



skillset AND **MATCH**

*CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE
PROMOTING
LEARNING FOR WORK*

 CEDEFOP

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GREEK EU PRESIDENCY

INTERVIEWS:

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MESSAGES:

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FEATURE: **WORK IN CLASS**

MEMBER STATES: **ITALY**



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

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

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CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE
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A magazine for

all things VET

JAMES CALLEJA

CEDEFOP DIRECTOR



We hope this magazine will send inspiring messages to stakeholders to drive vocational training to higher levels of attractiveness and relevance to the labour market

Vocational education holds the key to the wellbeing of present and future generations. During economic crisis or growth, no other sector in education can claim legitimacy over all levels of qualifications as much as vocational education and training (VET). Citizens of all ages, abilities and aspirations may find their common educational home in VET. This legacy must be sustained and rendered more visible.

Our objective in publishing this magazine is to promote vocational training in European initiatives taken by the Commission, Member States and social partners through Cedefop's work programme. We believe the link between the various stakeholders working on VET in Europe can serve as a catalyst for making lifelong learning more attractive and for setting up learning environments in workplaces.

Embedded in Cedefop's objectives are two overarching goals. The first is to help reduce youth unemployment, early leaving from school and VET institutions, and skills mismatches. The second is to increase participation in lifelong learning, apprenticeship programmes and wider use of work-based and workplace learning using European tools.



Through this publication, we wish to reach a wide spectrum of people from policy-makers in the public and private sectors to governors and principals of vocational colleges, employers, employee representatives, VET teachers and lecturers, university professors and researchers. But we are also keen on being read by curriculum planners, guidance and career counsellors and hopefully students and parents.

As a European agency, our key priority is to ensure that our research, policy analysis, learning and peer activities lead to the creation of a workforce, which is constantly employable and guarantees economic growth, competitiveness and sustainability.

Our ambition is to make VET a natural choice for those seeking a professional or vocational career, a balance between practical and theoretical applications in learning, the highest level of qualifications and the best-paid jobs in the market.

Focus should be on existing EU tools

BARBARA DORN

CHAIR OF CEDEFOP'S GOVERNING BOARD
DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING, GERMAN EMPLOYERS (BDA)



Young people's transition from education to employment can be eased by expanding access to dual-learning systems



Cedefop today is recognised worldwide as a leading centre of expertise on VET systems, comparative analyses, investigation on skills demand and supply and qualifications frameworks. With youth unemployment in many European countries at worryingly high levels, demand for Cedefop's support and know-how on the relationship between education and training and the labour market is more important than ever.

Vocational education and training (VET) is high on the policy agenda in Member States as well as at European level as a means to improve competitiveness and stimulate employment and job growth. Greater emphasis on learning outcomes and employability in education and training systems at all levels is necessary to ease recognition of qualifications, improve quality and foster mobility in Europe.

Rather than looking to create new concepts and initiatives, the focus should be on appropriate implementation and, where necessary, on adaptation of existing EU tools for recognition and quality assurance, such as the European qualifications framework, the European quality assurance framework for vocational education, the Europass diploma and certificate supplements and many others, as well as developing synergies between them.

Special attention should be given to strengthening work-based learning elements in Member States and in existing vocational training systems.

Young people's transition from education to employment can be eased by expanding access to dual-learning systems, such as in apprenticeships.

Cedefop deserves every support to consolidate its financial and personal resources, which are the basis and necessary condition for its ongoing excellence and successful performance as supporter and adviser of VET practice and policies.

Close and equitable cooperation between Member States, social partners and European Commission in Cedefop's Governing Board guarantees a singular merger of expertise of all key VET stakeholders to advise the Centre's work and strengthen its output.

This is Cedefop's unique selling point and a major pillar of its success. As current Chair of the Governing Board and employers' group member for 18 years, I can say that social partners are thankful to the staff, management and Directorate for a long tradition of close cooperation and common support and enrichment. ■

We need to make a case for

quality VET

XAVIER PRATS **MONNÉ**

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, DG EDUCATION AND CULTURE



It is a big challenge and Cedefop's support is needed more than ever



We all know how important it is to be able to rely on excellent professionals – a physiotherapist if our back is blocked, a mechanic if our car breaks down, or ICT specialists for basically all work and fun facilities around us. However, we often underestimate the role that vocational education and training (VET) plays in ensuring that we have such professionals to turn to, and the importance it has for the welfare of our societies, especially in the current context of rapid change.

