallel - to vocational qualifications at Level 3 of the Romanian framework for vocational qualifications (described later). Technological high schools share much common content with academic high schools and are organised into three technical pathways: natural resources, services and technical occupations. Within each pathway several individual vocational qualifications can be acquired. In 2005, 19 vocational qualifications were available from technological high schools. These qualifications are broadly based (such as technician in public administration);

([1]) Eurostat's indicator on lifelong learning shows that in 2005 1.6 % of Romanians between the ages of 25 and 64 participated in education or training in the previous four weeks, compared with an EU average of over 10 %.

Figure 1. Romanian secondary education system



- a stream leading to artistic, aesthetic or spiritual professions (performing arts, fine arts, architecture and religious orders). This is a small element in the Romanian system;
- a more specifically vocational stream. As will be explained, this 'progressive route' (*ruta progresiva*) was formed from different existing elements. After the recent reforms it consists of a two-year cycle in arts and trades schools (*Şcoli de arte si meserii*) leading to a Level 1 qualification, followed by a post-compulsory 'completion year', which leads to a Level 2 qualification. These two IVET levels form the standard expected of vocational education, which therefore lasts three years. Students following this route can then have access to a Level 3 qualification by undertaking a two-year high school programme related to their earlier vocational study. Graduation from the upper cycle of high school entitles the graduate to a 'double qualification': a qualification for professional purposes (Level 3) and access to the *baccalaureate,* which counts as an academic qualification. Vocational qualifications available at Level 2 in this system are more specific than those in the main technological high school route consisting of 135 individual qualification trades organised in 16 vocational groups. Fewer trades are available at Levels 1 and 3.

The first decision on which stream a pupil enters is taken at around age 14 after eighth grade (*gymnasium*). Decisions are governed by pupils' performance in national tests taken by all at that stage, by assessments of their performance during lower secondary education and by pupil and parent preferences. Oversubscribed schools and subjects select pupils according to their learning performance. Further decisions are taken by pupils after the first two school years (either school of arts and trades or lower cycle of high school). Those enrolled in the progressive route of qualification have another choice at the end of their 'completion year'.

The *baccalaureate* demands a given combination of subjects, including centralised examinations. For students at technological high schools this combination reflects their vocational specialisation to an extent, but also includes relevant scientific subjects and (for all students) Romanian and a modern foreign language.

Holders of the *baccalaureate* may apply to university. Romania has a sizeable university sector which has grown fast in recent years (over 70 % increase between 1997-98 and 2003-04) and spans polytechnic and academic institutions. Several Romanian universities are private and charge full fees to students.

Outside the university sector, Romania has several post-secondary education institutions: post-high schools and foremen schools (*şcoli postliceale şi scoli de maiştri*). These are open to students who have attended high school (whether theoretical or technological) and offer a range of qualifications, mostly of two years' duration. They charge fees to students or employers where students are employed.

Romania has developed a national framework for vocational qualifications spanning both initial (IVET) and continuing training (CVET). Notionally there are five levels, with Level 1 being the lowest; these are set out in Figure 2. However, for reasons we will explore later, no qualifications are currently allocated to Levels 4 and 5 (higher technical, managerial and senior professional roles). Vocational qualifications, whether provided in IVET or CVET, are formally approved by the National Adult Training Board (*Consiliul Naţional de Formare Profesională a Adulţilor* - CNFPA), which is also the National Authority for Qualifications. The process of validating vocational qualifications is becoming more formalised in sector committees, consisting of relevant social partners established by the CNFPA. Some 23 are envisaged, of which 22 are functioning. The curricula, as opposed to training standards, of IVET qualifications are approved by the Ministry of Education; the ministry does not have a role with CVET qualifications, though schools can participate as providers of adult training and are encouraged to do so.

Vocational programmes are presented in units. In the secondary school system there is a standard credit rating applied to each unit representing its weight, with a set number of credits for each level of vocational qualification, corresponding to the years of schooling necessary for each level (for example, credits appropriate to two years full-time study for Level 1 qualifications in the arts and trades schools). The number of credits is

Figure 2. Levels of Romanian vocational qualifications

Level one: worker – associated with vocational competences, applying knowledge in a professional activity from diverse vocational groups characterised by routine and predictable tasks.

Level two: qualified worker – associated with vocational competences, applying knowledge in a certain activity, with non-routine tasks, responsibility and teamwork.

Level three: technician/foreman – associated with vocational competences, applying knowledge in an extended area of professional activity, with diverse and complex tasks, excluding routine. The tasks involve decision-taking, responsibility and, sometimes, teamwork with coordination responsibilities.

Level four: associated with vocational competences, applying knowledge in an extended area of professional activity, with diverse and complex tasks, characterised by a significant level of personal responsibilities, coordinating activities and allocating resources and performance.

Level five: associated with vocational competences, applying knowledge in especially diverse, complex and unpredictable contexts. Independent decisions and high level of responsibility, including managing staff, allocating resources, analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution and control.

the same for any qualification at a given level. In the school system, key skills are part of every qualification - including a foreign language, problem solving, quality assurance, health and safety. The balance between them varies to some extent between programmes; however all must be included.

Qualification design in the secondary school system is undertaken by teams centrally coordinated by the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (NCTVETD). Units of training standards are developed and translated into teaching curricula. These are also modular; key skills are either presented as independent subjects (for example, modern languages or information technology) or integrated into other subjects for the purposes of teaching. Schools are required to follow training standards and teaching curricula, though there is scope for locally developed curricula. Providers of adult training, IVET schools and their partner enterprises or local committees for social partnership in IVET may propose their own training standards for validation to the sectoral committees. Adult training providers have considerable discretion over the teaching curricula leading to these standards. In several cases work has been done to develop occupational standards, though some of this is a little dated. There is no practice yet of regularly analysing occupational standards before presenting a qualification. Where these standards exist, based on the methodology, they are expected to influence the training standards and qualification.

Assessment in the school system is carried out by teachers for each unit, supplemented by a final examination for the award of the qualification. For

qualifications at Level 1, the final examination comprises a series of practical tasks, pre-set and made public by the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, which are assigned to students randomly. The results are judged by a panel which includes members from outside the school - they may be trade unionists, employers or professional staff from another school. For Level 2 qualifications, the final certification test includes an oral presentation of a project followed by a practical demonstration. The project must be developed by the student during the year's programme and teachers monitor and tutor the process. For qualifications at Level 3, assessment and final certification are similar to Level 2 qualifications, the only difference being the project's complexity. In addition to the Level 3 test, graduates of upper secondary education are entitled to enter the *baccalaureate* examination, which has academic purposes. Candidates who pass the *baccalaureate*, regardless of whether or not they have a vocational qualification, can go on to university.

Planning IVET provision is essentially a 'bottom-up' process. Schools propose the number of entrants for each year in the various vocational groups they offer. These are considered and approved by school inspectors within each county school inspectorate based on the total amount of centrally approved funding. In recent years initiatives have been taken through regional and local (county-level) education action plans, to link better the provision of IVET programmes to trends in economic development. These are intended to influence school plans, rather than dictate provision. Post-secondary institutions have considerable freedom to adjust their intakes as they see fit (and according to student demand). Most formal adult training for job-seekers and unemployed people is commissioned from training providers by the National Agency for Employment according to the occupations required by employers.

Having outlined the system we now examine its three strands - the labour market, the wider educational system and its evolution from the past to the future.

Fit with the labour market

There is considerable dissatisfaction within Romania about the appropriateness of the fit between IVET and the labour market. Employers complain that students are not well prepared for the realities of working life and that the standards to which schools train do not reflect the demands of the workplace. However it would be hard to find a country - particularly with a school-based system such as Romania's - where such complaints were not made. More transparent training standards and validation by sector committees aim to improve the relevance of qualifications. Several new sector committees have become enthusiastically engaged in reviewing standards, which can lead to contention on the balance between educational and longer-term career aims for individuals, on the one hand, against immediate labour

market needs on the other. Such debates are not always easy, but they need to take place.

Youth unemployment in Romania is high; in 2005 under 25s were three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, compared to an EU average of 2:1 (Eurostat). This is a long-standing feature and may reflect the fundamental problem of aligning IVET to the labour market. However, there are some peculiarities to the Romanian economic situation which could lead to such a situation regardless of the quality of IVET. Following the dramatic decline of large manufacturing enterprises, considerable numbers of older skilled workers in Romania either reverted to family agricultural work or moved abroad. This stock of 'hidden' unemployment both serves to depress official unemployment rates among adults (Ciobanu and Parciog, 1999) and provides stiff competition for young graduates of the IVET system, who tend to come at the end of the line for available jobs.

Nevertheless, the school system could do more to expose young people to real, or realistic, working situations. This arose naturally when, in communist times, many vocational schools were effectively attached to a single local enterprise. It was clear where students were going to work and arrangements were made for visits and practice, in line with the recruitment plans of the enterprise. Such links have mostly vanished, so the difficult process of establishing links with new, small firms is being undertaken and is an important focus of development at local level.

New curricula include mandatory work experience, and re-equipping schools clearly helps to add realism. At the same time, employers need to appreciate it is unrealistic to expect students to arrive absolutely ready for work as they might have done in the past, and that they need to offer in-company training for new entrants.

The match between school-based vocational curricula and the qualitative demands of employers for the occupations concerned is being addressed in four complementary ways, using experience from other EU countries.

First, by using information from the world of employment to help establish the right training standards - sometimes through 'scientific' analysis of occupations by defining occupational standards, sometimes with direct involvement of employers in designing programmes, and sometimes by examining training standards in other countries.

Second, to assign responsibility for the formal validation of training standards to the authoritative representatives of industry, namely the sector committees we described earlier.

Third, to increase the exposure of school-based students to practical work in realistic conditions, through work experience and links with employers.

Fourth, to encourage a degree of 'adaptation' of national standards and curricula to local conditions through the modular structure of qualifications.

The Romanian view is that none of these mechanisms by itself will guarantee a match between IVET training and labour market needs, but that

together they might. These mechanisms are not yet comprehensively implemented, but the direction is clear, and future IVET development initiatives are focused on these areas.

An apprenticeship system could smooth the transition from school to work (OECD, 2000). However, Romania has no recent tradition of apprenticeship ([2]), though legislation has recently been introduced to provide a framework for apprenticeship contracts. It remains to be seen whether this will be widely taken up.

One can also consider whether there is a match between the levels and occupations studied by VET students and the demands of the labour market. In terms of levels of education, the 2004 labour force survey (Amigo, third quarter) showed that around half of Romanians aged 25 to 34 had a qualification at the current Level 3 (high school) or above, whereas occupations demanding this level of attainment (professional, managerial, technician or administrative staff) accounted for only around half the employees. Conversely, those with a level of qualification corresponding to Romanian Level 2 accounted for about a quarter of 25 to 34 year olds, whereas the proportion of employees in the relevant skilled occupations was over a third. It appears Romania is producing overqualified young people for the jobs currently available. This, however, may be a sensible position to adopt if, as is hoped, demand for higher skill levels increases in an expanding economy. The proportion of younger people with qualifications at Level 1 or below - at around a quarter - currently roughly matches the proportion of employees with low levels of qualification, though this must be a worry for the future given the likely reduction in low-skilled occupations. Introducing the 'completion year', aimed at encouraging Level 1 students to go on to Level 2 qualifications, is an attempt to reduce the number of young people qualifying at the most basic level.

There is undoubtedly a significant mismatch between the types of occupation for which training is available and the demands of the labour market. Over 70 % of entrants to the arts and trades schools in 2004 were in mechanical, processing or production occupations, with less than 15 % in services. Perhaps understandably, there is no attempt to replicate in schools the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture (36 %) since this is expected to decrease, but it is not clear whether the emphasis on manufacturing occupations results from the past rather than from estimating future demand. Some believed accession to the EU would rejuvenate Romanian manufacturing industry, but employment has declined by more than 50 % since 1990 and now accounts for only one in three employees. Romania is attracting inward investment, but it seems unlikely to be in the labour-intensive processes of the past, and competition from the Far East in mar-

([2]) This should not be confused with recently restructured 'apprenticeship schools' (*Şcoli de Ucenici*) which, despite their title, did not operate apprenticeship arrangements with employers. Before Communist times an apprenticeship tradition did operate in parts of Romania, and historical evidence of guild systems exists until the end of the 19th century.

kets for manufactured goods also limits the scope for a large resurgence of manufacturing employment. The national development plan for 2007-13 does not foresee a recovery of manufacturing employment back to the levels needed to justify the current proportion of students taking vocational courses in manufacturing occupations.

It remains to be seen whether the system of regional and local education planning recently introduced will materially influence the occupational distribution of the IVET system. The absence of significant demand for young labour in new occupations currently makes it difficult to persuade schools to go through the painful and expensive business of replacing courses leading to the old occupations. In recent years considerable efforts have been made to modernise training content, broaden qualifications and update equipment and materials, but the sectoral mix of programmes has not changed a great deal.

Fit with the educational system

We have already noted the significant expansion of Romanian higher education. University education is much prized in the country and is now available to about one third of young people.

In many countries the advent of a mass university system has put pressure on vocational pathways, which need to deliver access to higher education if they are to compete with general education in the eyes of parents and students. In transition economies in particular, rising aspirations of the population and uncertainty about the availability of jobs following vocational education pathways have combined to reduce the attractions of VET (Masson and Fries Guggenheim, 2004).

In Romania this seems not to have happened, or at least not to a large extent. VET pathways in secondary education have roughly maintained their share of young people.

Without doubt, there are many reasons for maintaining IVET pathways in Romania. One was the decision in 1999/2000 to limit access to high schools according to pupils' performance in national tests (Birzea et al., 2000, p. 29), though this seems to have had a greater effect on technological high schools

Graduates	1995/1996	1997/1998	2000/2001	2002/2003
Theoretical high schools	27 %	28 %	34 %	34 %
Technological high schools (*)	38 %	40 %	35 %	34 %
Vocational and apprenticeship schools (*)	27 %	26 %	25 %	27 %

Source: National Institute of Statistics (Romanian statistical yearbook, 2004, Table 15.9).

(*) Technological high school figures include dedicated vocational high schools. Vocational and apprenticeship schools have now been combined into arts and trades schools.

than on the general stream. Romania has given considerable attention to securing progression routes in its IVET system, including:

- ensuring technological high schools give access to the *baccalaureate* and therefore to university entrance;
- combining formerly distinct polytechnic education with more traditional academic university studies in a unified higher education sector (over half university education is in vocationally-orientated subjects in business or technical studies);
- unifying former apprenticeship and vocational schools (which had different status) into a single arts and trades route, with encouragement for students to undertake at least one further year after compulsory schooling, which means that standard vocational education now lasts for three years;
- offering the possibility of gaining Level 3 qualifications (including the *baccalaureate* and therefore entry to higher education) in the arts and trades route, through a further two-year qualification. In principle, all students entering upper secondary education will have a chance to progress to higher education, a key feature in maintaining vocational routes (OECD, 2000).

Through these measures policy-makers in Romania have attempted to make IVET attractive to students with aspirations. Education in technological high schools is seen as a particular asset by offering a reasonably long-standing tradition of VET leading to higher education. Because successful students pass the *baccalaureate* in addition to their Level 3 vocational qualification they have ready access to higher education, particularly given the vocational nature of much of higher education.

The more recent innovation of a route to Level 3 qualifications via arts and trades schools has yet to prove its worth, but if successful will achieve much the same kinds of objectives as in France by extending the *baccalaureate* to the vocational route, in Sweden through national programmes, and in England by introducing specialised diplomas.

Of course there are problems in seeking to position VET as a progressive educational route. Curricula need to incorporate general as well as vocational content and to be broad. This leads to complaints that studies are not sufficiently specific. And progression demands a carefully formulated balance of studies, which militates against using the modular structure of Romanian IVET as flexibly as it potentially could be.

This deliberate construction of balanced IVET programmes and associated qualifications, which aim both to relate to the labour market and to give access to further educational opportunities as well as act as a foundation for a future career, cannot be expected to suit requirements for adult training, where labour market relevance is the most important aspect and there is less concern about educational aims. It may be that the Romanian system will see adults taking individual units of IVET qualifications, while IVET uses fairly tightly defined combinations of units. The qualification sys-

tem would, in principle, lend itself to such different uses. However very few companies provide or sponsor adult training. Those that do, offer training to comparatively few employees (Behringer et al., 2005). Consequently it is difficult to predict whether the system will be used in this way, or whether adult training (as in several other countries) will lead to different qualifications or remain largely uncertified.

The position of post-high schools in the educational hierarchy is interesting. In the 1990s, they expanded rapidly, peaking at 35 000 graduates in 1999/2000 - around half the output of the university sector at the time. Given that these are largely privately funded, it would seem they fulfil definite demand. Students need to have completed upper secondary education, though not necessarily the *baccalaureate*. Among other functions, post-high schools give opportunities to graduates of academic high schools to gain a vocational qualification. Unlike many other countries, there is little link between post-high school qualifications and universities. Without the *baccalaureate*, post-high school graduates cannot gain entry to university. However, they now seem to be declining in popularity, with fewer than 23 000 graduates in 2002/03. As an alternative to university rather than a route to it, they seem to have suffered from expansion of the university sector. The Romanian authorities are faced with two alternatives - either incorporating post-high schools into a wider higher education sector (with obvious expectations of increased financial support), or positioning them at the 'top' of a strictly vocational ladder. The latter is an unattractive course given the aspirations for higher education on the part of many vocational students. For these reasons there has been reluctance to develop formal vocational qualifications at Levels 4 and 5, as to do so outside the university sector would clearly signal that VET pathways exclude university. But to include university education in the vocational qualifications system would raise awkward questions about central validation and autonomy.

As proposals for a European qualifications framework (EQF) clearly allow for some overlap between post-secondary vocational education and higher education, this may be particularly helpful in Romania; higher education representatives have expressed a good deal of interest in the EQF. More generally, given the high proportion of Romanian university education which is vocational in nature, work is under way to see how it can be linked to the system of industry-validated standards through sector committees. Many of these committees have, from the start, included representatives from relevant university disciplines but the precise relationship between them and higher education in their sphere of interest needs to be worked through and discussed.

From past to future

Greinert (2004) outlines three broad types of VET system in Europe: a 'market model' under which the system responds to signals from employers and individuals, and operates at some distance from the formal educational system; a 'state-regulated model' under which school-based VET forms an intrinsic part of the educational system which itself dictates destinies on the labour market, and a 'dual-corporatist' model under which the State delegates powers to social partners who agree cooperatively on training arrangements and the entitlements they give on the labour market.

Using Greinert's typology we can easily recognise elements of a school-based model in the Romanian IVET system. Greinert characterises France as the embodiment of the State-regulated model, and indeed there are parallels between the French lycées technologiques, lycées professionnels, all giving access to a *baccalaureate* qualification ([3]), and their Romanian equivalents. Though it is tempting for those both in and outside Romania to identify the 'bureaucratic State-regulated model' described by Greinert in the communist era, it is clear that the origins of the main pillars of the Romanian system go much further back than that, and may well derive from the State-building initiatives of the late 19th century, when France was a powerful cultural influence.

The characteristics of the school-based model outlined by Greinert (ibid, pp. 21-22) seem to hold true for the structures of Romanian IVET as they were prior to recent reforms. The emphasis is on broad curricula with a premium on 'abstraction, verbalisation and theorisation', a distinct hierarchy of schools (high school, vocational school and apprenticeship school), emphasising a distinct qualifications 'ladder', each rung clearly related to different levels of occupation on the labour market.

Greinert's models are clearly 'ideal types'. Most countries incorporate elements from other systems and we can observe such elements in the Romanian context, too. We have already noted efforts to moderate the older, hierarchical system, by combining vocational and apprenticeship schools and by building a progressive pathway towards higher education into this new route. Apprenticeship schemes are also now under development, so Romanian IVET will embrace this additional model. In addition, in recent years preparing to join the European Union provided a strong impetus for reforming the VET system. This stimulus operated at two connected levels. First - in general policy - to align with EU initiatives in VET. Romania has been an enthusiastic participant in developing and testing the common quality assurance framework in VET and has tracked with interest evolution of the EQF. In designing its qualifications framework Romania has deliberately incorporated elements which are common in the EU and which

([3]) Unlike in France, there are no formally different versions of the *baccalaureate*; Romania recognises only one, though different combinations of subjects may be taken by students at different types of school.

seem likely to lead to compatibility with the EQF, such as a series of levels with objective descriptors, including key skills and a modular structure which is likely to ease participation in a EU-wide credit transfer and accumulation system (ECVET), should this develop. With many migrant workers, there is understandable attraction to EU initiatives such as Europass.

At the more operational level Romania has been exposed to foreign VET influences through participation in EU and other international development programmes - recent initiatives have been described by Şerban and Ciolan (2005). These programmes, with support from the European Training Foundation to examine practice in other EU countries, have resulted in clear instances of 'policy borrowing' (Finegold, McFarland and Richardson, 1992). Thus authorisation of qualifications has been delegated to sector committees on social partnership lines, and decisions on regional and local education plans also involve social partners, reflecting the influence of northern European systems. However, developing modular curricula and occupational standards would appear to owe more to Anglo-Saxon market-driven approaches.

Such influences are no doubt healthy in giving Romania a rich menu for developing its VET, and there can be little doubt that, as a result, Romania's VET system lies squarely in the European tradition. However their very number and variety poses a difficulty for policy-makers, since there is no guarantee that each policy approach is suitable for Romania, sustainable in the longer term or - for that matter - compatible with others. Thus, there are signs that the modular system does not operate as flexibly as it does in market-driven systems for which it was originally designed. There are doubts whether a full suite of regularly updated occupational standards is either affordable or necessary in Romania. Romanian policy-makers have therefore become more selective and questioning in adopting recipes from abroad, and doubtless this process will be reinforced when Romania assumes more control over specifications for development projects, as it gains access to EU structural funds instead of accessing externally controlled aid programmes.

Conclusion

In contrast to a CVET system which is still forming, Romania's IVET system appears well established and understood. As to its fitness for purpose, it seems comparatively well placed to secure the educational progression important in sustaining VET in an increasingly aspirational society. No doubt more can be done both to secure progression in the arts and trades route (where it remains to be seen whether considerable numbers of students will actually avail themselves of the new opportunities at Level 3), and to resolve constructively the slightly anomalous position of post-high schools. As noted, the Romanian system seems well aligned in the family of European VET systems - and in some areas, such as ECVET and the European quality assurance framework, is playing a prominent role. Alignment with

demands of the labour market is more problematic, partially because there seems not yet to be a clear sectoral trend in demand for labour which would prompt a move from traditional manufacturing trades in schools. The extent to which such alignment is to be achieved, through the new structures of national and local social partnership or through more market-driven mechanisms involving greater student choice with funding and performance measures applied to individual schools and localities, remains to be seen. ■

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New trends in initial vocational education and training in Bulgaria

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Key words
School vocational training, vocational qualification, intensive language learning, training in entrepreneurship, decentralisation of management, career guidance

SUMMARY

Despite a fall in the percentage of young people choosing this course between 1993 and 1994 (58.17 %) and 2003 and 2004 (55.23 %), vocational training remains the main path chosen by young people in Bulgaria. The national programme for developing pre-school, school education and training (2006-15), adopted in 2006 due to major public interest in this issue, aims to reform initial vocational training. This article presents the main pillars of this reform based on European strategic guidelines. The article points to several challenges to be faced in the near future such as networking vocational schools, developing a national qualifications framework based on the European qualifications framework and developing education and vocational training policies closely linked to employment policies.

In recent years vocational education has been a priority in State policies. This is due mainly to the perceived public need for vocational training for young people in line with the needs of modern society. A popular form of initial vocational training in Bulgaria is training received during secondary education. This allows pupils at the end of their training to obtain a vocational qualification in addition to their certificate of secondary education. In 2003, the percentage of this group within the structure of the national workforce stood at 39.6 %, while the percentage of those who had completed primary or lower-level education was 23.9 %, secondary education 15.63 % and higher education 20.83 % ([1]).

The Bulgarian education system has two levels - primary and secondary. Upon commencement of secondary education the choice of the type

([1]) Statistical reference book, National Statistical Institute, Sofia, 2004.

of school has always been the centre of attention for Bulgarian families. In the current education structure, it is most common for pupils at the age of 14 or 15 ([2]), eighth and ninth grades, to make their choice - secondary school or initial vocational education at a vocational school. At this age parents' influence is strong, and they usually define the type of education their children receive. For this reason, after graduating from vocational education young people often do not take up the profession for which they have studied and begin new training.

Vocational education in Bulgaria has become an established trend and is preferred by young people. According to the National Statistical Institute ([3]), for the 1993/94 school year 58.17 % of the total number of pupils in the secondary stage of their education chose vocational education, while in 2003/04 the percentage was 55.23 %. There is clear evidence of an established trend corresponding to practicality of choice and possibilities for future labour market prospects. Over the past 10 years interest in vocational education has increased due to additional possibilities for intensive learning of a foreign language alongside vocational training.

Notwithstanding all the positive changes seen in recent years, education and, in particular, vocational education are areas in which changes are constantly being made and which have yet to achieve the results expected by society.

Because of very high public interest, in 2006 the national programme for the development of school education and pre-school schooling and training (2006-15) was drafted and passed by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. This expressed national consensus on matters of education. The programme also plans for reform of initial vocational education.

What will be the most important changes?

The programme sets out a new educational structure envisaging changes to initial vocational training. It will be introduced during the 2006/7 academic year to fifth grade pupils.

The main changes are as follows:

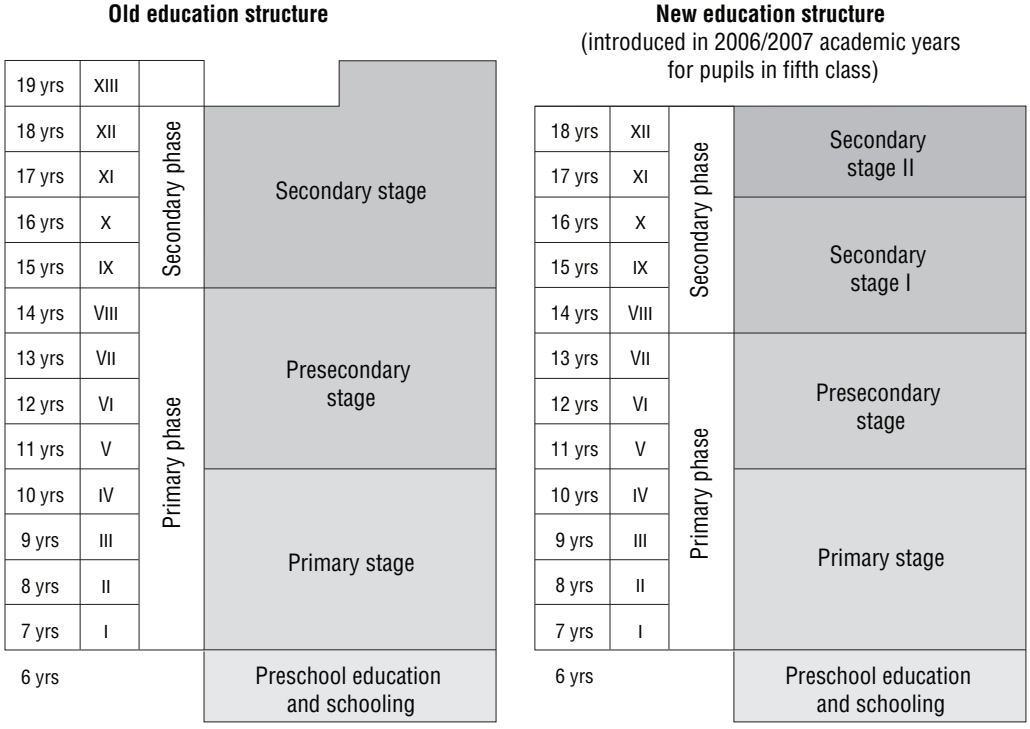
(a) primary education will end after successful completion of seventh grade (at the age of 13). Previously it ended on the successful completion of eighth grade (at the age of 14).

(b) secondary education is divided into two stages - first from eighth to 10th grade (from 14 to 16) and second from 11th to 12th grade (from 17 to 18). Previously, secondary education consisted of only one four-year phase from ninth to 12th grade.

([2]) In Bulgaria, primary education starts during the year the child reaches the age of seven and enters the first grade.

([3]) Statistical reference book, National Statistical Institute, Sofia, editions 1995 and 2004. The statistical reference book is published by the National Statistical Institute annually.

Figure 1. Diagram of the education system in Bulgaria



During the first secondary stage (three academic years from 8th to 10th grades) pupils studying at vocational secondary schools will be able to study a chosen profession at the end of which, in addition to a certificate of completing the first stage of secondary education, will receive the first level of their vocational qualification ([4]). This level is slightly higher than the second level of the European qualifications framework (EQF). In the eighth grade of vocational secondary school there will be 15 hours per week of intensive foreign language training, and the remaining hours (32 academic hours per week) will be used for comprehensive education and vocational training. In subsequent grades of the first secondary stage there will also be foreign language training so pupils at vocational secondary schools will be able to acquire one of the basic communicative competences - fluency in a foreign language.

The challenge for initial vocational education during this phase is that very few pupils express a desire to train in professions at the first level of vocational training. This training is not popular in Bulgaria, as shown by information from the National Statistical Institute ([5]). For example, in the 2001/02 academic year only 732 pupils followed the programme, or 0.22 %; in

([4]) The first level of vocational training is the lowest level.
([5]) Statistical reference book, National Statistical Institute, Sofia, 2004.

2001/02, 921 pupils or 0.26 %; in 2003/04, 798 pupils or 0.21 % of the total number of pupils in secondary education. Another challenge is the current list of professions for vocational education and training, in which the lowest number of professions are those with the first level of vocational training. Currently, the list of professions for vocational education and training is being updated and enlarged.

At the beginning of the second stage of secondary education, pupils again have the right to choose their type of education. Those entering vocational secondary school will be able to train in their chosen profession to a second or third level of vocational qualification. Some 20 to 22 hours are set aside for vocational training each week, and the remainder are set aside for studying for school-leaving certificates (10 to 12 hours per week). This level of training lasts two academic years, from 11th to 12th grades. It will begin when pupils are 17 years old, when, to a large extent, they can make their own choice of profession. In comparison, school pupils currently acquire their initial second level of vocational education over a period of four years, from 9th to 12th grades, and third level profession, over a period of five years, from ninth to 13th grades. Pupils currently complete their vocational education at the age of 18 or 19.

What are the expectations from the reform of initial vocational education?

With the introduction of the new education structure, initial vocational training in preferred professions, i.e. those offering a second and third level of vocational training, will begin in 11th grade and will be significantly shorter (2 years) than at present (4 to 5 years). This will lead to an improvement in the adaptability of vocational education to the dynamics of the labour market.

Young people will choose a profession at the age of 16, when they are better able to identify their desires and their independence of choice is greater. This will lead to an increased percentage of pupils entering the profession they have studied for.

It will create new opportunities for pupils completing 10th grade (16 years of age) who prefer not to continue their education ([6]). Opportunities will be provided for them to undertake initial vocational training based on short-term modules; formerly this was not provided for. The short-term modular programmes will be conducted at vocational secondary schools in the framework of a 300 to 360 hour programme. The entire training programme will be conducted over a period of three to four months. These programmes will be for initial vocational training in professions providing the first level of vocational training. Those completing this training will be able to enter the labour

([6]) According to the Constitution of Bulgaria, school education is compulsory up to the age of 16.

market immediately. Short-term modules should be developed with active support from representatives of employers' organisations.

Which traditional elements of vocational education will be preserved?

The opportunity for pupils to acquire a vocational qualification during their secondary education will be preserved. The Bulgarian educational tradition of intensive language study in 8th grade will be preserved since it has achieved very good results. Foreign languages for professional needs in the last academic year of education will also be preserved.

Training in entrepreneurship is another good practice which will be preserved. This was introduced into the vocational education system in the past 10 years or so. The number of vocational secondary schools in which, in addition to the compulsory education in entrepreneurship set out in the curriculum, pupils have had the opportunity in elective or compulsory studies to undergo training in entrepreneurial programmes, has increased. Stimulating entrepreneurial thinking, discovering and analysing economic links and influences, mastering key competences such as teamwork, networking, language, as well as applying foreign-language skills, creates the conditions for graduates from vocational secondary schools to be mobile and flexible in their future employment and professional activities, and provides a basis for lifelong learning. Educational training companies, set up in many vocational secondary schools are models of real companies and help form the key competences for working in a modern work environment. Training provided in an educational training company is also new for teachers. They become consultants and trainers for their pupils.

What other expectations have been created by the programme?

The programme envisages special efforts for career guidance. In recent years, the choice of education in most cases is made without long-term planning and prospects, which leads to more qualified unemployed people with a vocational training certificate who cannot find employment due to the saturation of the labour market. Preferences for a specific type of education among young people depend to a large extent on the information environment, including family and social partners. The Internet and media increase access to important information and consequently to choices which satisfy expectations for quality vocational education. Schools themselves are able to provide public access information about what they can offer, and the results their pupils have achieved on their own web pages.

The national programme for developing school education and pre-school education and training (2006-15) provides for including modules for early career guidance in the pre-secondary phase. The modules will be included in the academic subjects, 'domestic technology and economics' (fifth and sixth grades), and 'technology' (seventh grade).

A further opportunity for career guidance for pupils is planned through career centres, which will be created within the National Pedagogical Centre and its 28 regional structures. These centres will soon be established and equipped, and their personnel trained.

A wealth of information on the opportunities for education and training can be found in the national education portal. This portal (http://www.e-edu.bg/) aims to provide access through a modern medium to school education. It will provide a breadth of possibilities to all participants in the education process - pupils, teachers, directors, parents - and allow for one million users to access the site simultaneously. A wide range of users will be able to find electronic training courses, tests (for both external and internal assessment), electronic academic documentation and much information. Users will have access to the electronic websites of all schools in the country as well as registers kept by the Ministry of Education and Science, and they will be able to use a range of information and search systems. The portal is already up and running and is expected to form the basis of a national electronic knowledge network.

Decentralisation of management of the vocational education and training system is an important part of the programme, focused on the principle of subsidiarity: decisions will be taken at the level closest to those who implement it and who are most directly affected. The State will reserve the right to take decisions only in cases where it is not possible or it is not justified for the decision to be taken at another level. Financial decentralisation and decentralisation of authority will continue. But the vision of decentralisation does not stop at the level of municipalities, it continues to individual schools, on the principle that providing rights is connected to greater responsibility. Above all, a reliable system of control and accountability will be created. Flexible control mechanisms are being sought for public control over management of vocational schools. First, the status and role of school governors' boards are being reassessed, aiming to increase their rights (helping to prepare the school budget, commenting on the accounts, as well as participating in the programme for developing the school and in procedures for appointing and dismissing school principals and selecting teaching staff). Each school should not only have a board of governors but also a body with real and effective rights in financial and management activities. Another possibility to control management activities is to create school councils made up of representatives of parents, teachers and the municipality, which could develop as collective school management bodies.

