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State of Affairs of the European education policy (April 2008)

1 European Commission

1.1 Overview of the activities of the peer learning clusters (2006-2008)

During 2005, the Commission has invited Member States to participate in peer learning activities on individual policy themes according to their interests. The rationale behind this is to make policy cooperation in the Education & Training 2010 process more efficient and closer to the needs of the individual countries. So-called 'clusters' have been set up in 8 areas:

- Modernisation of universities
- ICT in Education
- Increasing participation rates in lifelong learning (EU Benchmark)
- Teachers and Trainers
- Achieving the benchmarks on early school leavers, completion rates and literacy
- Making the best use of resources
- Increasing the number of graduates in Math, Science and Technological subjects and decreasing the gender imbalance among graduates in these subjects (EU Benchmark)
- Key competences

Each 'cluster' decides which countries will host study-visits for peer learning activities. The Commission has recommended those Member States who host study-visits to invite teacher unions in their country to the on-site study visits. EUNEC is asking for greater involvement of the stakeholders in the planning and coordination of these peer learning activities.

This document gives an overview of the meetings of the clusters and the peer learning activities since 2006 and of the planned meetings and activities in 2008. You also will find a reference to the corresponding legislative outcomes.

1.1.1 Modernisation of universities

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 3 meetings (April, July and November)

Meetings 2007: 3 meetings (April, June and October)

Meetings 2008: 2 meetings (April and October)

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- October, PLA on joint implementation of curriculum and funding reforms in NO
- October, PLA on partnerships between universities and business in the UK.

Activities 2007

- March, PLA on government steering of autonomous institutions in NL
- October, PLA on implementation of NQF/EQF in higher education, BG
- Work on a Compendium of good practices in HE-reform.

Activities 2008

- April, PLA -'light' on use of learning outcomes in BE
- June, PLA on relation between education and research/innovation in IS
- October, PLA on mobility in HE in ES (t.b.c.)

Legislative outcomes

Follow-up to the Communication on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities

Key events 2008

End of summer, Start of Compendium on good practices in modernising universities

1.1.2. Teachers and trainers

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 3 meetings (March, June and December)

Meetings 2007: 3 meetings (February, June and November) + 3 meetings especially on VET teachers and trainers (January, May and November)

Meetings 2008: 3 meetings (March, June and November) + a joint seminar in April with 'Key Competences' + 3 meetings on VET teachers and trainers (January, June and November)

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- May/June, PLA on developing schools as learning communities for their teachers in NL.
- December, Peer Learning Seminar on School Leadership policy organised by Commission in Brussels.

Activities 2007

- March, PLA on partnerships between VET schools and companies in AT.

- May, PLA on preparing teachers to respond to classroom diversity in NO.
- Oct, PLA on relationships between schools and teacher education providers, DK.

Activities 2008

- January, PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for teachers and trainers in VET
- May, PLA on Initial teacher training: the balance between classroom practice and theoretical studies in LI
- June, PLA (VET topic and country (IS) to be confirmed)
- October, PLA on VET teachers as change agents towards autonomy of VET schools in SL

Legislative outcomes

Communication: Quality of Teacher Education (2007).

1.1.3. Making best use of resources

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 2 meetings (May and November)

Meetings 2007: 1 meeting (June)

Meetings 2008: No meetings planned

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- March, workshop on Investing in and Financing of VET in HU.
- April, PLA on University governance: Autonomy and accountability in DK.
- September, Presidency Conference on Efficiency and Equity, FI.

Activities 2007

- March, Conference on Evidence-based policy in DE.
- May, PLA on evidence-based-policy and practice in NL.

Activities 2008

- No activities planned

Legislative outcomes

Follow-up to the Communication and Council conclusions on Efficiency and Equity.

Staff Working Document: Evidence Based Policy and Practice (2007)

1.1.4. Maths, Science and Technology

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 2 meetings (May and November)

Meetings 2007: 2 meetings (April and October)

Meetings 2008: 2 meetings (May and November)

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- November, PLA on holistic MST reforms "Delta Plan S&T" in NL.