Cedefop's skills forecasts show that almost half European jobs by 2025 will be for the medium-skilled. Preparing Europeans to fill those jobs is largely a responsibility for VET. Even now, half of Europe's young people are enrolled in VET. Keeping VET attractive for young people, ensuring good employment prospects for them, equipping them with the right skills, represents a huge responsibility for the VET community and for public authorities.

Still, VET is not only about young people. Continuing vocational education and training should also help adults develop and maintain their skills throughout their lives and prepare them for life transitions: today we live longer and experience several transitions in our lifetimes, going from work back to education, or working and studying simultaneously.

VET is also developing at higher qualification levels, driven by demand from advanced economic sectors. These higher-level VET skills play an essential role in fostering technological change and innovation, and also increase employability: the higher the qualification level, the more likely the person is to find a job.

We need to make a case for quality VET in Europe. This means great expectations for the VET community: embracing meaningful reforms, reaching out to non-traditional learners, seeking credible partnerships with other learning providers, from business to university to civil society and social partners, taking advantage of innovative learning systems and new technologies.

It is a big challenge, and Cedefop's support is needed more than ever. Cedefop has become a unique VET centre of expertise and I am convinced that it will continue to provide much-needed support for developing and improving VET systems in Europe. ■

Investment in education and training **key** to exit crisis

ANDROULLA VASSILIOU

EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, MULTILINGUALISM AND YOUTH



In her role as European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, **Androulla Vassiliou** has been instrumental in urging Member States to invest in education and training. Her policy priorities include improving skills, focusing on market needs, increasing learning mobility and opportunities for young people. In an interview for the Cedefop magazine Ms Vassiliou talked about vocational education and training (VET) priorities and the Commission's latest initiatives.

The European alliance for apprenticeships and the youth guarantee are two European Commission initiatives launched last year to help combat unemployment in Europe. How are they progressing?

Both initiatives are progressing well. In the European alliance for apprenticeships, we have managed to mobilise not only the Commission and Member States but also social partners, training and education providers, companies and youth organisations. Broad cooperation and peer-to-peer learning are helping to develop quality apprenticeships, and the Commission is encouraging and facilitating such cooperation through working groups, events and funding. Cedefop is playing a key support role both in promoting cooperation between Member States and monitoring VET and apprenticeship reforms, initiatives and results. Apprenticeships are also one of the four elements of the youth guarantee scheme, together with education, traineeships and work. By now, the large majority of Member States has submitted plans for implementing the youth guarantee and we will support implementation in the Member States and regions with high youth unemployment through the EUR 6 billion youth employment initiative.

What can be done to prevent the risk of newly introduced or revamped apprenticeship systems failing when trying to transfer successful models from countries with a tradition in work-based learning?

First of all, it is important to be clear about the fact that no education and training system is perfect, and also that apprenticeship systems cannot be copy-pasted from one country to another. However, it is very clear that models which combine in-school education with in-company training deliver better employment results than other systems. This point is borne out by the relatively low youth unemployment rate of countries that have such systems. Austria and Germany are two examples, but there are also very good examples from other Member States, and all countries have something to learn. So what we are encouraging Member States to do is to exchange experiences and best practices, to find inspiration and see how key elements can be implemented efficiently and effectively in their home context while respecting and building on national and regional systems and traditions. One should also remember that systemic changes take time, and that it is important to plan for long-term, incremental developments rather than quick fixes.



We must invest in providing people with the skills that they and their prospective employers need

You have been asking EU Member States to invest more in reforming education and training at times of economic crisis and budgetary constraints. What can you say to convince them that investing in education and training can contribute to recovery?

Investment in education and training is a key stepping stone on our way out of the crisis.

Within sound fiscal policies, we must prioritise investments in our citizens, mainly young people that are going to build tomorrow's Europe. Today, we are confronted with the fact that there are 2 million jobs available in the EU, which employers cannot fill because they cannot find people with the right skills.

At the same time, one in five young people are unemployed. We must therefore invest in providing people with the skills that they and their prospective employers need.

All investments must be well thought through to ensure that they adequately address local challenges and that they operate effectively and efficiently in the particular national situation.

For this, we need to make sure that employers and schools work closer together. If we fail to do so, the lack of employable skills will continue to hamper growth and competitiveness of businesses and development of society.

Erasmus+ is another new initiative that has started life this year. How can it support activities for reinforced VET, apprenticeship and work-based learning?