Changes to the status of the principal are being planned. The principal is directly responsible for managing the school and conducting a policy directed at raising the prestige of the school and consolidating it as an insti-

tution providing high-quality, modern education. Currently, principals have permanent tenure of position. Some no longer have the ambition to acquire new management skills and abilities after their appointment. The local community has no leverage to influence such principals. Without doubt, the local community - representatives of parents, teachers and local government - should play a key role in appointing and dismissing school principals. The new procedure should prevent the appointment of anyone inappropriate and provide for better control by the local community over the activities of principals.

The National Training Institute for School Principals was established in 2006 to provide training for principals and increase their organisational, managerial and financial skills. Since the beginning of 2007 it has conducted two sets of training: initial training for candidates wishing to become principals, culminating in a national examination for acquiring a principal's licence; and regular training for active principals, to update their knowledge and increase their level of qualifications. Training includes various courses aimed at turning principals into professionally trained school managers. Training should be given to management teams of vocational schools and information material provided on good practice in school management.

The programme will introduce mandates for appointing principals without restricting the number of mandates. This should allow better control over the activities of principals, who, at given periods, will have to prove the efficiency of their programmes for developing the school, account for what has been achieved and once again ask for the confidence of parents, teachers and pupils. It is planned to develop criteria and indicators for regularly assessing the professional qualities of principals. Compulsory certification would stimulate and discipline principals, especially in combination with the principle of mandates.

At the start of the 2006/07 academic year, a series of one-year pilot projects began in 10 municipalities, in which decisions relating to the appointment and dismissal of principals would be taken by representatives of parents and teachers in the relevant school, the municipality and the regional educational inspectorate. With the projects completed, the results will be analysed and relevant legislative changes will be proposed for a new system of appointing and dismissing principals; it could be introduced as early as 2008/09 into all municipalities, provided all schools receive a delegated budget. A delegated budget is a means of financial decentralisation of the education system which makes schools economically independent. Principals of schools can take independent management decisions when collecting and spending funds. Well-run schools will receive additional financial incentives for effective management and will be able to provide higher salaries for teachers. The delegated budget system will motivate the school's entire staff to economise when spending funds. In vocational secondary schools this will doubtless lead to improving the quality of initial vocational education. The delegated budget system is planned to be introduced in all vocational secondary schools before the end of 2008.

Local authorities will gradually receive authority to specify the number and types of vocational secondary schools. Providing local authorities with the right to open and close vocational secondary schools assumes that these schools will be transferred to municipal financing. Since these are frequently schools of regional importance, this authority should be delegated in conjunction with the relevant bodies at district administration level. Thus, the vocational secondary schools network will be structured according to the specific social and economic characteristics of individual regions. Only a certain number of vocational secondary schools of particular national importance will continue to be State-run. The criteria for defining a State school have yet to be decided on. The Ministry of Education and Science plays the lead role. The new programme overall, and in particular vocational education and training, considers the new requirements of the global economy and the challenges of the highly competitive labour market in the European Union.

What challenges lie ahead?

Vocational education and training faces new challenges. One of the main challenges is optimising the network of vocational schools. Optimisation guarantees adaptation to negative demographic processes and provides vocational education and training according to the needs of the labour market. Experts from the Ministry of Education and Science have analysed the existing network of vocational schools and capacity of the district and regional economy, and planned priorities for the economic development of districts/regions. This analysis is expected to help optimise the network during forthcoming academic years.

The adoption of the national programme for developing school education and pre-school education and training (2006-15) has initiated the process for modernising and improving the legislative system, allowing for comparison of the academic results achieved through the training of pupils and adults in the vocational education and training system with the levels and descriptors of the EQF. Forthcoming changes to the legislative system seek to improve it. The legislative system is to blame for many of the problems facing school education. The school education system continues to be managed by people rather than rules. All basic and long-term social relations will be regulated at legislative level with the aim of guaranteeing greater sustainability in time and transparency in their acceptance.

The national qualifications framework (NQF) is soon to be developed. It will be comparable to the European qualifications framework (EQF). Although the Vocational Education and Training Act defines four levels of vocational qualifications, which to a large extent are equivalent to the first five levels of the EQF, it will be necessary to develop an NQF with all the necessary requirements to provide future adequate comparison with the final EQF.

A study is being carried out on European experience in validating competences obtained in non-formal training and independent education. The question is, which best practices from other countries can be applied in Bulgaria?

A consultation process is being carried out on accumulating and transfering credits in vocational education and training. A study is being made of the institutions of higher education in Bulgaria as well as on best practice in other countries.

Developing vocational education and training is based on European strategic aims for reforming vocational education and training systems: accordance and compliance of development of education and training with employment policies; with research and innovation, macroeconomic, effective partnership at all levels in connection with lifelong learning policy. Reforming the system will reduce the discrepancies between quality in vocational education and the expectations and requirements of consumers, and will widen opportunities for the free movement of people. ■

Challenges and perspectives of the adult vocational training system in Bulgaria

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SUMMARY
This article provides a brief review of recent developments and problems in adult training of the employed and unemployed in Bulgaria. It is presented in three parts: information on legislation and the institutions; information on current problems with vocational training of the employed and unemployed; and some future measures for improving training efficiency. The findings are based on data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI), a survey on vocational training of employed at enterprises in 2005, a regular survey on the labour force, and administrative statistics from the Employment agency. This article only considers the system of vocational training for adults aged 16 to 54. Bulgaria's accession to the EU on 1 January 2007 poses new challenges, with increased opportunities for labour force mobility and level of qualification requirements.

Key words
Vocational training, employed, unemployed, legislation, institutions, shortage of qualified labour force

Introduction

This article provides a brief review of recent developments and problems in adult vocational training of the employed and unemployed in Bulgaria. It is presented in three parts: information on legislation and institutions; information on recent developments and problems with vocational training of the employed and unemployed; and some future measures for improving scope and training efficiency.

The Bulgarian vocational education and training system prepares citizens for work in the economy and other spheres of public life by creating conditions for acquiring vocational qualifications and their upgrading. It includes vocational guidance, vocational training and vocational education. Vocational training targets acquiring a qualification in a profession or in part of a profession and its upgrading. The findings in this article are based on

data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI), a survey on vocational training of employed at enterprises in 2005 ([1]), the labour force survey ([2]) and administrative statistics from the Employment agency. This article considers only the system of vocational training of adults aged 16 to 54.

National policies and actions in vocational training of adults focus on increasing investment in human capital and supplying the labour force with better education and skills. The target is to improve the adaptability of workers towards the changing economy and to increase labour productivity. Fast technological development, globalisation of financial and commodity markets, and the need for continuous renewal of goods all require flexible and efficient methods for vocational training – not only initial but also continuous training for the labour force. That is why vocational training is an increasingly important issue for today's labour market, in particular with regard to productivity, labour flexibility and quality of work.

All actions have to contribute to reaching the objectives of the Bulgarian employment strategy, the government programme and annual employment plans. As a result, Bulgaria faces a great challenge to meet the Lisbon targets of the EU and to implement the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs and the memorandum on lifelong learning.

During the past few years the Bulgarian economy has recorded stable economic growth of between 3 and 5 % per year. Growth higher than 6 % is expected for 2006 and 2007. In EU-25, growth of real GDP was 2.3 % for 2006, and the expected rate for 2007 is 2.3 % ([3]). The Bulgarian economy requires more investment in human capital.

Since 2002, the employment rate has increased and was 58.6 % in 2006 ([4]), 2.9 percentage points higher than 2005 but gaps remain, compared to the EU-25 rate of 64.3 %. Unemployment has been decreasing for 10 years reaching 9.0 % in 2006. The rate of registered unemployed ([5]) has also

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([1]) In June 2005, the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute carried out a survey of vocational training in enterprises. The survey method is in compliance with the grant conditions contracted between NSI and Eurostat in the frame of MBP Phare 2003. The survey was organised in the context of the LLL concept, and covered CVT, which enterprises organised for their employees in 2004, as well as IVT measures.
The main goal of the survey is to satisfy the information demand of bodies developing labour force policy on continuing vocational training provided by enterprises for their employees. As source of the sampling frame, the last up-dated version of the Statistical Business Register was used. The sampling frame comprises 53 060 enterprises in 24 NACE categories with five or more employees in 2004, allocated to 92 strata. The strata are defined by the cross-classification of 20 NACE categories and 4 size classes (according to the number of employees: 5-9, 10-49, 50-249, 250+). In each stratum, the sample is drawn by simple random sampling (without replacement). The sample size is calculated to assure a maximum length of half the 95%-confidence interval of 0.25 for the estimated parameters. The calculated total sample size is 3 813 enterprises.

([2]) The survey is carried out by the National Statistical Institute according to ILO recommendations and Eurostat requirements. It is a quarterly continuous survey providing average quarterly results; the sample size includes 18 000 households.

([3]) Employment in Europe 2006/ European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Unit D1 Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006, p. 249.

([4]) Source: National Statistical Institute, data from labour force surveys 2005 and 2006.

fallen. It was 11.5 % in 2005 and 9.6 % in 2006. In 2005, the average number of registered unemployed was 424 381 and 64.5 % of all unemployed were without profession. In 2006, the unemployed decreased to 356 054 but the share of unemployed without profession did not change – 64.8 %.

Despite raising labour productivity over past years, great disparity with other EU Member States remains. One reason for the productivity is insufficient participation of the Bulgarian population ([6]) in lifelong learning. For example, only 1.3 % of the population aged 25 to 64 took part in education and training in 2005, while the percentage for EU-25 was 10.2 %. The highest level of participation in LLL is observed in Sweden – 32.1 %, and the lowest in Greece – 1.9 %. In Romania this percentage is 1.6 %, and in the new EU Member States (10) it varies between 3.9 % (Hungary) and 7.9 % (Latvia) ([7]). The Lisbon goal for 2010 is 12.5 %.

Economic growth is sensitive to the stock and quality of human capital. A high-skilled and adaptable labour force is a factor in technology diffusion and innovation in work organisation and management. This leads to higher labour productivity and economic competitiveness (with focus on the new start of the Lisbon strategy). Currently, the Bulgarian economy is creating more and better jobs but it also needs an adaptable, flexible and qualified labour force. Legislation for providing it has already been created. Corporate investment in human resources is critical for investment in human capital, both for society and the national economy. Investment in human resources at corporate level is not yet common practice and the level of this type of investment is rather low.

Vocational training of the unemployed is a priority of labour policy but the low level of education and motivation, especially of the long-term unemployed (in 2006 they were 57.2 % of the total number of unemployed) require more efforts and action from the State and social partners.

Legislation for adult vocational training ([8])

Since 1999, a new vocational education and training Act has regulated public relations in vocational training of adults and the rights of individuals to vocational education and training in accordance with their personal interests and abilities. The Act determines the conditions for the functioning and development of the vocational education and training system based

([5]) Source: data for 2005 and 2006 from the administrative statistics of the Employment Agency of Bulgaria.

([6]) The total population of Bulgaria in 2005 was 7 718 750, the population aged 15 to 64 was 4 814 000 (62.4 % of the total population). Source: National Statistical Institute.

([7]) Eurostat, lifelong learning data.

([8]) Vocational training is as follows:
(a) initial vocational training to acquire a qualification in a profession or to part of a profession;
(b) continuing vocational training to improve a qualification in a profession or part of a profession.

on cooperation between institutions, local authorities and social partners. According to the Act there are four levels of vocational qualifications and six framework programmes for training. The Act also stipulates the institutions ([9]) providing vocational training and introduces a requirement for private vocational training centres to be licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). The VET Act also stipulates State educational requirements (standards) and the rules for managing and funding the VET system. The last amendments to the Act made in 2005 transpose the EU directives on regulated professions ([10]).

The Employment Promotion Act, adopted in 2002, also regulates the vocational training of adults (both employed and unemployed). It determines the functions of the National Advisory Council for Vocational Training of the Labour Force (NACVTLF), State subsidies for vocational training, the right of unemployed trainees to receive grants, the functions of the Employment Agency to organise and fund training from the State budget for active labour market policy. During the past two years amendments to the Act expanded the scope of training institutions to have the right to provide training for employed and unemployed adults by including vocational schools. Grants for management training were offered to unemployed people setting up micro enterprises or starting their own businesses in the agricultural sector. The institutions responsible for the vocational training of adults are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, and the Employment Agency.

Employers and trade union organisations also play an important role in developing and implementing national policy on vocational training of adults. The social partners participate in many councils and bodies at national, regional and local levels, such as the Economic and Social Council (in 2005 the Council drew up an opinion on the problems of vocational education and training in Bulgaria ([11])), the National Employment Promotion Council, NACVTLF, NAVET's managing board, regional employment committees, cooperation councils for labour offices. The social partners are involved in developing and implementing labour market programmes and projects for training and employing disadvantaged groups.

([9]) Training institutions are: vocational schools, secondary schools, colleges, arts schools and vocational training centres, junior high schools, primary, general secondary, secondary special and sports schools, determined by State educational standards. Vocational training can also be provided by ministries, municipalities, employers' organisations, trade unions and employers.

([10]) Directives on the right to provide services by lawyers, architects, dentists, doctors, nurses, midwives, chemists, veterinarians, etc.

([11]) Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria, 2005.

Recent developments and problems in adult vocational training in Bulgaria

Vocational training fot the employed

In the 1990s, the years of transition to a market economy, the vocational training system of the centralised State economy was quickly destroyed, but the establishment of a new, market-oriented system took time.

After a period of rather strong decline, a new system was created. Today vocational training for the employed is organised by employers, trade unions, the Employment Agency, non-governmental organisations, etc. The findings of this chapter are based on data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI) and the survey on vocational training of the employed in enterprises in 2005. That year, about 53 060 enterprises, firms and organisations were included in the NSI survey on continuing vocational training. Collected data refer to the year 2004. Employers in 8 037 (15.1 %) public and 45 023 (84.9 %) private companies were interviewed. Only 14 199 enterprises or 26.8 % of the total number of estimated enterprises had organised vocational training for their staff. This number is insufficient but it varies considerably according to the size of the enterprise and the number of staff: for example, 70.0 % of enterprises with more than 250 employees provided training, but only 18.5 % of micro enterprises. The training included mainly instructions, job rotation, self-study, etc. The share of employees included in training activities is small – only 14.2 % of employees took part in training in 2004.

There are various reasons for these modest results. For example, employers only invest in training their staff when they are sure of a return on their investment by obtaining higher staff productivity, quality performance and innovation. Vocational training is organised mainly in cases where new products or services, new production methods, or reorganisation of the enterprise's activities are introduced. The small number of employees included in training can be explained by the low level of innovation in enterprises (for the considered period, new products or services were introduced in only 8.6 % of enterprises, only 6.7 % of enterprises implemented new technologies and only 2.6 % made structural changes). Economic insecurity is the main reason many enterprises have not developed plans for the future. They do not have plans for future investments and staff development; they rely only on favourable economic conditions to survive. In Bulgaria, total labour costs are high because of the insurance burden, and additional investments in staff training would only increase costs further. Employers suffer significant losses when trained employees move to other enterprises for higher salaries. In particular, few employers know how to avoid such losses by signing an agreement on the rights and obligations of both employer and employee in advance.

The insufficient number of trained employees is also due to the fact that only one fifth of employers assess the qualification and skills of their staff.

Staff assessments are carried out annually mainly in big public enterprises. During the three year period between 2002 and 2004, managers of one quarter of enterprises needed to train their staff in new skills. Often managers are not aware of the benefits of improving their employees' skills or how to find a training provider. Four out of five managers interviewed are convinced that skills can be improved during work, 'learning-by-doing'.

About 58.4 % of interviewed employers believe they can recruit qualified workers with the skills needed on the labour market. The high number of unemployed creates the illusion of a high level of supply; but employers meet difficulties when looking for a qualified worker because most unemployed are unskilled, poorly educated and motivated. There is a shortage of qualified workers such as technicians, mechanics and workers in sectors of rapid development such as construction, tourism and textiles.

Half the managers recognise the importance of VET and 52.1 % intend to organise training for their staff. But they do not understand the need for developing training plans (only 6.6 % of enterprises had such plans in 2004), allocating funds for training (only 4.6 % of enterprises allocated such funds in 2004) and creating in-company training centres (only 12.4 % of large enterprises run their own training centres).

The lack of company development plans determines the lack of training plans for employees. According to the survey quoted above, only 11.1 % of interviewed enterprises plan to provide vocational training for their employees in 2006 and 2007, 31.7 % would probably provide training, but more than a half of the enterprises, 57.2 %, do not plan to organise any vocational training. It is disturbing that only 6.9 % of micro enterprises plan to provide training for their staff to acquire new skills and two thirds of micro enterprises (65.2 %) respond that they have no intention of undertaking such actions.

For almost one third of employers (32.6 %), employees themselves are responsible for acquiring new or better skills. Because of low incomes, employees' participation in training courses paid by themselves is limited. Most employees do not practise lifelong learning. Signed agreements for training between employers and employees represented by trade unions is rare (only 3.0 % of enterprises have signed such an agreement, mainly large enterprises with a staff of more than 250).

Training impact is evaluated in only 30.1 % of all enterprises, in half of large enterprises (54.1 %) and in only 16.2 % of micro enterprises which shows the importance of vocational training. Evaluation is based on data from training certificates or from evaluation forms filled in by trainees. Most enterprises (69.9 %) have not evaluated training impact because they do not consider it important.

Data on the positions of trained staff show that more often training is organised for managers and major group professionals. In about 52.1 % of enterprises training qualified support staff was included, whereas in only 14.4 % of enterprises was training for low-qualified workers included. The table below shows the training provided most offten.

Short-term training such as sharing experience and giving instructions during or before work, are the preferred forms of training for 66.8 % of employers interviewed. Such training is low-cost, of short duration and usually gives immediate results, which is why the time spent in training is only 0.15 % of the total time off work in 2004. The time spent in training on average is 17.2 hours per participant. It is positive that about 31.5 % of enterprises apply other forms of training such as self-learning, learning by correspondence or distance learning using the Internet, etc.

Most enterprises in the survey sample, 73.2 %, have never organised training to improve the qualifications of their employees. The main reasons are as follows:

- according to 78.1 % of managers, the skills of their employees respond to the needs of the enterprise;
- in 60.3 % of enterprises ([12]), newly hired staff have the needed skills;
- in about 21.9 % of enterprises, high cost is the main reason for not organising continuing vocational training.

Summarising, managers of small and medium-sized enterprises are not very active in organising training for their staff. The situation in large enterprises is much better and this is important because more than half the employed work in large enterprises and have the opportunity to develop their

Table 1

Training in:	Number of courses	Percentage of total	Duration of training
Total	48 091	100.0	100.0
Foreign languages	1 777	3.7	7.0
Sales and marketing	4 168	8.7	5.4
Accountancy and financing	5 534	11.5	5.5
Management	4 721	9.8	6.6
Office work	838	1.7	1.4
Personal skills and working life	3 055	6.4	5.3
Computer literacy	4 771	9.9	9.8
IT	1 001	2.1	2.2
Equipment and production	8 846	18.4	22.5
Safety and health at work	4 584	9.5	5.3
Services	651	1.4	3.1
Other	8 145	16.9	25.9

Source: Vocational training in enterprises; National Statistical Institute; Sofia, 2006, page 40.

([12]) More than one answer is possible; as a result the sum of the percentage figures exceeds 100.

vocational skills. Incentives for employers to invest in training staff are insufficient. Branch organisations and trade unions could be more active in implementing lifelong learning policy.

In 2005, the Employment Agency organised training for 5 290 employed in micro and small enterprises, and for employees lacking the required qualification to work with new technologies and changed conditions of manufacturing, etc. The State subsidy per training course per employee is determined every year in the national employment action plan (NEAP) for 2006 and 2007 it is EUR 125 from the State budget with the rest paid by employers. Training centres are selected following a tender procedure or by employers themselves. In some cases the impact of training on employment is limited by low motivation and the insufficient educational level of trainees. Sometimes training is not delivered attractively, without using new methods of teaching and without the active participation of trainees.

The low living standard and insufficient incomes of low-educated persons limit their participation in training courses paid by themselves and other forms of lifelong learning activities. At the same time, despite the opportunities provided by the VET Act, the system for validating knowledge obtained through informal learning has not been developed.

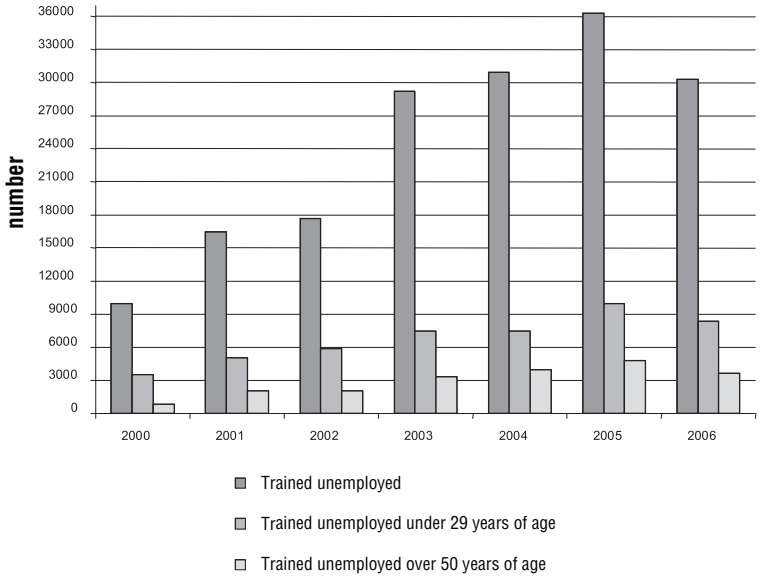
Training of unemployed people

The system of training unemployed people is better organised and funded. Its scope expands constantly because employability of the unemployed is a major priority of the NEAP in recent years. Various programmes and measures for vocational training are included annually in NEAP. The Employment Agency organises training for more than 70 professions. The list of professions is changed every year according to labour force demand. Aiming to ensure equal access, training provided is free of charge for unemployed people, covered by a State subsidy. To encourage participation, the unemployed are provided with resources to cover accommodation and travel costs. The subsidy for training is determined annually in the NAEP (EUR 250 for 2006 and 2007).

In 2005, the average number of registered unemployed was 424 381 and about 36 344 unemployed people ([13]) were included in vocational training, or 8.6 % of all unemployed people. In 2006, there were 30 335 or 8.5 % (in 2006 the average number of registered unemployed was 356 054). As a result of training in 2005, 73.8 % of the trained unemployed found a new job immediately or shortly after training. This shows that training provided corresponded to a great extent to labour force demand. Of the trained unemployed, 47.9 % were young people up to 29 years of age, and 55.6 % of them had secondary level of education. A good practice is internship of three months for some trainees (70 % of all trainees in 2005). The knowledge and skills acquired by trainees are tested in real work conditions and they have the opportunity to be hired if job positions become vacant. During internship,

([13]) National Employment Agency.

Figure 1. Unemployed included people in vocational training



Source: National Employment Agency.

trainees receive the minimum salary and are insured.

Most unemployed have participated in courses for computer operators, cooks, experts in accountancy, hairdressers, producers of bread and pastry, waiters and waitresses, and barmen. Foreign language training is also provided.

Figure 2

Educational structure of unemployed in 2006

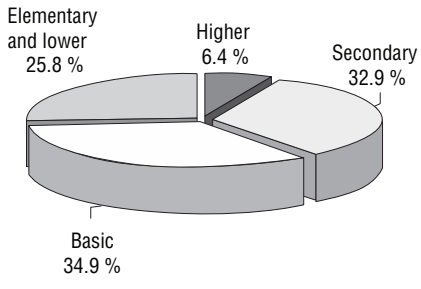
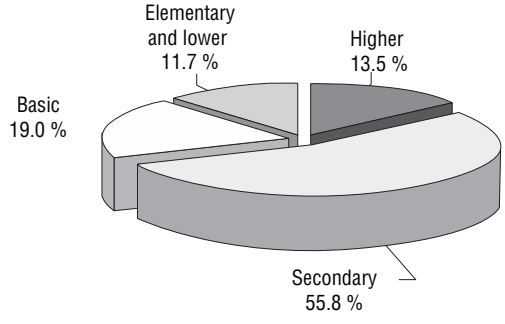


Figure 3

Educational structure of trained unemployed in 2006



Source: Administrative statistics of the Employment Agency 2006.

Selecting unemployed people for vocational training courses organised by the Employment Agency is made in accordance with the tasks outlined in their individual action plans. To improve access of unemployed people from disadvantaged groups to training as well as to better link their individual needs to the training provided a new method for selecting unemployed people for vocational training was adopted in 2006. It gives priority to the low-skilled unemployed, young unemployed and people with disabilities.

The unemployed have showed higher interest in programmes for: computer training of youths and women; literacy and vocational training of Roma people; vocational training of early school leavers; training in entrepreneurship, etc. Vocational training is also provided in Phare programme projects ([14]).

Licensed private centres for vocational training are increasingly important for training the unemployed. At the beginning of 2007, according to NAVET's data these centres number more than 400 ([15]), but most are located in Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna. Vocational training centres provided training for more than 50 000 unemployed and employed in 2005. Training was mainly in 'business management and administration', 'hotels and restaurants', followed by 'motor vehicles, ships and aircraft' and 'metalworking and machine-building' or in 91 professions. Many people were trained as cooks, welders, security guards, fitters, construction workers, waiters, barmen, office secretaries and tailors. Training courses for part of a profession predominate. About 2 000 training courses were funded by the Employment Agency and about 1 000 by employers.

Despite the successful results achieved in vocational training, there are still problems connected to quality assurance. Short-term training is preferred by the unemployed because it gives them a chance to find a job.

The vocational training system is still centralised, with funding provided by the State. The number of private vocational training providers is rapidly growing but some offer disorganised training, which is reflected in the quality of training. Training programmes are not followed, trainers are not trained to train adults, practical training is insufficient and outdated facilities are used. Information and communication technologies are insufficiently used in the training process, as access to the Internet is limited. Sometimes there is a shortage of specialised textbooks and training materials.

Simultaneously, training effectiveness is limited by low motivation and the low educational level of the long-term unemployed. As a result, vocational training of the unemployed is preceded by activities such as motivation training, literacy courses, vocational guidance, etc.

([14]) Phare programme projects – 'Clearing the path for youth employment', 'Alternative employment' 'Human resources development and employment promotion', programmes funded by the Social Investment Fund, etc.

([15]) Annual bulletin 2005 of NAVET; Sofia, 2006; Annual report of the activities of NAVET in 2005, p. 7-40, Analysis of the information of 2005 received from centres for vocational training in Bulgaria.

Future actions in adult vocational training

One of the main policy priorities set in the chapter on 'Employment' of the first Bulgarian reform programme is improving labour force employability and improving lifelong learning.

In adult vocational training new strategic documents are to be implemented, an adult training strategy was developed in 2006 and a lifelong learning strategy will be developed in 2007.

The main objective of the Bulgarian operational programme 'human resources development', which provides the framework for receiving funds from the European Social Fund (ESF), is improving the quality of life through improving human capital, increasing employment and labour productivity, and social inclusion. One of the major priorities is raising the quality of education and training and providing better access to quality education and lifelong learning.

More effective measures will be taken to ensure training in key competences for a more flexible and adaptable labour force, training in entrepreneurship, training for reducing illiteracy and increasing employability of the labour force with low levels of education and without qualifications. As regards implementing the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs of the EU, employment programmes will be directed at the most vulnerable groups on the labour market. Vocational training will be a component of the programmes directed at reconciling work and family life. In-company training will be encouraged through various tax incentives, subsidies for training a larger number of employed people, opportunities for more flexible working hours aiming at combining work and learning, providing counselling services to employers about the rights and obligations of trainees.

According to the national strategy for continuing vocational training 2005-2010 ([16]), the main priority is improving access to continuing vocational training by developing training forms close to home (distance training, e-learning); ensuring opportunities for combining work and study and developing specific measures for disadvantaged groups on the labour market.

To ensure high quality of continuing vocational training, actions are envisaged for improving the organisation of vocational training for the unemployed, updating curricula and training methods, introducing a system for controlling and evaluating training outcomes. Existing State educational standards (labour standards) are being improved and developing new ones is based on job requirements.

The system for identifying employers' labour force needs with specific qualifications developed under a Phare project will be applied to the whole country, including some forecasting. It will be used as a basis for developing training plans, vocational fields and State enrolment plans for students at secondary and higher schools.

([16]) Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2004.

To achieve a close link between initial and continuing training a national qualifications framework will be developed in accordance with the European qualification framework. It will contribute to achieving transparency and recognition of qualifications. International experience will be studied as well as opportunities for validating knowledge and skills obtained through non-formal and informal learning.

Realising effective cooperation and coordination between key institutions in vocational training and the labour market is important. Suitable incentives and mechanisms will be introduced for sharing expenses and responsibilities for improving the level and effectiveness of investments in human resources through reducing the tax burden and introducing appropriate guarantees for spending on staff building. Collective labour bargaining will be improved for labour force training with active involvement of social partners, which is a requirement of the Copenhagen declaration. Greater decentralisation of funding of the VET system is important for attracting funds from the ESF.

To improve the link between education, training and the labour market, and in accordance with Luxembourg Council 2004 recommendations, an integrated information system will be established, with data on trained people by profession, by acquired level of vocational qualification, and with information on training institutions and trainings providers and training courses organised by the Employment Agency. Feedback on the percentage of trained people who find job is important for the VET system. Such information will be provided through the Employment Agency's information system and the National Insurance Institute.

According to the requirements of the Copenhagen Declaration, it is important for Bulgarian policy-makers and experts to know the best practices of other Member States and participate in peer reviews and discussions on the problems of LLL. The active participation of Bulgaria in the new integrated programme of EU progress and especially in the EU programme 'Lifelong learning' could support these processes substantially.

Conclusion

There is broad consensus in Bulgarian society that human capital is a key engine for growth in the knowledge-driven economy. Legislation and the adopted strategies, plans and programmes, provide opportunities for improving human capital and activating lifelong learning, but they have to be realised through joint efforts of all players concerned. Bulgaria's accession to the EU on 1 January 2007 presents new challenges connected to increased opportunities for labour force mobility and requirements of enterprises to introduce EU standards. While large companies in Bulgaria have progressed in this field, small and medium-sized enterprises need support from the State and social partners in increasing the quality of their human resources. It is very important that envisaged future activities in lifelong learn-

ing are carried out. The result will be sustainable growth of productivity, adaptability of enterprises, creation and adoption of new technologies. The higher employability of unemployed people as a result of training could partially cover the lack of skilled labour in some sectors.

Expected results from the coherent policy to be implemented by the end of 2010 include a considerable increase in the level of participation of adults in LLL, increased employment rate and overcoming the shortage of qualified labour. ■

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The contribution of European vocational training policy to reforms in the partner countries of the European Union

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SUMMARY
This article provides an overview of recent developments in EU vocational education and training (VET) policy, and of the issues and challenges faced by VET systems in the Western Balkans, Turkey, and other countries covered by the 'wider European neighbourhood' policy. The purpose is to emphasise the relevance for these countries of the EU messages, instruments, benchmarks and principles that are part of the Copenhagen process, but also the interest expressed in the process by the countries themselves, particularly those currently implementing reforms to meet the challenges faced by their own systems. But to maximise the impact of the EU messages and instruments certain conditions must be met. To make these messages and tools relevant to each country, it is essential to conduct a process of policy learning. Partner countries must also place their reforms within comprehensive lifelong learning strategies, in partnership with all actors in the field.

Key words
Education and training policy,
vocational education and training,
lifelong learning,
policy learning,
institution and capacity building,
social partnership

Introduction

The development of human capital is increasingly recognised as a means of facing the challenges of globalisation and the knowledge society. It lies at the very heart of the challenges posed by the transition towards a market economy and democratic society, and of preparing the accession of new countries and potential accession countries. It is also an essential factor of the transition process embraced by countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, for setting up a Euro-Mediterranean area of free exchange in Maghreb and Mashrek countries, and for the integration of these regions

(except Central Asia) within the new European neighbourhood policy. It is in this context that education and training systems are being questioned in all partner countries of the European Training Foundation. Vocational education and training, especially, is attracting reflection and far-reaching reform.

In their drive to reform, these countries are expressing a growing excitement about policy developments in EU education and training that are linked to the Lisbon strategy, and about the diverse paths taken by EU Member States. The recommendations made and instruments deployed in the wake of the Copenhagen Process [3] have especially raised interest [5]. National authorities have expressed an interest in integrating the messages and mechanisms of the European Union within their own policies. These developments also enjoy the backing of programmes of European assistance and partnership, and the support of the European Training Foundation.

Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of these measures on the education and training systems concerned, we can draw some initial conclusions from experiences gained and reforms introduced, allowing us to reflect on how to make better use of the mechanisms set up by the European Union for future enlargement and how to develop a more effective policy vis-à-vis neighbouring countries. We need to answer the following questions: How can partner countries make the best possible use of the diversity, methods and approaches employed within the Union, both at Community and national level? How can these approaches contribute to the systemic change towards democracy and the market economy? Is the presentation of European messages within partnership and assistance programmes the most efficient way to meet the needs of these countries? Should European VET policies be drafted with a view to being extended to partner countries? How can we create a closer partnership in vocational education and training between the European Union and these countries? To what extent can this new EU process of mutual learning benefit the development of policies in partner countries?

Above and beyond the daily activities of the Foundation on behalf of these countries, these questions were on the agenda of a conference held in Turin in June 2005, entitled *What's good for Europe is good for its neighbours* [16], as was the work done by a consultative committee in June 2006 [11], which devoted a workshop to the question of *Learning from diversity: vocational education and training developments in the EU and its partner countries*. Based on these precedents, this article attempts briefly to point to recent changes in EU vocational education and training policies, to evaluate the diversity of the instruments and approaches adopted and examine their relevance for VET systems in partner countries, to assess their contribution to a stronger *mutual policy-learning process* and, based on the experience of the ETF, to draw lessons and raise new questions.

Education and training policies in the European Union

EU education and training policies have evolved considerably since the Luxembourg Council of 1997 as an element of the European strategy for employment. An even greater change followed from the Barcelona Council of 2002, which was based on the Lisbon strategy of 2000. Education ministers focused on three main objectives: improving the quality and efficiency of education and training systems in the EU; ensuring that these systems are accessible to all; and opening education and training to the world outside the EU [4]. Ministers decided to make changes of the basis of the *open coordination method:* exchanging experiences, working together toward common goals and drawing lessons from best practices in third countries.

As a result, ministers have cooperated more closely on vocational education and training since the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration [3]. Their cooperation aims to encourage voluntary links within the area of vocational education and training in order to promote mutual trust, transparency and the recognition of qualifications and competences – essential factors in improving citizens' mobility and access to lifelong learning. The following priorities were listed in the Declaration: *the European dimension, transparency, information and guidance, the recognition of competences and qualification and quality assurance.*

In addition, the *Education and Training 2010* programme covers not only formal education and training but, increasingly, non-formal learning, vocational teaching and training, and higher education. This integration corresponds well to the idea that vocational education and training is increasingly having an impact on all levels of education. The fresh impetus given to the Lisbon Strategy by the March 2005 European Council clearly showed the need to link growth more closely to employment and to refocus the Strategy on human capital, the knowledge society and lifelong learning. The integrated guidelines for growth and employment [7] adopted by the Council in June 2005 firmly anchor the priorities set out in the work programme *Education and Training 2010.*

Within the open method of coordination these policy objectives have been accompanied by a working method using a number of instruments, references, principles, measures, indicators and benchmarks, and good-practice databases. These are all linked to a number of priority themes, such as lifelong guidance, key skills for lifelong learning, the efficient use of resources, promoting education and training activities, transparency, mobility, the recognition of qualifications and the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, as well as the training of trainers and quality assurance.