Activities 2007

- May, PLA on mathematics education in SE.
- October, PLA on renovation of science education in FR.

Activities 2008

- April, PLA on national plan for MST in NO
- June, PLA on gender issues and teacher training in MST in DE
- September, Seminar on gender issues in MST (Brussels)
- October, PLA on national plan on math, and on science in PT

Key events 2008

October, Presidency conference on science learning in secondary and higher education in FR

1.1.5. Access and Social inclusion in lifelong learning

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 2 meetings (May and December)

Meetings 2007: 2 meetings (March and July)

Meetings 2008: 3 meetings (January, July and November/December)

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- September, seminar on disadvantaged youth in BE.
- September 2006, Conference on Equity and Efficiency in education in FI.
- October, PLA on preventative and compensatory measures against early school leaving in BE.

Activities 2007

- January, PLA on the Youth-reach, the School Completion and the Home School Liaison Service in IE.
- April, PLA on desegregating education for Roma children in HU
- November, PLA on strategies for equal opportunities in education in FR.

Activities 2008

- PLA on adult literacy in IE
- May/June, PLA on learning communities in ES (to be confirmed)
- October, PLA on immigrants' languages in education and pre-school in SE (to be confirmed)
- December, PLA on returning migrants in EL (to be confirmed)

Legislative outcomes

Communication: Education and Migration (2008).

Key events 2008

February 14, Presentation of reflections on early school leaving at the Education Council

June, Publication of a report on early school leaving

1.1.6. Key Competences

Cluster

Meetings in 2006: 2 meetings (May and October)

Meetings in 2007: 3 meetings (March, June and November)

Meetings in 2008: 3 meetings (March, June and November) + a joint seminar in April with 'Teachers and trainers'

Peer learning activities etc

Activities 2006

- No activities

Activities 2007

- January, PLA on cross-curricular objectives in BE.
- September, PLA on support for school in HU
- December, PLA on learning materials/cross-curricular competences in EL

Activities 2008

- May, PLA (topic and country to be confirmed)
- February, synthesis report on 2007 PLAs
- October, PLA (topic and country to be confirmed)

Legislative outcomes

Communication: Modernising the School (2008)

1.1.7. ICT

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 2 meetings (April and November)

Meetings 2007: 2 meetings (March, June and December)

Meetings 2008: 2 meetings (June and November)

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- January, PLA on Finnish virtual schools in FI.
- September, PLA on building learning networks in LU.
- Analysis of the ICT impact report. A review of studies of ICT impact in schools in Europe, elaborated by ESN.

Activities 2007

- April, PLA on the use of the structural fund to develop ICT infrastructure and brokerage of ICT based pedagogies in HU.

- September, PLA on leadership and parental involvement in the UK.
- Follow-up work on the Impact Report.

Activities 2008

- May, PLA (topic and country to be confirmed)
- October, PLA on digital contents: Copyright and licensing issues (country to be confirmed)

Legislative outcomes

Report on the use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all (2008).

Key events 2008

eSkills Conference, Thessaloniki, October 2008

ICT08 addressing young people's minds, Lyon 27-28 November 2008

1.1.8. Recognition of learning outcomes

Cluster

Meetings 2006: 2 meetings (May and December)

Meetings 2007: 2 meetings (March and December)

Meetings 2008: 2 meetings (May and December)

Peer learning activities etc.

Activities 2006

- October, Peer Learning Seminar on "The impact of a learning-outcomes approach on education and training systems".

Activities 2007

- January, PLA on quality assurance in validation of non-formal learning in BE.
- June, seminar on NQF development (preparation for PLA in HU) in BE.
- July, PLA on validation of non-formal learning in FR.
- October, PLA on National Qualification Frameworks in HU.
- January - December, Cedefop comparative study (32 countries) on the shift to learning outcomes.
- January - December, update of European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- July 07 - May 08, preparations of 'European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning'
- July 07 - July 08, Cedefop study on relationship education and occupation standards and the role of learning outcomes.