Through Erasmus+ we are significantly strengthening our support to VET, apprenticeships and work-based learning. First of all, between 2014 and 2020, Erasmus+ will provide 650 000 vocational students with a learning experience abroad. We will also be funding mobility for teachers and trainers. In addition, we are scaling up support to VET-business cooperation through so-called 'strategic partnership' projects, and we will fund over 150 sector skills alliances involving 2 000 VET providers and enterprises aiming at developing new curricula and training methods.

How can European tools increase people's chances of finding a place in the labour market?

European tools play a crucial role in supporting quality, transparency and recognition of skills, credits and qualifications between European countries. This is an important benefit for learners because it improves their opportunities for mobility in education and work. One of the main obstacles to free movement of people remains mutual recognition of skills and qualifications – or lack thereof. European tools like the European

qualifications framework, the European credit system for VET (ECVET), Europass and the European quality assurance framework (EQAVET) can help overcome these barriers.

While the most immediate benefits will be felt by people who want to move to another EU country, in the long run everybody stands to gain from increased clarity and transparency of their qualifications.

To make the most out of these European tools, we intend to develop them further in a coordinated, synergic way. What we are aiming for is a fully-fledged European area of skills and qualifications. We have been conducting a public consultation and a specific Eurobarometer survey on this important initiative to obtain the input of stakeholders and citizens on how best to serve them through European tools. ■

Ms Vassiliou at Cedefop's 2013 skills conference with then Acting Director Christian Lettmayr (r) and DG EAC's Director António Silva Mendes



WORK IN CLASS

More initial vocational education and training should combine school and work-based learning

In 2012, just over half, some 50.3%, of the European Union's (EU's) upper secondary students were in initial vocational education and training (IVET). But, according to Cedefop's core indicators (see box) only 27% of them were in vocational courses combining school and work-based learning.

There are wide differences between countries, both in terms of numbers of young people in initial VET and those that blend school and work-based learning.

In countries such as Belgium, the Czech Republic, Austria and Slovakia (see table) more than 70% of upper secondary students were in initial VET in 2012 – the highest rates in the EU. Other countries, such as Denmark with 46.1%, Germany (48.6%) and France (44.5%), are nearer to the European average.

In Denmark, however, almost all initial VET students are in some form of combined school and work-based learning. In Germany, the proportion,

some 88.2%, is also very high. In the Czech Republic, Austria and Slovakia the figure is more than 40%. France, with around 26.9% of its initial VET students combining school and work-based learning, is very close to the European average. However, Belgium, despite having a high proportion of vocational students, has only 4.3% combining school and work-based learning.

This is not to say that teaching in school-based systems is not good quality, that students do not learn practical things, or that they have worse job prospects. According to the latest data (from 2009), the employment rate of initial VET graduates aged 20 to 34 in Belgium is 85%, one of the highest in Europe and some 11.2 percentage points higher than that for general education graduates of the same age. In France, the employment rate for vocational and general education graduates is about the same at around 72%.