A number of tools were put in place, including the *Guide for developers of lifelong career guidance systems, Europass,* the *Joint Quality Assur-*

ance Framework for vocational training, the *EQF (European Qualifications Framework),* and the *ECVT (credit transfer system),* which are currently undergoing testing. Apart from these common tools, a series of databases of good practices catalogue the very diverse policies and initiatives implemented in the Member States. These include the *European Toolbox for promoting the best use of resources,* the general presentation of good practices and policy initiatives for '*an environment that nurtures continuing training: making training more attractive and strengthening the links between work and society*', and a database on lifelong learning. Mention must also be made of the national Europass centres and the European Network for Quality Assurance in vocational training. Equally, a number of indicators and benchmarks have been developed to monitor progress within the European Union and at the national level in terms of attaining the set goals. These include the rate of early school leavers, the attainment level in higher secondary education and the percentage of adults in lifelong learning. These indicators are particularly relevant for measuring the progress of reforms in vocational education and training.

All these policy instruments are at the disposal of candidate countries, which are already associated with EU policies and have started to use Community instruments designed to implement the *Education and Training 2010* work programme. With the exception of *peer-learning activities,* systematically introduced in 2006 to intensify efforts and promote mutual learning, all other measures are available to all countries wishing to modernise their systems, meet set standards and practices of the Community or promote worker mobility between their country and the European Union.

Vocational education and training in the partner countries: the challenges ahead.

The diversity of partner countries

The partner countries working with the Foundation are very diverse in terms of political organisation, economic development, social and civil conditions, demographics and culture. If we are to believe the UNDP's Human Development Index of 2004 [24], which contains data on life expectancy, education levels, participation in primary, secondary and higher education, and GDP per capita, the countries concerned range from 23rd (Israel) to 123rd (Morocco), as shown in table 4. The recent Member States, with which the Foundation worked up to 2004, range from 27th (Slovenia) to 45th (Latvia). The Western Balkans range from 44th (Croatia) to 73rd (Albania). The Russian Federation ranks 65th, while Turkey ranks 92nd. The countries of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus range from 80th (Kazakhstan) to 113th (Uzbekistan). The greatest variation is to be seen in the countries of the MEDA area, which range between 23rd (Israel) and 78th (Lebanon) to 111th (Egypt) and 123rd (Morocco); but also within Eastern Europe, where Belarus ranks

67th, Ukraine 77th and Moldova 114th. A closer look, however, shows that these countries face common problems in vocational education and training. All are faced with challenges similar to those of the EU Member States, though on a different scale and in very different environments.

While progress can be seen in several countries, on average the performance of the education systems is inferior to that of EU countries. In certain cases (according to international studies and indicators) it is even deteriorating. Admittedly, this global view hides a plethora of diverse situations. For example, the last PISA 2003 survey [19] on the maths performance of 19-year-old pupils placed Russia at the same level as Hungary and Italy and slightly below the average for OECD countries, while Serbia and Turkey are clearly lower, with Tunisia at the bottom of the scale of the 15 countries surveyed – at the same level as Brazil, as can be seen in Table 1 below. Moreover, Russia's results with regard to scientific education are clearly improving while reading results are worsening, in contrast to the situation in its neighbours Poland and Latvia. The results of the TIMSS surveys [1] on performance in maths and science of 8th grade pupils (around 14 years of age), which were conducted in 1995, 1999 and 2003 reveal a more complicated picture, as shown in Table 2: though Russia features quite high on the scale, it fell behind between 1999 and 2003 both in maths and science, Romania and Bulgaria are at the middle of the scale, below other European countries participating in the survey, while FYROM, Jordan and especially Tunisia are lagging far behind. The results of the PIRLS 2001 survey on the reading abilities of 10 year olds also show major differences, with Bulgaria at the top of the scale of the 35 countries surveyed, Russia, Romania and Moldova in the middle, Turkey and FYROM clearly below average, with Morocco at the bottom of the scale, as shown in Table 3.

In such circumstances, vocational education and training do not receive priority action or adequate funding, even though this is the education sector that has suffered most severely from the transition to the market economy, industrial restructuring and the wars in former Yugoslavia [12]. The task is immense when one considers the need to modernise programmes and adapt them to the needs of the labour market and the knowledge economy; to develop adult training and prepare for lifelong learning; to create bridges between different occupational areas for young people and adults; to open up pathways between vocational, general and higher education; to establish parity of esteem between occupational paths and general education; to ensure proper coordination between the ministries and active cooperation of all actors involved at national, local and regional levels; and to establish an effective social partnership on education and training issues.

Table 1. PISA Average performance of the partner countries of the European Training Foundation and the new EU Member States (former partner countries)

	Maths 2000	Maths 2003	Δ	Reading 2000	Reading 2003	Δ	Science 2000	Science 2003	Δ
Czech Republic	510	527	+17	492	489	-3	511	523	+12
Slovakia		505			469			495	
Hungary	478	479	+1	480	482	+2	496	503	+7
Poland	470	490	+20	479	497	+18	483	498	+15
Russian Federation	469	474	+5	462	442	-20	460	489	+29
Latvia	452	486	+34	458	491	+33	460	489	+29
Bulgaria	430			430			448		
Romania	426			428			441		
Serbia		432			412			436	
Turkey		417			441			434	
Tunisia		359			375			385	
OECD average	494	496	+2	500	494	-6	500	500	0

Table 2. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
Average results on the scales of mathematics and science in eighth grade by country in 1995, 1999 and 2003 and differences in 2003 compared with 1999. The new Member States are indicated for purposes of comparison.

	Maths			Δ	Science			Δ
	1995	1999	2003	2003-1999	1995	1999	2003	2003-1999
Hungary	527	532	529	-2	537	552	543	-10
Russian Federation	524	526	508	-18	523	529	514	-16
Slovakia	534	534	508	-26	532	535	517	-18
Latvia	488	505	505		476	503	513	+11
Lithuania	472	482	502	+20	464	488	519	+31
Israel		466	496	+29		468	488	+20
Slovenia	494		493		514		520	
Bulgaria	527	511	476	-34	545	518	479	-39
Romania	474	472	475	+3	471	472	470	-2
Moldova		469	460	-9		459	472	+13
Cyprus	468	476	459	-17	452	460	441	-19
FYROM		447	435	-12		458	449	-9
Jordan		428	424	-3		450	475	
Tunisia		448	410	-38		430	404	-26

Source: TIMSS [1]

Table 3. Average performances in reading (*Progress in International Literacy Study,* PIRLS 2001) in the partner countries of the European Training Foundation as well as in the new EU Member States (former partner countries)

	Average result	Number of years spent at school	Average age
Bulgaria	551	4	10.9
Latvia	547	4	11.0
Lithuania	540	4	10.9
Hungary	537	4	10.7
Czech Republic	536	4	10.5
Russian Federation	531	3 or 4	10.3
Slovakia	522	4	10.3
Romania	512	4	11.1
Israel	507	4	10.0
Moldova	505	4	10.8
Slovenia	503	3	9.8
Cyprus	490	4	9.7
Turkey	452	4	10.2
FYROM	445	4	10.7
Morocco	358	4	11.2
International average	500	4	10.3

The difficulties of reforming vocational education and training in the new EU Member States

At this point, it should be pointed out that the somewhat flattering performances obtained in the new Member States, as shown in the tables above, do not reflect the situation in education and vocational training. The experience of these countries – with which the Foundation worked up until the 'big bang' enlargement of 1 May 2004, and up to the end of 2006 as regards Bulgaria and Romania – clearly shows the inherent difficulties of introducing necessary reforms. Although the worsening shortages in qualified labour are hindering a return to growth, vocational training pathways have not changed in line with needs. Unemployment especially affects secondary school leavers, including those with a vocational qualification, while higher education offers the possibility of much better-paid jobs in the future. Moreover, companies are still not prepared to invest in vocational training, either for young people or for adults; employers do not encourage attempts

to train or retrain. As a result, most students and families are turning away from vocational education courses, preferring to take their chances with higher education. This means both university (which is still highly academic) and new institutions – some public but most private – whose short courses offer key skills, especially those required by the service economy and referred to most often by employers.

An upcoming study by the World Bank on initial training in the eight new Central European Member States advises governments to progressively scale back investment in vocational education in secondary schools and to move instead towards the post-secondary level, explore alternative financing methods to organise 'practical' training in companies, and encourage companies to finance equipment and students to finance their studies (including through loan schemes). To many people this is a sign that the reforms introduced so far have, at least partially, failed; as a result, they look to European policy instruments to kick-start the system. If this development shows the difficulty of reforms in the 'enlargement countries' and those covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, it also reveals the importance to these countries of enhancing cooperation that is based on the European tools.

Problems and challenges facing the vocational education and training systems in the partner countries

Initial vocational education and training is facing particular difficulties in the Meda countries, which are facing strong demographic pressure and dwindling public resources. The partitioning of pathways is preventing global strategies from being defined [17]. This is equally important in the Western Balkan countries, where reform depends on support programmes and funding, principally from the EU and the World Bank, at a time when young people are turning en masse away from vocational education pathways. For certain countries one could even ask whether reforming initial vocational training is a real option today, considering how little is currently invested in it [13].

Adult training, including training on the labour market, is equally problematic. While adult participation in lifelong learning was 9.7% on average in 2005 in the EU25 (the EU benchmark is set at 12.5% for 2010), the figure was 2.3% in Turkey, 2.1% in Croatia, 1.6% in Romania and 1.3% in Bulgaria. Reskilling the workforce, though necessary, is particularly difficult due to low or irrelevant levels of training [21], limited national resources, a lack of motivation among employers, a high proportion of micro-enterprises in the economy and a lack of appropriate tools for skills development. This problem is particularly acute in countries with falling populations, i.e. most of the Western Balkan countries (except Albania and Kosovo) and East European states. High unemployment also makes enterprises reluctant to fund training for their workers since the labour market is in a position to satisfy most of their needs for skilled labour. The move towards decentralised, autonomous educational institutions is blocked by the insufficient transfer

of public funds to the local level and to attitudes formed by a long tradition of centralisation. Yet decentralisation is also sometimes applied, mainly for political reasons, to levels where it becomes a byword for fragmentation. This is the case of FYROM, where full responsibility for primary, secondary and vocational schools was given to the municipalities following the 2001 Ohrid agreements. Similarly, since the 1996 Dayton accords, each of the 10 cantons of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation has had its own Education Minister. These factors have led to marked disparities in employment and training.

Although training programmes have been undergoing reform for a long time and pedagogic content and methods have seen some development almost everywhere – generally as part of pilot projects – their deployment in all fields and implementation in all schools is a very long process. Many vocational training courses are still not adapted to present conditions and do not correspond to the needs of the labour market. Teaching methods have not really changed; there is a considerable need for teacher training and much technical equipment is obsolete. Private training is developing mainly in fashionable niche areas, and the quality of the courses is occasionally more than doubtful. There is a general lack of qualification and certification frameworks. The components of the vocational training systems are highly fragmented and compartmentalised, particularly in Mediterranean countries. This considerably complicates any work on transparency, quality assurance and evaluation.

More generally, these countries suffer from a lack of transparency in managing their systems and from clientelism surrounding many decisions, especially on appointing school heads and awarding equipment grants. The introduction of both market economy mechanisms and democratic processes is of vital importance for modernising education and training systems. Institutions responsible for vocational education and training must be developed and reinforced at every turn – including among social partners.

Partner countries' interest in the European messages

The main challenges set in the area of vocational education and training in the European Union by the Maastricht Communication [3], i.e. *implementing reforms and increasing investment in education; improving the image and attractiveness of vocational pathways; achieving high levels of quality and innovation linking VET with the labour market requirements; taking into account the needs of the low-skilled; parity of esteem and links between VET and general education, in particular with higher education',* correspond exactly to the objectives stated earlier, even though the scale of problems to be solved is of another order and despite the need to take into account specific challenges.

This is why most of the partner countries have embarked upon ambitious reforms of their vocational education and training systems, usually within more general educational reforms. Many have also shown interest in following upon the European 'advances' in order to achieve these reforms.

For example, ministries of education and employment in the Western Balkans have expressed, in several joint declarations, a keen interest in reforming their education and vocational training systems on the basis of EU policies and instruments. In turn, the European Commission has encouraged these steps, as shown by the Communication *"The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and prosperity'* [2] and the action plans prepared for each country in the Mediterranean area and Eastern Europe in implementing the neighbourhood policy strategy [8].

Apart from the reform programmes inspired by the wealth of experience in the EU, progress with *Education and Training 2010* and the Copenhagen Process has resulted in launching more targeted projects, either within support programmes and assistance from the EU, or through more limited campaigns for awareness-raising and dissemination activities, analysis, counselling and institution-building, in which the ETF was particularly involved. This has led to a learning process which we must now analyse more closely.

The ETF experience: lessons learned

To what extent is this Community experience useful in paving the way towards current reform and in involving all the actors concerned? Doubtless it is too early to make an in-depth evaluation of how European vocational education and training policies affect the partner countries. Nonetheless, we may draw some conclusions from the experience of the ETF. Our analysis concerns the content of the reforms, their implementation and the process of learning initiated by such activities.

We based our analysis on the awareness campaigns related to the Copenhagen messages, but also on activities for implementing lifelong learning strategies, national certification frameworks, quality assurance, sectoral approaches to qualifications and the development of apprenticeship training. We also took into account the ETF's monitoring of the Phare, Cards, Tacis and Meda [9] European support programmes, including in the new EU Member States. The analysis was also based on the conclusions of a conference held in Turin in June 2005 [16] where representatives of the partner countries tried to identify the obstacles to using Community instruments and points of reference when implementing vocational training reforms in their countries. Finally, we took into account the work of the ETF Consultative Group of June 2006 in a workshop dedicated to the impact of European vocational training policies on reforms in the partner countries of the European Union [11].

On the content of reforms

As seen earlier, on paper the message and instruments of the Copenhagen Process seem well adapted to solving problems in vocational training in the partner countries. They provide an overall approach, pointing to the weaknesses of the training professional systems and identifying the necessary reforms. Since these messages and instruments tackle the basic problems which affect vocational education and training in these countries and attempt to set realistic objectives, they can be expected to be effective – at the price, of course, of a much greater effort, compared to European Union countries. Such reasoning, however, is naive. It disregards the gap between these countries and the EU in terms of market economy and democracy and in the way institutions operate. This gap makes for difficulties which act as brakes on reform and can lead to a distortion of the European message.

Nevertheless, experience shows that under certain conditions ([1]), European messages can act as catalysers, allowing an identification of the strengths and weaknesses of national systems, clarifying the strategic issues and identifying the appropriate political response. As argued by an ETF expert in a recent article [20] examining the implementation of national qualification frameworks in the Western Balkans, *'Measures addressing the main aspects of a national qualification framework are supported through the Copenhagen process and thus far have remained sufficiently broad to promote strategic directions without constraining local initiatives. This aspect is of prime importance in countries reviewing and reforming their education and training systems as it provides guidance and support which allows them to position themselves among a range of strategies without imposing a single or unique approach. In this regard, the material from Copenhagen may be used to guide reforms, thereby accelerating their reform process by shortening the amount of time taken in policy search for models or approaches that reflect mainstream trends in EU Member States'*.

But one should avoid considering these messages and instruments in isolation, without examining how they interact with other messages and with all components of reform in vocational education and training. Nothing would be worse than treating the messages from the Copenhagen Process as a series of technical recipes for introducing cut-price reforms. We could well ask whether the introduction of the Europass Certificate Supplement, to the exclusion of other more substantial measures, could make it possible to restore the image of vocational secondary schools in Poland and to stem the flow of pupils towards general education. The European Commission's presentation of the European Qualifications Framework clearly showed how the different messages from Copenhagen were interlinked. Besides, just as it is not desirable to consider the teaching of vocational education and training without placing it within the wider vocational education and training system in a given country, the Copenhagen instruments, including indicators

([1]) Those implemented by the ETF as part of awareness-raising programmes.

and benchmarks, must similarly be considered as part and parcel of the Education & Training 2010 programme. This broader vision is also served by the integrative value of many of the tools proposed. An example is the European Qualifications Framework, which takes into account all the levels of qualification, including through higher education.

It is essential to create in each country a clear idea of the role of competences and qualifications in economic and social development, especially for paving the way toward the market economy and knowledge society, and to define an adapted strategy interlinking the various components of the education and training system and all levels of intervention. The six priorities ([2]) and the six key components ([3]) of the European strategy for lifelong learning are an appropriate framework to follow, realigned, of course, in accordance to each country's circumstances.

Aiming for an integrated strategy also makes it possible to consider which is the best response to the needs for growth, development and social cohesion; how the various parts of the education and training system could contribute; which short-, medium- and long-term objectives should be set; and how the right balance should be struck between them. It also raises the issue of the public and private priorities and resources required to attain these objectives. This leads to reflecting on and organising interaction between initial and continuing training, between vocational training and higher education, between formal learning and informal and non-formal learning, between certification and validation of competences, between the respective roles of the State, the company and the individual, between the State and the social partners, between the different administrative levels, and between the State and local and regional representatives. Most of the partner countries suffer from weakness in adult training, in skills recognition, and from an imbalance between initial training and formal education (markedly higher than in the EU). This bolsters their interest in the European tools resulting from the Copenhagen Process, all of which place formal, informal and non-formal learning, as well as initial and continuing training, on an equal footing.

Here, the case of Estonia is interesting: a plan to relaunch vocational education and training, implemented in 2003, combined the establishment of a national qualifications framework, aimed at underpinning a policy for recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning, with the availability of considerable resources. Loans per pupil for vocational education were significant increased, and secondary schools were encouraged to make loans conditional on student results and to attract new groups.

In Hungary, a project involving the implementation of a national certification framework is seen as a way to improve efficiency and coordinate

([2]) Value learning; Information, guidance and counselling services; investing more time and money in learning; bringing learning opportunities closer to learners; providing everyone with basic skills; supporting research into innovative pedagogy.

([3]) Developing partnerships, identifying learner needs, adequate resources, access for all, creating a learning culture and a search for excellence.

national training policies. It should contribute substantially to the preparation of a lifelong education and training strategy, along with a series of measures to encourage adult learning and training programmes.

In fact, each tool of the European armoury has a systemic value: the capacity to treat the cultural and societal foundations of the education and training systems and to make them evolve in the direction of the social market economy and democracy. It is important to draw the best from it; and to do so requires an understanding of the measures themselves as well as of their conditions and constraints. It should not be possible to build a national qualifications framework without also creating the conditions for a solid social partnership on training and qualification issues. Similarly, setting up an efficient vocational guidance system is meaningless without the active cooperation and support of schools and employment agencies. Promoting quality likewise assumes a vision which encompasses the learning institution and its environment, especially the labour market. In more general terms, it is advisable to avoid implementing quality assurance approaches in vocational education and training in a compartmentalised manner, with no link to the approaches deployed by education ministries, as is the case in some countries in the Meda area.

This all shows how important it is to pay attention to the way in which these 'European' approaches are presented and implemented by their promoters, especially the European experts chosen to finalise programmes of EU assistance. Paying lip-service to 'fashionable' concepts should be avoided. Too many activities are still being presented as measures to promote lifelong learning without seriously taking into consideration the global strategic context or necessary pre-conditions. One good example of rhetoric can be seen in the education strategy (in a lifelong perspective) adopted in 2006 by the Government of FYROM. This document, which puts all the onus on higher education and marginalises training, essentially takes up the most ambitious aims of the European policy and the Lisbon agenda while stating that in any case the State will gradually cut public financing for education and will leave it up to the municipalities and training institutions to provide for their own needs. Another example, unfortunately all too common, is that of seminars that bring together experts and representatives from the ministries to talk about the need for the involvement of the social partners without the social partners actually being present. In certain Mashrek countries, decentralised mechanisms such as public/private partnerships have been promoted in an authoritative, top-down manner, which contradicts their aims and jeopardises their success.

The national or local situation in which such measures are to be introduced must be examined carefully. It is the responsibility of European assistance and its experts to build and implement programmes taking full consideration of the local situation context and real needs in close collaboration with local and national authorities, who in return should contribute fully to this mutual learning exercise.

On the process

The conclusion of the enlargement process for ten new countries [14, 18] showed that European support programmes had not devoted sufficient attention or assistance in developing institutions capable of steering the transition to democracy and the market economy, nor in taking on board and using the experiences gained by the European Community. Similar problems, but at a higher level, are evident today in the candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as in other partner countries at an even greater distance from the European market economy and democracy.

But this is not purely a technical or institutional issue; it is also of a political and cultural nature. What is the real interest of governments in the European experience if not the possibility of a faster accession (for candidate and potential candidate countries) or of half-opening the door to accession (for 'neighbouring' countries). Apart from a rhetorical interest in such messages, to what extent are they ready or even capable of implementing measures that unsettle and even contradict the practices and work routine of their administration? The answer can be gleaned from the priority given to vocational training: as stated above, this is weak in most countries, if one examines public spending devoted to training. It can also be gleaned from the extent of dysfunction in implementing reforms; from the inefficiency and lack of transparency in managing available resources; and from the difficulties in establishing partnership and social dialogue on training issues.

Fortunately, many actors do have a genuine interest in seeing reforms introduced. They are the ones who will turn out to be the driving force behind the promotion and implementation of the European messages: the middle management in ministries, chambers of commerce and industry, trade union representatives, directors of vocational schools, heads of employment agencies, regional representatives. Many will use the rhetoric of the Summits to flesh out projects for raising qualification levels and for adapting the labour market to the needs of individuals and companies. This is why it is important to fully involve this category of people in European projects and to make them their main promoters.

It follows that an effective policy of awareness-raising and of integrating European messages into vocational training reforms should not be focused on a limited number of actors and institutions. On the contrary, it is important to involve a core group of responsible authorities and experts, representatives of the competent ministries (at the least, the ministries of education and employment), local and regional elected representatives, social partners and others playing a role in civil society, to work closely together, with a clear commitment on the part of the ministries involved. This core group should not only forge links with the tools derived from Copenhagen and the drafting and implementation of the Phare, Cards, Tacis and Meda programmes, and of European support programmes whose fragmentation is often an obstacle. It should also ensure the integration of pilot projects in education and training system reform by disseminating the outcomes

of these projects and mobilising all concerned. A major issue here is the central importance of *including teachers and trainers in the critical mass of stakeholders for reform* [15]. Being at the heart of implementing new programmes and new methods in schools, but also in contact with the school partners, parents, employers, municipalities and other interested parties, teachers and trainers are essential agents for implementing reform and related learning processes.

One of the ingredients for success is the existence and development of institutions to deal with the different dimensions of reforms and to maintain the necessary contacts with the European Commission, its specialised agencies and networks of competent experts and institutions within Europe and beyond. Unfortunately – as many admitted during the meetings in Turin mentioned earlier – partner countries show weaknesses in developing competent institutions, including in the area of research and expertise. In countries undergoing transition, research in education, formerly well-developed, was dismantled; rebuilding this capacity is still in its early stages. Those in charge often lack think tanks to interpret the advice and messages of international assistance and thus to help them make the best use of this assistance, in partnership with the actors concerned.

It is also important to combine top-down and grassroots approaches to make all involved responsible for the changes taking place. As one speaker complained at the meeting of the Consultative Committee (referring to the setting up of sectoral committees in Romania some 10 years after the initial steps for the reform of vocational training were taken), *'we started reform by building the roof before the walls and only now are we concerned with the foundations'*. The social partners must be fully involved in these processes if reform is to succeed and if the messages of Copenhagen are to be integrated and consolidated over time. This is how Romania is now planning to implement its national qualifications framework in the coming 5-8 years, Estonia and Hungary over the next 7, Croatia in the next 5 and Turkey over the next 3-5 years [6].

The learning process

Learning about policies is not just a copying exercise, nor does it involve applying EU instruments to the letter. The point is to understand the underlying principles, the inherent logic, of each policy or instrument and to determine how these principles and arguments could lead to a better understanding of the national context, identify realistic objectives and support necessary change. We call on those in charge at the national level, but even more so on those disbursing European assistance – especially experts implementing these programmes and those responsible for follow-up and evaluation – to keep this in mind when drafting new programmes.

Here, dissemination of good practice can play an important role, provided it becomes part of the learning mechanisms set up by the countries themselves. The aim should be to benefit global strategies that are equipped

with the necessary resources and to ensure the active participation of all concerned.

The mechanisms put in place within the European Union with the open method of coordination, and supplemented since 2005 by peer-learning activities, demonstrate that this learning does not just happen on its own. It is not enough to jointly set ambitious objectives and expect that each country will undertake the necessary effort. What applies for the European Union countries should be also considered for the partners, in the light of how far they are behind the EU (as highlighted by European indicators) and of how much ground they need to gain before they can achieve the objectives of their education, training and employment policies. To set the Lisbon objectives for the Western Balkans [2] means, at the very least, providing them full access to all tools and measures of European policy, including the opportunity for peer-learning activities – something which is lacking today. Taking note of this situation, the ETF has implemented peer-learning pilot projects, which have had interesting results in the Western Balkans as they covered a limited number of countries and targeted precise subjects that were undergoing reform [23].

Conclusions

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the EU has considerably developed its vocational education and training policy under the Lisbon Strategy and has helped to expand mutual awareness of policies in the Member States of the Union, especially through peer-learning activities. At the same time, reforms in vocational education and training have gradually taken on greater importance among the priorities of the governments of the partner countries, which have expressed a great interest in European policy – an interest fostered by new developments in EU foreign policy. Pre-accession aid and the European neighbourhood and partnership instrument have contributed to setting up a framework, within which the Union and its partner countries can create a reinforced mutual learning process in order to achieve reforms.

The Helsinki Communiqué (5 December 2006) on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training [3] indicated in its conclusions that *the implementation of the Copenhagen process and its priorities should be supported through* a number of points, including *the exchange of information, expertise and results with third countries, particularly those countries covered by the 'enlargement' policy and by the 'wider Europe neighbourhood' policy*.

Although it does not go as far as the Finnish EU presidency had wished when it prepared the December 2006 Council meeting (for which it had sent a questionnaire to the Member States [22] asking *whether the Copenhagen process or certain aspects thereof should be open to cooperation with third*

countries), the Helsinki Communiqué does open the way to new cooperation with the partner countries of the ETF.

Policies aimed at increasing the attractiveness and efficiency of vocational education and training systems, promoting learning for everyone, developing new models of governance with the full involvement of all parties as active partners, putting in place tools and approaches for greater transparency, mobility and flexibility and higher quality, also function as measures helping third countries to meet the challenges of globalisation, the knowledge economy and social cohesion. They can also extend and support partnerships between the EU and partner countries. Thus, Community approaches to education and training – including the open method of coordination – should not be seen as policy responses to challenges faced by the EU and by accession or candidate countries alone.

The work and the experience gathered by the ETF has shown that the proper implementation of these messages in the partner countries should not be taken for granted, and is all the more difficult in cases where the economy and society are still lagging far behind the EU's. It is important to take into account not only the differences between the countries concerned and the EU Member States, but also between the partner countries themselves. The experience of the new Member States clearly shows the wide range of situations across the Union. This diversity is even greater in the partner countries. Nonetheless, the messages from Copenhagen have already begun to take hold in some of these countries. Their systemic value has fired up awareness and acted as a catalyst for reform.

The continuation of these efforts now requires all concerned to work together and in partnership with the European Union; a global vision of the role of skills and qualifications in social and economic development; the implementation of real lifelong learning strategies; greater administrative support and more expertise in education and training issues; and more resources, in terms of both time and money. Partnership must exist at every level: between those to be mobilised, especially the social partners, but also between local and national actors and their European Union partners. This should be undertaken through joint learning activities, to guarantee a clear awareness of local circumstances and to anchor measures locally in order to achieve national objectives. We can only hope that the new European instruments for Pre Accession Assistance (IPA) [9] and support to the *European neighbouring policy instrument* (ENPI) [8] will be the right frameworks for such mutual learning and partnership. ■

Annex

Table 4. List of the partner countries by Human Development Index level

Rank	Country	Index
23	Israel	0.927
44	Croatia	0.846
54	(Bulgaria)	0.816
60	(Romania)	0.805
62	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.800
65	Russian Federation	0.797
66	FYROM	0.796
67	Belarus	0.794
73	Albania	0.784
77	Ukraine	0.774
78	Lebanon	0.774
80	Kazakhstan	0.774
86	Jordan	0.760
87	Tunisia	0.760
92	Turkey	0.757
97	Georgia	0.743
99	Azerbaijan	0.736
100	Palestine	0.736
102	Algeria	0.728
105	Turkmenistan	0.724
107	Syria	0.716
110	Kyrgyzstan	0.705
111	Egypt	0.702
113	Uzbekistan	0.696
114	Moldova	0.694
123	Morocco	0.640

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Combating labour market exclusion: does training work?

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Key words
labour market, policy, training, effectiveness, evaluation, outcomes

RÉSUMÉ

This article reviews active labour-market policies (ALMP), of which training is prominent. For about 20 years now, they have been one of the most important measures to combat unemployment and exclusion from the labour market. But is training a successful and efficient policy to reduce unemployment, compared to other types of ALMP? We draw some conclusions based on a review of evaluation results. We then make recommendations for designing as well as evaluating training. We underline the need for ALMP evaluations to develop an insight into 'why' training works (or not). Finally, we advocate a new approach to ALMP and training programme evaluation: a systemic evaluation of the effectiveness of a programme through its relation, interaction and complementarity with other programmes, institutions and main stakeholders in vocational education and training, employment and production.

Introduction

The present article summarises the reviews carried out by Hujer et al. (2004) and Walsh and Parsons (2004) in the framework of the third Cedefop report on vocational education and training research (Descy and Tessaring, 2005). Studies reviewed in this report address systematic and scientific evaluations of active labour market policies, with a focus on training. The studies provide a broad geographical coverage of ALMP evaluations in European countries up to 2003 ([1]), including EU-wide reports for

([1]) Delivery of the original reports to Cedefop; published in Descy and Tessaring, 2004a, 2004b.

mid-term and final European Social Fund evaluations as well as national reports reviewing the European employment strategy. Descy and Tessaring (2005), based on these and other publications, drew conclusions and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of active labour market policies, with a focus on training.

Active labour market policies

Persisting unemployment during the past decades led to growing awareness of the need to increase the effectiveness of employment and labour market policies. There is now broad consensus on implementing active measures to complement passive ones.

The term 'passive measures' designates legal rights and entitlements of unemployed people to receive unemployment and other related social benefits, including early retirement benefits. Active measures refer to more voluntary policies that foster reintegration into the labour market. They involve implementing various programmes targeted at specific groups to tackle specific problems affecting them.

Since the 1980s, the trend in European labour-market policies has been to complement the distribution of unemployment and other benefits by active measures to reintegrate people more quickly into the labour market. Between 1985 and 2000, expenditure on active measures increased progressively in various European countries, and in some countries equalled or even surpassed spending on passive measures. For example, in 2000 Sweden and Greece spent equal amounts on active and passive labour-market policies while Italy was spending more on active measures. The remaining EU countries still spent more money on passive measures although they were moving towards an equal spending pattern, compared to the situation in 1985 (Hujer, 2004; Figure 1). The OECD (2003, p. 73), in its thematic review of adult learning, also notes that common to all countries included in the review is the increased importance given to training and other active measures rather than reliance on passive reception of unemployment benefits.

The emphasis given to training and retraining in ALMP can be seen by looking at the distribution of spending. On average, in terms of percentage of GDP, training is the type of active measure in which most money was invested in 2003 in the EU-15 (Figure 2). Considering the share of expenditure by type of action in individual EU-15 Member States (Table 1), it appears that training is the most significant part of ALMP spending in Germany, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Finland and the UK. It is the second most important part of expenditure in Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, Italy and Sweden.

Compared with EU-15 countries, central and eastern European countries (before enlargement) tended to spend less on training and retraining

(Walsh and Parsons, 2004, p. 229). They favoured other policies, such as job creation through public work and subsidised jobs ([2]).

Evaluating ALMP

Given the increasing importance of ALMP in general and training in particular, one would expect their evaluation to be a common concern for governments. Surprisingly, this is not necessarily the case in European countries. Until recently, only a few European countries carried out rigorous evaluations (Descy and Tessaring, 2005, pp. 36-42). This weak evaluation culture is accompanied by a lack of appropriate data for evaluation. In contrast, there is a long-standing tradition of evaluating labour market programmes in Canada and in the US (which is why much of the literature emanates from these countries). 'A distrust deeply rooted in the North American society toward all government actions, combined with strong emphasis on the principle of individual responsibility, renders it virtually impossible to implement labour market programmes without an evaluation by independent experts' (IZA, 2000, p. 2). Most evaluations of ALMP therefore stem from the US and Canada but also more recently from northern European countries (Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the UK and Nordic countries). Evaluations are not widespread in central and southern European countries; they are mainly carried out either as a requirement for receiving European social funds or in the framework of the European employment strategy.

ALMP effectiveness: what works?

This section discusses the results of evaluations of programme participation on the labour market outcomes for individuals – mostly in terms of employment and earnings – rather than investigating the net effect of programmes on total employment.

Table 2 summarises results obtained by various researchers in evaluating ALMP. It is difficult to compare the relative impact of each type of measure but it is worth noting that:

- special youth measures do not appear successful, unless this type of intervention is carried out early and is of broad scope;
- job search assistance appears to help most unemployed people, even if some conditions need to be in place;
- subsidies to employment also seem effective, contrary to direct job creation.

([2]) However, this may be because these active policies were recently introduced and the full set of ALMP was not yet available. For instance, some of these countries spent a large proportion of their budget developing their employment services in the 1990s. Once the required level of service was established, they started focusing on other kinds of employment policies.