Activities 2008

- June, PLA on National Qualifications Frameworks, PL
- July, seminar on validation methodologies (portfolio)
- October, PLA on National Qualifications Frameworks, UK
- November, PLA on validation, NO

Legislative outcomes

Adoption of EQF Recommendation (2007).

Key events 2008

June, Launching conference EQF, Brussels

1.2 European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT): the composition of the Identification Committee and the nomination of the members of the Governing Board

The European Commissioner for Education and Culture, Ján Figel', announced to the European Parliament and the Council on 5 February the composition of the ad-hoc Identification Committee that will recommend members of the future EIT Governing Board. This Identification Committee will guarantee the independence, legitimacy and credibility of the identification process. Starting in February 2008, the work of the identification Committee is expected to take around four months.

The Committee is composed of four professionals of highest standing and unquestionable independence, providing a balance of expertise in different areas and coming from across the European Union.

The members of the Identification Committee are:

- Professor Günter Stock, Chairman, President of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities
- Professor Miklos Boda advisor to the Rector at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics
- Cecilia Schelin Seidegård, chairwoman of the Royal University of Technology in Stockholm
- Professor Ronan Stéphan, director for industrial affairs and technology transfer of the French CNRS, and executive director of France Innovation Scientifique et Transfert S.A.

The identification process will comprise a two-phase consultation with the main representative organisations at EU level. The Commission, after having informed the EP and the Council of the outcome of the selection process, will appoint the eighteen members of the EIT Governing Board.

The EIT represents a unique opportunity to boost Europe's innovation potential. It will be a flagship for excellence at European level, bringing together the best scientific, business and education resources to boost the Union's innovation capacity. It will be based on a two level-structure: first, on a light-weight governance structure and second, on a set of Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) that will pool together the best European resources to perform research, education and innovation activities.

The Governing Board will steer the activities of the EIT. It will be composed of independent members of the highest potential and prestige and provide a balanced expertise in business, research and education. It will set the strategy of the EIT and decide on the areas in which to invest and to establish the KICs. It will also be responsible for the selection of the KICs, for the monitoring and evaluation of their work.

The Commission anticipates the appointment of the Board's members around summer 2008, after the adoption of the EIT regulation scheduled in March 2008.

1.3 Promoting a "personal adoptive language" strengthens multilingualism and intercultural dialogue, concludes the EC group of intellectuals

The Group of Intellectuals set up to advise the Commission on the contribution of multilingualism to Intercultural Dialogue delivered its report, entitled 'A rewarding challenge', to Commissioner Orban today. The group, chaired by Amin Maalouf, in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, makes proposals on how languages can foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, establishing a clear link between linguistic diversity and European integration. These findings should fuel the discussion at the first-ever Ministerial Conference on multilingualism, scheduled for 15 February. The group focuses on citizens with a "second mother tongue", also called a "personal adoptive language", with which they identify for personal or professional reasons.

The personal adoptive language is already a reality for a growing number of EU citizens who identify with another language on a personal, cultural or professional level.

Two main points can be identified from the proposals.

- Bilateral relations between the EU countries should hinge on the languages of the two countries involved rather than on a third language. Each country should have enough proficient speakers of the others' languages.
- The EU should promote the concept of a "personal adoptive language", to be seen as a "second mother tongue" with every European citizen being motivated to learn one. It would need to be part and parcel of everyone's school education/university studies and professional life, closely linked to aspects involving history, culture and literature. This adopted language would not normally be the one used for international communication.

To support these points, there are a number of practical considerations

- Immigration has a growing impact on political, economic, social and intellectual life in Europe. For immigrants, the personal adoptive language would normally be the language of the country in which they have chosen to live.
- The non-EU immigrants' own languages should be included in the languages which EU citizens would be encouraged to learn.
- For those Europeans whose mother tongue occupies a dominant position in the world, acquiring a personal adoptive language would be particularly important, in order to avoid remaining isolated in monolingualism.
- To ensure that this linguistic diversity is maintained countries should establish a common organisation entrusted with the task of promoting knowledge of each other's language and culture.