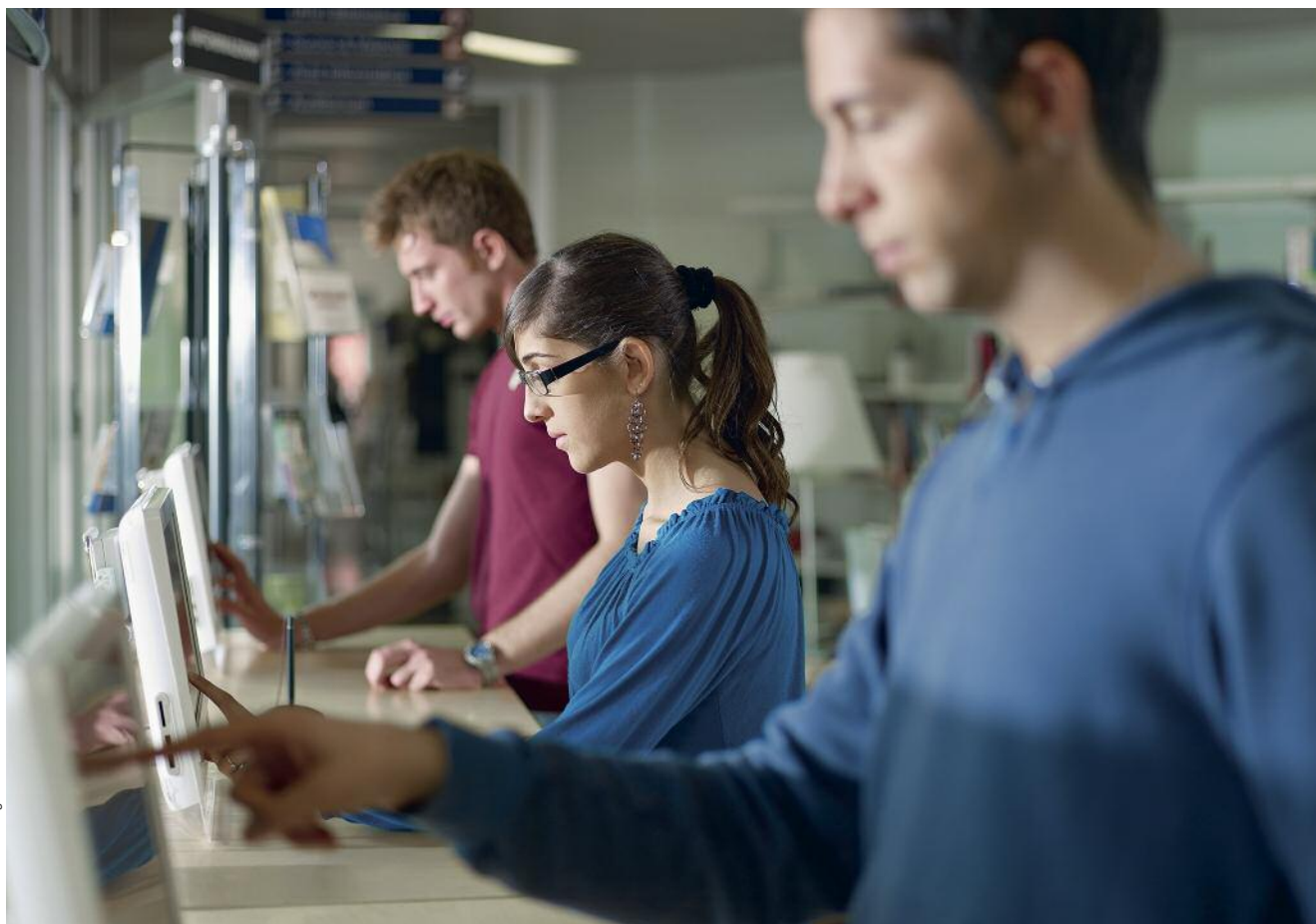
CEDEFOP'S CORE INDICATORS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Statistics on vocational education and training are not always easy to find or interpret. Consequently, Cedefop has compiled a concise set of 32 core statistical indicators relevant to the Europe 2020 strategy objectives and European policies for VET and lifelong learning. The indicators are published as 'statistical overviews' for each EU Member State and, where data are available, for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. The overviews enable countries to be compared with one another and with the EU average. The format is easy to use and data are supplemented with a commentary highlighting interesting points for each country.

The overviews are snapshots of progress in key areas of education and training policy in Europe. Data used for the indicators come from several sources, including the European labour force survey, UOE (Unesco/OECD/Eurostat) data collection on education systems, the continuing vocational training survey, the adult education survey and Cedefop's skill supply and demand forecasts.

The core indicators do not assess national systems or policies. Detailed monitoring requires more data and thorough analysis of the context. Cedefop publishes the overviews collectively in *On the way to 2020: data for vocational education and training policies: country statistical overviews*, which can be downloaded from Cedefop's website at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/22388.aspx>





SOME OF CEDEFOP'S CORE INDICATORS ON VET FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES (2011-12)

	Belgium	Czech Rep.	Denmark	Germany	France	Austria	Slovakia	EU
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	72.8	73.0	46.1	48.6	44.5	76.1	70.9	50.3
IVET work-based students as % of upper secondary IVET	4.3	43.6	96.8	88.2	26.9	45.7	40.8	27.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds)	85.0 (*)	78.7 (*)	88.5 (*)	83.5 (*)	72.2 (*)	88.0 (*)	74.7 (*)	79.1 (*)
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)	11.2 (*)	10.6 (*)	6.0 (*)	26.2 (*)	0.6 (*)	5.1 (*)	3.8 (*)	5.6 (*)

(*) Data are the latest available and relate to 2009.

However, students in vocational learning without a strong work-based element may have less opportunity to acquire work-related skills that can improve their job-readiness.

There is also growing evidence that young people on high-quality apprenticeships and internships are more likely to acquire useful skills and attitudes to find suitable work and that they have a smoother transition to the labour market than general education graduates.