Figure 1. Spending on active and passive labour-market policies, EU-15, 1985, 2000 (% of GDP)

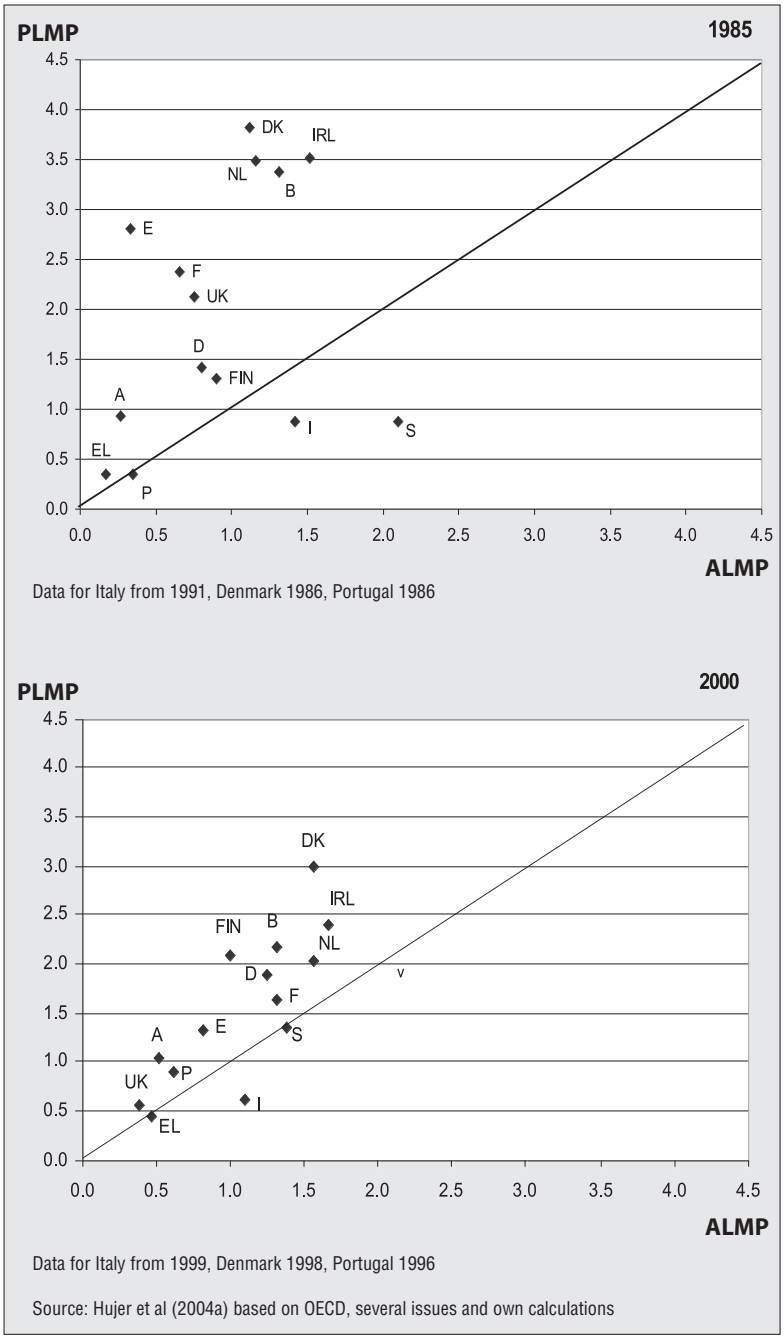

Figure 2. Public expenditure on ALMP, EU15, 2003 (% of GDP)

Source: Eurostat, LMP data collection, EC 2005

Table 1. Composition of active labour-market expenditure by type of action, EU-15, (%), 2003

	Training	Job rotation and job sharing	Employment incentives	Integration of the disabled	Direct job creation	Start-up incentives
EU15	39.4	0.3	19.7	16.3	19.4	4.9
BE	17.9	-	21.5	11.5	48.6	0.5
DK	33.8	-	31.8	34.3	0.1	-
DE	46.8	0.1	12.3	16.1	15.1	9.5
IE	36.5	0.0	22.2	6.2	35.1	0.0
EL	27.9	-	16.6	19.6	-	35.8
ES	20.0	1.3	43.0	11.9	16.2	7.7
FR	36.9	-	10.3	10.6	41.8	0.4
IT	36.8	0.0	50.3	1.0	4.2	7.6
NL	21.0	0.0	3.2	50.0	25.9	-
AT	64.6	0.0	13.1	12.1	9.2	1.0
PT	53.0	0.0	28.9	10.2	7.3	0.6
FI	47.4	8.2	17.3	13.4	12.0	1.5
SE	37.5	0.7	14.2	44.1	-	3.5
UK	81.2	-	1.9	12.6	4.0	0.3

NB: Luxembourg: no data available for the 'training' category.
Source: Descy and Tessaring (2005) based on Eurostat, 2002.

Grubb and Ryan (1999, pp. 80-92) conclude from their review of evaluation studies in the US that training for disadvantaged adult men and women yielded only modest gains in earnings, while training for disadvantaged youths showed no positive and even some negative impact. In Europe, training tends to increase the employability of disadvantaged participants but not their earnings. Again, the efficacy for young workers is uncertain. In addition, even if training does have an effect on participants' employment probability, the aggregate employment effect appears to be weak. '[...] public training often fails, particularly when it involves short, low-cost courses of remedial training and retraining, and when the criterion of success is a lasting gain in earning power, and not simply a short-term increase in employment rates for participants who continue to inhabit low-skilled labour markets. At the same time, public training can work when it sets its sights higher, aims at occupationally relevant needs in shortage labour market and takes training quality seriously' (ibid., p. 92)

From their review of microeconometric studies in selected European countries, Hujer et al. (2004) conclude that, in many instances, training programmes have positive effects; they found fewer examples of positive effects of other types of ALMP, especially job creation programmes. Equally, Fay (1996, cited in Walsh and Parsons, 2004, p. 232) puts forward that expectations of the return of training measures for individuals should be modest. Nevertheless, small-scale, targeted programmes that reflect the needs of both employers and job-seekers offer the best prospective outcomes.

Martin and Grubb (2001, p. 15) conclude that although training tends to be the most expensive active measure its efficacy is not obvious (at least in terms of traditional outcomes such as employment and earnings). Some programmes have yielded low or even negative rates of return for participants when the estimated programme effects are compared with the costs.

Selected studies carried out in northern European countries (summarised by Descy and Tessaring, 2005, p. 176-177) show it is difficult to draw a clear picture of the effectiveness of training from evaluation results (Table 2). Effectiveness tends to vary across studies, according to external labour market circumstances and across target groups.

Nevertheless, the following recommendations can be made for designing and implementing training programmes to increase the effectiveness of training in ALMP ([3]):

- they should be targeted at specific groups and objectives (e.g. the long-term unemployed, unemployed youths, women returning to employment, illiterate adults, etc.);
- they should allow time for active job search (which should also be actively promoted);
- they should be kept relatively small in scale and not be used as a large-scale solution to unemployment;

([3]) Based on the following literature: Fay (1996, cited in Walsh and Parsons, 2004), Martin and Grubb (2001: 14), Walsh and Parsons (2004), Hujer et al. (2004), Grubb and Ryan (1999).

- they should lead to qualifications or certificates not only recognised but also valued on the labour market (involving employers in programme design and implementation seems to play a positive role);
- they should establish strong links with local employers and provide work experience, while avoiding displacement or substitution effects;
- when targeted at the young, they should be considered in association with general policies on education.

Evaluations carried out in the framework of EU policies

As indicated above, European countries do not all share the same evaluation tradition. However, the necessity of evaluating projects financed by European social funds as well as of reviewing progress in the framework of the European employment strategy has led all EU Member States to proceed to some form of evaluation or monitoring.

The European employment strategy (EES)

Concerns about the high level of unemployment in the EU led to the EES, a framework for a coordinated policy response which improves labour market policies while providing a common European framework for combating unemployment. Training is an important aspect of this strategy. This section presents selected results of the EES 2002 impact evaluation.

The EES is a form of 'management by objectives'. It is based on peer review and benchmarking policy and practice between Member States. The Council of the EU, following a proposal from the European Commission, decides on employment guidelines each year. These guidelines have to be transformed into national policies and reported on in national action plans (NAPs). NAPs are then assessed with a view to setting the next annual guidelines. Since 2000, in addition to the employment guidelines, the Commission issues specific recommendations to Member States. The requirement of reviewing labour market policies regularly is embedded in the EES. Thus, the EES contributes to developing and establishing evaluations and a common learning culture in EU Member States. In 2001/02, Member States carried out a thorough review covering the first three years of the EES (from 1998 to 2001). This provided a useful insight into active employment policies (Table 3), and served as a basis for the 2002 Impact evaluation of the EES (European Commission, 2002).

Evaluations carried out for the European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF provides funding for programmes which develop or regenerate people's employability. The ESF supports measures which aim to prevent and combat unemployment, develop human resources and foster integration into the labour market, promote a high level of employment, equal opportunities for men and women, sustainable development and economic and social cohesion. Programmes are planned by Member States with the European Commission and then implemented through a wide range of provider organisations in both public and private sectors ([4]).

Funding requirements and implementing the ESF also play a role in developing an evaluation culture throughout the EU. The ESF requires evaluation at three levels:

(i) project level: each funded project is required to have an explicit monitoring and evaluation strategy;
(ii) national level: in the 1990s, Member States were involved in mid-term and final evaluations of their national ESF programmes;
(iii) European level: the European Commission, drawing on national reports, indicates EU-wide trends.

Table 4 summarises some findings of ESF evaluations. From the EU-wide report, it appears that targeted policies in general work better than non-targeted ones and that linking training to labour market and employer needs is always likely to improve their impact.

Conclusions on evaluations carried out in the framework of EU policies

Although the EES and the ESF contribute towards raising the profile of and using evaluations, benchmarking and peer reviews, there are still substantial differences across EU countries in rigorous evaluation methods. Overall, evaluations carried out in the framework of EU-supported policies display the same pictures as more traditional evaluations of ALMP: there is no consistent indication of the effectiveness of training when it is get people back into employment. Training seems to have a positive effect but it tends to be modest and linked to prevailing labour market conditions. Training needs to be targeted and it works better if employers are involved or if their needs are directly considered. In difficult labour market conditions, training might not be sufficient to get people back into employment.

Recommendations for evaluating training within ALMP

Reviewing evaluation results tells us that the effects of training on employment and earnings tend to be modest: it cannot be effective for all target groups, regions and episodes of the business cycle. At the same time, it is a very costly type of ALMP. Consequently, does training work well enough, or are other kinds of ALMP preferable? We argue that whether an intervention is successful or not in increasing employment probability and earnings for participants is not sufficient to inform policy-making and design better and more sustainable interventions.

Two main conclusions emerge from examining various attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of training in ALMP:

- current evaluation results do not provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of training; it tends to vary across programmes and target groups as well as across studies;

(4) This brief description of the ESF is based on the DG Employment and Social affairs ESF 2000-06 website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf2000/introduction-en.htm#key.

Table 2. Lessons from evaluation literature on the effectiveness of ALMP, composite studies

Appears to help	Appears not to help	General observations	Source
Training/retraining			
Disadvantaged adults, especially women	Disadvantaged young people (?)	Type of training: remedial training for disadvantaged workers; mainstream programmes in the US: greatest gains in subsequent earning for adult women. Young register no gain or losses. in Europe, increases employability but tends to leave earnings unchanged; the picture does not seem as negative concerning the effect on youth in Europe as it is in the US.	Grubb and Ryan (1999)
Long-term unemployed, in particular women		Small positive effect on employment and earnings, which depends to a great extent on the business cycle	Dar and Tzannatos (1999) (1)
Those laid off en masse		Has a high dead-weight effect; most successful if on small scale and targeted towards the most vulnerable groups.	Dar and Tzannatos (1999) (1)
	Young people	Did no better than control groups in terms of improving employment probability and earnings; social rates of return tended to be negative.	Dar and Tzannatos (1999) (1)
Men and women (young and middle-aged)		The impact is higher for women than men. The impact is lower for older participants than the young. Those with primary and secondary education benefit more than those with post-secondary education.	Fretwell et al. (1999) (2)
Short-term unemployed			Fretwell et al. (1999) (2)
Unemployed		In central and eastern Europe countries. With some limitations imposed by the general state of the labour market, in these countries, training emerges as a relatively low-cost measure.	Walsh and Parsons (2004)
of which: formal classroom training			
Women reentrants	Prime-age men and older workers with low initial education	Important that courses signal strong labour market relevance or signal high quality to employers; keep programmes relatively small in scale.	Martin and Grubb (2001) (3)
On-the-job training			
Women re-entrants; single mothers	Prime-age men (?)	(?) Because some programmes gave positive results and others not; Must directly meet labour market needs. Hence, need to establish strong links with local employers, however increasing the risk of displacement.	Martin and Grubb (2001)

Appears to help	Appears not to help	General observations	Source
Special youth measures (training, employment subsidies, direct job creation measures)			
	Disadvantaged youths	Effective programmes need to combine an appropriate and integrated mix of education, occupational skills, work-based learning and supportive services to young people and their families; early and sustained interventions are likely to be most effective; need to deal with negative attitudes to work among the young. Adult mentors can help.	Martin and Grubb (2001)
young people to find a job	young people to get higher pay	Insertion programmes; evidence studies in France and in the UK; gains for young people result in displacement for other workers.	Grubb and Ryan (1999)
Job-search assistance (job clubs, individual counselling, etc.)			
Most unemployed but in particular, women and sole parents		Must be combined with increased monitoring of the job search behaviour of the unemployed and enforcement of work tests	Martin and Grubb (2001)
of which: reemployment bonuses			
Most adult unemployed		Requires careful monitoring and controls on both recipients and their former employers.	Martin and Grubb (2001)
Subsidies to employment			
Long-term unemployed; women re-entrants		Require careful targeting and adequate control to maximise net employment gains and social benefits. Some substitution mechanisms might reduce net employment gains.	Martin and Grubb (2001)
Aid to unemployed starting enterprises			
Men (below 40, relatively better educated)		Only works for a small subset of the population.	Martin and Grubb (2001)
Direct job creation			
	Most adult unemployed	Typically provides few long-term benefits and principle of additionality usually implies low marginal-product jobs; no significant or even negative effects in France, Switzerland, Sweden and the UK.	Martin and Grubb (2001) Hujer et al. (2004) ([4])

NB: ([1]) Cited in Walsh and Parsons (2004).
([2]) Based on a review of evaluations up to 1999 in four transitional countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Turkey.
([3]) Martin and Grubb (2001) based their finding on: US Department of Labor (1995), Fay (1996), Friedlander et al. (1997), Grubb (1995), HRDC (1997), Lerman (1997) and OECD (1993).
([4]) Based on Lalive et al. (2000), Gerfin and Lechner (2000), Bonnal et al. (1997), Brodaty et al. (2001), Firth et al. (1999); Payne et al. (1996) and Larsson, (2000).

Source: This table is based on an original table from Martin and Grubb (2001); it has been completed and adapted by the authors.

Table 3. Selected results from national reviews of employment policies – EES, impact evaluation (focus Pillar I: employability, in particular training measures)

Country	Type of measures	Review methodology
Spain	Training for the unemployed: design and delivery of training are decentralised to regional authorities; main target groups: short-term unemployed youth and adults.	Econometric analysis of the impact of measures for participants: chance of having a job at the time of the analysis (hiring rate); chance of having a job at one point during the observation period (employability rate); estimation techniques for comparing the treatment group against a control group.
The Netherlands	Overview of a wide range of training measures.	Drawing on previous evaluation (in particular De Koning, 1998).
Ireland	ALMP under the national employment action plan: support to the unemployed at an early stage of unemployment period mainly by providing a job, followed with guidance and counselling (in this process training may be offered).	Administrative data and consultations with key players of social and labour market fields.
United Kingdom	New Deal Programme: targeted at young people (18-24) once they reach six months of unemployment and those over 25 once they have been unemployed for 18 months. New Deal 50 Plus is targeted at those unemployed aged 50 and over, who are eligible after six months of unemployment.	Administrative data
Austria	Training programmes upgrading the skills of the unemployed and responding directly to employers' needs. Qualification improvement programme through public employment service.	Micro-analysis of programme participants and non-participants, adjusting the gross findings with econometric techniques to calculate estimates of net impact. Estimation of macroeconomic effects of policies.
Finland	Thorough appraisal of all four pillars.	Administrative data combined with other sources such as the labour force survey. Various manipulations (including quasi-experimental techniques).

	Main results
	Training had positive effects for most participants and significantly improved the employability of certain sub-groups (in particular disadvantaged youths, disabled persons and ex-convicts). Employability rate offers a better indicator of the longer-term job prospects of participants.
	Effects of participation in training programme changed significantly throughout the 1990s. Until 1993, there were significant positive effects, especially for long-term unemployment. After 1997, no significant effect of programme participation can be detected.
	Although the report reaffirms commitment to such measures to help alleviate social exclusion and labour shortages, it also questions whether they always work. It suggests that the probability of leaving unemployment is rather dependent on the individual's capacity to compete in the labour market than on the support provided through ALMP.
	Reasonable signs of success with 57 % of sample in work (the majority from the younger age groups, have shorter unemployment spell and are women).
	Positive macro impact of participating in training programmes, when upgrading of skills of the unemployed corresponds directly to employer needs. Increase of aggregate employment by over 9 800 each year. Contribution of 0.32 % to GDP growth. Earnings potential of participants in the qualification improvement programme increased by EUR 2 870 per annum (in comparison with a control group).
	Overall employment effect of training measures were modest for the individuals concerned. Labour-market training has a weak net impact on employment probability of participants (outcomes slightly better for those with lower than average employability at the start of the programme). Interview-based survey shows considerable social benefits for programme participants. The study concludes that training designed for immediate employment should be responsive to the economic cycle, being reduced when fewer jobs are available. Training that helps to increase skills should, on the contrary, respond inversely to the economic cycle.

NB: Walsh and Parsons did not consider reports from the other Member Sates because of their lack of specific coverage of ALMP and attention to detail.

Source: Walsh and Parsons, 2004 based on national reports prepared in the context of the 2002 Impact evaluation of the EES (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/impact_en.htm).

Table 4. Summary of main finding of ESF evaluations, Objectives 1, 3 and 4

Objective 1:	to develop regions which are currently underdeveloped
net impact was greater when programmes concentrated on the most disadvantaged groups than when they were targeted to all the unemployed; in some cases, combining measures increased their net impact; programmes offering work experience achieve better results when combined with some form of skills training.	
Objective 3:	to tackle long-term unemployment, promote equal opportunities, improve lifelong learning, encourage entrepreneurship and adaptability and improve the role of women in the workforce
overall, gross employment impact ranged from 30 to 80 %; clients showed high levels of satisfaction with their programmes; the chances of finding work after a programme depended less on the beneficiaries' personal characteristics than on the availability of jobs in the labour market and the type of project.	
Objective 4:	to improve the qualifications and prospects of all those in employment
some evaluations suggested that employers benefited more than workers from the supported activities; future skills needs were generally not identified and taken into account into project design; some of the training supported through projects was considered too general or, in some cases, not sufficiently transferable between employers.	

Source: Walsh and Parsons (2004) on the basis on European Commission (2001).

- exogenous circumstances affect the relative effectiveness of training considerably.

Local circumstances, including prevailing labour market and administrative conditions, also limit the degree of generality and transferability of evaluation results. Consequently, the recommendations that can be drawn from reviewing evaluation work lead to 'identifying common denominators that hint best practices' (Walsh and Parsons, 2004, p. 253).

Additional factors render evaluation work highly complex and tend to limit the usability of evaluation results ([5]):

- evaluation results are highly dependent on the methods and data used. Examples show that for one specific programme, different evaluations can draw different conclusions (Hujer et al., 2004);
- usually evaluations of ALMP focus strictly on earnings and employment as positive outcomes. Accounting for non-intended results (including negative ones) is not part of the evaluation scope;
- policy-makers and evaluation commissioners want quick results; evaluation methods themselves incline evaluators towards measuring short-term outcomes ([6]), and evaluation budgets are often limited;
- ALMP programmes tend to be small-scale; hence, even if a small programme has significant positive results for participants, it does not mean

([5]) Partly based on Martin and Grubb (2001, pp. 10-13).

([6]) One fundamental evaluation problem is that the more time passes, the more difficult it is to follow a sample and to attribute observed effects to the intervention.

that it would remain cost-effective and produce the same kind of positive outcomes – without generating adverse effects – if implemented on a larger scale (in number of participants or in geographical terms);
- finally, the task of evaluators is all the more complex because ALMP change according to specific needs and local contexts; various types of programmes are implemented in parallel; the mix of programmes is continuously changing and passive and active measures are often used complementarily to one another.

Below we make some recommendations on dimensions and methods for training evaluations in ALMP that should get more attention in future.

Broadening the evaluation scope

The focus of evaluation should be broadened to ([7]):
- address the determinants of outcomes, compared across subgroups of the labour market;
- be carried out over longer periods to see whether short-term effects on earnings and employment also hold in the long run and whether there are delayed effects ([8]);
- focus on increased employment probability or reduced unemployment duration as outcome variables. Earnings and wages might be questionable outcome variables in the European context because welfare state and minimum wage regulations may result in distortions between employment status and earnings;
- extend the scope of effects (or side-effects) to non-material ones (increased self-worth, better health, wider social and behavioural gains, further learning experiences, etc.);
- foresee from the outset, i.e. when an intervention is designed, that the information required for an evaluation is gathered in a continuous process;
- attempt to better assess the structure, content and design of training courses as well as whether they can be adapted to different circumstances, such as changing labour-market needs.

Although broadening the evaluation scope following these recommendations would considerably complicate the evaluator's task and would require methodological developments, we consider it would provide a fuller and more adequate picture of a programme's outcomes than is currently the case.

([7]) Summarised compilation of the recommendations made by several authors: Fay (1996, cited in Walsh and Parsons, 2004), Martin and Grubb (2001, p. 16), Walsh and Parsons (2004), Hujer et al. (2004), Grubb and Ryan (1999).

([8]) This aspect is crucial because programmes are established to address systemic and enduring problems such as unemployment, social exclusion, transition from school to work, etc. These are problems that require long-term solutions. Therefore, whether the short-term results of a programme (what is generally captured by evaluation) are sustainable must be investigated.

Opening the black box: the question of 'why'?

While evaluations tell us a lot about what works, or not, they are less instructive on another equally important and related question: why? Why do certain programmes work for some groups and not for others? Why do some circumstances increase the likelihood that a programme works? Why do specific programme designs and characteristics work well, better or not at all? Finding answers to these questions is central to designing cost-effective public training programmes. Formative evaluation and qualitative methods are required to address these questions because they deepen our understanding of the way an intervention operates and participants react to it (Descy and Tessaring, 2005, pp. 73-74).

Exploring programme design and implementation can help determine if the causes of a programme's (non-) effectiveness are endogenous (e.g. appropriateness and quality of the learning process) or exogenous (e.g. the availability of jobs corresponding to the skills developed in the programme).

One important but often neglected aspect is the learning process. Evaluations often tend to assume that the expected learning process happened and resulted in the skills the programme intended to develop. In addition, few studies are concerned with the most effective teaching environments and methods ([9]), failing to recognise that it is an important element of programme design. One cannot conclude on the (non-) effectiveness of a certain type of training without establishing whether any learning, let alone quality learning took place.

Evaluations that examine only the final outcomes of programmes in economic terms, such as earnings or employment, or even in non-economic terms, such as better health or reduction in crime, assume that this is sufficient to decide whether a programme should be maintained, expanded or terminated. Improving the quality of a programme to improve its positive outcomes should also be considered a key evaluation goal.

Towards a systemic approach for evaluating ALMP

Evaluations of the type discussed so far are conducted in what can be called a 'programme' perspective (Grubb and Ryan, 1999): training in ALMP is designed and implemented in a defined period and then evaluated. These evaluations reinforce the tendency to design policies that are limited in scope and target population, rather than aiming at long-term institution building.

Grubb and Ryan (1999, p. 109) comment: '[...] a programme is conceived of as something that can be created relatively quickly, introduced among the other institutions of a society, evaluated as a discrete entity, expanded or contracted. We call this a "project" or "programme view", because of its tendency to think of a VET programme as self-contained and independ-

([9]) Limiting itself to comparing on-the-job and off-the-job training, e.g. pedagogic and didactics are not considered.

ent. Then, what is conventionally called “programme evaluation” assesses the effect of the programme only, independently of any surrounding policies and institutions. We contrast this with what we call a “systems” view' They elaborate later on (ibid. p. 116): '[...] only rarely do the evaluation of VET programmes conceive of a larger system of programmes [...] a system that might develop slowly over time. [...] A corollary is that more energy is put into developing new programmes and evaluating them – and then abandoning them or trying new approaches – rather than continuing to develop institutions over longer periods of time [...] This suggests that the entire evaluation enterprise, in its “programme” focus, is part of an incoherent and fragmented approach that is unlikely to lead to more effective VET policies over time. A systems perspective would, on the other hand, encourage thinking not about individual projects, but about widely available programmes that are linked to one another and institutionalised'.

The basic reason for adopting a systemic approach in policy design and consequently in evaluation work is that any policy will interact with the rest of the system (institutions, organisations and actors) and with other systems (such as production). In addition, various types of programmes, led in parallel, also interact. A systems perspective emphasises the need for more coherence between the various training interventions, ALMP as well as other social policies.

Issues of internal consistency (is this programme complementing, conflicting or cancelling other active or passive measures?) and external consistency (is this programme consistent with the institutions in place, e.g. does it consider signalling patterns in the labour market?) are to be considered in both programme design and evaluation ([10]). Close to these issues is transparency, i.e. the ability of workers and employers to understand the role of a specific programme in the vast range of learning opportunities offered in education, vocational training and various ALMP. Whether ALMP consider sufficiently and are responsive to labour market skill needs and employment demand is an important dimension to systemic evaluations.

Finally, in a system perspective it is worth asking whether a programme is linked to other learning opportunities. Training in ALMP mostly has a narrow focus on skills. To allow individuals to achieve both the levels and varieties of competences necessary throughout their lives, one should ensure that each programme can potentially be linked to other programmes (Grubb and Ryan, 1999, p. 118). Recognising and validating learning results of training in ALMP could constitute a step in this direction.

In conclusion, systemic evaluations consider whether a programme is successful because of its ability to be repeated, articulated with other VET programmes, connected to employers' hiring practices, and otherwise related to other established practices and institutions. Policy-makers and

([10]) See Descy and Tessaring (2005, pp. 127-130) for a discussion on internal and external consistency in systems' evaluation.

evaluators should expand their views on the nature of useful interventions. Developing programmes and measures has to be seen in a context where they relate to one another, in addition to their individual effectiveness. This should also be reflected in evaluation designs.

Conclusion: continuous improvement of employment measures and policies

ALMP are established in all EU countries, training being one of their key measures. Demonstrating their efficiency and improving their quality should be a concern for policy-makers.

Traditional evaluations of ALMP 'compare' explicit programme goals with measurable outcomes (mainly in terms of employment probability and earnings). They estimate the relative effectiveness and/or efficiency of different interventions. Most evaluations are quasi-experimental, with emphasis on econometric elaboration of programme outcomes. However, because traditional evaluations do not open the 'black box', their results are generally limited in indicating possibilities for change and improvement of programme design and implementation. They concentrate on what works rather than trying to answer why something works or not. They also tend to neglect interactions between various policy interventions and their cumulative impact.

Evidence-led public policy is more in line with a holistic evaluation, combining formative and summative approaches, thus collecting the breadth and scope of information needed to provide feedback on quality. 'Some of the best studies are those that take a wider methodological perspective, certainly using [quasi-] experimental approaches where feasible, but complementing this with the use of administrative data and more qualitative information on for example, processes and the perceptions of programme participants. It suggests that evaluation hitherto has been more "academically" driven rather than "policy" driven, which is not so much a criticism of the former as a lack of proper attention in the latter' (Walsh and Parsons, 2004, p. 252).

Evidence-led policy-making requires information on the circumstances, both exogenous and endogenous, that lead to programme quality, positive outcomes and cost-effectiveness. These requirements go beyond common evaluation practices. In consequence, a systemic approach to evaluation should be developed alongside existing techniques. It should broaden the current perception of effectiveness by also focusing on the way programmes and measures interact with other interventions and existing institutions. By doing so, it provides better-founded information to decide whether an intervention should be expanded or repeated and can lead to further learning opportunities. Policy evaluation should define the criteria and provide

supporting empirical evidence on which policy types and which policy mix promise superior solutions to a society's problem. ■

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Developing an instrument for identifying a person's ability to solve problems

Results of a pilot study

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Vocational education, learning, new qualifications, problem solving, learning environment, assessment

SUMMARY

Increasing people's ability to solve complex problems is more and more often being seen as an integral part of vocational education. While there have been numerous empirically-based approaches to the didactic structuring of teaching and learning arrangements by which students' ability to solve problems can be increased, knowledge of how to evaluate a person's ability to solve problems is far more limited. There is a lack of testing instruments that are inexpensive to implement and evaluate and take account of the features of ill-defined problems as they occur in professional practice. This article describes, with reference to a pilot study, the further development of a method of measuring a person's ability to solve problems (AIT according to Sembill) which is reliable but too expensive to evaluate in practice. The new MAPS instrument (Measurement and Assessment of Problem Solving) is more structured in terms of both performance and evaluation. The results of the pilot study indicate a high level of reliability and validity of the new instrument, these results having to be confirmed in a follow-up study, the design of which is also presented in this article.

Problem

Young people in vocational education and those entering the job market nowadays face a rapidly changing, increasingly complex world. This restructuring in the business world ([1]) (cf. Buttler, 1992; Schunck, 1993, Dohmen, 1999; Reetz, 1999; Achtenhagen, 2000; Picot, 2000; Kessler, 2003), often referred to simply as 'megatrends', also leads to a change in requirements for business staff (white collar jobs). In particular, the question is raised as to the extent to which knowledge acquired during education is retained over time and whether other, higher cognitive abilities are not also crucial when it comes to carrying out the work and tackling problems in one's professional life. A person's ability to solve problems is discussed as being a key skill and may be defined as a knowledge of how to deal adequately with complex, not fully understood and ever-changing realities (cf. Sembill, 1992a; Bransford; Stein, 1993; Sembill, 1995; Wuttke, 1999; Wolf, 2003).

Increasing a person's ability to solve problems should therefore already form an integral part of one's professional training: '*Learning to solve problems is the most important skill that students can learn in any setting. In professional contexts, people are paid to solve problems, not to complete exams.*' (Jonassen, 2004, XXI). However, traditional teaching in vocational colleges has hitherto failed to promote this in any systematic way. This is particularly evident when students are supposed to apply acquired knowledge in problem situations but are unable to do so ([2]). Failures to apply knowledge are attributable not least to the teaching practice still prevailing in many (vocational) schools. For the most part (over 70% of teaching time), the teacher presents facts and details. There is barely any time left to look at the application of knowledge and any particular increasing of a person's ability to solve problems (Hage; Bischoff; Dichanz; Eubel; Oehlschläger; Schwittmann, 1985, Dichanz; Schwittmann, 1986; Bohl, 2000; Pätzold; Klusmeyer; Wingels; Lang, 2003). Although teachers generally identify a person's ability to solve problems as being a skill that is crucial to success in the workplace, they do almost nothing to help their students acquire this skill. There are three possible reasons for this:

Teachers think that rudiments and basic skills have to be taught first before they can move on to more demanding subjects like problem-solving. As there are plenty of rudiments to teach in any subject and, furthermore, increasing a person's ability to solve problems takes time, they tend to put it off from one year to the next.

([1]) Internationalisation of markets, globalisation of the use of resources, introduction of new technologies, breakdown of traditional values, development into a service society, demand for highly qualified staff.

([2]) The problem is far from new. Back in 1929, Whitehead referred in this respect to the problem of inert knowledge. Inert knowledge is knowledge that can be repeated by people if they are explicitly asked for it, but cannot be used and applied spontaneously in situations where problems have to be solved.

Most teachers are unsure how learning environments can be structured in order to increase a person's ability to solve complex problems (lack of known methods).

While a person's ability to solve problems is established as a learning objective in curricula, it is unclear how it can be evaluated. Standardised tests in schools and as part of one's vocational training focus on the reproduction of facts, not on a person's ability to solve ill-defined problems. As learning processes are largely influenced by the tests that follow, teachers and students still focus on acquiring and reproducing factual knowledge.

In the light of these deficiencies, our research concentrates on the key areas of the structuring and implementation of learning environments to increase a person's ability to solve problems, and measurement of the acquired ability to solve problems. The following comments focus on the problems of measurement from the point of view of the structuring and implementation of learning environments (cf. Sembill, 1992a, Wuttke, 1999, Schumacher, 2002, Wolf, 2003 and Seifried, 2004).

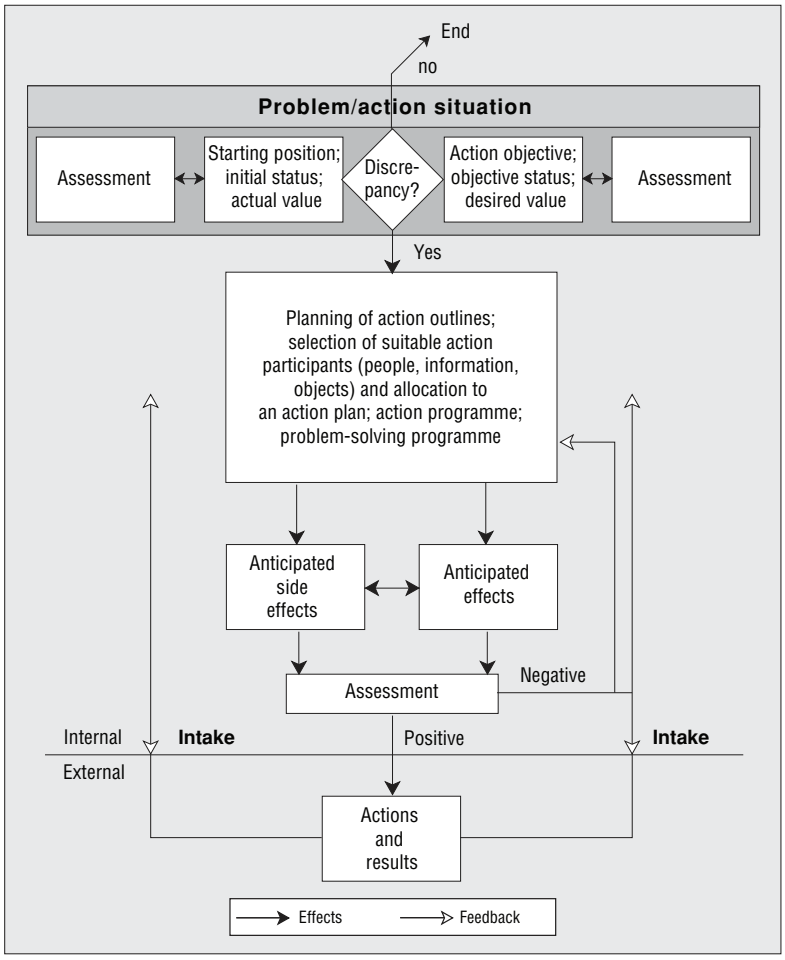
Learning environments for increasing a person's ability to solve problems

There are various approaches defining the 'ideal typical' steps to be taken in order to solve a problem and therefore giving clues as to how learning environments should be structured to increase a person's ability to solve problems. Bransford and Stein (1993) propose, for example, the IDEAL framework (Identify, Define, Explore, Anticipate and Act, Look and Learn). In the German-speaking sphere, Sembill (1992a) has developed a comparable framework model that he describes as an analytical ideal type of planned actions (see Fig. 1).