The full report of the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue is available in 22 languages at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages_en.html

1.4 Commission launches initiative to facilitate mobility in vocational education and training (ECVET proposal) – 10 April 2008

The European Commission has presented plans for a Europe-wide credit system in vocational education and training. This system, called ECVET, would make it easier for citizens to get formal recognition of knowledge, skills and competences they have gained

in another country. Member States are encouraged to sign up to this voluntary scheme that does not seek to replace national systems but to facilitate the transfer between them.

This new initiative aims to build on the success of ECTS, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System in higher education. Originally introduced in 1989, the ECTS has improved transparency and facilitated the recognition of study components done in another country than one's own.

Education systems in Europe are highly fragmented and often complex. Vocational education and training are no exception in this respect. The number of different qualifications and procedures, even within one country, can make it difficult to transfer the results of learning from one system, or learning context, to another.

By facilitating such transfer situations, the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) supports citizens' mobility and gives them better access to lifelong learning, whether in formal, non-formal or informal contexts. In ECVET, units of learning outcomes are defined with an associated number of credit points. This in turn helps qualification-awarding authorities in the Member States to translate learning outcomes and associated points acquired elsewhere into their own vocational training qualifications system.

ECVET is fully compatible with both the European credit system in higher education and national systems in vocational education and training. The Commission's proposal takes the form of a recommendation, now submitted for approval to the European Parliament and the Council. Member States would eventually adopt it on a voluntary basis and implement it according to their own rules.

The Commission has also put forward plans for a new reference tool that would help Member States exchange best practice in vocational education and training policies. The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF), which is the subject of a separate Recommendation, aims at increasing transparency and consistency of policy developments in this field. Member States are invited to improve their quality management practices by applying this set of common criteria and indicative descriptors and measure their policies against it.

Useful links:

European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training

DG Education and Culture: ECVET

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/ecvet/index_en.html

Quality Assurance in vocational education and training:

DG Education and Culture: European Network on Quality Assurance in VET:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/qualitynet_en.html

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop): Quality assurance in VET: http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/quality/

1.5 Expected documents and events in 2008

1.5.1 Documents

- Report on the use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all;

- Communication "E-skills for the 21st century: fostering competitiveness, growth and jobs";
- Innovation Green Paper;
- Joint Interim report Education and Training 2010 (Spring 2008);
- Communication on Schools for the 21st century (June 2008);
- Green Paper on Education and Migration (April 2008);

Migration is posing a significant challenge to education systems. Education policies need to take adequate account of needs emerging from migration, and to be equipped to cope with the new challenges, in order not to hinder the overall equity and efficiency of the education systems. The survey carried out in the framework of OECD's PISA shows that pupils of immigrant origin still face significant educational difficulties and specific problems in Europe.

The general objectives of this green paper are:

- To explore further the relation between education and training systems and their specific role for the migrant population of Europe;
- To initiate EU-level reflection on policies to promote school integration of migrants on the basis of existing data thereby focusing on what constitutes good national/local policy approaches and the value-added of EU policies and programmes.
- Proposal for a recommendation on a common quality assurance in VET (April 2008);
- Updated strategic framework for Education and Training (December 2008)

1.5.2 Events

20 May 2008: Stakeholders Forum (on the updated strategic framework)

25 November 2008: VET conference in Bordeaux (next stage in the Copenhagen process)

2 Conclusions of the European Council on Education (14 February 2008)

2.1 Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on progress under the 'Education and Training 2010 work programme – "Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation".

2.1.1 Council conclusions

The Council adopted the 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme. The 3rd joint progress report, entitled 'Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation' gives a picture of progress made, identifies areas where progress remains insufficient and proposes measures to be taken for further improvements. The report points to the following three areas that will need particular efforts: raising skills levels, implementing of lifelong learning strategies and strengthening the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation).