Recognising these benefits, the European alliance for apprenticeships, launched by the European Commission in July 2013, aims to improve the quality,

supply and image of apprenticeships across the EU. Some Member States are already engaged in bilateral cooperation on VET reform, apprenticeships and apprentice mobility.

However, the success of extending combinations of school and work-based learning depends heavily on employers' commitment to provide opportunities. Given that employers continue to stress the need for 'soft' skills such as teamwork, ability to adapt and to continue to learn, all of which can benefit from having experience in the workplace, it is in their interest to do so. ■

WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT SKILLS MISMATCH AND NEETS

Partnerships between education and training and social partners are not an option but inevitable to prevent skills mismatch and having people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), argued Cedefop Director James Calleja at the Greek EU Presidency's flagship conference on vocational education and training (VET).

The conference, held on 26 March in Athens, gave Member States an opportunity to get acquainted with successful VET policies and practices which tackle skills mismatches, focusing on how work-based learning can meet contemporary challenges.

In his keynote speech, Greek Minister of Education Constantine Arvanitopoulos said that 'it has to be a strategic choice of the Commission and national governments, especially the southern Europe ones, to make school-to-work transition easier through apprenticeships, traineeships and initial work experience programmes, and to restructure our educational systems so that they match labour market needs and offer lifelong learning.'

Highlighting the contribution of education 'to economic growth, jobs and social cohesion' has been one of the Greek Presidency's priorities and, together with an event on apprenticeships, the conference has put the focus on VET.

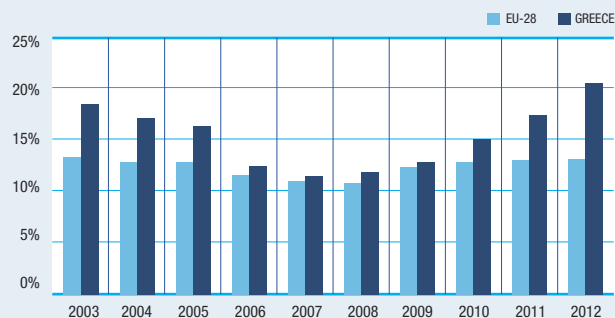
The Cedefop Director noted: 'VET covers almost the whole spectrum of the qualifications framework. It triggers innovation; we need VET policy-makers and institutions that believe in its potential at all qualifications levels and implement measures to raise quality and excellence with urgency.'

He stressed that 'the worlds of education and

work are not/have not been talking to each other enough,' which is why 'we need to strengthen initial vocational education and training (IVET) by coordinating efforts from governments, social partners, the labour market and education and training providers. Without a strong IVET base, it is impossible to have quality continuing VET and VET at higher education.'

Presenting the challenges VET faces when it comes to skills mismatch and work-based learning, Mr Calleja argued that 'before you reform education and training, you need to know what kinds of jobs there are, where and which skills they require; reform in education must go hand-in-hand with economic and social strategies and must be supported by skills

YOUNG PEOPLE (15-24) NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING, 2003-12



Source: Eurostat, website database, 2013.

Cedefop's new report provides an insight into the Greek VET system. You can download it here





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Trainers in
continuing VET:
emerging
competence profile



Skill mismatch:
more than
meets the eye



intelligence.’ One of the workshops at the conference concluded that skills intelligence and stakeholder cooperation are crucial in building new qualifications for emerging sectors.

According to Mr Calleja, ‘the European tools are a solid foundation to build a culture of learning by doing; adapt them to your national, regional, local contexts and they will make a difference.’

Cedefop supports the work of the European Commission and Member States based on its expertise on labour market issues, qualifications and VET policies. The envisaged Cedefop policy-learning workshops in 2015 will enable knowledge sharing towards strategic, prioritised and citizen-centred initiatives in VET institutions.

Policies and strategies to increase work-based learning should focus on action: the role of trainers who work with young people should be taken seriously and the necessary support should be provided. But initiatives cannot be copy-pasted from one country to another.

‘Countries need to identify their growth potential and skill needs, develop training schemes to suit their specific contexts and use the potential of work-based learning. This requires comprehensive strategies, which include competence development of teachers and trainers, and commitment of all actors,’ concluded Mr Calleja. ■

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GREECE

The 2014 Greek Presidency of the Council of the EU takes place in the context of major economic and social challenges, as the crisis can be felt all over Europe, hitting Greece especially hard. During the recovery process, education and training policies, especially vocational education and training (VET) policy, can play a major role in empowering people and enterprises to be competitive.