The characteristic components of complex problem-solving processes contained therein are identified in problem-solving research and cognitive psychology (cf. Dörner, 1976, Dörner, 1983, Sembill, 1992a, Dörner, 1999). They form the basis for structuring complex learning environments in which students:

(1) Identify the problem by:
  (1.1) Analysing and assessing a given situation;
  (1.2) Setting objectives;
  (1.3) Identifying possible discrepancies between the initial situation and the desired objectives;
(2) Use their existing knowledge;
(3) Gather the necessary information;
(4) Propose solutions (action or problem-solving programme);
(5) Analyse side effects in relation to the desired effects;
(6) Implement proposed solutions;
(7) Check and evaluate the result of the solution to the problem and
(8) Improve future problem-solving processes.

Figure 1. The Analytical Ideal Type (AIT) of planned Action (Sembill, 1992a; Sembill; Wolf; Wuttke; Schumacher, 2002) ([3]).



Most of these elements are also found in what are referred to as constructivistically-based learning environments like *anchored instruction* (CTGV, 1992), *intentional learning* (Bereiter & Scardemelia, 1989**)** and *learning with cognitive tools* (Kommers; Jonassen; Mayes, 1992).

The self-organised learning developed in our research group is based on the basic principle described above and therefore enables a person's ability to solve complex problems to be increased (cf. Sembill, 1992a; Wuttke, 1999; Sembill; Wolf, 2000). Self-organised learning can be described

([3]) This plan is an elaborated form of the TOTE unit (Test-Operate-Test-Exit; Miller; Galanter; Pribram, 1960), which is regarded as the unit on which problem-solving processes are based.

in terms of four main characteristics (cf. Sembill; Wolf; Wuttke; Schumacher, 2002; Wolf, 2003):

- Central to self-organised learning are the problem-solving activities of students. The problems to be tackled are complex and are generally solved in a project-based and group-oriented environment.
- The planning, implementation and assessment of learning processes is – as far as possible – left to the students ([4]). Self-organised learning also has to cover the definition of and reflection on objectives and the assessment of and reflection on a person's own actions and his solutions to the problem (cf., in this respect, the 'ideal typical' steps for solving a problem shown in Fig. 1).
- In self-organised learning, each person naturally also does his own learning. However, in addition, *learning for others* (sharing work when tackling problems and presenting results) and *with others* are central elements in the design of self-organised learning. It is also assumed here that arguments within groups and with the teacher and the expression of people's own ideas promote reflection and analysis and help the generation of knowledge and the ability to solve problems (cf. Wuttke, 2005).
- When solving complex, realistic problems, there is always the risk that mistakes will be made and first attempts will fail. However, it also means that people can learn from their mistakes, reach an understanding independently and build up skills (cf. Spychiger; Gut; Rohrbach; Oser, 1999; Oser; Spychiger; Mahler; Reber, 2002; Spychiger, 2003).

Self-organised learning has already been introduced and evaluated in five vocational colleges. In two of the studies, a virtual business was also created as an 'anchor' to help in problem-solving (a furniture company with imaginary data such as price lists, catalogues, calculations, lists of materials, delivery dates, etc.). Within the framework of the respective teaching units, problems relating to established curriculum subjects had to be solved. For example, students were put in the shoes of a furniture manufacturer when dealing with the subject of 'Materials business'. This manufacturer, at the request of a travel agent, has to submit a tender for the furnishing of an entire new branch to be opened in a student district. Computer equipment – apart from sector-specific software – also has to be provided. While tackling this problem (over the course of about 20 hours of teaching), students have to solve a large number of subsidiary problems. For example, decisions have to be made as to whether a new line of furniture will be purchased or made by the company itself or whether a just-in-time delivery is less or more expensive than keeping the furniture in stock.

A summary of the main findings of the studies so far shows that, when following a course of self-organised learning and in comparison with conventionally taught lessons, students:

([4]) This all of course takes place within the framework of prescribed curricular requirements.

- *are able to master the subject matter just as well* as students who are taught it by teachers. In tests based on learning objectives, they come off just as well as those in the control group despite poorer initial qualifications in some cases;
- show a far *greater ability to solve problems* after completing the respective teaching unit. This applies both to problems specific to the subject and to problems from other spheres of the lives of young people not covered in the subject;
- show a greater degree of self-motivation required for analysis-oriented learning (intrinsic motivation and interest);
- broaden their range of learning strategies and apply learning strategies more appropriately;
- get fully involved in their respective learning groups and classes and feel that they are being taken seriously ([5]).

If the first finding were now to be looked at in isolation – 'self-organised learning achieves the same level of knowledge as conventional teaching' – one would have to wonder whether the undoubtedly higher cost of self-organised learning is actually worth it. However, as explained above, the aim is not just to enable students to repeat factual knowledge, it is also to give them the ability to solve problems as is required when meeting the challenges of the workplace. But in order to be able to comment on whether a person's ability to solve problems has actually increased, and in order to be able to include this skill in the measurement of performance, a person's ability to solve problems has to be made measurable.

Measuring a person's ability to solve complex problems

In psychological research and research into learning and teaching, information provided by students themselves are generally gathered by means of questionnaires in order to measure their ability to solve problems (e.g. Stäudel's Skills Questionnaire, 1987 or Dirksmeier's Diagnostic Inventory of Problem-Solving DIP, 1991). However, this does not tell us how well students are actually able to solve problems in their professional environment ([6]). In our work we therefore concentrate on measuring actual performance in problem-solving. Students are given complex and realistic written problems to be solved by giving written answers. For this purpose, Sembill (1992a,, 1992b) developed a system to enable the quality of written solutions to problems be assessed. It includes both quantitative and qualitative criteria and

([5]) Detailed descriptions and discussions of the findings are given, for example, in Wuttke, 1999; Wolf, 2003; Santjer-Schnabel, 2002, Sembill, 2004, Seifried, 2004; Schumacher, 2002).

([6]) A strongly subject-oriented 'Test of ability to solve sector-specific problems' is described by Hussy; Seeling (2004a, 2004b).

Figure 2. Example of an ill-defined problem

Please imagine you are faced with the following situation:

You are Head of the Personnel Department at a furniture factory (Justus-Liebig-Büromöbelwerke, JLB) in Gießen, South Hesse. The company has just been taken over by the Swedish HAVARTI Group.

The Personnel Manager Mrs Olsen wants Mrs Mertens – an office worker in the Personnel Department's payroll office – to be trained in PowerPoint so that she can produce transparencies for Mrs Olsen's advertising presentations. Mrs Mertens refuses because it is not part of her job description. 'I already have my hands full with the wages accounting', she explains.

Mrs Olsen is annoyed and consults you in your capacity as her manager. 'I think job descriptions are a waste of time. What good do they do anyway? They only make staff inflexible. And it takes ages to produce these descriptions. The business we are in is constantly changing and the requirements of our staff change at the same time'. Mrs Olsen asks you to send out a memo stating that job descriptions are no longer binding.

Please imagine you are the Manager and try to resolve the dispute. Think of the possible consequences of doing away with binding job descriptions.

Please describe how you weigh up the arguments for and against various solutions and which solution you go for. Remember to give your reasons.

You have 30 minutes.

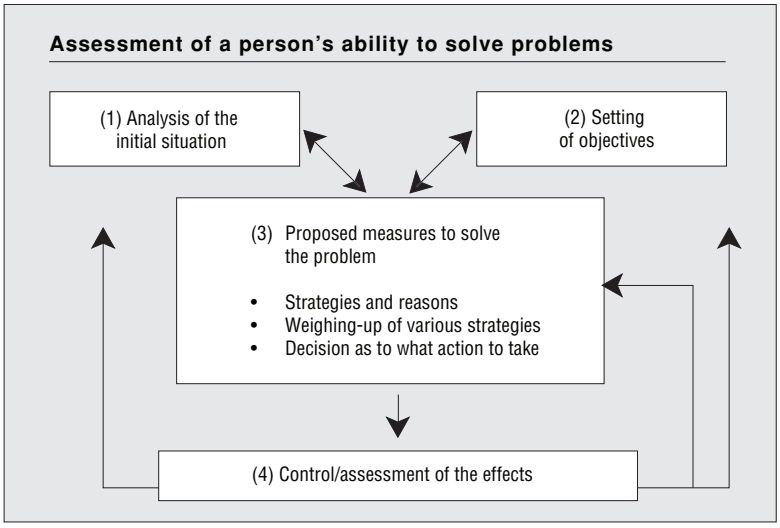
contains the ideal steps in a problem-solving process (see Fig. 1; cf. also Dörner, 1976; Dörner; Kreuzig; Reither; Stäudel, 1983):

- Analysis of the initial situation
- Setting of objectives
- Developing problem-solving strategies or measures
- Controls to check the appropriateness of the solution to the problem (taking account of main and side effects).

Students are given descriptions of problems (see, for example, Fig. 2) and are supposed to provide written solutions to them.

The written solutions to these sorts of problems are assessed in a first step according to quantitative criteria. Analysis is carried out here as to whether the students have carried out all problem-solving steps appropriately (for the system, see Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Overview of the evaluation categories for assessing problem-solving ability



Below is a brief overview of how the evaluation is carried out. Detailed instructions for codes used are given by Sembill (1992b) and Wuttke (1999).

(1) Coding for the category 'Analysis of the initial situation' (actual situation):

AS1: Number of facts having a bearing on the problem. This category provides information on the student's ability to obtain relevant information (from texts).

AS2: Comments, opinions and assessment of these facts (critical analysis of available information);

AS3: Number of people/groups specified in the problem having different interests (who is relevant to the initial situation, who has to be taken into account).

Coding example:

Example of a student's solution	AS1	AS2	AS3
Mrs Mertens is an office worker in the payroll office, so she possibly knows nothing about advertising.	1	1	1
I think it is a good idea to ignore the job description.		1	
I think Mrs Mertens is right to refuse to produce the transparencies.		1	(1)

(2) Coding for the category 'Setting objectives'(desired situation)

DS1: Number of objectives specified;

DS2: Production of a hierarchy of objectives (importance, sequence, priorities).

Coding example:

Example of a student's solution	DS1	DS 2
If Mrs Olsen needs help, she should persuade her manager to employ an assistant for her.	1	
At the moment, it is probably more important to do the work than to waste time in a power struggle.	2	1

(3) Coding for the category 'Measures'

M1: Number of measures proposed;

M2: Giving reasons for the measures;

M3: Weighing up the measures (likelihood of success, main effects and side effects);

M4: Decision on measures to be taken.

Coding example:

Example of a student's solution ([7])	M1	M2	M3	M4
You should first talk about their differences.	1			
They should share the work and do the transparencies together.	1			
If they do it together, both can manage their work.		1		
It is better to reach a compromise than to impose rules (this is directed at Mrs Mertens, who is relying on her job description and refusing to produce the transparencies).	2		1	
I think it would be best if there were job descriptions but the managers also asked employees to be flexible.				1

(4) Coding for the category of 'Controls'

C1: Facts in the solution are referred back to the initial situation;

C2: Description of the consequences of the solution for the initial situation;

C3: Facts in the solution are referred to the desired situation;

C4: Description of the consequences of the solution for the desired situation;

C5: Facts in the solution are referred to the measures;

C6: Description of the consequences of the measures.

([7]) In the evaluation, it is striking that almost all participants specify measures but hardly ever give reasons.

Coding example:

Example of a student's solution	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
I would explain to Mrs Olsen that it would be complete chaos if there were no compulsory job descriptions.	1	1				
It might be useful to mention in future job advertisements that employees have to be flexible and cooperative, even if they are asked to carry out tasks that do not precisely come under their job description.			1			
Employees would then be unlikely to insist on doing only what comes under their job description.				1		
If he could persuade the two women to cooperate and do the work together, it would be much better for the workplace atmosphere.					1	1

The categories can then be added together to give an overall score, the 'Analytical Ideal Type'. A high score indicates a highly developed ability to solve problems.

In the next step, the quality of the problem-solving is analysed by expert rating. The categories to be taken into account here are:

- Use of declarative and procedural knowledge (giving reasons and alternatives, logical comprehensibility and prospect of success of the problem-solving);
- Complexity of the problem-solving and the reasons given (quality of the theoretical model);
- Formulation of original objectives and ideas (e.g. moral considerations).

In previous studies, this evaluation system has given results that were consistent both with the assessments of teachers and with our own assessments and observations in the classroom (cf. e.g. Wuttke, 1999; Wolf, 2003; Seifried, 2004). The problem is the large amount of time required to evaluate written problem-solving, making the instrument unsuitable for use in schools. As there are a number of evaluation steps to go through, several lessons have to be set aside for each solution. Furthermore, the results are hugely dependent on how motivated and prepared students are to write down what they think. Account also has to be taken of the fact that, because the questions are very open, students will not mention certain aspects that they do in fact know.

As a result, the instrument is currently being developed to produce a more practical instrument for measuring a person's ability to solve problems (MAPS – Measurement and Assessment of Problem Solving Skills). This instrument cuts down the time spent on evaluation and should be less dependent on the student's motivation and ability to put thoughts into writing. MAPS comprises a combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative aspects of problem-solving. Unlike the original AIT method, students are also given specif-

ic questions along with the problem (cf. Fig. 4). These should structure and help in the solutions and answers and prompt answers relating to all aspects, even for students who are not so motivated and/or are unable to put their answers in writing. Together with an evaluation sheet, the questions can help teachers ascertain the students' ability to solve problems.

Figure 4. Problem together with specific questions

Problem for the students

Please imagine you are faced with the following situation:

… the problem already described in Fig. 2 is inserted here

Questions:

Initial situation:

- Please describe the situation in your own words.
- What information is missing? Who would you ask for it, who could help you? Where would you look for additional information?
- Please describe the assumptions you are making with respect to missing information (when tackling this problem, you can work on the basis of assumptions because you currently have no access to additional information).

Objectives:

- Which objectives would be conceivable in relation to the situation described above?
- Which would you try to achieve and why?

Measures:

- What measures could help you to achieve the objectives?
- Please say why you think these measures are appropriate.
- Are some measures better than others? Please take account not only of the objectives you are trying to achieve, but also of possible (undesired) side effects.
- Decide which measure(s) is/are most appropriate.

(Theoretical) control:

- How do your solutions alter the initial situation?
- How successful is your solution given the objective you are trying to achieve?
- How promising is/are your measure(s)?

The students' answers are evaluated using the following assessment system:

Figure 5. Evaluation sheet for solutions to problems

MAPS assessment sheet	
Analysis of the initial situation	
Student gives a comprehensive description of the situation.	Yes (in own words) – to a certain extent – no
The student's description covers the main points.	Completely – to a certain extent – not at all
Student indicates missing/required information.	Entirely sufficiently – not much – none
Student formulates ideas as to where/from whom missing information can be found.	Many – some – none
Student formulates assumptions on missing information.	Many – some – none
The student's assumptions are reasonable.	All – some – none
Definition of objectives	
Student formulates objectives.	Many – some – none
The objectives are reasonable.	All – some – none
Student formulates objectives for all those involved in the problem.	For all – only for some – for none
Student chooses one or more objectives.	Several objectives – one objective – no objectives
Student says why s/he chose the objective(s).	Yes, explicitly – yes, implicitly – no
The choice of objective(s) is well-founded.	Yes – to a certain extent – no reasons or poor reasons
Measures and action plans	
Student proposes various strategies/action plans.	Yes – only a few – none
Student explains why s/he thinks these measures are reasonable.	Yes – partly – no
Student weighs up various measures against one another.	Yes – partly – no
Student takes account of possible (undesired) side effects.	Yes – partly – no
Student decides which measure(s) is/are reasonable.	Yes – no
Control	
Student analyses whether and how measures might alter the initial situation.	Yes – to a certain extent – no
Student analyses whether the measure(s) is/are successful in achieving the desired objective(s).	Yes – to a certain extent – no
Student analyses whether the measure(s) is/are reasonable.	Yes – to a certain extent – no

For each answer, marks are awarded according to the level shown (from 0 to 2). In this way, performance in the individual sections and an overall score for a person's ability to solve problems can be ascertained. The evaluation table is in principle suitable for all subject areas ([8]), but subject experts are required to carry out the evaluation in order to enable assessment of the students' performance.

MAPS evaluation: First findings from a pilot study

Method

For MAPS evaluation, a first pilot study with students has been carried out so far; the second test is to start in schools in autumn 2005. In the pilot study, nine students whose main course was business education ([9]) were looked at and given two similar problems. Both related in terms of their subject to previously attended business education seminars. One problem was open (like the one in Fig. 2), the second problem was, as shown in Fig. 4, supplemented by specific questions. The first problem was assessed by two encoders according to the AIT system, the second – also by two encoders – according to the MAPS evaluation system. The results of this study should provide starting points when it comes to answering the following research questions ([10]).

How reliable are the measurements of the two AIT and MAPS instruments? The interrater reliability (Cohen's Kappa) is used check this.

The results relating to a person's ability to solve problems achieved so far using the AIT system are satisfactory insofar as they confirm theoretically expected findings. For example, there is, in accordance with the theory, a positive correlation between analysis and a person's ability to solve problems. Such findings indicate that, using the AIT system, a valid instru-

([8]) The two instruments (AIT and MAPS) have so far only been trialled in German vocational colleges and universities. However, as they are independent of any subject, they could also be used for measurement purposes in other European and non-European educational establishments. The only requireement is a subject expert to assess the quality of the solutions.

([9]) The participants in the sample are therefore future teachers at vocational colleges in Germany. The sample is unrepresentative for numerous reasons. To begin with, it is too small to enable the findings to be generalised. Furthermore, MAPS is being developed for use in vocational colleges, in other words for a target group which is a) younger and b) usually less well educated than the sample in the pilot study. For these reasons, other studies of the population for which the instrument is designed are required. Design considerations in this respect are presented in the course of the paper.

([10]) As already mentioned, the sample of 9 participants is extremely small and the findings are certainly unrepresentative. As a result, the follow-up study will be carried out on a much broader basis.

ment for measuring a person's ability to solve problems could exist ([11]). It should now be examined whether MAPS also measures a person's ability to solve problems. To do this, the relationship between the two measures of a person's ability to solve problems (measured by the AIT system and measured by the MAPS system) is determined. Ranking correlations are calculated with respect to the subdivisions of a person's ability to solve problems (actual situation, objectives, measures and control) and with respect to the overall score (AIT).

Findings of the pilot study

When calculating the interrater reliability, findings were as expected. As both the tackling of the problem and the evaluation are more structured and prescribed with MAPS, the measures of the participants' ability to solve problems correlate much more often than with AIT evaluation. The interrater reliability within the framework of the AIT evaluation can only be assessed as being satisfactory (Cohen's Kappa = 0.66). Correlation within the framework of the MAPS evaluation, on the other hand, is very acceptable with a Kappa of 0.89.

The ranking correlations between the two measuring instruments indicate that both instruments at least measure similar constructs (Fig. 6).

The correlation coefficients generally indicate a medium to high correlation between the two instruments. The statistical validation (significance) that is not available in all cases is presumably attributable to the small sample. Nevertheless, the findings can be regarded as being an indication that the instruments measure similar things.

Figure 6. Ranking correlations between AIT and MAPS findings in unrepresentative testing (N = 9)

	AIT and MAPS correlations
Actual situation	.543 (p = .065)
Objectives	.377 (p = .159)
Measures/strategies	.820** (p = .003)
Control	.789** (p = .006)
Overall score for a person's ability to solve problems	.807** (p = .004)

([11]) In order actually to establish whether the 'ability to solve problems' construct is being validly ascertained, an external criterion would have to be applied. This has been difficult hitherto because, to our knowledge, there have never been any proven, valid instruments that actually measure a person's ability to solve problems. Although there are a number of questionnaires on the subject, to use these as an external criterion is problematical in that information provided by students themselves and measurements of skills do not necessarily have to be connected.

Consequences for teacher training and for subsequent investigations

International comparative studies like PISA have shown that German students are often insufficiently capable of applying their knowledge and solving complex problems. With respect to a person's ability to solve problems ([12]) ascertained within the framework of research into interdisciplinary skills in the PISA 2003 study, it was revealed that although German students were above the OECD average, they were significantly behind the international leaders (Korea, Finland and Japan). Moreover, 14.1 per cent of young people in Germany have to be classified below the first skill level as far as problem-solving is concerned (cf. OECD, 2004).

As mentioned at the beginning, the relevant literature contains plenty of methodical advice on the design of problem-based teaching and learning arrangements that might address this deficiency. However, the problem remains that teachers are often still very attached to conventional teaching methods and hence make insufficient use of the opportunities to increase a person's ability to solve problems. To improve the situation, greater use of more innovative methods is required in teacher training and further education events for teachers who are already established.

However, this does not overcome the problem that, at present, there are no instruments for measuring a person's ability to solve problems available that are suitable for use in vocational colleges. As most of what is learnt is that which is tested at the end of the year – and is at present still predominantly factual knowledge – this lack of available test instruments and measurement methods may have a negative impact on the design and implementation of teaching and learning processes.

MAPS is a first step towards closing this gap by developing a practical instrument. Findings so far provide starting points enabling development of a reliable and possibly also valid instrument for measuring a person's ability to solve problems. As the previous study was carried out in a university environment, though the instrument was designed for use at vocational colleges, the next study will be carried out at a vocational college. It should first be examined here whether students and teachers can work with this instrument, in particular whether the MAPS rating categories are appropriate. Secondly, it should be checked again with a larger sample how reliably MAPS measures the person's ability to solve problems. The design is structured as follows:

In a first step, students' ability to solve problems is ascertained by means

([12]) What was tested was the ability to use cognitive processes in order to solve real, interdisciplinary problems in which the solution is not immediately obvious. The questions set three types of problem (making decisions, analysing and outlining systems and looking for errors) and related to requirements for life outside school (e.g. in leisure and professional situations), in which problem-based action is required. The international test involves paper and pen questions, in particular skill at solving analytical problems.

of Stäudel's skills questionnaire ([13]) (1987) in 5 classes (N ≈ 100). Using these preliminary test values, the whole group is divided into two equal subgroups that should be indistinguishable with respect to students' ability to solve problems. This should prevent the findings being distorted by a systematic ability effect (a person's ability to solve problems) in one group ([14]).

In a second step, the groups are given identical problems. As it cannot be expected that all classes in an educational subject area will have the same knowledge, a problem is chosen from students' everyday life. This should prevent an uneven distribution of prior knowledge falsifying the results. One group tackles the open problem that is evaluated according to the AIT system. The other group is given the problem according to MAPS, which is linked with specific questions and evaluated according to the MAPS system. In both groups, the solutions are evaluated by to encoders each.

Using this design – on the basis of the problem-solving of one subgroup – the MAPS interrater reliability can be rechecked. It is thereby possible to establish how effective the instrument is in a school environment. As there are three measures of a person's ability to solve problems in this procedure, it is also possible to examine whether the instruments measure a similar or identical construct. For each instrument there are in this case two 'external criteria' which enable assessments to be made regarding validity. ■

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([13]) The subscales 'adequate problem-solving behaviour' and 'heuristic skill' are used here to measure a person's ability to solve problems irrespective of the subject.

([14]) In principle, it would also be possible to form the groups on the basis of their demonstrated ability to solve problems (measured by AIT or MAPS). However, this procedure is very expensive and recognition effects could distort the subsequent findings.

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Education in values and moral education in vocational colleges

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SUMMARY

On the assumption that education in values and moral education are necessary, moral competence (to make judgments) and the structure and development of the faculty of moral judgment should not be disregarded, even in the vocational education system. The main features of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development are described as a basis for this before empirical results enable the author to make statements on the status of the moral competence to make judgments among business trainees. When fostering the moral competence to make judgments, attention should be paid in particular to certain development conditions: skilful appraisal, perceived conflicts, opportunities for communication, experience of cooperation, responsibility and opportunities to act. Information on a beneficial structuring of conditions in vocational colleges can be derived from the available empirical results on moral atmosphere in private and professional fields of action; this information is beneficial to the development of value orientation and the ability to reflect on moral matters.

Key words
Education,
moral judgment,
moral education,
moral development,
values,
developmental conditions

The necessity of education in values and moral education

Trainee Valentin is offered a bonus of EUR 150.00 by his boss if he sells a particular 'non-seller' washing machine to a customer. The trainee knows that this washing machine should no longer be sold due to environmental concerns about its high power and water consumption. On the other hand, the bonus is extremely appealing to him, because he has been saving for some time for a trip to see his friends in America, and would finally be able to afford it. What should Valentin do?

In such a conflict or a similar conflict, it is not just the decision to do something or refrain from doing so that is of interest, but also primarily the reasons for this decision, among which value orientations and fundamental moral attitudes are of great importance. They characterise human cooperation and social coexistence in all aspects of daily life. In the context of private and socio-political actions, including actions at school or college and in professional life, moral competence (to make judgments) constitutes a significant component in the genesis and control of behaviour. Therefore, particular emphasis must be placed on values and changing values as well as the structure, status and development of the faculty of moral judgment in a vocational context too. Internalised values are relatively stably acquired considerations which, as internal control quantities, act to determine and regulate behaviour, lead to selective perceptions and influence (professional) decision processes. However, objectives, values and motives are also subject to changes over time. Critical reflection on inherited value systems in an era of progressive mechanisation and specialisation as well as changed environmental and socialisation conditions are expressed in changing value structures and attitudes, especially among young people. Such a general change in social values and behaviour can be effected, for example, across a spectrum from values regarding duty and acceptance to individualism, hedonism or self-development values (Inglehart, 1977). In this case, the so-called secondary virtues, such as order, industriousness, punctuality and cleanliness, become less important, while values such as freedom, self-realisation and independence gain importance. Changing values not only give rise to generational conflicts but can also result in declining behavioural certainty and growing uncertainty about orientation.

German school legislation establishes the obligation to educate and train, considering not only qualifications and subject knowledge but also the ability to orient oneself, to find an identity and to form a graduated value system to be required (and to require support). This obligation to educate and train thus also includes moral education obligations (e.g. taking on responsibility for fellow human beings, developing a high level of moral sensibility, improving the ability to undertake moral reflection and moral reasoning), although these obligations would have to be sharply delimited and their objectives would have to be precisely worded. In view of the fact that values and moral topics/situations are constantly encountered (e.g. in social situations, with regard to environmental pollution, white-collar crime, tax evasion, the behaviour of public figures etc.), moral competence (to make judgments) and the structure and development of the faculty of moral judgment should also be moved to the foreground of school (and vocational education) work. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development can be regarded as a basis; this theory is initially presented in the next section.

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development

The model proposed by Kohlberg for the development of moral competence to make judgments is based on the following basic assumptions: All human beings have a cognitive instance known as 'moral reflection'. It undergoes change, which happens in stages or surges.

- These stages, according to Kohlberg (1978, p. 110; cf. also Piaget, Inhelder, 1979, p. 113 et seq.), are 'structured wholes', i.e. the individual makes consistent morally relevant judgments, that is to say judgments which are in accordance with the stage reached in each case across all situations. These stages are structurally different; the higher the stage the more differentiated the thought patterns.
- The stages are passed through in ascending order in an 'invariant sequence'. The development is irreversible. There are no regressions and it is not possible to miss out a stage.
- The stages are 'hierarchical integrations', i.e. the thought elements of a lower stage are integrated into the next highest stage, reformulated and differentiated. While arguments from a stage lower than that reached are still understood, they are rejected in principle.
- A transition between stages is triggered by cognitive dissonances, which are generated by moral conflicts. It is found that the problem can no longer be adequately or satisfactorily solved using the judgments applied hitherto.
- Finally, Kohlberg postulates that moral development is interculturally uniform. Accordingly, the development of the ability to make moral judgments progresses in the same way in all human beings, irrespective of nationality, culture and gender.

Figure 1. Summary of the stages of moral judgment (according to Kohlberg, 1978, p. 107 et seq.; see also Oser, Althof, 1992)

Pre-conventional level	Stage 1	Judgment in accordance with considerations of reward and punishment and on the basis of physical threat.
	Stage 2	Judgment according to the pattern of 'to each his own', 'tit for tat'. Belief in reciprocity.
Conventional level	Stage 3	Judgment in accordance with the 'golden rule' principle: 'Do as you would be done by'.
	Stage 4	Judgment in accordance with law and order: observance of social rights and obligations; principle of equality.
Post-conventional level	Stage 5	Stage of the ideas of the social contract, preserving fundamental rights.
	Stage 6	Stage of universal ethical principles, Categorical Imperative.

Kohlberg differentiates three levels of moral judgment, each containing two stages. These six stages are not categories of a person's character but rather an expression of an understanding of justice (see Figure 1 for a brief description of the stages).

Stage 1 is the stage of heteronomous moral thinking, which is attained approximately at the age of from 3 to 5 and in which one's own wellbeing is to the fore. The guiding criteria are punishment and obedience. Anything which brings pleasure and avoids pain, or provides a reward and averts punishment, is justified. Children profess their parents' claim to leadership to be legitimate and submit to the judgment of adults. Stage 2 is reached at around the age of 6/7. The prevalent impulses here are individualism and an objective way of thinking which is characterised by believing reciprocity to be fair. It is moral thinking determined by objective: What do I get from that? The interests of others are discerned, but one's own benefit always takes precedence. Reciprocity and fairness are the criterion for what is morally correct. This is also expressed in various figures of speech: 'You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours', 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!'

In contrast to the pre-conventional level with its egocentric way of thinking (stages 1 and 2), in the subsequent conventional level the viewpoints of society are taken in; society focuses its considerations on integration into reference groups or the social system within which a person lives. In stage 3, a person orients himself towards interpersonal conformity, in which mutual expectations (of roles) and relationships are important. Stage 3 thinking is primarily group thinking. A person orients himself towards the viewpoints of his specific reference groups (e.g. family, friends, colleagues). In stage 4, the specific social system within which a person lives becomes the focus of the way he thinks. Maintenance of the social order is regarded as a moral obligation. A person is guided by the law, justice and order. Specific modes of behaviour are assessed by asking the question 'What would happen if everyone did that?' The viewpoint of society is taken in here in that responsibility to society is always discerned.

At the next, post-conventional level, the sociocentric orientation of stages 3 and 4 is overcome. The matter at issue is no longer integration into reference groups or the specific social system, but rather the pursuit of generally valid and recognised values and principles. Stage 5 is the stage where moral thinking is guided by principles. It implies universal guidelines which are applied when making moral decisions for the benefit of international society in its entirety. Reasoning used at level 6 is related to humanity and the very fact of being human. A person is guided by universal ethical principles, e.g. the Categorical Imperative.

The stage of judgment at which prospective businessmen and businesswomen think, argue and, if appropriate, also act, is identified in the following section.

The status of moral competence to make judgments among business trainees

The investigations into the status of moral competence to make judgments ([1]) were carried out among trainees in the insurance sector ([2]) at a commercial vocational college in Mainz (cf. Beck et al., 1996). They were carried out using questionnaires on social problems in the spheres of family, group of friends and career. ([3])

A story of conflict originating from Kohlberg, the so-called Heinz dilemma, was used as a measurement tool for the familial sphere, and served for comparison firstly with other studies of morals and secondly with the dilemmas in the other spheres: In order to save the life of his terminally ill wife, should Heinz break into a pharmacy and steal a newly developed drug which he cannot afford because the price is too high? The subject first had to decide what Heinz should do and then had to state reasons for his decision. The same also applied to the subsequent modified situations in which Heinz no longer loves his wife or the question is about a stranger instead of her.

Further dilemmas were constructed relating to the trainee's circle of friends and professional life, with the latter being divided into internal company relations and external company relations. With regard to the circle of friends, the test conflict was the question of whether Eberhard should help Florian, who, like him, is 17, to steal money from the cashier's office at their orphanage in order to enable Florian to escape from the prevailing atmosphere of strictness and paternalism there and to determine his own life from now on.

In the sphere of internal company relations, trainee Holm was faced with the problem of whether he should, just for once, comply with his boss's request to falsify the turnover statistics so that the latter can use his increased commission to help himself out of personal financial trouble. With regard to external company relations, finally, insurance trainee Weber discovered by chance that a policyholder who died as a result of a heart attack was already suffering from heart disease before the policy was taken out; should he conceal this information and pay out the sum insured or not?

([1]) Supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* [German Research Foundation] within the scope of the Priority Programme on the '*Lehr-Lern-Prozesse in der kaufmännischen Erstausbildung*' ['Teaching/learning processes in commercial initial training'] (File ref.: Be 1077/5).

([2]) In Germany, insurance salesmen and saleswomen are trained within the dual system of professional training, i.e. each week they work in a company for 3½ days and go to vocational college for 1½ days. Companies vary in size, from relatively small insurance agencies to larger insurance groups. The training period amounts to between two and three years, depending on educational background. It ends with a final examination set by the Industrie- und Handelskammer [Chamber of Industry and Commerce].

([3]) The sample comprises a total of 140 trainees in the insurance sector who commenced their training between 1992 and 1997 and were mostly aged between 17 and 21. Some of these trainees were questioned at annual intervals on the faculty of moral judgment and morally relevant development conditions. The total numbers fluctuated with respect to the dilemmas, since not all respondents dealt with each dilemma or gave adequate, evaluable answers.

When making a diagnosis on judgment, the decisions for or against a course of action are of less importance in the respondents' answers than the reasons which in the respondents' view justify the respective decision. The significant factors in assigning arguments to a stage are the elements of the content and the social viewpoint used to judge the question. The status of moral competence to make judgments determined for the different spheres can be seen in Figure 2.

It can be seen from a glance at the classifications into stages that in conflicts within the sphere of family and friends the decisions are predominantly based on the socio-centric level of stage 3. This result, which conforms to the theory put forward by *Kohlberg* (cf. Colby, Kohlberg, 1987, p. 101), contains statements about expectations of family members and friends and reflections on duties and obligations to them which the subjects consider to be of determining importance. In the family problem, five subjects are even already arguing at stage 5; they contemplate the spirit of laws or place human rights at the centre of their considerations.

With respect to the conflicting relations within the company, the subjects' reasons for their judgments are predominantly to be classified as stage 2. The predominant thoughts here are those characteristic of this stage, concretely individualistic thoughts concerned with the equitability of reciprocity; personal advantages and disadvantages are weighed up; acceptance of a negative consequence is rejected. A quarter of answers can be assigned to stage 3, in which, for example, the expectations of colleagues or feelings of obligation towards them or the company play a role. Almost half of subjects also argue at this level in the dilemma concerning external company relations (case worker/customer); the dominant themes here are social relationships and the desire to be helpful.

If the results for the private and professional spheres are compared, on average higher stage classifications are noted in the private realm. In the private sphere, use is made principally of sociocentric reasons for judgments; the social environment and the expectations of the other members of the group play a central role in the arguments. In contrast to this, most of the subjects reflect on the decisions which they would take in the sphere of work

Figure 2. Frequency distribution of subjects' answers across the stages of moral judgment in the private and professional spheres

Area of conflict		**Stages of moral judgment** (according to Kohlberg; cf. Figure 1)					
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Private sphere	family	17	49	136	1	5	-
	friends	23	48	56	2	-	-
Professional sphere	Company - internal	71	92	56	-	-	-
	Company - external	34	73	94	4	-	-

from an egocentric point of view; possible consequences of their actions for their own needs determine the moral judgment here.

The possible ways of fostering moral development shall be dealt with in the next section.