Joint reports are adopted on a biennial basis by the Commission and the Council. It is a key document in measuring the contribution of education to the Lisbon process, and it is the background against which the key messages to the European Council have been formulated (see 2.2)

2.1.2 Main findings of the Joint Progress Report on the "Education and Training 2010 work programme"

The data included in the Joint Report show that Europe has made some progress in most of the areas monitored. Participation in education is in general on the increase in all levels, including pre-primary, but progress is not yet fast enough to reach the ambitious goals that Europe has set for itself.

There is cause for concern, however, over the trend increase in the share of pupils with only low reading skills. The EU has set itself the goal of decreasing the share of low achievers by 20% by 2010. Unfortunately, the share has instead increased by about 13% since 2000. The figures reveal that boys perform worse than girls. While Finland is amongst the best performing countries worldwide, its experience contrasts with that of Romania and Bulgaria, where more than half of 15 year old pupils have low reading skills.

As regards participation in upper secondary education and early school leavers, Europe has made constant progress since 2000. There are one million fewer early school leavers today compared to 2000. But even faster progress is needed to reach the benchmarks. While Nordic countries and the new Member States in general perform well as regards participation at school, some Southern European Member States, notably Malta and Portugal, show relatively low participation rates and high rates of early school leaving.

As regards tertiary maths, science and technology graduates, with a growth of 26% since 2000 (or 170 000 graduates) Europe has already clearly surpassed the goal of increasing the number by 15% by 2010. However, there has been less progress in reducing the gender imbalance.

Participation in adult lifelong learning has also progressed, but not fast enough to reach the benchmark set for Europe. The Nordic countries and the UK currently show the highest participation rates (over 20% of adults participating in an adult learning activity during a four-week reference period).

Participation in pre-primary education is considered to be of great importance for later learning. This has increased continuously since 2000. Some Member States, notably France, Belgium, Italy and Spain already reach nearly 100% participation, but several EU countries, including Poland and Ireland, still have rates below 50%.

As a result of increasing participation rates in education, educational attainment rates of the adult population are tending to increase too. The number of low skilled adults is falling each year, and nearly 23% of the EU working age population currently has a higher education degree, up from about 19% in 2000.

Education needs proper funding. However, while between 2000 and 2003 public spending on education as a percentage of GDP increased considerably in EU Member States, in 2004 the upward trend in education funding stopped —and even declined slightly compared to the year before.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/progressreport_en.html

2.2 Key messages Qualifications to the Spring European Council in the field of education and training

The Council adopted, after an exchange of views, key messages in the field of education and training addressed to the Spring meeting of the European Council (13 and 14 March in Brussels).

The key messages highlight a number of actions and issues that need to be drawn to the attention of the European Council at this critical stage for implementation of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. They emphasise four themes:

- implementation of lifelong learning strategies, inviting member states to take concrete actions to:
 - address the lack of progress on youth literacy and reduce the number of early school leavers;
 - improve achievement levels of migrants;
 - make the teaching profession more attractive to the best graduates;
 - attract more adults into education and training.
- knowledge triangle (education – research – innovation), emphasising in particular the crucial role of education and training in promoting creativity and innovation;
- intercultural dialogue, underlining the importance of equipping individuals with the competences needed to engage in such a dialogue;
- transnational mobility, which should become common practice in higher education and be developed further in the field of vocational education and training.

In addition, the Council invited the Commission to submit by the end of 2008 a proposal for an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training.

Ministers also held an exchange of views in connection with the adoption of the text. As an additional focus for this discussion, a well-known education expert presented a example of outcomes of a peer learning activity carried out in the framework of the open method of coordination, specially on early school leaving.

The debate which followed covered, in particular, the following items:

- the key messages and in particular the importance of basic skills and teacher training;
- the effectiveness of the open method of coordination and the role of peer learning, indicators and benchmarks particularly with regard to the EU strategy for the post-2010 period;
- the particular issue of early school leaving, and the means that can be used to address this problem, including increased support for disadvantaged schools, closer teacher-parent cooperation, mentoring schemes and special attention for the children of migrants.

2.3 Other business

2.3.1 Designation of the 2009 European year of Creativity and Innovation

The Commission briefed the Council on the plan to designate 2009 as the European year of creativity and innovation, an initiative raised at previous Council meetings. Its aim will

be to promote creativity and innovation as key competences for the personal fulfilment and well-being of all individuals in society.