In Greece, VET is in transition. The 2013 legislation on secondary education aims to promote VET and strengthen its work-based component. The action plan for youth employment intends to better link education with work, upgrade VET, boost apprenticeship and broaden career guidance offered to young people.

But legislative reforms alone are not enough. To make qualifications relevant requires closer communication between education and training and the world of work. Enterprises need to

understand that training young people is an investment in their own future. Young people and their families also need to realise the advantages of work-based learning. This is a challenge in a country where university education enjoys much higher prestige than VET. But unemployment among university graduates, though still lower than that faced by people with lower qualification levels, has been rising during the crisis.

Evidence from other countries shows that cooperation in shaping attractive and relevant qualifications can help increase ownership and commitment. Greece officially presented the Hellenic qualifications framework in February 2014. Fully implementing changes will take time. Achieving sustainable results will require commitment from all partners in education and training and the labour market.

A lot more required to reach employment targets

LÁSZLÓ ANDOR

EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR EMPLOYMENT,
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION



European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion **László Andor** talks to Rosy Voudouri about the youth guarantee, the European alliance for apprenticeships, other ways of boosting employment in Europe, and the North-South job divide

Good vocational education and training systems are crucial for employment, according to the European Union (EU) jobs official. Commissioner László Andor visited Cedefop on 4 March, addressed the staff and was informed about the agency's work.

An economist from Hungary, Mr Andor served as a member of the board of directors of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development before being appointed EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in 2010. Amid the economic crisis that affected Europe, he made helping 'the jobless back to work, preventing further poverty and social exclusion' the focus of his work, as his online profile suggests.

One of the European Commission's central initiatives in the fight against unemployment is the youth guarantee, and Mr Andor assesses the project he and his team are overseeing:

'The Member States implementing the youth guarantee can already draw from EU resources since September last year and as soon as they have their operation programmes in place, they can cover it directly from EU funds. I believe that there is a lot of good

progress. However, sometimes you feel, as in the case of Greece for example, that the implementation plans are uneven, some of them are limited in terms of time horizon, not going beyond a certain time period, or others perhaps not elaborating sufficiently on the necessary partnerships between, let's say, policy and business. There are certain weaknesses, which pop up in the cross-country comparison. This is what the Commission is trying to do now – to compare the implementation plans.'

The scheme aims to ensure that all young people under age 25 receive a good-quality offer of employment, an apprenticeship or traineeship or the chance to continue their education within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. And, although a 'good-quality offer' sounds vague, Mr Andor believes it was very important to add this element to the guarantee: 'We don't want zero-hour contracts; we don't want traineeships without a clarified remuneration. So, obviously there are certain elements, especially, when we speak about young people, the learning content, even if it's not a course but a job or an apprentice-



As Europe is emerging from a long recession, it is emerging with serious asymmetries and that also results in increases of outward migration from countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal or Greece

ship. It has to be a decent learning content, so we need to emphasise also the quality and ensure that this becomes a reality.'

The youth guarantee is one way of boosting employment in Europe. A lot more needs to be done to make sure we reach the 75% employment target by 2020, says the EU official:

'We have to see the longer-term trend of working longer simply because we live longer in the European Union and we have to achieve what is called active ageing, to avoid early retirement, to avoid loss of skills and competitiveness of the ageing workforce. The European workforce is ageing and shrinking. Because of the demographics, there is a necessity to invest more in working conditions, to invest more in operational safety and health, to invest more in lifelong learning, to invest more in the capacity of the European labour market, EURES for example, to connect better supply and demand and thus help people to have a more fulfilling career and to work longer in their lives.'

When it comes to job opportunities, the North-South divide in Europe is growing. We asked Mr Andor for the Commission's view, taking into account labour mobility.

'Mobility is an important opportunity and a fundamental right,' he says. But it can also be perceived as brain drain by countries with big unemployment or as unwanted immigration by countries in an unstable economic situation:

'The North-South divide, or the asymmetries between the core and the periphery of the Eurozone, has become deeper in the past few years. Even now, as Europe is emerging from a long recession, it is emerging with these serious asymmetries and that also results in increases of outward migration from countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal or Greece. So, mobility is in a way a consequence of not having jobs in countries in recession, not having job growth, and Europe will need to do a lot more to restore the growth potential and overcome these asymmetries in the monetary union. This of course cannot happen without reforming the monetary union.'