Fostering the development of moral competence

Although to date little is known about the precise transition from one stage to the next highest stage, the question arises of how a teacher can initiate moral development. It is undoubtedly facilitated or impeded by external factors. While in the view of Kohlberg (1976) opportunities to take on roles and viewpoints and confrontation with socio-moral conflicts are of primary importance, it is in particular everyday living conditions, as well as deliberate educational influences, which determine the development process for the moral competence to make judgments. The development conditions identified by Lempert as being relevant to moral development (cf. Hoff, Lempert, Lappe, 1991) are explained below (see Figure 3 for a summarising overview):

The appraisal directed at or withheld from someone identifies the quality of interpersonal relationships. This includes respect, warmth, thoughtfulness versus contempt, coldness, harshness; these influence the devel-

Figure 3. Sociobiographic development conditions for moral competence to make judgments (in accordance with Lempert)

Condition	Explanation	Subcondition	Characteristics
Skillful appraisal	Quality of interpersonal relationships, emotional attention and social acceptance	as a personality; as someone undertaking a role	skillful – detached
Perceived conflicts	Confrontation with interacting persons (groups of people) who have opposing orientations	interest v interest or interest v value or value v value	open – concealed manifest – latent
Opportunities for communication	Exchange of opinions, assertions, arguments		informal – restricted
Experience of cooperation	Type of relationship model used in decisions		participative – directive
Responsibility	Perceived assignment and attribution of responsibility	adequate	
		inadequate	expecting too much or expecting too little
Opportunities to act	Perceived leeway or restrictions	adequate	
		inadequate	expecting too much or expecting too little

opment of a feeling of self-worth and self-confidence. Advanced trust is particularly definitive with regard to greater moral development (Lempert, 1993, pp. 10-13). In this context, the differentiation as to whether someone is accepted as a whole person ('appraisal as a personality') or only on the basis of certain achievements ('appraisal as an expert or someone undertaking a role') appears important; the former is significant for the transition to the post-conventional level, and the latter for the transition to the conventional level (ibid., p. 4).

In conflict resolution, the important issue is open confrontation between interacting persons with incompatible orientations. Conflicting interests, norms and/or moral concepts may arise. The frequency of occurrence and the type of conflict resolution (whether it is open or concealed) and/or the degree of verbalisation (from manifest to latent) are also of importance for the development of an awareness of moral problems.

Opportunities for communication are to be found in the exchange of morally relevant information, of opinions, assertions, arguments etc. Communicative competence can be acquired in a more informal atmosphere in which in principle all topics can be discussed openly and without sanctions. In contrast, restricted communication tolerates only a narrow field of (usually socially desirable) expressions of opinion and therefore does not foster development.

The mode of cooperation is closely related to the form of involvement in communication. It is of morally socialistic relevance here whether cooperation between persons is of a participative or directive nature. Participation means equitable team work and integration into decision processes. In contrast to this, in directive or subordinative relationship patterns decisions cannot be influenced; in fact, the individual must subordinate himself and must carry out instructions.

The assumption of responsibility is understood to mean the assignment and attribution of responsibility which is perceived to be adequate or inadequate, which influences a sense of responsibility and therefore moral competence. Demands which are appropriate to capabilities are considered to be beneficial, whereas expecting too much or too little, and lack of clarity regarding demands which have been made are believed to hinder moral development.

Opportunities to act are closely related to cooperation and the assignment of responsibility. Leeway permits the realisation of one's own beliefs and desires; it is possible to implement one's own ideas in a formative manner. This contrasts with restrictions to which private or professional actions are subject.

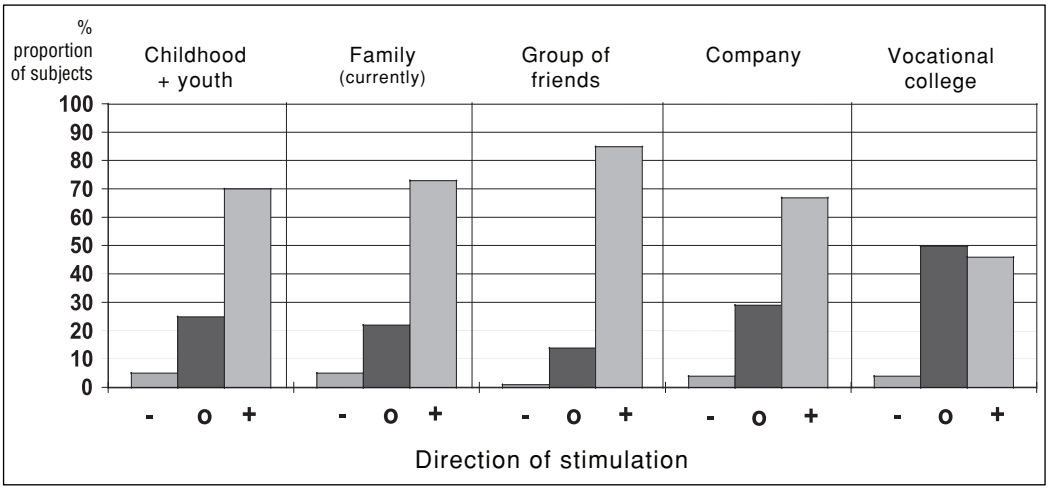
In the questionnaires used for the prospective insurance salesmen and saleswomen and the interviews carried out (cf. Beck et al., 1998), in essence two items of information were collected from each subject for each development condition in each sphere (family, group of friends, company and vocational college): 1. personal impression of characteristics and 2. in relation to this, a personal assessment of importance in each case. A combi-

nation of these data makes it possible to calculate a measured value for each condition (probability of change in moral competence to make judgments); this value varies between -1 (having a strong tendency to reversion, regression tendencies) via 0 (stabilising) to +1 (very beneficial); for the sake of simplicity, Figure 4 only differentiates between '-' (inauspicious), '0' (stabilising) and '+' (beneficial). First, the question of whether different conditions exist in the trainees' different spheres which could explain or predict the different courses of development of the moral competence to make judgments is investigated. For this overview, summarising scores were calculated for all subjects, which are intended to convey an overall impression of the stimulation potential of various spheres in order thus to gain a first perception of the milieus within which the trainees move.

Very good prerequisites for moral development are to be found in the private sphere (childhood and youth, current long-term relationship and group of friends). The situation is best among the group of friends; this is not particularly surprising, since this is the only reference group which is of a voluntary nature. The conditions discovered within companies are on average not quite so good, but nevertheless overwhelmingly positive.

The most striking feature is the profile of the vocational college, which is perceived to have the least stimulating effect on moral development of all the spheres investigated. If individual development conditions are considered, it becomes apparent that the students are not appraised on the basis of their achievements to an extent which could be described as stimulating development. However, they feel that they are accorded a degree of recognition that could have a fostering effect. Overall, regarding this condition there are fewer positive evaluations for college in percentage terms than for the other spheres. The two dimensions of 'conflicts' and 'cooperation' are largely to be described as stabilising or regressive. The situation

Figure 4. Moral atmosphere in private and professional fields of action



is slightly better, but not much better, with regard to opportunities to act. It is only communication and responsibility which are able to foster moral development.

By and large, college seems to take on more of a stabilising function. However, it is also precisely in this area that the greatest concentration of constellations which trigger regression are to be found – a result which may appear rather alarming and whose possible causes (e.g. strict structuring of syllabi, rigid organisation of lessons, time pressure, but also advanced trust, respect, social integration and recognition) merit closer investigation.

When searching for possible ways of fostering moral competence to make judgments at college, problem/dilemma discussions should be mentioned first of all. Suitable examples of these include moral conflicts and current moral problems which are independent of specific subjects, but also moral problems and conflicts which are subject-related and which present material taken from the syllabus. Restricting such discussions to religion and ethics classes is thus neither necessary nor helpful. Whereas previously the chosen method was the so-called plus-one convention, in which moral development is pushed to the stage above one's own stage by means of arguments, it is assumed nowadays that confronting people with counterarguments from the same stage as that on which they are currently to be found in moral terms is just as beneficial (cf. Oser, Althof, 1992, p. 107). The problem with which the teacher is faced, in addition to knowledge and internalisation of the theoretical principles, is that of diagnosing the status of each student's moral competence to make judgments, of paying attention to phases of transition between stages, of going into each stage and spontaneously formulating suitable counterarguments in order to trigger cognitive dissonances. Without going into the specific course of discussions of moral dilemmas here (in this respect, cf. e.g. Oser, Althof, 1992, pp. 105, 108, or Lind, 2003, pp. 83-85), various factors may be pointed out which have a beneficial effect on moral development: the type of cognitive conflict, the frequency of such discussions, good training for the teacher, good preparation for the class, the regularity of these discussions in lessons, openness to real problems, the manner in which teachers stimulate intellectual discussion, etc.

The *just community* approach can be seen as another method of fostering moral development (cf. Oser, Althof, 1992, pp. 337 et seq.). Characteristics of the just (school or college) community include various pupils' or students' committees, and also plenary meetings of teachers and pupils at which the principles of democratic rule-making and problem solving on an equal basis are practised on real-life occasions and experience of taking on responsibility and interacting in a respectful social manner is gained.

Conclusion

On the assumption that education in values and moral education is necessary and obligatory, this article first described basic theoretical principles for developing moral competence to make judgments. Examination of the status of this competence and of conditions which foster moral development revealed that factors stimulating greater moral development may be considered to include tolerance, openness, sensitivity to conflict, moral sensitivity and, all in all, a good social climate (Oser, Althof, 1992, pp. 156-159). From this, in turn, it is also possible to derive pointers for beneficial structuring of the atmosphere in a school or college which will support the development of value orientations, the faculty of judgment and the ability to undertake moral reflection.

Problems in the field of moral education include the necessity for long-term support, segmentation between different spheres of life, the real-life and everyday relevance of the material, the discrepancy between thinking and acting, and often moral hypocrisy and hidden values (a clandestine syllabus), which, along with the pedagogical activities planned for lessons, sometimes bring about an unfavourable influence. The questions arise of whether morals can be taught and what specific opportunities there are to foster the moral competence to make judgments within the educational sector. Lind (2003, p. 24 et seq.) and especially Lempert (2004) believe that morals can be fostered primarily in discussion of dilemmas and by using the *just community* approach.

Values begin to be imparted in the parental home; this process continues in kindergarten and school, and in the subsequent period of vocational training or study. Thus, parents, educators, teachers and trainers have the great responsibility of serving as role models for the personal development of children and young people. This role model function applies not only to behaviour, attitudes, outward appearance and motivation but also to dealing with social conflicts by means of argument. The requirements and expectations of companies training young people relate to characteristics including appropriate appearance, willingness to work, ability to communicate, to work in a team and take initiative, general and specialist knowledge and problem-solving abilities; they are increasingly complaining that young people lack these skills or have an inadequate grasp of them. Teachers at vocational colleges, as professional managers of their students' learning and development processes, frequently find themselves faced with a dilemma when fulfilling their educational and training remit: In view of the decreasing training budget, they have to place emphasis on vocational subject matter that is relevant to the final examination, but they should also at the same time foster general personal development, although this does not appear to be vocationally helpful and useful. Here, too, there is in reality no contradiction and there are also no conflicting objectives: Moral development can take place and values can be imparted through the medium

of professional education. The question is thus not when to take the time to deal with these objectives but rather how to structure everyday lessons so that they simultaneously serve the aims of qualification and personal development.

I would like to conclude these deliberations with a more personal remark: Engaging with morals certainly does not automatically make you a 'better' person – but it can at least make it easier to recognise what you would have to do (or not do) in order to become a better person. Using the initial dilemma faced by the trainee Valentin, everyone may determine for himself which possibility he would choose and why. Finally, the following saying of George Bernhard Shaw can serve as a challenge not just for teachers who are role models but also for all of us:

> ***The best reformers the world has ever seen***
> ***are those who commence on themselves.***

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Between school and work – dilemmas in European comparative transition research

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Key words
Comparative research, youth unemployment, transition from school to work, vocational education systems, welfare systems, social inclusion

SUMMARY

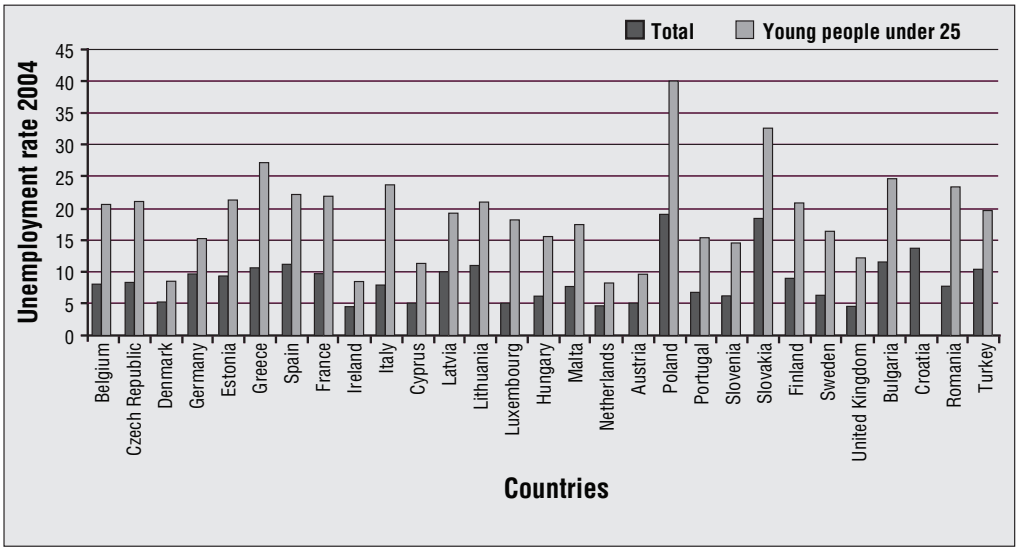
On the basis of the author's experience in coordinating a number of EU research projects aimed at improving the transition from school to vocational training for disadvantaged young people, the following paper focuses on problems in comparing support measures in Europe and on the practical relevance of comparative EU research. The first section sets out the dilemmas in this type of European comparative transition research and provides an overview of research to date. Welfare state and youth research are then used to combine the factors determining the transition experience into a model. The author outlines the conditions under which this model could deliver results that could provide guidance for changes in pedagogical practice. These considerations are illustrated using the example of the results from the Leonardo project 'Re-Integration. Transnational evaluation of social and professional re-integration programmes for young people'. Finally, the author raises possible questions for further research and support policy.

The problem of the relationship between theory and practice in comparative transition research on vocational education

The labour market is becoming increasingly tight, there is a long-term shortage of on the job training places, employers are demanding more complex skills profiles and higher qualifications, and growing up is becoming increasingly complicated; all of these factors mean that, for young people in Europe, there is a widening gap between leaving general education and entering the workplace. The consistently high youth unemployment figures show that there is a mismatch between the educational and employment systems (Fig. 1). What manifests itself from the point of view of the labour market as a skills deficit often represents, for the individual concerned, a lifelong struggle with social, economic and cultural exclusion risk factors, in a precarious situation. These problems may present themselves in different guises and pose a threat in different ways in the various Member States of the European Union. This not only depends on the national or regional training and labour market and the qualification output of each education system, but is also determined by a collection of factors in youth, social and labour policies under the welfare state, and by normative guidelines, which as a whole represent a variety of cultural contexts and institutionalisations.

In order to provide support for disadvantaged young people 'crossing the threshold' of integration into vocational training and/or working life, vir-

Figure 1. Youth unemployment in Europe 2004



Source: Eurostat, own calculations

tually all of the EU Member States have instituted special programmes and measures over the past 25 years. The European Commission has provided a major impetus for this by specifically calling on the Member States, by way of voluntary commitments, to implement appropriate measures focusing on the needs of socially marginalised groups with a view to integrating them into the labour market (European Commission, 2001). The results included national action programmes such as the "New Deal" in the United Kingdom, the emergency programme '*Jugend mit Perspektive - JUMP*' in Germany and '*nouveaux services emplois jeunes*' in France. These kinds of labour policy and vocational training programmes have now become relevant transitional institutions for a growing number of young people. It is estimated that around 40% of all young people in Europe who remain jobless after completing general school education will be involved in one or more of these programmes (Dietrich, 2003). Individually, these schemes have been established as permanent fixtures in the national vocational education system, such that it could be described as a 'System of Schemes' (ibid.).

Which young people in a country are at particular risk of exclusion, and what integration strategies are developed depends first on the welfare state system and secondly on the existing vocational education system. This relates both to how 'disadvantage' is defined, and to the pedagogical and political measures for combating it (cf. Pohl, Walther, no year stated, and Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). Taking account of the place of these measures in the training and employment landscape, the dominant social policy and education policy legitimation pattern, the expectations of young people prevailing in society and society's attitude towards unemployment and lack of training, these schemes to help the disadvantaged can be differentiated as follows:

- Schemes that extend mainstream school-based vocational education and offer alternative options for learning and working on an individual level – these schemes aim to promote personal development and to broaden career options.
- Schemes to make up for structural deficits and a lack of availability of training – these are based on the introduction of a subsidised structure in parallel with the mainstream, with specific access requirements. A prerequisite for participation is the determination of individual deficits, and the importance of the allocation function of the training system means that this may have negative long-term effects with respect to social integration.
- 'Workfare' schemes, which focus primarily on the employability of the participants. The proportion of general and vocational education involved in such programmes varies, but is generally low. They generally concentrate on achieving economic independence as quickly as possible, thus resulting in a comparatively short phase of youth.
- Extending time spent in schools, in some cases in conjunction with work experience – this aims to compensate for both the shortage of training

places and educational deficits, but does not address the issue of disenchantment with school and the lack of vocational basis in general schooling.

Institutions, measures and programmes corresponding to these reasons and plans, aiming both to develop the competences of young people and improve their job-related skills on the one hand and to improve social cohesion and reduce dropout rates from training on the other, generally reflect a labour policy and pedagogical intention. This dual intention is rarely adequately discussed in evaluation studies. Quality criteria are often reduced to measurable indicators, primarily the employment rate, while the right to education and the educational content of the measures is disproportionately harder to quantify. Nevertheless, social and cultural integration and participation in society interact closely with access to training and the labour market.

The effectiveness of such measures in supporting disadvantaged young people is of considerable interest in both pedagogical and economic terms. The results of comparative transition research are therefore, first, of relevance in terms of vocational pedagogy with regard to the development and maintenance of corresponding long-term skills concepts, strategies and systems, including in particular for the target group of young people in difficult learning situations. Secondly, they have relevance in social policy in terms of the further social and individual costs of unsuccessful transitions and ensuring social coherence. Finally, they are important with regard to the effect of standardisation trends in a European social and education policy.

European comparative studies of this system of schemes are, however, faced with two basic questions: how can measures to support the transition from school to training and work be compared with one another at all, given that they are based in structural and conceptual terms on the established national vocational education systems, which vary widely from Finland to Portugal? And how, in view of these large cultural and institutionalised differences, can we produce results that may influence the actions of politicians and educators?

When it comes not to purely hermeneutic questions or explorative studies but to European projects backed up by policy that target changes in pedagogical practice in the Member States – in this case, optimising the transition to training and work – transnational comparative studies are faced with the challenge of both elucidating the interdependence of the subject-related emancipational and labour market-related skills dimensions of the programmes and, at the same time, finding a methodologically and analytically appropriate approach to differences in education and training systems within Europe and the related cultural differences in transition phases.

This can be illustrated briefly by way of an example: the aim of the Leonardo project 'Re-integration – Transnational Evaluation of social and professional re-integration programmes for young people' (http://www.biat.uni-flens-

burg.de/biat.www/index_projekte.htm) was to draw up transcultural and transnational quality criteria for vocational preparation measures. The transcultural quality indicators identified were collaboration, reflexivity, inclusiveness and situated pedagogy (CRIS) (Niemeyer 2005). One particularly important aspect was the long-term establishment of mechanisms and methods for self-reflection by all those involved in the support process at all three levels – political planning, institutional support and individual implementation. In addition to an interactive instrument for sincere self-evaluation (QSED – Quality through Self-Evaluation and Development, Heidegger, Niemeyer, Petersen, 2005), the results of the project included the transcultural recommendations CRIS, which take account both of cultural peculiarities and their socio-historic context and of the practical relevance and the country-specific approaches of the relevant education and social policy. At this point, suffice it to clarify national differences using situated learning as an example: programmes focusing on supporting disadvantaged young people at the interface between school and work often make effective use of the effect of authentic work experience, seeing learning processes as a combination of growing, becoming, belonging, taking part, experience and practical action (Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). This enables learners to recognise that their work makes a significant contribution to the whole and that they are important participants in a group that is engaged/involved in a useful activity. Transcultural recommendations to promote situated learning at macrolevel – to implement it through policy and planning – relate both to established educational institutions and to pedagogical cultures. In countries with a school-based vocational training system, situated learning challenges the established institutional boundaries. In this context, the aim of measures to support disadvantaged young people must be to provide more authentic work experiences and to combat the negative effects of purely school-based learning. In countries with less formal vocational education systems and fewer training institutions, vocational learning processes seem to be more firmly anchored in a practical working community. Nevertheless, in this context it is worth further developing the establishment of competences and the recognition of informally acquired skills. In addition, education policy should aim to provide training places and develop training programmes; this is particularly true of countries where the vocational education system is less well established, but is not only applicable to those countries.

This example may suffice at this point to illustrate the fact that practical recommendations can only be drawn from research projects with reference to the individual national context and in collaboration with the various people involved in practice.

Dilemmas in European comparative transition research

The challenges arising from the requirements of comparability, general applicability and practical relevance imposed on research into the transition between school and work can be summarised as five dilemmas.

1. Dilemma of the lack of a basis for comparison

Which young people are at risk of exclusion, at which stage of life, how does this manifest itself and how can it be combated are very different across Europe. The obvious national differences in relation to the organisation, structure, control and funding of the national vocational education systems do, it is true, raise the question of which, if any, vocational education system best prepares young people for the job market, but at the same time it cannot be overlooked that vocational education has its historical roots in the various national education systems and direct transfer from one country to another is highly unlikely to produce the same results.

2. Dilemma of cultural differences

Beyond discipline-specific access routes and politically or economically based structural approaches, there appears to be a system of more influential factors that are manifested in the oft-cited 'cultural differences', as can so often be seen in transnational research projects. These involve a mesh of language, historical developments, normative guidelines and institutionalised discourse, varying emphases on which constitute national specificities. In qualitative comparative research such cultural differences can often be seen in considerable detail. With respect to transition research, they go hand in hand with other features which as a whole express different attitudes to young people and different aspects of youth, in other words cultural differences in normative discourse regarding youth, work and skills.

3. Dilemma between employability and emancipation

Research that aims to go beyond the labour market perspective and the associated fixation with employment figures, and instead to embrace the subject perspective, understanding both vocational education and pre-employment support as an emancipation process aiming at maturity and participation, requires differentiated comparative and quality criteria and a long-term outlook. Thus, in view of the increasingly difficult labour market situation, the question should be raised of whether, in addition to employability, more emphasis should be placed on promoting the ability to get involved as a citizen and to overcome high-risk circumstances. From this perspective, the educational aspect of support measures is given greater weight than the training aspect.

4. Dilemma between structural exclusion and individual integration

In many regions of Europe, there is a serious shortage of on-the-job training options, which makes it virtually impossible even for young people leaving school with good qualifications to find a training place immediately. This can clearly be seen, for example, from the increasing importance of school-based vocational training schemes, which have become an important option for a growing number of young people in, for example, the United Kingdom and Germany (in this regard see, for example, Hayward, 2004). More complicated work routines lead to higher entry requirements for young school leavers. Schemes are therefore faced with the dilemma of having to 'treat' structural, system-specific exclusion mechanisms on an individual level by pedagogical means. Transition measures have a regulatory function in labour market policy. They cannot only be seen as a refinement of teaching methods for better integration into the world of work but also act as an extension of the education system and continue its selective function, thus operating as sophisticated exclusion mechanisms, legitimising selection processes in vocational education policy terms with pedagogical justifications. The results of these measures have long-term effects for the participants in terms of social participation. Here, too, there are considerable differences in the national (and sometimes regional) design and organisation of these processes. Structural exclusion and individual integration are given different weightings in each cultural and institutional context.

5. Context dependence of educational practice

The issues discussed above give rise to a further dilemma: vocational education as an educational practice is always dependent on the person and the situation, and, as such, is culturally, socially and practically location-dependent. Practical conclusions and political recommendations, the intended results of research projects funded at European level, therefore have to either be kept so general that they can relate to the cultural context of all the countries involved, or be so specific that national and regional exceptions continually have to be made. While educational policy recommendations can be made at a general level, pedagogical concepts cannot be developed in isolation from the relevant local historical and cultural circumstances and the resultant institutional situation, and they cannot result in changes to educational practice without local players being involved in the implementation strategy.

Comparative transition research – an overview

A cursory examination of research comparing the transition from school to training and work in relation to Europe makes it obvious that these dilemmas are not adequately reflected, though this is not true of the dilemma of the lack of comparability of vocational education systems. The resulting re-

strictions, which are primarily due to the different structures and organisation of vocational education and of social security systems, are repeatedly emphasised. There are also complaints that research into the transition from school to work is characterised by insufficient data (Hannan et al., 2000, Descy, Tessaring, 2001). This is true only to a limited extent. For example, there is no lack of statistical data, or of indicators (Lassnigg, 2005). The data sets of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), LFS (Labour Force Survey), CVTS (European Continuing Vocational Training Survey), UNESCO and the ILO (International Labour Office), Cedefop, EUROSTAT and national statistics provide information regarding education trajectories and transition problems, in particular mismatches (see in this respect Wolbers, 2002). What is lacking, however, is the link between macro- and micro-levels and research into the interdependence of the two levels, particularly from the transnational perspective. Moreover, the large quantitative studies generally relate to the mainstream, i.e. to the standard situation represented by institutionalised education. Schemes and programmes that aim to compensate for 'failed' transitions cannot, in general, be modelled using the existing data sets. The heterogeneous project landscape of free and private providers in this vocational education no-man's land obviously does not represent a statistically relevant variable.

The methodological approach to comparative transition research continues to present a major challenge (Hannan, Werquin, 2000; Niemeyer 2005a). As a general overview, two research perspectives can be identified, which tend to be differentiated by the choice of method.

The initial work in this area focused on the match between education systems and labour market requirements (Maurice, Sellier, Silvestre, 1986; Allmendinger, 1989; Müller, Shavit, 1998; Hannan et al., 1998). 'A substantial amount of research work within this tradition has been carried out on the extent and nature of "matching" between both the level and content of education/training received in full-time education and the subsequent extent it was "matched" to the job/occupation entered' (Hannan, Werquin, 2000:107). Müller and Shavit, who investigated 'the role of national institutional differences for occupational allocation' within this tradition (Müller, Shavit, 1998, p. 8-44), emphasise 'that the effects of education in the occupational attainment process, and its impact on employment chances in the labour force, are indeed systematically conditioned by the respective institutional contexts. Both the magnitude and the shape of the effects vary between countries and this variation is due, to a large extent, to differences in the social organisation of education.' (Müller, Shavit, 1998, p. 36). Their results underline the relationship between the institutionalised education system, particularly the vocational education system ('The crucial factor appears to be the extent of vocational specificity of the educational system' (ibid. 39)) and the labour market. However, they too specifically refer to the established educational institutions, which represent the various national educational systems. Initiatives, projects and extra institutional forms of vocational learning, which play a crucial role in access to training for disad-

vantaged young people, are not covered by their study, which means that it is difficult to draw practical conclusions from it with regard to improvements in transitional education.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a series of European comparative studies focusing directly on measures to prepare young people for work. As research and evaluation projects, they look first into the efficiency and effectiveness of measures to prepare young people for work (see, for example, European Commission, 1996; Brandsma, 2000; Hammer, 2003). Another research strand takes the subject perspective as a starting point to investigate the requirements for a successful transition (Stauber, Walther 2001) and focuses on the alignment of (vocational) education concepts with the specific needs of the target group of disadvantaged young people (Evans, Niemeyer, 2004; Heidegger, Niemeyer, Petersen et al., 2005).

These studies, too, reach the conclusion that it is above all the context of education and work in which the qualification scheme is anchored that makes a difference to a successful transition (Raffe, 1987; Caroleo, Pastore, 2003; Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). The question can therefore legitimately be raised of whether a 'skills offensive' in the sense of additional qualification schemes can be the only reaction, or an adequate reaction, to the growing gap between the education and employment systems, or whether it provides key qualifications for locked doors (Heikkinen, Niemeyer, 2005; Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). At the same time, it is also worth asking whether entry into employment is sufficiently comprehensive as a general indicator of a successful transition. The validity of entry into training and employment as a vital instrument for social integration for disadvantaged young people is very rarely discussed, despite the fact that many of them can only expect to enter the labour market in stages. That, in particular, is why the personal development aspects of programmes, which focus on the ability to manage one's own life course and on the development of competences to shape one's own career path (Hendrich, 2002), is becoming so important.

Nevertheless, vocational education research predominantly focuses on the question of how deficits in competence acquisition with respect to the requirements of the job market, whether they arise from structural problems in the respective education system or from individual social disadvantage, can be compensated for. This focus on issues regarding the school-to-work transition in a relatively narrow sense means that transitional research appears to be a problem for vocational training. This, however, constitutes a narrowing of the subject that, in my opinion, does not do justice to the complexity of the processes under examination. Instead, it replicates the current paradigm of (vocational) pedagogisation and individualisation of the structural problem of inadequate training places and jobs and obsolete training opportunities. This is not so much a solution to the aforementioned dilemma between structural exclusion and individual integration as a continuation of it.

Transition risks in Europe

In this context, the question arises of how comparative research into the system of schemes can take adequate account of the dilemmas discussed above. If the design of schemes to 'support the disadvantaged' focuses on 'competence development and self-emancipation', the title of a symposium at the 2005 ECER conference in Dublin, then recommendations for action to change pedagogical practice can only be generated from research by means of systematic feedback with the players in pedagogical practice. This raises, first, the practical research question of how this feedback can be guaranteed and, secondly, the question of how, in view of the explicit reference to national and/or regional peculiarities, results and findings can be worded so as to have transnational relevance. This includes, for example, the question of how the recognition that authentic work experience in a commercial context provides the greatest opportunities for remotivation and reintegration can be applied to education practice with street boys in Lisbon, teenage mothers in London or market-disadvantaged groups in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

It is true that the transnational perspective can provide a more complex insight as part of a European research project, especially since it generally also takes a transdisciplinary approach. However, this is initially a process of individual understanding, which does not necessarily lead to general conclusions.

To provide a clearer picture of the comparative work needed in this context, we need to sketch a model of the significance of the structural differences for young people's transition processes, using sociological concepts from welfare state research and youth research.

One pragmatic solution to these dilemmas is to identify factors that characterise a national transition system and combine them into models covering groups of countries. The contrast in solidarity is a fundamental principle in this, and forms the structure holding the model together. The clarity of a classification depends on the extent to which it can be distinguished from other possible classifications (see Bohnsack, 1997, p. 500). The aim is the process of ideal-typological understanding, which always also involves the development of a construct. In this context, the following model clarifies the differences in integration processes and measures, working on the assumption that programmes to support disadvantaged young people in the transition from school to work are rooted in the national context, in three aspects:

(a) by the established education system, particularly by the structural and institutional management of vocational education,
(b) by the welfare model or the prevailing social insurance system, and
(c) by the normative discourse on youth and the associated models of transition, independence and autonomy, as well as care and welfare, expressed in that discourse.

Figure 2: Models of European transitional systems in the context of research into welfare states, vocational education and young people

Welfare system	Social policy principles	Structure of VET system	Responsibility for integration into work	Weak points or challenges	Cultural perception of youth	Social perception of youth unemployment	Approach of support programmes	Relationship to vocational education
Scandinavian	Social security as citizens' right	School-based	VET as part of the education system with general right to integration	Transition to work Disenchantment with school	Personal development as citizens' right	Paradoxical, because young people are in the general education system, not in the labour and training market	Broadening individual opportunities	Extension of mainstream
Employment-based	Systems and right to social security depend on gainful employment and position in working life	Dual system	Joint responsibility of economy and education policy for vocational education	Access requirements, dropout rate, shortage of training places	Preparation of social and occupational participation (allocation)	Result of individual deficits and disadvantages	Compensation for structural deficits	Establishment of parallel system
Liberal	Free individual in a flexible market economy, high risk of social exclusion	Market-dependent	Market-driven	Little general education, risky transition	Aims for early economic independence	Stigmatisation of dependence	Improving employability	Bridging function
Mediterranean	Fragmented systems of income security depending on position in working life; high importance of informal structures, e.g. family, in social inclusion	Highly informal	Education policy Family, church, etc.	Relatively little formalised VET, little recognition of vocational education	No clearly defined and accepted status	Result of lack of training structures and appropriate job offers	Extending school attendance, support in finding work	Introduction of formal structures

Against the background of national classifications, features of these three levels are combined and related to the specific socio-economic and historical context in each case. In this way, four groups of countries can be identified in Europe. The aim of this classification is not to categorise or label national policies and practices, but experience from various Leonardo projects (*Re-Integration. Transnational evaluation of social and professional reintegration programmes for young people; Self-evaluation. Transnational Methods and Models for Self-Evaluation of Non-formal Personal Competences; Modules*. Recognition of modules in pre-employment education; see http://www.biat.uni-flensburg.de/biat.www/index_projekte.htm) has shown that reference to this type of complex model of European transition systems makes it easier to formulate appropriate recommendations for action on the basis of research. Self-understanding processes within the research community can thus be steered and self-reflection processes encouraged.

To provide a clearer picture of the comparative work needed in the context of transition research, the structural differences between national transition systems and their significance for young people's transition processes were compared using models, and also using comparative research from other disciplines. Comparative research into the history of Europe's vocational education systems (Greinert, 1995), and into the development of the welfare system (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996), allowed us to identify four models into which the West European countries can be divided. Work in comparative youth research and on social exclusion issues (Stauber, Walther, 2001; Beelmann, Kieselbach, 2003), which referred in turn to Esping-Andersen's model, were also included in the overview.

Typologies always run the risk of over-generalisation if they are not based on theoretical considerations, a well-founded selection of criteria and extensive analysis. It should therefore be emphasised once again that the summary in Figure 2 should be seen as an instrument for the (self)-understanding process within transnational research projects. The criteria on which it is founded are based on extensive research findings from historical vocational education theory, comparative welfare state research and youth research, as is summarised below.

1. *Comparing European vocational education systems with regard to their potential for integration into training and work*

The historical genesis of national vocational education systems should be seen as the result of economic and political conflicts of interest (Greinert, 1995; Müller, Shavit, 1998). Greinert (1995) develops three models, which differ with regard to the role played by the State in controlling and steering vocational education. In the context of transition research and support for disadvantaged young people, it is also necessary to identify the intended and unintended selection and exclusion processes inherent to the national vocational education systems, whereby the following questions need to be asked:

(a) Does vocational education have its own status within the national education system?
(b) How does it relate to general education?
(c) How, and by which social players, is the quantitative relationship between supply and demand for training managed? Who provides training?
(d) Who pays for training? How and by whom is training given a pedagogical methodology?
(e) What social status does vocational education have?
(f) What social status is acquired through training?
(g) How is access to training regulated?
(h) Who is socially responsible and competent for entry into training?