2.3.2 EuroSkills 2008 (Rotterdam, 18-20 September 2008)

The European Commission and the Netherlands's delegation briefed the Council on EuroSkills, the first Europe-wide skills competition, which will be held in Rotterdam on 18-20 September 2008. It will be organised by a newly established association, European Skills Promotion Organisation (ESPO), in cooperation with Skills Netherlands. The European Commission is supporting the organisation of the event through the Lifelong Learning Programme.

2.3.3 European Qualifications framework

The Council adopted the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

It is expected that it will be co-signed by the Presidents of the EP and Council in late February/early March 2008.

3 Publications

3.1 "No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education"

The OECD announces the publication of "No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education", the final report of the OECD Thematic Review on Equity in Education, which was presented during the Lisbon conference. You can find all information on:

http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_2649_33723_39676214_1_1_1_1,00.html

'No More Failures' challenges the assumption that there will always be failures and dropouts, those who can't or won't make it in school. In fact, initiatives in many countries demonstrate that it is possible to successfully tackle school failure and dropout rates – and to reduce the huge social cost of adults without basic skills. This book offers a valuable comparative perspective on how different countries have handled equity in education. Among the issues it explores:

- - tracking, streaming and academic selection
- - school choice
- - secondary education structures and second chance programmes
- - grade repetition
- - links between school and home
- - early childhood education
- - resource allocation
- - targets for equity
- - the special needs of migrants and minorities

The book identifies three key areas for delivering equity in education: the design of education systems, classroom practices and resourcing. It proposes ten concrete policy measures, backed by evidence, on how to reduce school failure and dropout rates. It will be of special interest to policy makers, school leaders, teachers and parents. This page

provides the cover image, the blurb, the executive summary, the table of contents and information on how to obtain the publication.

3.2 Eurydice study: 'School Autonomy in Europe: policies and measures'

Eurydice announced the publication of the study 'School Autonomy in Europe. Policies and Measures'.

Over the past twenty years, schools have been the subject of much reflection and many reforms, in particular as regards the autonomy granted to them. Increased decision-making power has been vested in them in order to improve democratic participation, the management of public funding for education and, especially in recent years, the quality of teaching. School autonomy remains a key issue on the political agenda of many European countries.

Eurydice provides an outline of the current state of school autonomy at primary and lower secondary level: Which areas are concerned and to what extent? Which decision-making bodies have been implemented? What are the main accountability mechanisms of schools? The study also presents a historical overview of the reforms related to school autonomy, spanning more than 20 years.

<http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=090EN>

3.3 What skills will Europeans need in the years to come? First EU forecast of skill needs is published by CEDEFOP

Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, presents its first forecast of skill needs up to the year 2015. The study "Future skill needs in Europe: medium-term forecast" concludes that demand for skills and qualifications is being driven upwards in most occupations, including in so-called elementary jobs, by the continuing rise of the service sector and sweeping technological and organisational changes.

The forecast by Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, covers the period up to 2015. It shows that the long transition of European economies away from the primary and manufacturing sectors and towards the service sector is not yet complete. The new Member States in particular are still going through the process. But the transition is gradual: the traditional sectors still employ significant numbers of people and will continue to do so in the medium term. This is the case in all alternative scenarios explored by the forecasting exercise (from 'optimistic' to 'pessimistic').

By 2015, the primary sector is expected to employ 10 million workers across Europe — down from 12 million in 2006 (15 million in 1996) — while manufacturing will employ 34,5 million — down from 35 million over the same period (38 million in 1996).

But services are where the real growth is. The economy as a whole will generate more than 13 million new jobs by 2015 — despite the loss of well over 2 million jobs in the primary sector and half a million in manufacturing. Transport and distribution, including tourism, will create 3.5 million additional jobs, while business and various services offer the best employment prospects in the medium term, generating 9 million new jobs by 2015. Another 3 million additional jobs will be created in education, health and social work.