Commissioner Andor gives his verdict on another new initiative aimed at tackling youth unemployment – the European alliance for apprenticeships: 'This is indeed about spreading a model, boosting the prestige of apprenticeships but also inviting companies to

contribute. When we launched the alliance last summer in the city of Leipzig, we already had a number of big companies announcing the creation of apprenticeships in large numbers. And since last summer, we've had more and more learning about this and joining this European alliance. Apprenticeships can be created in smaller companies as well. The key question is to find a link between education and vocational training on the one hand and industrial development, industrial policy on the other.'

Mr Andor with Cedefop Director James Calleja at the Centre's premises in Thessaloniki



At the interface of training, skills, qualifications and employability



CEDEFOP'S WORK PRESENTED
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



Read the briefing note on Cedefop's
achievements in 2013 and plans for 2014
www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/22296.aspx



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High-quality vocational education and training (VET) relevant to labour market needs is a policy priority for the European Union. The economic slowdown has led to worryingly high levels of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among young people.

Presenting Cedefop's work at the European Parliament earlier this year, the Centre's Director James Calleja said that all its activities 'aim at emphasising the inescapable link between training, skills, qualifications and employability.'

'Cedefop's work is at the interface between education and training and the needs of the labour market,' stressed Mr Calleja. 'Employability is crucial for the future of the Union and it is necessary to ensure the economic crisis is tackled by a responsive and skilled workforce,' he added.

Cedefop's role in supporting European VET policy-makers between 2007 and 2012 has recently been evaluated for the European Commission. In its findings, the evaluation noted that the agency 'was highly successful in implementing the objectives in its founding Regulation,' during the review period.

Mr Calleja told the European Parliament that the challenge now is 'to keep up the high standards achieved but also to ensure that Cedefop continues to provide answers to policy-makers dealing with unemployment, preventing people leaving vocational education and training early and unqualified, helping those who lack skills and competences for today's and tomorrow's labour market, ensuring that all types of skills are recognised, and supporting businesses who wish to provide work-based learning.'

The Cedefop Director highlighted three facets of a common challenge that will define the agency's work in 2014:

- adult education and learning – an area which Cedefop is strengthening so more people find acquiring skills and competences closer to their work experiences;
- European alliance for apprenticeships – Cedefop will fully support the Commission in its work on the alliance, and Member States working together to create an attractive apprenticeship culture within the 2020 education and training targets;
- technical support to Member States in all aspects of European tools and synergies between tools – not all Member States are cruising at the same altitude on European initiatives and tools, and Cedefop proposes to intensify its support to help Member States come closer to the 2020 education and training targets.



Italy will take over from Greece the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 July. The country is dealing with structural problems affecting its economic system by attributing a key role to quality vocational education and training (VET) as a driver to increase employability and promote social inclusion. The strategic objective is to strengthen VET because of extremely alarming youth unemployment data.

THE ITALIANWAY



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Using
vocational
training
to boost
employability

Italian government initiatives will focus on increasing youth employment, facilitating international mobility of workers and enhancing the 'social dimension' of the economic and monetary union.

Special attention will be given to the national plan implementing the youth guarantee, which is designed to ensure supply of information, guidance, work experience, training, apprenticeships and youth entrepreneurship. These measures are targeted to people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and are offered according to the specific profiles of those most remote from the labour market. The plan connects relevant institutions and stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. In addition, the government will launch a reform of the employment services through partnerships between businesses, public institutions and non-profit organisations to match demand and supply of labour and promote entrepreneurial initiatives.

With respect to education and training policies, the government will focus on supporting European and international mobility of students and teachers, preventing and combating early school leaving, integrating systems of education/training and labour market, raising key competences of students and improving quality of education and training. The Italian Presidency's priorities will aim at strengthening the most significant 'systemic' innovations recently introduced.

The new types of training pathways currently being designed to ensure recognition of competences and professional profiles (including innovative ones) at national level are noteworthy. The process is facilitated by the implementation of legislation defining a national system of certification of competences and validation of non-formal and informal learning, which is learner-oriented and in tune with local labour market needs. Financial resources allocated to training activities, other than those provided by structural funds, will be pooled together.

Increasing investment in VET is important, with surveys showing that learners who completed their pathways in accredited VET centres perform better, in terms of training and employment outcomes, than learners exiting the school system.

Optimising and integrating various funds is considered relevant also to continuing VET. The push towards integration represents a reverse trend in recent years; this, however, seems inadequate given the limited resources and small number of firms and local contexts involved. It will therefore be increasingly important to move away from the logic of mere testing and to scale up successful experiences at system level, while identifying priority actions, which may cover essential topics such as innovations to be implemented in different areas and sectors and the ability to internationalise small businesses.