On the basis of Greinert, but with explicit reference to the connection between transitional and vocational education structures, Heidegger distinguishes four structural models for vocational education in Europe. In so doing, he refers (1) to the development of national economic structures, in particular when industrialisation took place, (2) to the degree to which State social policy takes an interventional approach, (3) the relative power of the social partners and (4) the 'social-democratic' model of society as a complex of causes (Heidegger, 2004, p. 175 et seq.).

In countries with a school-based vocational education system and a strong social democratic tradition of social policy (e.g. Finland), the normative ideal is that of the capable citizen for whose social security the State is responsible. Vocational education is seen as part of the general education of citizens and is consistently put in the hands of the State. The right to education and training is seen as a general human right that extends universally to all young people. Even here, there are young people who are disenchanted with school, but measures are generally designed as temporary alternatives to general school-based vocational education and always target a return to the mainstream. There are particular problems here with the transition from school to work, as shown by Finland's youth unemployment rate, which has remained high over the long term.

In countries with a strong tradition of the market economy, the vocational education sector, too, is less State-regulated (e.g. the United Kingdom). Demand for training is regulated directly by the labour market. Training predominantly takes the form of on-the-job training, access to it depends on recruitment practices, and certified qualifications have no generalised importance. Support structures and induction programmes are also controlled by the market, so that private training providers decide on access (see Hayward, 2005). Not only do education policy measures target youth unemployment, they also aim for the recognition of a general certification system (National Vocational Qualifications - NVQs).

In countries with a strong tradition of trade unions (e.g. Germany), the training system was structurally regulated in consultation between employers, employees and the State, and protected by collective agreements. In

these countries, vocational education has a high social status. Completion of a course of study results in a recognised qualification status. In these countries, measures to support disadvantaged people are directly based on the dual structures of vocational education. They focus primarily on the acquisition of certificates as access entitlements, and correspondingly less status is attached to non-job-related competences. The tradition of the joint responsibility of the economy, the State and employers, however, often acts to hinder the development of integrated alternatives to the highly selective training system.

In countries which in the post-war period were strongly characterised by national structures, it is informal structures for vocational education that predominate, in which informal learning has a high status and recognition and certification systems are not strongly developed. The transition phase from school to work is also not heavily structured. Although the risk of ending up with no training is high, there are extensive, often equally informal, support and integration structures, mainly within the family, but also in the black economy. However, vocational education is not highly regarded and is seen as 'second rate' to academic education. Structural measures to support the transition into work in these countries focus on improving the prestige of vocational education.

2. Findings from comparative welfare state research

Research into the sociology of the welfare state also emphasises the interdependence between the development of social security systems and the formation of industrial employment structures. It points to the central function of welfare state instruments in the production and reproduction of a social labour force or, in the current terminology, of workers as 'human resources', as a vital social organisational achievement of the modern welfare state (from Lessenich, 1994).

'State-defined framework conditions for labour market organisation relate not only to whether – and for whom – the now practically traditional crisis in the labour market leads to a crisis in individual reproduction, but also, and in particular, to whether – and for whom – these precarious living conditions are permanent, in other words whether – and for whom – the crisis in the labour market equates to a crisis in personal living conditions and personal life courses.' (Lessenich, 1994, p. 225).

Measures to support the transition from school to work should therefore not only be seen as contributions to education and skills, but are also rooted in national welfare and social policies. This is made clear when they are propagated as part of an activating labour market policy along the lines of 'supporting and demanding'. It is therefore also worthwhile to include research into welfare systems (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996; Lessenich, Ostner, 1998) in comparisons of transition systems. This analysis of welfare state systems relates to the specific ways in which advanced capitalist societies deal with the closely interwoven problem complexes of gainful employment and social security ('work and welfare'). Depending on the

historical political power constellations and the history of the development of State welfare provision, various patterns of welfare state intervention can be perceived, which coalesce over time into relatively stable, politically institutionalised regulatory arrangements (Lessenich, Ostner, 1998, p. 11f). According to Esping-Andersen (1998) the particular features of individual welfare state systems can be connected with three central distinguishing criteria:

(a) the specific significance of the three support institutions of the State, the market and the family/household, and the interplay between public and private forms of welfare;
(b) the quality and extent of the social rights granted, in particular the extent to which government policy restricts the commodification of the workforce and reduces the dependence of the individual on the market ('decommodification');
(c) the structure of the social hierarchy, in other words, the specific social distribution patterns.

Esping-Andersen differentiates between liberal (USA, Canada, Australia, in part Denmark, Switzerland, UK), employment-based (Austria, France, Germany, Italy) and universal (Norway, Sweden, in part Denmark, Finland) welfare models. Leibfried (1990) and Lessenich (1994) follow up on this by advocating the addition of a fourth type of welfare status, relating to the Mediterranean countries. We therefore have four structural models (Lessenich, 1994, p. 240).

The congruence with the models of vocational education systems described above is striking. In the 'social-democratic' (or universal) system, citizenship is connected with a general right to employment, and the associated social security structures are based on the ideal of full employment, for which the State takes responsibility. Social security is bound to participation in gainful employment or, for young people, to preparation for employment by participation in State-run vocational or general education provision. In the 'conservative' (or employment-based) model, which corresponds to the 'dual' system of vocational education, the social security systems are institutionally rooted in the insurance principle and are (in part) controlled by the social partners. Claims for social support are, both in general and in preparation for training, linked to the indication of individual deficits. In the 'liberal' model, the State restricts itself to a low level of basic social security, and any further assistance must be 'acquired' individually in the context of the market economy. The individual's personal responsibility is the ideological background for this: economic independence is given a high value, while dependence is stigmatised. The exclusion risks for both young people and adults are therefore highly individualised. In the 'post-authoritarian' (Lessenich) or Mediterranean model, too, the State's regulatory function is restricted. In this system, however, other social security systems, such as the church, charities and the family, counteract the individualisation of exclusion risks. A deregulated labour market is characterised by insecure,

temporary forms of employment and the presence of a black economy, which allow inclusion strategies beyond those regarded as normal in northern Europe.

3. Findings from youth research

Current work within youth research on the transition issue, comparing systems across Europe, points to the importance of ideological patterns and normative basic assumptions in institutional actions, as expressed in demands and expectations on young people, patterns of entry into work or the individualisation of structural problems (Stauber, Walther, no year stated, p. 5f). In view of the fact that youth policy measures are also rooted in the context of the welfare state system, Esping-Andersen's model can be used analogously to identify four types of youth system in Europe. These, in turn, determine different patterns of interpreting youth unemployment and the context of the transition measures implemented to combat it (see, for example, McNeish, Loncle, 2003). In the universal system, it is claimed, it is the ideal of individual personal development that dominates, and motivation is therefore the primary aim of education and youth policy action. Young people are faced with few restrictive normality expectations. In the liberal system, on the other hand, it is said that the standard of a short phase of youth followed by relatively early economic independence dominates. In employment-centred transition systems, young people are primarily seen as students and apprentices. This goes hand in hand with the early assumption of a social position in line with vocational training. In underinstitutionalised (Mediterranean) systems, 'youth' has no clearly recognised status, but is, rather, a social vacuum that is primarily compensated for by the family (Pohl, Walther, no year stated, p. 7).

Conclusions

The vocational education, welfare system and youth research perspectives have been brought together to develop a conceptual framework (Fig. 2), illustrating the complex relationship between employment, education and social policies in their institutional form, practical implementation and normative effect. This model forms an analytical framework for further investigation. It is an abstract model, with all the shortcomings necessarily associated with modelling, but it nevertheless clearly shows that the Scandinavian, employment-based, liberal and Mediterranean systems each correspond to specific transition patterns, and that correspondingly varied intentions can be seen in the support measures.

In this context, the question of the practical relevance of European comparative transition research can be answered in a more differentiated manner. The structural points of exclusion and inclusion differ according to the context in each country, as does the individual pattern of how to overcome

it. The 'success' or 'failure' of individual measures can therefore not be fully assessed using output-oriented methods based on individual criteria such as employment rates or length of unemployment. Sustainable occupational *and* social inclusion for 'disadvantaged' young people only becomes clear in the complex synopsis of the whole framework of individual and social factors from a long-term perspective. This necessitates complex methods that both include a transnational perspective and take sufficient account of cultural differences, and are able to reproduce both structural changes and individual developments.

The table presented (Fig. 2) can be used as a basis for understanding European research projects. It is a model that reflects how normative guidelines are incorporated in measures to support the transition from school to work and also refers to the transdisciplinary aspects of comparative transition research. The design of the transition system in terms of practical pedagogy and education policy should take account of the depicted multidimensional localisation by considering the fact that the relevant measures act in the context of both the established social security and vocational education systems and that the young people taking part are at a stage in their lives when they are forming their identities, during which, alongside vocational guidance and training, further-reaching normative guidelines have an effect.

The conceptualisation set out can also provide vital impetus for further research. First of all, the table should be expanded to include the East European Member States of the European Union. The question also arises of the extent to which cultural differences retain their influence in view of the current trend to dismantle State support and control systems and of the conquest of the welfare and education system by the free market economy. How can social and education policies, which at first glance appear to be standardising, be transformed into institutional practice in the national cultural context? And, in view of their heterogeneous history, is standardisation sensible and feasible? It is highly doubtful that social coherence in the national context can be developed and maintained sustainably by means of transnational regulations and processes. And finally, it should be borne in mind that these considerations primarily focused on the macro- and meso-levels of social and education policy planning and design, and excluded the individual level of the subjects. Particularly with regard to individualised risk profiles and diversified transitions, however, the issue of subjective mastery becomes more important. ■

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The role of public policy in worker training in Italy (1)

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SUMMARY

The training received by workers depends predominantly on the organisational choices and funds allocated by businesses. It is therefore justifiable to ask whether public policy should either endorse the spontaneous distribution of training or take measures to correct it. This paper analyses the motivations and limitations of public intervention, focusing on the Italian case in which, in recent years, the system has changed radically as a result of opportunities offered to social partners to directly administer the financial resources available for continuous training. The paper argues that the policy instruments in Italy are not capable of providing a clear response to the need for the two forms of continuous training – collective and individual. Therefore, the paper proposes that a part of the funds be administered by the social partners specifically to promote collective training, leaving the public administration with the task of responding primarily to the demands expressed by individuals.

Key words
Continuing training, public policies, labour market, trade unions, employees, Italy

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Introduction

An economic study has highlighted multiple effects correlated with an accumulation of human capital through extra-scholastic training processes: specifically, a positive influence on productivity and, therefore, on salary levels and salary increases over time, greater involvement in the job market and a reduced risk of job loss. Furthermore, it may also contribute to improving the satisfaction of individuals within a productive organisation, allowing them to become more actively involved in problem-solving and facilitating interaction among themselves and with the outside world.

In light of these multiple effects, and focusing on the study of continuous training, we need to answer the question of how workers are selected for training.

Empirical evidence suggests that in all countries, training activities are not evenly distributed among different categories of worker. Only certain categories have access to frequent opportunities for training, whereas others participate rarely or not at all (OECD, 2003; L.M. Lynch and S.E. Black, 1998; A. Bassanini, A. Booth, G. Brunello, M. De Paola and E. Leuven, 2005).

In Italy, adult participation in education and training is strongly correlated with the original level of education (Eurostat, 2004). More recent studies have shown that in the private sector, 30 % of employees questioned had taken part in continuous training during the three years prior to the interview (ISFOL 'Plus' survey, 2005; Croce, Laj and Pancioni, 2006). Put very concisely, there is much less propensity to provide training in businesses with less than 50 employees, in the family service sector and in agriculture, while the construction and manufacturing industries also offer little training. In southern Italian regions, the proportion of workers receiving training is lower than average. Furthermore, above 45 years of age the proportion of workers receiving training drops rapidly. The figures also show that proportionally less women are offered training. Workers with time contracts and part-time workers are even more disadvantaged. Workers in the lowest earnings bracket take part in employer-sponsored training more infrequently than others. The proportion of workers with middle school certificates taking part in training is approximately 2/3 that of high-school graduates and only 1/3 that of degree graduates (Angotti and Bernardini, 2006; Montanino, 2001). Lastly, only low proportions of factory workers, labourers and artisans participate in training. The figures for the initial activities financed by funds promoted by social partners to support continuous training also confirm that certain categories of worker still have little chance of participating in training activities (Ministry of Labour, 2006).

As we have seen, there is a marked inequality in the distribution of opportunities for training among different categories of worker. It is therefore possible that the spontaneous actions of the market may aggravate inequality and segmentation in the work market. In light of this situation, should pub-

lic policy endorse this spontaneous distribution or take measures to correct it? And, in the second instance, according to what criteria and with which instruments? What are the implications for the continuous training system in Italy?

The second part of this paper will consider the motivations and limitations of public intervention on the basis of the two criteria of efficiency and equity. The third part of this paper argues that in order to be effective, training policy must be defined in response to demand, the nature of which depends on the subject expressing the demand. The fourth part contains a brief presentation of Italian public policy for worker training, whereas the fifth part analyses whether the Italian system suitably addresses the two goals of improving the distribution of continuous training among different worker categories and increasing the overall number of training opportunities, and suggests a number of corrective measures. The sixth part concludes the paper.

Efficiency and equity in the distribution of training

In addition to favouring an increase in the overall volume of training activities, training policy may also influence the distribution of training among different categories of worker. In terms of efficiency, distribution is considered optimum when each worker receives a quantity of training equivalent to the maximum social surplus. This surplus is given by the difference between the product realisable with trained work and the costs sustained for training.

Economic analysis demonstrates that where decision-making is left to the private individual (worker or business), the resultant training may be less that the quantity deemed efficient ([2]). The causes for this underinvestment may be attributable to the dynamics of the job market or external factors (Brunello and De Paola, 2004; CESifo Working Paper 1286, 2004; Leuven, 2005). In particular, one of the factors hindering the achievement of optimum levels of training is a difficulty in coordination. Indeed, both the worker and the business draw advantages from training and, as a consequence, contribution is necessary from both parts in order to achieve a socially efficient level of investment. However, the intrinsically intangible and unverifiable nature of investment in training (the quantity and, above all, quality of training are difficult to measure in definite terms) render joint funding from both parties difficult. If the worker cannot monitor training and demand from the business that the training received is compliant with the terms defined, an agreement on joint funding cannot be struck. As a result, each party will make unilateral decisions and the results will be inefficient from a collec-

([2]) Theoretically, it is equally possible that inefficiencies in private decision-making may lead to an excess of training.

tive standpoint. More specifically, it is probable that the investment will be made by the party for whom there are the most advantageous individual rewards (and which is also not subject to limitations impeding investment) (Acemoglu and Pischke, 1999).

In concordance with these theoretical considerations, the empirical evidence available demonstrates that in the vast majority of cases, training – albeit not necessarily of a strictly specific type – is provided by businesses. Indeed, the training provided is prevalently of a transferable nature (in other terms, providing skills and knowledge that may be also applicable in businesses other than the one in which they were acquired). In European countries, on average, between 70 % and 80 % (depending on the source of statistics) of courses are provided – and in the majority of cases, also paid for – by businesses. In Italy, this figure is at least 60 % (ISFOL 'Plus' survey, 2005). Even bearing in mind the fact that courses provided by businesses are shorter in duration that those organised independently, it is nonetheless true that, on average, 2/3 of training received by workers depends on businesses (Bassanini et al., 2005).

Therefore, businesses almost always play a primary role in the planning and administration of training and, as a consequence, in the selection of its recipients. Given these circumstances, it is clear that investments in training are geared to maximise the private gains of the business rather than social surplus, and that they will be determined by the same informative, organisational and financial limitations to which the business is subject (Leuven and Oosterbeek, 1999). The results, however, may diverge more or less significantly from the criteria for efficiency. Above all, the decisions of businesses tend to most heavily penalise weaker categories of worker. Training provided to the weaker components of the workforce will always be very meagre as it offers limited *gross* gains in return for high costs. It is more likely, rather, that the stronger workers in the job market (those with better educations, with better positions in corporate structures and with greater resources and more free time) will also have better training opportunities.

A possible answer to this could be public intervention expressly intended to sustain the training of weaker categories of worker in order to reduce inequalities in income and career prospects among workers.

Depending on the case, such measures to improve equity could lead to two different results. In the most optimistic case, providing training to weaker categories of worker will reduce inequalities while also improving efficiency. An example of this would be training offered to workers with time contracts, presumably young persons with a medium to high level of education but no financial resources. On the one hand, it is unprofitable for businesses to provide training for these workers due to their high turnover; on the other, a lack of personal resources means that they cannot afford to fund training themselves. Measures to support these workers would reduce the training gap hindering their development and would also improve efficiency.

Conversely, a trade-off between efficiency and equity may arise. To achieve a reduction in inequality, training may need to be pushed beyond optimum levels, leading to a deterioration in efficiency. In this scenario, the aggregate costs of additional training (sustained by the business and/or the State) exceed the benefits (increase in productivity). However, it may be justified in as much as it is beneficial for the weaker target categories and from a social point of view, as it meets equity criteria. Naturally, additional training must not exceed the limit beyond which it offers no benefits (even gross of costs) for its recipients. In these circumstances, other measures are preferable to training policy, such as, for instance, adult education programmes, active employment policies and monetary transfer (Lynch, 2003).

An example scenario in which such a trade-off could arise is with workers with low levels of education, for whom training would offer very limited results in terms of acquired skills and productivity. In this case too, businesses are relatively disinclined to offer training. Public measures offering greater opportunities for the acquisition of human capital may be beneficial to these workers, by improving their disadvantaged position in the employment market, but would be costly in terms of efficiency.

Training policy in response to demand

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in awareness among governments of industrialised countries concerning the issue of continuous training. This new context has necessitated a redefinition of the logic and methods of public policy relative to the past. The prevalent view today is that training policy should primarily act from the demand for training expressed by workers and businesses, via measures and incentives geared to promoting and maximising direct, coordinated funding from the workers and businesses themselves (Wurzburg, 1998; Gasskov, 2001; Bassanini, 2004). This demand-oriented approach focusing on co-funding is in direct contrast with the conventional view based predominantly on the training offered – via funding or direct service provision – by public organisations. This approach is justified by the following suppositions:

- as a large proportion of the benefits of training go to the participant businesses and workers, it is logical that they should sustain the costs,
- the restrictions of public expenditure limit the resources available for financial measures to support training,
- it is advantageous to establish market mechanisms that stimulate appropriate investment decision-making by the parties involved (mechanisms which are neglected in an offer oriented approach).

A demand-based system may be more effective in increasing the level of responsibility of the parties concerned while ensuring the operational flexibility necessary to avoid incongruity between the training provided and

the training requirements of the economy (Finegold, 1996). This approach already exists, albeit to widely varying degrees, in the principal national continuous training models in place in European countries. Within these models, more so than in initial training systems, the decision-making and funding role played by private parties (workers and businesses) outweighs the role of public intervention (Croce, 2005).

Nevertheless, even an approach based on co-funding by businesses and workers is not without its limitations. It appears that private decision-making cannot be depended upon to ensure a satisfactory flow of investment in training. In reality, and as mentioned earlier, it is particularly difficult to coordinate investments in training by workers and businesses. As a result, a *system of unilateral decision-making*, with its inherent inefficiencies, is more likely to become emplaced than a *system of co-funding*. If training is primarily funded by businesses, then their decisions will be geared to maximise their own gains without sufficiently considering the benefits of the workers. The available resources will be allocated to the training of the categories of workers generating the greatest gains for the businesses themselves. Furthermore, and concerning the aspect dealt with here, a co-funding-oriented approach may aspire to achieve satisfactory distribution in terms of efficiency, but does not explicitly consider the possibility that it may be unsatisfactory in terms of equity.

As a result, while public policy must take care not to displace private investment – and indeed actively encourage such investment – it must also be capable of intervening where the overall levels and distribution of investment in training differs significantly from the objectives defined for efficiency and/or equity.

Collectively oriented training policy and training policy in response to individual demand

In a training-demand-oriented approach, the nature of public policy differs depending on whether it addresses the demands of businesses or the demands of workers.

A study of the scenarios in a number of European countries shows that public action in response to the demands of businesses is often in the form of *collectively oriented policies*, as they involve the co-planning and, in some cases, co-administration of the training measures with social partners. In this case, planning skills, the active involvement of worker representatives, preferably within the company, and an ability to administer the plan itself are necessary. These components may render access to public resources more difficult, especially for smaller businesses. Measures catering for demand expressed by the workers themselves, however, may be described as *policies in response to individual demand*. In this case, the individual worker expresses the demand for training and is also the final beneficiary of the policies.

It is important to note that in an ideal continuous training system, these two types of policy could be mutually complementary, as they functional-

ly cater for distinctly different training requisites. Training in response to individual demand does not overlap with training organised with training programmes, as it intercepts and fulfils a demand that would be difficult to cater for in programmes defined by businesses.

The mutually complementary nature of the two policies may be illustrated briefly as follows: In the case where training is planned by businesses via training programmes, these presumably respond primarily to the needs of the business itself in a context of an *internal job market*. In this case, therefore, the business assumes responsibility for worker training in a scenario of generally stable occupational relationships and of mutually advantageous exchange between workers and the business. Training in response to individual demand, in which workers autonomously select their own training programmes, may provide a more appropriate response to the needs of workers not belonging to the internal job market with weak ties to the business who, as a consequence, have to organise their training personally. The logical recipients of this second set of policies are primarily workers operating in *professional markets* with a high degree of mobility, but also a considerable proportion of workers operating in *secondary market* conditions ([3]).

A system of both collectively-based policies and policies responding to individual demand could therefore potentially fulfil the training needs of workers with widely varying personal or job market characteristics. However, for this to be effectively possible it is important that these policies are structured and defined to enable them to respond, on the one hand, to imperfections in the job, credit and training markets and, on the other, to the structural limitations restricting public intervention in training. In this light, there are a number of conditions upon which the effectiveness of these policies depends. Concerning collectively-based policies, these must be capable of:

- reducing the problem of free-riding among businesses (this requisite may, for example, justify the enforcement of mandatory contribution by businesses, such as a levy of 0.30 %);
- effectively eliminating the restrictions limiting the training activities of businesses and workers, bearing in mind that especially in the case of small businesses, these restrictions may not just be economic, but also informative, organisational or time-related in nature;
- favour coordination between businesses and workers, reducing the problems of information asymmetry and lack of trust that may impede the effective co-funding of training.

([3]) In this context, the internal job market refers to businesses conducting training internally, whereas the secondary market refers to businesses and jobs of inferior quality for which businesses have no interest in investing in training. Lastly, the professional job market consists of workers with high level, acknowledged professional qualifications and with superior bargaining power, who are willing to sustain the costs of their own training.

Whereas the effectiveness of policies in response to individual demand depends on:

1. their capacity to eliminate restrictions impeding workers from providing their own training, especially economic limitations;
2. on the existence of measures promoting the distribution of information and to ensure the quality of training in order to broaden the group of potential beneficiaries of these instruments;
3. on a capacity to select, as recipients of the measures, individuals operating in external and professional job markets.

The effective layout and effectiveness of a dual channel configuration for continuous training must then be evaluated. A system that cannot fulfil its objectives – in other terms, respond to the requisites for efficiency and equity of a wide variety of subjects and situations – would not justify the enforcement of mandatory levies to fund training. In this case, less selective and more automatic incentives to promote training, geared towards a more limited set of objectives, may be preferable.

Public policies for worker training in Italy

The current public policies for worker training have been developed over the past decade and are largely, if not exclusively, based on systems for the disbursement of funding. The first operational instrument was the national law on continuous training (Act No 236, 1993), implemented in 1996 and covering all workers in private businesses. This law predominantly finances training programmes submitted by businesses and defined in agreement with worker representatives, but the actual responsibility for planning and defining the priorities of the measures implemented lies with the public administration, regional governments in particular, which receive annual funding quotas from the state. It must be said, however, that in recent years, efforts have been made to channel funding towards categories of workers that are generally not involved in training processes, in an attempt to give equity priority over efficiency.

Alongside conventional training programmes, the law also finances a system of individual vouchers, in an attempt to reduce cumbersome bureaucracy in the administration of resources and to increase the numbers of participants in training activities.

A second financial instrument was introduced in 2000 with the more specific objective of favouring individual rights to worker training. This law requires the inclusion in the contracts of social partners of the possibility to take leave for training activities, even if not directly related to work. Alternatively, regional governments may also use the resources to finance individual vouchers.

Together, these two financial instruments account for approximately 15 % of the resources allocated annually for businesses and workers. A more sub-

stantial proportion of the resources – around 40 % – is provided by measures financed by the European Social Fund. These measures are also based on the conventional training programme model, and do not differ significantly – from the point of view of the worker and the business – from the aforementioned national financing laws.

During the two-year period from 2004 to 2005, interprofessional funds were introduced in Italy. These are private entities promoted by the social partners to finance worker training. Businesses may electively decide whether to be associated with a fund and, should it do so, choose from one of the 12 currently operational funds. By implementing these funds, the State has delegated the administration of public policy to the social partners, based on the assumption that the partners are in possession of more comprehensive information than public administration and, as a result, can better utilise the resources. Furthermore, as these are private entities, they will define more streamlined procedures for the allocation of resources. Currently, these funds account for the remaining 45 % of the resources available for worker training. This figure is destined to increase over the coming years, making the funds the primary channel for the public financing of continuous training policies. It is interesting to note that most of this funding, whether for national law, for the national quota of the European Social Fund or for the funds promoted by the social partners, comes from the same source, specifically a mandatory levy equal to 0.3 % of total wages paid by businesses to the State. The mandatory nature of this contribution is justified by the phenomenon of free-riding in the funding of training due to a lack of voluntary coordination between actors. Furthermore, by obtaining resources from all private sector employment, the overall costs are spread across the board, keeping pro capita expenditure within reasonable limits.

As it is payable by the business but proportional to wages, this levy effectively implies that training costs are distributed between the business and the worker, as its introduction has led – as a result of the normal elasticity of demand and supply in the job market – to a reduction of the surplus of both parties. The funding for training is therefore provided by the resources of businesses and workers. From an economic standpoint, this cofunding justifies the necessity for agreements between the parties involved in the funding of continuous training as well as the mutual nature of the funds, in which the social partners jointly administer the training policies.

By using funding via mandatory wage-proportional levies administered by social partners, the Italian system adopts an *interventionist* model, in which specific legislative obligations impose or regulate investment in training. Analogous systems are in place in France, Belgium, Spain and Denmark. Furthermore, the implementation of interprofessional funds, of which equivalent instruments exist in the countries mentioned above and in others, such as the Netherlands, exerts a powerful influence to promote autonomy and cooperation among the social partners, by offering them the opportunity not just to administer but also to guide and develop the continuous training system.

Considerations on the policy instruments in place in Italy

In this current period of transformation of the continuous training system, the question arises of whether the public policies operating in Italy today are effectively capable of not just increasing the volume of training provided, but also of improving its distribution. The first aspect of this question is structural in nature, specifically, whether the instruments available, based on the dual channel of activities cofunded by the public administration (national laws and European Social Fund) and by the interprofessional funds promoted by the social partners, are mutually complementary or overlapping. It would appear that the instruments are predominantly overlapping as in many programmes today, both training in response to individual demand and collectively-based training are financed. Furthermore, some of the instruments available share similar characteristics, with substantially the same methods of resource allocation in terms of the recipient subjects.

As a result, in spite of the fact that (as mentioned) the instruments available in Italy – definable essentially as an offer of public resources – include both collectively based policies and policies in response to individual demand, it would nonetheless appear that the overall configuration of the system does not have a clear strategy for policy, to differentiate the instruments in place for different targets and to strengthen complementarity between them.

The current continuous training system is the result of the fragmented and often convoluted development of its various constituent instruments, caused by different motivating factors and contingencies, in many instances not coordinated as part of a global vision. While it has adopted a demand-oriented approach, the current configuration of public policy does not fully achieve the complementarity described earlier, giving rise to a harmful overlapping of instruments.

As a consequence, a significant portion of the workforce is effectively left at the margins of the training system; of these workers, only a very small proportion benefits from public policies ([4]). As already mentioned, this not only introduces the risk of aggravating segmentation and inequality, but also implies a loss in efficiency.

The recently introduced solution, intended to respond to the training requisites of the weakest segments of the workforce, also appears to be unsatisfactory. This solution favours segmentation between training intended for highly skilled workers belonging to the central core of the business and training for weaker workers – those with lower levels of education and

([4]) As demonstrated by the 2005 report on continuous training in Italy, public funding covers 10 % of all continuous training activities.

either not employed in core functions or with only loosely structured ties with the business – as the former is instrumental in achieving the strategic goals of the business whereas the latter plays a merely compensatory role. This divergence is being observed with interprofessional funds used to finance programmes defined effectively by businesses and destined primarily for strong workers, and in the remainder of public policies for a variety of purposes, with the predominant goal of improving equity but of dubious efficacy in terms of the professional development of the workers involved.

In the current situation, therefore, public policy does not manage to express its full potential. Assuming that current legislative instruments remain unchanged, specialising the policies deployed by interprofessional funds and public administrations could possibly facilitate the evolution of the system towards one based completely on collectively-based policies and policies in response to individual demand. The former could primarily be entrusted with collectively based policies, whereas the latter could take responsibility of policies in response to individual demand ([5]).

This would fulfil the different requisites expressed by demand, and the policy-maker – whether it be a representative of the workers and employer or the public administration – could appropriately direct the instruments to achieve the dual goals of efficiency and equity.

Clearly specialising the policies in accordance with the guidelines defined would enable improvement both in collectively based training and training in response to individual demand.

Concerning the latter, while voucher systems have been implemented by a number of regions, their use has been rather limited and, as a result, they have still not developed sufficiently to be considered as a primary training channel. The system therefore needs to be expanded to include relatively more advantageous access and financing conditions for the priority targets identified in accordance with their territorial, sector and professional contexts. For marginal worker categories, the voucher system should be supported by appropriate measures and incentives to promote access to the system and maximise its benefits, so as not to limit the use of this instrument solely to more dynamic workers. Also, a worker's individual right to access training could be calculated in usable working hours, subject to approval by the business and supported by the voucher system. To prevent workers from excessively accumulating usable hours and to motivate the worker to effectively use the working hour credit earned, the credit should be periodically reset to zero, every three years for example.

Furthermore, through the implementation of appropriate incentives, the funds could also promote the inclusion of low skilled workers in the training plans defined by businesses. In a system of collectively based policies, trade unions could play a significant role in this aspect. In order to achieve this objective, businesses and trade unions could negotiate how working

([5]) In this model, the channel destined for the financing of training in businesses not associated with any fund remains to be defined.

time and free time are used for training, the training standards and a system to certify skills. These are measures to promote the cofunding of training by the business and the worker.

Lastly, another priority goal is to increase the percentage of businesses offering training. This requires policies specifically targeted at smaller businesses which, in order to ensure efficacy, cannot be exclusively financial or fiscal in nature, and must also entail a network of services to generate demand, as well as a set of streamlined funding mechanisms and simplified administrative procedures for small projects.

Conclusions

The Italian continuous training system is more developed today than it was even just a few years ago. The introduction, in 2004 and 2005, of the funds promoted by social partners is causing radical changes to the instruments available to businesses and workers and has raised doubts about the entire system formerly in place. Nonetheless, the problem of broadening access to training to components of the workforce who would otherwise be left out remains an open issue. However, the current system still includes imperfections, specifically overlapping instruments and a segmentation between training of strategic value (financed by the funds and geared to fulfilling the objectives effectively set by businesses) and training with a purely compensatory function (promoted by the public administration). Rather, efforts must be made to achieve complementarity between the different instruments, entrusting the social partners with the administration of policy in response to collective demand and assigning policy in response to individual demand to the public administration.

The inefficiency of the current system is also manifest in the fact that even the relatively meagre public resources available for training are in part left unused, in spite of the fact that approximately 90 % of all training in businesses is financed by private resources.

Lastly, it must be noted that the efficacy of policies geared to promote and stimulate the *demand* for training necessarily also depends on an elastic and efficient *offer*, which for the time being is still not sufficiently developed in Italy. Measures to perfect systems for the stimulation and promotion of demand must therefore be associated with action to promote the quantitative and qualitative development of the offer of training services. ■

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Current national strategies in vocational education and training: convergence or divergence?

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Apprenticeship, dual system, practical education, theoretical education, typology, upper secondary school

SUMMARY
Current common challenges in profound economic structural change and increasing international competition could imply that disparate national systems would converge towards some 'best practice'. In this article such possible convergence is studied from two perspectives; active promotion of apprenticeships in State-regulated systems and inclusion of VET in (more theoretical) upper secondary education. There is political ambition for convergence in both cases but recruitment problems also exist.

Introduction

The systems of vocational education and training (VET) in European countries are basically responses to challenges that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These challenges included profound technical and organisational changes, often referred to as the second industrial revolution, and partly of increasing international competition, often referred to as globalisation of the 19th century. In the past couple of decades European economies have again faced common challenges. Technical and organisational change has taken place on a large scale since the late 1970s to the extent that it has been labelled the third industrial revolution. In addition, international competition has become much fiercer with the spectac-

ular growth of 'new economies', in particular in east and south Asia. It is quite possible, as present challenges are so huge, that VET systems must drastically change. The purpose of this paper is to identify some current trends in national systems and assess to what extent those trends represent strategies that result in convergence of national systems. The main reason for discussing such a possibility today is, in contrast to the situation a century ago, there is an organised European level that could influence national systems.

Classification of national VET systems

It is at first sight a little surprising that national VET systems evolved very differently from the late 19th century onwards. The challenges were similar to all industrial countries and implied, among other things, increasing demand for labour with new skills in, for instance, welding and toolmaking. One reason was that the nature of the challenges was similar but not the same in all countries. A few were leading technological transformation, others were following and in some cases a profound transformation (i.e. industrialisation) did not take place until much later. This factor alone implies that the impact of technological and organisational change differed. In addition, the historical development of labour market actors, the education system and the political arena – to name two important elements – differed markedly. In short, conditions that could affect the extent and shape of VET systems varied greatly among European countries around 1900. The multitude of national systems that evolved has been systemised from several different perspectives (Tessaring, 1999). Regardless of classification principles, however, three basic models tend to constitute the typology. Much of the discussion in Tessaring (1999) is based on VET systems in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. With a slightly different approach, Thelen (2004) differentiates between the British/American, Japanese, and German models, respectively. Greinert (1999, 2005) presents three structural models: type A, where training is regulated primarily by market forces, type B, where training is primarily regulated by bureaucratic control, and type C, where training control is 'dual', combining market and bureaucracy, where an apprentice system is dominant.

This typology is still important when the merits and shortcomings of different models are analysed. It seems, however, that when looking at current national systems in the European Union the three models are insufficient. In practice, the type A system (market regulated) is predominant only in the United Kingdom (and partly in Ireland) and type C (dual) only in Denmark, Germany and Austria. That leaves the VET systems in the remaining 20 Member States analysed as type B systems. This is unsatisfactory since that group incorporates systems from many other different perspectives. In this paper, the State-regulated system will be divided into two subgroups, where the dividing criteria are based on the challenges from the

third industrial revolution. The demand for labour with a more theoretical understanding of work processes and with a broad, general competence has increased in all industrialised countries. It is therefore reasonable that the extent to which vocational education and training is systematically based on theoretical concepts is an important dimension. It could also be argued that VET systems with a considerable theoretical component are in a sense more 'modern' and, possibly, more attractive to young people.