Even more significant in its impact than the continuing shift to the service sector is the growing requirement of skills and qualifications at all levels. The demand for high skills has not yet peaked. Today, 80 out of 210 million European workers are in highly-skilled, non-manual jobs and this high proportion is expected to rise further.

Between 2006 and 2015, Europe will gain 12.5 million additional jobs at the highest qualification level and 9.5 million at the medium level (especially vocational qualifications). But jobs for workers with low qualifications will decline by 8.5 million. Even jobs for unskilled manual workers are demanding more qualifications, while skilled manual workers will increasingly need medium-level qualifications.

This has serious implications for employment. A shrinking population implies a continuing need to replace workers, even in declining sectors and occupations. But with skill requirements increasing dramatically, the new workers will need higher qualifications to perform "the same job".

The forecasting exercise is based on a projection of current trends. To cover new developments in skills and occupations, Cedefop, with the contribution of Skillsnet — its international network of researchers and policy makers for the early identification of skill needs — also looks into particular fields in detail. So far Cedefop has studied tourism, nanotechnology, agri-food and wood and will soon launch reports on the health and environment sectors. In addition, it will be working on the basis of surveys to identify employers' expectations of skill needs.

The study covers 25 member states of the European Union (Bulgaria and Romania are not covered), plus Norway and Switzerland.

Website: www.cedefop.europa.eu

3.4 Study on the impact of Comenius, the EU programme for schools

The study involved nearly 8 000 schools that had participated in the Comenius programme over the last six years. It was undertaken on behalf of the European Commission by the Gesellschaft für Empirische Studien in Kassel, Germany, in cooperation with the Centre for School and Education Research at the Martin-Luther University in Halle Wittemberg, Germany.

Participating in a school partnership under the EU's Comenius programme brings clear advantages to the pupils, teachers and schools involved. This is the main finding of a recent study of the impact of European school partnerships funded through Comenius. Such school partnerships have been found to help pupils to learn better, they improve schools' teaching and learning environments, motivate pupils and teachers to learn foreign languages, and improve intercultural awareness and competences.

The Comenius programme, which is currently part of the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme for the period 2007-2013, supports projects between schools in different European countries. Through these projects, pupils and teachers work on agreed topics, exchange project results between the partner schools and develop small publications, web sites or DVDs to present their results. Comenius School Partnerships mainly use communication technologies to carry out their work, and consequently there is only limited travel. More than 800 000 pupils were involved in such partnerships in 2007. 30 000 of them took part in a mobility activity to meet their partners in other countries.

The European Commission commissioned a study in 2007 to assess the impact of these Comenius School Partnerships on teachers, pupils and the participating schools as a whole. The results are strikingly positive: both pupils and teachers improved their languages skills, gained more intercultural competences, and experienced a better school climate.

- Better computer and social networking skills

Teachers reported that through Comenius School Partnerships, more than 70% of their pupils boosted their social skills and their ability to work in teams[1]. According to their teachers' assessments, two-thirds of pupils gained specialist knowledge and ICT competences, and they became more self confident and motivated to learn. Moreover, 75% of the teachers improved their capacity to work in inter-disciplinary teams. They also dealt with new subject matter and learned about new teaching methods.

- Language skills boosted

Through the Comenius School Partnerships, more than 75 % of the pupils become more interested and motivated to learn foreign languages; while 62 % substantially improved their proficiency in English and 23 % in a language other than English. In addition, two-thirds of the participating teachers improved their English skills. English is often used as the main communication language in the partnerships, whereas other languages are less commonly used. Nevertheless, one third of the teachers also gained better skills in a language other than English.

- Improved school climate

Further, the respondents to this survey reported an improvement in the school climate (60 %) and a boost in interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. Project work reportedly became increasingly popular, and the more intensively and actively pupils participated in project activities, the more positive was the impact of the school partnership. A large majority of all teachers (79 %) saw a stronger European dimension in their school as a result.