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Vocational training is **FIRST** rate education

CHRISTIAN LETTMAYR

CEDEFOP DEPUTY DIRECTOR



Christian Lettmayr, Cedefop's Deputy Director since 2005 and Acting Director between October 2010 and October 2013, speaks passionately about vocational education and training. He will retire in the summer, but wants to see VET as the natural link between the world of education and the world of work.

In a few months, Cedefop will celebrate its 40th anniversary. It is one of the first two European agencies, founded in 1975 together with Eurofound. Mr Lettmayr reflects on how Cedefop's work has contributed to VET policies throughout this period:

'The Council at the time recognised that VET was a very important part of some of the fundamental principles of the Union, because it is the labour-market-related side of education, which is a necessary condition for creating a unified labour market. In the beginning, Cedefop was more like an information platform. It took a while before it established itself more closely as a support to European policy-making, which has evolved, after the Lisbon strategy in 2000, in what we call an open method of coordination, meaning the wilful and voluntary cooperation of Member States in a policy area where the competence always has been and still is with them. But, and I think this has been clearly underlined in the years of crisis, there is a paramount need for closer cooperation and further

development of a truly European system. Otherwise the economic union will not work in the long run.'

In a drastically changing working environment, Mr Lettmayr believes there are particular challenges ahead for vocational education and training: 'We have the influences of the whole IT revolution, major trends like the ageing population or the need to develop our economies in regard to sustainability, to make them greener, which impacts on jobs. Then, there is a question which comes to the fore of the policy discussion more and more – the distribution of income and wealth. All this is drastically changing the working environment and the number and types of jobs available. It obviously has an impact on the skills and qualifications people will need in the future and on the way of living. The old paradigm of the information society and knowledge society with its constant need of updating knowledge and skills, meaning a truly lifelong learning approach, becomes even more important.'

Cedefop supports the European Commission's initiatives to



*In the end,
you will be much happier
doing something
which corresponds
to your talents*

combat youth unemployment and, in particular, the European alliance for apprenticeships. This is a subject close to the heart of the Centre's Deputy Director:

'The trend towards work-based learning is, to some extent, a correction of mistakes we have made in the past. With the trend towards higher qualification levels we believed that we needed more school-based learning to send a higher proportion of the population to university, and have forgotten a little bit that in the formative years, after 15 or 16, work-based learning and experience of real working life helps to teach people soft skills, which are very important for their employability. We are not trying now to revive any romantic and traditional form of apprenticeship. This is an attempt to combine the elements of apprenticeship with the need for higher qualification levels, which makes this trend so important and so interesting. It concerns not only those countries that do not have a good apprenticeship system. Of course, for those countries the challenges are bigger because they need to do a lot of institution-building and



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to change perceptions of the population, education providers and employers. But it also relates to countries which already have very good apprenticeship systems because they need to develop them and include the necessary features which can respond to demands of the modern labour market. We are working very closely with the Commission and many other institutions. Cedefop is particularly well-placed in this context because Member States trust the Centre to be a knowledgeable broker in monitoring and accompanying their efforts. I think we have a lot to contribute there.'

Mr Lettmayr concludes with a word of advice for those considering whether or not to follow the vocational education and

training path: 'I once talked to a man in a village who was taught to become a plumber. He was an intelligent man who could easily have gone to university. He said to me about his choice: "I will have a job, the possibility to set up my own enterprise and I will be independent." VET is not second-rate education. It often corresponds much more to the talents and inclinations of people and offers a lot of possibilities for professional development. In the end, you will be much happier doing something which corresponds to your talents, and if you do it well, you may get further in life than with a university degree in a field of study that offers occupations which may not make you happy.'

new

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IN FOCUS

MACROECONOMIC BENEFITS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Improvements in workforce skills are essential for European countries to attain higher economic growth and to compete effectively on product markets. Literature indicates a positive relationship between levels of education and productivity growth. This report, published in January 2014, builds on and expands this body of research in two ways. First, it investigates the differential impact of various skill types – higher (academic), upper-intermediate vocational, lower-intermediate vocational, lower-intermediate general, and low – on labour productivity. Then it accounts for the stock of uncertified skills (those built through training). Analysis is carried out in six EU Member States – Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK – representing different modes of VET. The analysis suggests that general and vocational skills complement each other and that the effect of (certified) skills on productivity is stronger when they are reinforced by training.

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