The two subgroups must also be defined in an operational manner. In this paper, a provisional and crude definition is used: 'theoretical' VET systems are defined as systems where successful participation in any (or most) VET programmes at upper secondary level qualifies for studies at all or most programmes at tertiary level. In 'practical' systems, there is no such direct link between the tertiary level and VET programmes at upper secondary level. If it is at all possible to progress to the tertiary level, substantial additional studies are required. The provisional character of this grouping must be underlined. It remains to demonstrate that the division also makes sense in a broader perspective, for example, if there are differences in labour market regimes that correspond to the two groups.

It must be emphasised that any classification of national systems is problematic since terms such as 'VET programmes' and 'upper secondary level' are used somewhat differently in various countries. For example, in several Member States participation in traditional VET programmes at upper secondary level (or equivalent) is affected by how strongly prevocational and post-secondary education and training is developed (European Commission, 2006). To sort this and several other problems out, a comprehensive, reliable, and updated database is useful. This article is based on information from eKnowVET at the Cedefop/trainingvillage website, which claims to be one of the best sources of information on VET systems in Eu-

Table 1. Grouping of national VET systems in Europe

A. Market systems	B1. State–theoretical	B2. State – practical	C. Dual systems
(Ireland)	France	Czech Republic	Denmark
United Kingdom	Netherlands	Cyprus	Germany
	Finland	Estonia	Austria
	Sweden	Spain	
		Italy	
		Latvia	
		Poland	
		Portugal	
		Slovenia	
		Slovakia	

rope. It is an additional purpose of this article to assess to what extent that database is relevant for comparative research. Unfortunately, the information in it is incomplete and at the time when material was collected (end of April 2006), complete descriptions of national VET systems were available for only 18 of the 25 Member States. The United Kingdom is not among these, but has been included in most discussions.

With these classification principles and based on my interpretation of the information in eKnowVET, the following grouping of national VET systems in Europe emerges.

Some comments are in order since the classification simplifies a complex reality. Most practical State systems provide a possibility to proceed to higher education but descriptions of the different routes are not always clear in eKnowVET. Possibilities are discussed in some detail below in the section on integration of VET at upper secondary school. In addition, the possibilities to take part in vocational education and training at pre- or post-secondary level further complicate the picture. Portugal is a good example. There are various possibilities to obtain a vocational qualification combined with school progression, depending on age and school qualifications (apprenticeship training, education and training for young people, education and training for adults). There are also several paths that provide a vocational qualification without school progression (IEFP). Another example is Slovenia, where the State sector accounted for approximately 20% of students at secondary but almost 100% at post-secondary level. It is likely that similar reservations apply to other countries as well and that underlines the provisional nature of the classification. However, it does not at this stage invalidate the classification and so it is used throughout this article.

Recent VET strategies at European level

Early attempts to formulate a common European policy on vocational education and training came to a definitive halt in the late 1960s and VET has since been considered a national policy area (Petrini, 2004). However, observations such as European economies falling behind the US, in particular, in the rapid economic transformation of the 1990s led to formulation of the Lisbon goals in 2000 through which European economies should be the most competitive in the world by 2010. The Lisbon goals initiated increased cooperation between Member States in several areas, including vocational education and training. That cooperation led to formulating a policy summarised in the Maastricht Communiqué in 2004. Here, it was pointed out that reforms and investment should focus on:

- ‘the image and attractiveness of the vocational route for employers and individuals, to increase participation in VET;
- achieving high levels of quality and innovation in VET systems to benefit all learners and make European VET globally competitive;

- linking VET to labour market requirements of the knowledge economy for a highly skilled workforce, and especially, due to the strong impact of demographic change, for the upgrading and competence development of older workers;
- the needs of low-skilled (about 80 million persons aged between 25 and 64 in the EU) and disadvantaged groups for achieving social cohesion and increasing labour market participation.'

The Communiqué further identified areas where priority should be given at European level as well as in national policies. At European level, priority was given to developing transparency, quality and what is called 'common trust'. The new *Europass* adopted by the European Parliament and Council of the European Union in December, 2004 is concrete evidence that the process is continuing at European level. Another example is the *European qualifications framework* (European Commission, 2007) adopted by the Commission in September 2006. However, that level is not the concern of this paper so we move on to the national priorities set up in the Maastricht Communiqué.

At national level, eight priorities were put forward, ranging from improving investments in VET to competence development of VET teachers and trainers. It is characteristic of the Lisbon process that the priorities were openly formulated and as such they do not constitute a guideline for assessing whether national VET systems are converging or diverging. However, several priorities point towards increasing cooperation between the State and actors on the labour market. They include raising stakeholders' awareness of common understanding, increasing private investments in VET, and systematic involvement of the social partners, (priorities Nos 1, 2 and 6 in the Communiqué). In this paper we disregard the investment priority (which is worthy of a separate study) and concentrate on the involvement and common understanding of stakeholders and social partners. The open formulation of priorities needs to be operationalised, however, to allow for an empirical investigation.

Integration of apprenticeships in State-regulated systems

Presumably, the most powerful argument for stronger involvement of stakeholders and social partners in VET is that in countries where such involvement is already comprehensive the transition from school to work seems less problematic (Olofsson, 2005). Almost by definition, involvement of stakeholders is strong is countries with a dual VET model since 'duality' presupposes active participation by enterprises and trade unions. This implies that some sort of apprentice-like arrangement in State-controlled systems would also be beneficial for school-to-work transition. A test of possible conver-

gence is to what extent apprentice solutions exist in the various State-controlled systems. Table 2 depicts present apprenticeships in State systems in Europe.

Table 2 confirms the existence of apprenticeships (or apprentice-like arrangements) in most countries where VET is State-regulated and school-based. From that point of view a certain convergence is discernable but it must be pointed out that the character of apprenticeships differs quite a lot between countries. In some cases, France for instance, apprenticeship is a viable alternative to school-based vocational education, even if it is quantitatively much smaller. In other cases, apprenticeship is restricted to the handicraft sector and/or generally regarded as a second-best alternative by both students and employers. Such distinctions are not always clear from the descriptions in eKnowVET and to sort them out in further detail, collaborative research is required. However, Table 2 indicates another important difference between the two subgroups. Countries where the VET system is generally more theoretically oriented also have, with the exception of Sweden, a developed apprenticeship system. In the subgroup with a more practical school-based VET system apprenticeships are less

Table 2. Presence of apprenticeships in State-controlled VET systems

State - theoretical		**Remark**
France	yes	
Netherlands	yes	No employment contracts
Finland	yes	
Sweden	(yes)	Very small scale
State - practical		**Remark**
Czech Republic	no	
Cyprus	no	
Estonia	(no)	Ongoing pilot project
Spain	yes	
Italy	yes	
Latvia	(no)	Small scale handicraft
Poland	yes	Handicraft
Portugal	yes	No employment contracts
Slovenia	no	
Slovakia	(yes)	Very small scale

Source: *eKnowVET*.

common even if the picture is far from clear-cut. Spain and Italy have recently introduced expanded apprenticeship programmes and something similar, although on a smaller scale, is true for Estonia, Latvia, and Slovenia.

Table 2 summarises the situation in 2004-05. This information by itself is not sufficient to show if apprenticeships are becoming more integrated into State-regulated systems or not. Unfortunately, the available information is far from comprehensive but some observations can be made. In some countries the apprentice system continues to be associated with low educational attainment, which runs contrary to integration. This situation prevails chiefly among some new Member States. One example is Cyprus, two other partial examples are Estonia, where one target group is dropouts from lower secondary school, and Latvia. In several other countries, however, there are signs of ongoing integration of apprentices into the State school-based system as part of national VET strategies. Some examples are Portugal, where apprenticeship courses combine academic and practical components, Slovenia where 40% of the knowledge in apprenticeship training has become of theoretical character, and parts of the systems in Estonia and Italy.

Another indicator is trends in popularity among young people for apprenticeship systems. France reports that the number of apprenticeship contracts has declined in recent years and in the Netherlands and Finland the number has stagnated. Similar developments are also reported from countries with an established dual system. Denmark and, in particular, Germany report that the number of apprenticeship contracts has diminished and the Federal German Ministry of Education has even expressed fears about the future of the system (Bundesministerium, 2004). A similar development is reported from some new Member States, where Slovenia and Latvia report difficulties in recruiting students even to the limited programmes they have. In Poland, recruitment is satisfactory only in the handicraft sector.

To summarise this part of the discussion, there seems to be some convergence in apprenticeships but it consists of two contradictory parts. In most countries there is a political strategy to maintain or strengthen apprentice or apprentice-like elements in VET more or less regardless of the basic model. However, students are becoming increasingly hesitant to enter this kind of education in either dual or State-regulated systems.

Integrating VET into upper secondary school

When basic VET models were constructed, around 1900, vocational training was clearly separated from theoretical education in grammar schools. From the 1970s onwards, however, demand for theoretical knowledge increased substantially on the labour market which also affected VET systems. The Maastricht report (Tessaring and Wannan, 2004) found young people increasingly choose theoretical rather than vocational streams and

discussed several actions that have been taken (or are being considered) in Member States to counteract that development. In this section we scrutinise to what extent VET programmes are being integrated into a school-based upper secondary system.

Integrating VET into upper secondary education implies that successfully completed VET programmes make students eligible for studies at tertiary level. This criterion was used to distinguish the 'theoretical' State-regulated system and it is obvious such integration is already established in these systems. Here, we look in more detail to what extent it is possible in other systems. Table 3 presents a review of the present situation. It should be noted that the table represents a rough summary of a rather complex situation in practically all countries.

As Table 3 indicates, there are possibilities for students to proceed into higher education from both the market-orientated and dual systems. In the dual system that possibility is restricted and implies additional efforts from students. The exact amount of effort differs, depending on the direction of

Table 3. Possibilities to proceed from VET to higher education

Market orientated	
Ireland	Directly
UK	(No information in eKnowVET)
Dual system	
Austria	Extra exam
Denmark	Extra exam
Germany	Special courses
State – practical	
Czech Republic	Two year course
Cyprus	Very limited
Estonia	Very limited
Italy	Two year course
Latvia	One year course
Poland	Very limited
Portugal	To some parts of HE
Slovakia	No/Special exam
Slovenia	To some parts of HE
Spain	To some parts of HE

Source: *eKnowVET*.
NB Some parts of HE usually means polytechnics but may also imply larger parts of HE.

studies in the dual system, but at least one additional year of studies is required. The 'practical' State-regulated systems seem to offer the greatest difficulties to proceed but there is great variance within the group, and indeed in each country. In this article, the main focus is on upper secondary level (ISCED 3), but in several countries vocational education and training is also present in other levels of the school system, which makes comparisons difficult. In particular technical schools often offer quite advanced programmes that provide a vocational qualification and at the same time qualify for at least parts of the tertiary level. In some countries this is the exception rather than the rule, which is why the simplified review in Table 3 characterises access to higher studies for Cyprus, Estonia and Poland as 'very limited'. However, for the same reason as above we are more interested in the direction of change and, unfortunately, the possibilities to study that process empirically are as limited as in the previous case. Again, we have to make do with a more impressionistic picture.

Only a few countries still maintain a strict division between VET programmes and theoretical upper secondary education. In Italy, a recent law actually brings together the two systems under 'one umbrella' recognising that they have the same goals of promoting the growth and advancement of people. In most countries, however, the express strategy is to promote a transfer to studies at tertiary level by decreasing the extent of the extra courses required and/or by increasing the possibilities to take special exams. This is evident in countries with a dual system. Germany in particular, but also Austria and Denmark, have introduced measures through which it will become easier to qualify for special exams. In several countries with a 'practical' State-regulated system the main political goal is to raise the status of VET by promoting the role of the social partners (Estonia, Latvia, Poland) or lifelong learning (the Czech Republic and Portugal). In that context, Spain proposes action to reduce the number of dropouts from the VET system as an appropriate way to make it more attractive.

To summarise this part of the discussion, a certain convergence is discernable in particular at political level. In countries with a market-oriented, dual, or State 'theoretical' model, actions have been taken or are underway to promote transfers from VET programmes to tertiary studies, mainly by introducing more theoretical components in VET. Similar processes are also underway in some countries with a State 'practical' model. However, practically all countries report problems with the increasing amount of theoretical education, in particular diminishing recruitment and rising dropout rates.

Concluding remarks

This article contains one main and one additional research question. It would be presumptuous to claim that a definitive answer has been given to either of them but some observations have emerged. The additional ques-

tion is to what extent the information in Cedefop's eKnowVET is useful for external researchers when addressing complex issues with a comparative approach. While the information in eKnowVET is quite useful, some reservations must be made. Most national VET systems are very complex and although contributors to the database have evidently put in a lot of effort to produce comparable information, some problems remain. To some extent they are due to differences in education systems which are extremely difficult to sort out, in particular in the condensed way a database should be structured. Other problems arise because several VET systems are changing and it is not always clear to what period or year specific information pertains. A concrete proposal to improve the usefulness of eKnowVET is to date all information properly. Most problems are of a similar nature and will probably be rectified once the collecting and processing of data has been refined. Other shortcomings are more of a conceptual nature: it is unavoidable that some of the complexity of each individual system is lost in a database. This said, the supreme merit of eKnowVET should be emphasised – it allows for comparative studies in vocational education and training.

The main question asked - are national VET systems in Europe converging or diverging? – has received some tentative answers but they point to somewhat different directions. An initial observation is that the suggested subdivision of State-regulated systems into 'theoretical' and 'practical' models sheds some light on the question. In countries with a State-regulated 'practical' VET system, the systematic relations with the labour market are not well-developed and the theoretical components in education and training are small. It should be pointed out that most countries in this group are former socialist countries and that VET systems as well as labour market institutions are still in a transformation process (see Masson, 2004 for an interesting evaluation). The other countries in this study, regardless of VET model, demonstrate a better record. There are few, if any, signs of convergence between State 'practical' models and all the other models in this fundamental respect.

Another fundamental difference is all 'the other' countries have a higher GDP per capita than any country in the State 'practical' group (Eurostat, 2003). Some convergence is discernible between these high-income countries, at least at policy level. With few exceptions there are ongoing or planned activities to increase or strengthen elements of apprenticeship as well as promoting theoretical components in the programmes. In some cases this is a question of launching an apprenticeship system in parallel with the existing school-based system (as, for example, in Estonia) but in other cases it is a question of doing both at the same time. The Dutch system, with two parallel tracks at upper secondary level, one apprentice-like and one distinctly theoretical, is an example of this strategy. The Italian system, where emphasis is laid on increased opportunities for young people to transfer from one system (apprenticeship) to another (upper secondary) through credits for skills acquired, is an example of a slightly different strategy with a similar goal.

However, there is another trend of convergence among practically all Member States – recruitment to VET programmes is falling or at best stagnating (European Commission, 2006). This could mean that the challenges of the 'third industrial revolution' are not challenges to specific VET models but to the very concept of initial vocational education and training. ■

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Cedefop. *Europass: promoting transparency of qualifications in Europe.* Available from Internet: http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu [cited 15.3.2007].

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Reading

Section prepared by Bettina Brenner of the Documentation Service with the help of the European network of reference and expertise (ReferNet)

Europe International: information, comparative studies

Final report on ageing and employment: identification of good practice to increase job opportunities and maintain older workers in employment.
European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; University of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research - IER
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2006, 228 p.

This is the European Commission's report about what can be done to increase job opportunities for older people and to keep them in employment. It reflects on good practice, identifies key factors and recommends actions that can be taken at EU, national, company and individual levels. The study also gauges the success of the European Employment Strategy, one objective of which is to extend the working lives and increase the employment rates of older workers.
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/incentive_measures/studies/ageing_and_employm_en.pdf

Fostering mobility through competence development: the role of competence and qualification development in fostering workforce mobility: conference summary, Thessaloniki, 9-10 November 2006.
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - EFILWC; European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – Cedefop
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2007, 41 p.
ISBN 978-92-897-0983-5; Cat.No. TJ-77-07-117-EN-C

The report is the outcome of the first EMCC Company Network Seminar organised jointly by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. The seminar opened with a series of presentations setting out the policy context and summarising current research on

workers mobility in Europe based on the results of a recent Eurobarometer survey. The following session highlighted initiatives that have been undertaken at European, national and sectoral levels to promote the transparency and recognition of employees' qualifications.
http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2007/13/en/1/ef0713en.pdf

Identities at work / edited by Alan Brown, Simone Kirpal, Felix Rauner.
International Centre for Technical and Voctional Education and Training - Unevoc
Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 2007, 350 p. (Technical and Vocational Education and Training, 5).
ISBN 1-4020-4988-9

This volume brings together international theory and empirical research that deals with continuity and change of identity formation processes at work under conditions of modern working processes and labour market flexibility. By bringing together perspectives from sociology, psychology, organisational management and vocational education and training the contributions in this volume connect the debates of skills formation, human resources development and careers with individuals work commitment and professional orientations in various ways. With this focus the volume presents a new research perspective based on an interdisciplinary and international approach. The publication shall serve as a useful resource to researchers and policy makers working in the fields of skills formation, human resources development and organisational management.
http://www.unevoc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/UNEVOC_UIS_Report.pdf

Mobility in Europe: analysis of the 2005 Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility.
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - EFILWC
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2006, 82 p.
ISBN 92-897-0955-3; Cat.No. TJ-76-06-207-EN-C

This first report of the surveys findings outlines the extent of mobility in Europe, and examines the intentions of European citizens regarding mobility in the future. With transitional arrangements from the 2004 enlargement of the Union still under debate, and the accession of further states around the corner, this report aims at delivering a timely insight into a question of central importance to the European Union.
http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2006/59/en/1/ef0659en.pdf

Monitoring of regional labour markets in European states: concepts, experiences, perspectives / Christa Larsen, Waldemar Mathejczyk, Alfons Schmid.
Munich: Rainer Hampp, 2007, 184 p.
ISBN 978-86618-108-3

Regional factors are important for the economy and employment in highly competitive, international markets. As a precondition for the functioning of regional labour markets, adequate information has to be generated and transformed into new knowledge for all actors involved. Regional Labour Market Monitoring can be seen as an approach to meet these requirements. A variety of projects in this area have been set up in several European countries. Their common purpose is to develop and implement sets of indicators to measure the current regional labour market and to provide information over its development into the future. Both the regional labour force and business enjoy the benefits from this activity. This anthology gives an idea of the diversity of European approaches to monitoring regional labour markets. It renders different concepts and instruments representing the region in which they are used.

OLCOS roadmap 2012: to promote the creation, sharing and re-use of Open Educational Resources (OER) / Guntram Geser (ed.).
Open eLearning Content Observatory Services - OLCOS
Salzburg: EduMedia Group, 2007, 150 p. ISBN 3-902448-08-3

The road mapping work was conducted to provide decision makers with an overview of current and likely future developments in OER (open educational resources) and recommendations on how various challenges in OER could be addressed. The report covers the following areas: policies, institutional frameworks and business models; open access and open content repositories; laboratories of open educational practices and resources. For each of these areas, drivers/enablers and inhibitors of OER and open educational practices are identified and described in detail. Based on the road mapping results, the report also provides a set of recommendations.
http://www.olcos.org/cms/upload/docs/olcos_roadmap.pdf

Participation in formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes worldwide: an initial statistical study.
International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training - Unevoc; Unesco Institute for Statistics - UIS
Bonn: Unevoc, 2007, 124 p.
ISBN 978-3-00-020134-9

This report aims to stimulate an important process to fill the information gap existing in the area of comparable quantitative data and indicators on global TVET participation. It presents one of the most comprehensive statistical analyses to date of enrolments in formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the world. It is an international, comparative study that describes access to formal TVET by level, age and gender. The report addresses three main questions: What statistical data currently exists on formal TVET in the world? What are the potential benefits and limitations of statistical analyses of existing data? What are the next steps towards the improvement of TVET data collection and analysis? The target audience for the report includes TVET policymakers, donors, researchers, practitioners, administrators and education planners.

Quality and practice in assessment: new approaches in work-related learning / Marja-Leena Stenström and Kati Laine (eds.).
Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research, 2006, 178 p.
ISBN 951-39-2608-7

This book is the third and final outcome of the Leonardo da Vinci project QUAL-PRAXIS. The main objective of the QUAL-PRAXIS project was to discuss and examine practice-oriented assessment models from the perspective of different national VET traditions. The project focused on identifying current innovations and future developments in practices and approaches to the assessment of work-related learning in different European countries. Particular attention was paid to good practices of practice-oriented assessment.

Research methods in education / Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison.
London: Routledge, 2007, 656 p. 6th ed.
ISBN 978-0-415-36878-0

This is a new edition of a best-selling textbook. The authors have thoroughly updated the fifth edition and included more text on current developments in research practice, action research, developments in ICT, questionnaire design, ethnographic research, conducting needs analysis, constructing and using tests, observational methods, reliability and validity, ethical issues and curriculum research. The entire text has been redesigned to cater for the increasingly sophisticated needs of the educational researcher. The new edition is more comprehensive, up-to-date and user-friendly, with increased accessibility.

European Union: policies, programmes

Linking the worlds of work and education through Tempus.
European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2007, 58 p.
ISBN 978-92-9157-486-5; Cat.No. TA-X1-07-007-EN-N

This study explains how university-enterprise cooperation has evolved in the EU, as a creative response from the world of learning to its changing role and environment. It explains the principles of university-enterprise cooperation and offers practical examples, both from the EU and from all the regions in which Tempus operates. It also offers clear recommendations for authorities, universities and enterprises.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/doc/linking.pdf

A coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training: communication of the Commission.
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2007, 15 p.
(COM (2007) 61 final of 21.2.2007)

This Communication proposes a framework of indicators and benchmarks for the follow-up of the Lisbon objectives in the area of education and training, which is coherent and for the first time fully reflects the more detailed objectives within Education & Training 2010. It also covers objectives related to the convergence of higher education structures within the 'Bologna process', and the 'Copenhagen process' in vocational training. It outlines a statistical infrastructure from which the indicators can be derived. It invites the Council to adopt the framework as a basis for providing strategic guidance and steering to the Education & Training 2010 strategy.
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0061en01.pdf

Implementing the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs: 'a year of delivery': assessment of the national reform programmes / Commission of the European Communities.
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2006, 186 p.
(COM (2006) 816 final, part II of 12.12.2006)

In October 2006, Member States presented their first reports on the implementation of their national reform programmes. Based on these im-

plementation reports, the Commission has prepared the 2007 Annual Progress Report. This report contains detailed assessment of the progress made and takes into account the work carried out by the Council on selected themes
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0816en01_02.pdf

Final report on the implementation of the Commission's action plan for skills and mobility, COM (2002) 72 final: report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2004, 10 p.
(COM (2007) 24 final of 25.01.2007)

The purpose of this report is to give an account of progress or shortcomings in the implementation of the Action Plan for skills and mobility, which was adopted by the Commission in February 2002 and endorsed by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002. The original objectives against which progress has been measured were threefold: First, to expand occupational mobility and skills development by ensuring that education and training systems become more responsive to the labour market. Secondly, to facilitate geographic mobility through the removal of administrative and legal barriers, the development of language and cross-cultural skills, the promotion of cross-border recognition of qualifications, and an EU-wide immigration policy. Finally, to promote both occupational and geographic mobility through the provision and dissemination of information about existing opportunities for mobility and the related support mechanisms in the EU, mainly through the setting up of a one-stop mobility information site and the improvement of the EURES2 jobs vacancy system.
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0024en01.pdf

European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET): a system for the transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes in Europe: Commission staff working document.
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2006, 20 p.
(SEC (2006) 1431 of 31.10.2006)

The objective of the planned ECVET is to create a European device which will facilitate the transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired by individuals moving from one learning context to another or from one qualification system to another, in particular during a mobility period, and who wish to obtain a qualification. ECVET will be used on a voluntary basis. The Commission is consulting with all the countries participating in the Education and Training 2010 work programme, the European Social Partners, the relevant European associations, NGOs and

networks, European sectoral bodies etc. The responses will be taken into account in establishing the final content and technical specifications of ECVET. The consultation will close at the end of March 2007.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/ecvt/work_en.pdf

From the New Member States Bulgaria and Romania

BG RO **Monitoring report on the state of preparedness for EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania: Communication from the Commission.**
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2006, 52 p.
(COM (2006) 549 final, 26.09.2006)

This report outlines the Commission's assessment of both countries' progress since May 2006. It confirms that Bulgaria and Romania have made further progress towards membership, demonstrating their capacity to apply EU principles and legislation from 1 January 2007. They have reached a high degree of alignment. However, the Commission also identifies a number of areas of continuing concern, and areas where the Commission will initiate appropriate measures to ensure the proper functioning of the EU unless the countries take immediate corrective action. Both countries are strongly encouraged to make proper use of the months before accession, in order to address the remaining issues.
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/sept/report_bg_ro_2006_en.pdf

Employment, education and occupation structures: a framework for forecasting / **Robert Stehrer.**
Wiener Institut für Internationale Wirtschaftsvergleiche
Vienna: WIIW, 2005, 94 p.

This paper introduces a model for forecasting changes in employment levels and structures by sectors, occupational categories and educational attainment levels which is then applied to the new member states and Bulgaria and Romania. The model is based on the following ideas: As these countries have lower productivity levels than the EU-15, the scope for technical change and catching up is quite large. Thus, if these countries converge to the EU-15 productivity levels at given trajectories, real income levels are al-

so changing, which implies changes in demand and output structures by Engel curve effects.
http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/nat/aut/ngo/2005_0002_en.pdf

Financing vocational education and training in the EU new Member States and candidate countries / Jean-Raymond Masson.
European Training Foundation - ETF
Turin: ETF, 2004, 73 p. ISBN 92-9157-455-4

This report provides an overview of the financing of vocational education and training in seven EU new Member States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Cyprus) and four candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Croatia). Priorities and trends in education and training funding are analysed and the main issues and challenges highlighted.

http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/3AD39E01E3BA762AC125712A0064D1BB/$File/NOTE6MNPHG.pdf

Quality in education in the Balkan countries / Nikos P. Terzis.
Balkan Society for Pedagogy and Education
Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis Brothers, 2005 (Education and pedagogy in Balkan countries, 5) ISBN 960-343-829-4

This, the fifth volume in the series launched by the Balkan Society for Pedagogy and Education, contains all the papers presented at the Society's intemational conference on the subject „Quality of education in the Balkan countries" held in Sofia on 2-3 July 2004. Chapters: Quality in education in the Balkan countries; Quality in the Kindergarten, primary and secondary education, Quality in teacher education and school management; Quality in vocational and higher education; Quality and educational innovations; Quality in schooling.

BG Achieving the Lisbon goals: the contribution of vocational education and training in Bulgaria / Ulrike Damyanovic and Haralabos Fragoulis.
European Training Foundation - ETF
Turin: ETF, 2004, 21 p.

This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report 'Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET', prepared for the European Commission. This report is intended as an insight into aspects of the Bulgarian VET system.
http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/7EEB86F72885C34DC125702700567D0B/$File/ENL_LisbonMaastricht_BG_04_EN.pdf

Continuing vocational training in the context of lifelong learning in Bulgaria.
Human Resource Development Centre - HRDC, Bulgarian National Observatory – BNO
Turin: ETF, 2004, 56 p.

The report was prepared following a peer review carried out in the country in November 2003, as a part of the European Training Foundation new peer review programme in SEE countries. The peer review team studied available policies, strategies, laws, and other documents, and conducted inteviews and meetings with policy makers, practioners and stakeholders both at national level and in two regions: North-Central and South-Central. The team focused on a selected number of issues, including the perception of concept on continuing vocational training and lifelong learning in Bulgaria, analyses of supply and demand, followed by concrete recommendations for improvement and suggestions for the next steps.
http://www.etf.europa.eu/WebSite.nsf/Pages/A4D0C791E098444EC1256FA800609899/$FILE/ESEE_PeerReview_BG_04_EN.pdf

Dynamik und Stabilität in Berufsbildungssystemen: eine theoretische und empirische Untersuchung von Transformationsprozessen am Beispiel Bulgariens und Litauens / Olga Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia.
[Dynamics and stability in vocational training systems: a theoretical and empirical study of transformation processes in Bulgaria and Latvia.]
Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005, 359 p. (Berufliche Bildung im Wandel, 6) ISBN 3-631-52972-4

The study deals with the processes of transforming vocational training systems in two post-socialist East European countries (Bulgaria and Lithuania). It focuses first on the need for involvement in the academic disciplines of vocational training and for the concepts thereof to be applied to the context of eastern Europe. It also

sheds light on and brings together some of the current knowledge in transformation research and the findings of related academic disciplines, and incorporates them into the theoretical frame of reference, which is to be systematically expanded. The theoretical findings are supported by empirical studies conducted in Bulgaria and Lithuania and ultimately allow conclusions to be drawn for educational research.

Erwachsenenbildung und Bildungspolitik in Bulgarien / Christian Geiselmann, Johann Theessen.
[Adult education and educational policy in Bulgaria.]
Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association - IIZ/DVV
Bonn: IIZ/DVV, 2005, 245 p. (Internationale Perspektiven der Erwachsenenbildung, 48) ISBN 3-88513-805-0

This publication analyses the state of adult education in Bulgaria as well as current attempts of educational reform. The book especially asks which of the existing institutions and traditions help carry out EU policies for lifelong learning, or, respectively, which are the obstacles to be dealt with.

RO **Achieving the Lisbon goals: the contribution of vocational education and training in Romania / Arjen Deij, Mircea Badescu and Haralabos Fragoulis.**
European Training Foundation - ETF
Turin: ETF, 2004, 31 p.

This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report 'Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET', prepared for the European Commission. This report is intended as an insight into aspects of Romanian VET system.
http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/249300069EC419BAC125700D0041DA78/$File/NOTE6CRG3H.pdf

Vocational education and training and employment services in Romania.
European Training Foundation - ETF
Italy: European Training Foundation, 2004, 98 p.
ISBN 92-9157-299-3

The country monograph on vocational education and training and employment services provides a baseline for assessing the progress of implementing the priorities identified in the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy (JAP) agreed between the government of Romania and the European Commission. Current EU policies based on the Lisbon conclusions, such as the lifelong learning initiative, and the European Employment Policy, set the framework for the analysis.
http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/4EACB40E5131E265C12570270057ED59/$File/ENL_MON_RO_04_EN.pdf

Vocational training versus general education: evidence from an educational reform in Romania / **Ofer Malamud, Cristian Pop-Eleches.**
London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2005, 30 p.

Vocational training and general education are the two predominant forms of secondary schooling around the world. Most studies that compare the effect of vocational and general education on labour market outcomes in the cross-section suffer from selection bias since less able students are more likely to enrol in vocational programs. This paper exploits a 1973 educational reform in Romania that shifted a large proportion of students from vocational training to general education in order to avoid the bias caused by non-random selection. It is analysed the effect of this policy in the context of a transition economy that experienced a decline in manufacturing and a reallocation of labour to new jobs. The main finding is that cohorts affected by the policy were significantly less likely to work in manual or craft-related occupations but showed no differences in unemployment, non-employment, family income and wages than their counterparts who were not affected by the policy. The main conclusion of the paper is that the cross-sectional differences in labour market outcomes between graduates of vocational and general schools are largely a consequence of selection.
http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/seminarpapers/dg31102005.pdf

Romania and the Lisbon Agenda: sustaining growth and fostering jobs in an emergent economy / **Daniel Daianu [et al.].**
Bucharest: Grupul de Economie Aplicata, 2005, 57 p.

The report has been prepared by a research team of the Group of Applied Economics. The third report (November 2005) has been

undertaken against the background of the revised Lisbon Agenda; it uses structural indicators in order to assess the Romanian economy comparatively and examines the linkage between policies and the economic recovery/growth of recent years, the challenge of competitiveness in the local context, and the ability of Romanian policy-makers to foster job creation as a means to mitigate migration.
http://www.gea.org.ro/documente/ro/lisabona/lisabona2005.pdf

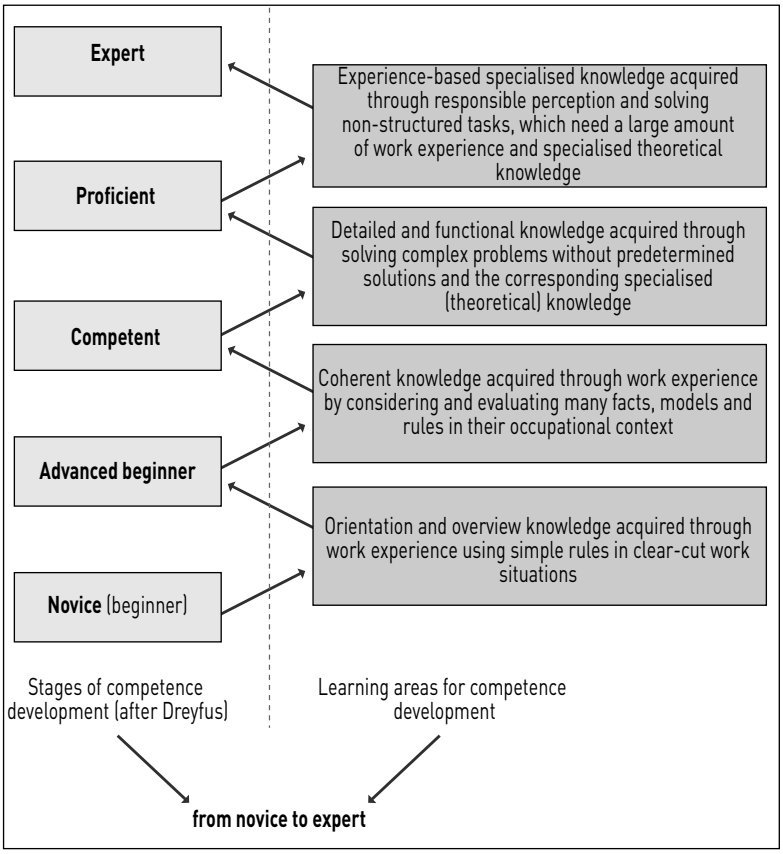
Romania just before EU accession: sustaining growth and fostering jobs in an emerging economy (4th repor) / **Daniel Daianu [et al.]**
Bucharest: Grupul de Economie Aplicata, 2006, 93 p.

This is the fourth GEA (Group of Applied Economics) report assessing Romania's economic performance by using Lisbon Agenda benchmarks. This fourth report acknowledges the progress made in specific areas of the Lisbon agenda, particularly business investment, relative GDP level, and labour productivity. It also provides a series of policy recommendations in order to improve Romania's capacity to conform to the revised Lisbon Agenda's policy guidelines. It is not redundant to say again that Romania's performance should be judged realistically, since we are not even close to the EU 25 performances in most regards of the Lisbon agenda and our priorities have to fit our challenges.
http://www.gea.org.ro/documente/en/lisabona/2006/4threport.pdf

Erratum

In issue 40, p. 54, there was an error in Figure 1. This is the correct text:

Figure 1: Vocational competence development 'from beginner to expert'



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European journal of vocational training

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