- Intercultural awareness raised

The survey showed that more than 80 % of teachers noted that their pupils became more interested in other countries and cultures. They improved considerably their knowledge of life in general, and school life in particular, in the partner countries, and also showed more tolerance towards other cultures and foreigners. The impact on teachers is similarly noteworthy: 90% of the teachers improved their knowledge and understanding of the partner countries' school system, and 82% established lasting personal contacts with teachers from partner schools.

More information on the study results is available on http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/impact_en.html

3.5 Study on the impact of the Leonardo da Vinci programme

The "Study on the Impact of Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Experiences of Trainees" was carried out by WSF Kerpen, Germany. It is based on the answers to 26 000 online questionnaires sent out between December 2006 and April 2007 to trainees in initial vocational training, and to people in the labour market who benefited from the Programme in years 2004 and 2005, in 28 countries. Trainees of all economic sectors, vocational fields, types and levels of training and sizes of enterprise were addressed.

Participation in projects financed by the Leonardo Da Vinci vocational training programme brings substantial social and economic benefits, a recent study funded by the European Commission has shown. It demonstrates that international mobility of this kind is a strong incentive for personal, linguistic, social and professional development.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme focuses on the teaching and training needs of those involved in vocational education and training. In doing so, it bolsters the competitiveness of the European labour market by helping EU citizens to acquire new skills, knowledge and qualifications in European countries outside their home country. It is part of the Commission's flagship funding programme in education and training, the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The study shows that vocational skills gained during a period of vocational training abroad pay dividends during the subsequent career. For instance, 58% of unemployed people received a job after their training abroad, 32% of employed people found a workplace in another country, 27% improved the quality of their jobs and 34% got jobs with greater responsibility. More than one third of trainees in initial vocational training improved their results and 41% said that their participation in training is now more intensive.

Other figures confirm the success of Leonardo da Vinci: 86% of all former participants are interested in another stay abroad, or in a professional life in another country, and 83% are willing to improve their language skills, and are making use of their acquired competencies and techniques.

The experiences gained abroad also boosted participants' self confidence (70%), their adaptability (73%) and inclination to teamwork (62%). The study found out that 66% of trainees improved their language skills, 65% their ability to manage unexpected situations, 72% the ability to interact with people, and 71% to handle new challenges.

The only negative critical point concerns the duration of placement: In 48% of cases participants complained that the stay was too short.

The evaluators came to the conclusion that the success of the projects funded under the Programme depends on the project design, the quality of pedagogical, linguistic and cultural preparation, and on the existence of monitoring/tutoring in cooperation between the sending and the host country. The recognition and certification of the placement abroad has an additional positive impact.

The Commission will discuss the study's findings with the Member States' national authorities and other stakeholders in order to build on the Programme's strong points and address its weaknesses. The aim is to develop a continual impact assessment based on permanent data collection. There are also plans to set up European discussion platforms within the different vocational fields, the results of which would feed into the future design of the Programme.

The study is available in English, German, French, Spanish and Italian at:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/index_en.html

3.6 Studies ECVET

Towards the end of 2005, the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission commissioned two studies (ECVET Connexion and ECVET reflector) on evaluating the level of readiness of VET and qualifications systems in Europe for the

implementation of the nascent ECVET. A third study dealt with the obstacles to transnational mobility faced by apprentices and other young people in initial vocational VET and possible ways of overcoming them (MoVE-iT). The results of these studies are published

The **ECVET CONNEXION study** targeted issues related to the conception and implementation of ECVET from the perspective of VET provisions. Its management was conferred upon the French National Association for Automobile Training (ANFA) and the French Ministry for Education, Higher Education and Research (MENESR). You can download the results of this study on www.ecvetconnexion.com

The mandate for the **ECVET reflector study** was to analyse the relationships between the features of the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) as proposed by the European Commission in its consultation document and the existing regulations and practices of assessment, validation, certification as well as accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes in the national VET systems in Europe. It has been led by Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (f-bb) and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in Germany. You can download the results of this study on <http://www.ecvet.net/c.php/ecvet/index.rsys>

For further information on **MoVE-iT** see www.europe-move-it.eu