European cooperation in vocational education and training
3 Editorial

An interview with Federal Minister of Education Professor Dr. Johanna Wanka

4 Vitalising the European Education Alliance

More opportunities for young people in Europe

6 New BMBF bilateral cooperation agreements in vocational education and training

Initiatives of the European Commission

8 Vocational education and training for growth and jobs – what can Europe do?

Learning from one another

10 Task Forces support bilateral initiatives for the promotion of dual training in Europe

Network “Work-based learning” starting soon

12 Definition, stock taking and objectives

Work-based learning in Italy

14 Challenges and perspectives for a European cooperation

The opportunity offered by the European Education Area

16 What impetuses can European projects generate

Good Practice: LEONARDO DA VINCI Transfer of innovation project

17 Development of vocation education and training in Lithuania

A glimpse behind the scenes of a Portuguese training company

18 Recognising diversity as an opportunity

Initial conclusions after one year of the Recognition Act

20 „Doing a top job – including in Germany”

Paradigm shift in education

22 Educational staff crucial to the shaping of the European Education Area

BIBB – the „common address“ for vocational education and training in Germany

24 Research policy advice and support for practice – available from a single source in high quality!

An interview on the German dual system

26 VET secures well qualified skilled workers and offers young people good prospects

28 Imprint
Dear reader,

A year ago I would not have thought that we would publish this English edition of our Journal. In the meantime "work-based learning" (WBL) has become a key word in vocational education and training. The European Commission has launched the Alliance for Apprenticeships; many countries in Europe but also in Asia, North or South America consider reforming their VET systems seeking to create closer links to the labour market. And employers search for qualified staff that can master the challenges of a changing work environment.

With this journal, we want to provide you an overview of the most important initiatives in Europe and put them into a broader picture. What is the idea of an alliance for apprentices? What were the objectives behind the Berlin Memorandum and what are the challenges countries like Italy face? And how do the European programmes support national reform policy? I am convinced that Europe and the Lifelong Learning Programme offer enormous opportunities for learning from each other and support the development of mutual understanding. We want to make this visible and draw your attention to the opportunities as well as the richness of concepts and sometimes solutions the programme offers.

The interested public often looks at Germany, and sometimes politicians declare the dual system in Germany to be a blueprint. This is not the case. WBL in Germany has specific historical roots and traditions going back to craftsmanship and the Hansa in the Middle Ages. Therefore the German system can neither be copied nor simply transferred. When looking at VET systems in Europe more in detail you will find elements of WBL nearly everywhere. In countries like Switzerland, Denmark, Austria or Norway a considerable part of VET is based on WBL.

What we would like to do is to look behind the scenes. Why do employers and trade unions take responsibility for training? What kind of governance is needed to run a VET system built on work-based learning? What are key elements of work-based learning and what should be considered a national "dialect"?

I do not presume that we can answer all these questions comprehensively in this publication. Also, for many challenges and problems there simply is no final answer. If at the end of the day we have gotten you interested in the topic, we have already achieved a lot.

Klaus Fahle
Director
Vitalising the European Education Alliance

Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka has been Germany’s Federal Minister of Education and Research since February 2013. From 2000 to 2009, she was Minister of Science, Research and Culture of the State of Brandenburg. From 2010 to 2013, she held the corresponding office in Lower Saxony. Before entering politics, Johanna Wanka worked in research and teaching for many years. Her specialist area is “engineering mathematics.”

You took up office as Germany’s new Federal Minister of Education and Research in mid-February. You have already announced some of your national educational policy priorities. The Federal Education and Training Assistance Act (BAföG), the Higher Education Pact and a quality campaign for teacher training are all keywords that have already been mentioned in this regard. What objectives are you pursuing in the field of vocational education and training?

One thing which is clear is that academic and vocational education are of equal value. For this reason, it is important for every young person to find the training or course of higher education study that best suits them and for them to be able to switch between the systems. I am convinced that we will need to open up our institutes of higher education even more widely in the future. In terms of the perspective I am adopting, my focus is on making the transitions between vocational and academic education more permeable, and that means in both directions. We should continue to make access to higher education study easier for those who hold vocational qualifications but are not in possession of a school-based higher education entrance qualification. By the same token, a further aim is to secure competencies already acquired when switching from academic education to vocational education and training. Recognition and credit transfer of competencies acquired during higher education study to the whole of the duration of the vocational education and training are important keywords here. Students who are considering dropping out of higher education study and switching to VET also need advice and information on training courses, occupational prospects and recognition regulations.

What expectations do you have of European cooperation in vocational education and training in this regard? What can we expect from Europe from your point of view, and what impetuses can Germany provide for European cooperation?

We are currently experiencing a historic opportunity. Never before has there been a demand for the dual system of vocational education and training been formulated in such clear terms worldwide. Recognition of our system is reflected in the form of specific enquiries regarding cooperation. In December 2012, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research staged a Ministerial Conference with the EU member states of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Latvia and Slovakia. At the conference, a memorandum was signed containing joint objectives and specific measures to promote youth employment and to develop company-related and cooperative VET systems. Our aim is to use these measures to vitalise the European Alliance for Apprenticeships initiated by the European Commission. This makes a real contribution towards combating youth employment and fostering social harmony in Europe (cf. p. 6 f.).

The European Education Ministers have agreed to improve their national vocational education and training systems and to create the general conditions for a European Vocational Education and Training Area. Within this context, we are also seeking to strengthen the mobility of young people and employees for training and employment in Germany. The plan is to implement exchange measures in the form of practical placements. 30 regional training networks will be established in the partner countries with German involvement. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) will establish a Central Office for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). These are examples of just a few of the initiatives that we have instigated.

As we know, Europe begins at home. On 17 January 2013, the Bundestag, the German Lower House of Parliament, adopted a national benchmark for the internationalisation of vocational education and training. The aim by the year 2020 is for at least ten percent of trainees to be able to acquire experience abroad during their training. How do you intend to support this objective? And what specific measures can the Federal Government undertake to assist with its implementation?

The Federal Government supports trainee mobility, not least via the objective agreed with the member states of the European Union that the proportion of trainees who have completed a period of training spent abroad should be increased to at least 6 percent by 2020. In 2012 alone, over 14,300 scholarships were funded via the European educational programme LEONARDO DA VINCI. This is twice as many as in 2007.
The Federal Government is committed to providing more funding for the mobility of trainees within the scope of the new “Erasmus for All” Programme. We also aim to improve the general conditions governing mobility in overall terms and to remove barriers to mobility on a permanent basis. The fostering of mobility also includes creating a welcoming culture. Germany plans to offer better availability of information, put provision for integration in place and drive forwards the recognition of educational qualifications.

At an EU level, the Federal Government is taking action to promote trainee mobility within the EU. In developing policy for young people, it has accorded a high priority to the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy with the aim of increasing European mobility for learning purposes for disadvantaged young people in particular. The aim is both to increase mobility in quantitative terms as well as designing a high-quality system via such mechanisms as longer duration of periods spent abroad and credit transfers for competences acquired in other countries.

One question on adult education if I may. Demographic change, which is a focal point of the BMBF Science Year, is having serious consequences for people’s employment and learning histories. What are the concepts that the Federal Government is deploying to shape the change, and what changes are required in the educational system?

The ramifications of demographic change have been discernible for some time, for example on the training places market. The central question is how an ageing and shrinking society can continue to remain innovative. Education has a crucial contribution to make in this respect. In future, it will be even more important to tap into all area of potential for the training market, including both high-ability and lower ability young people, in order to ensure a supply of skilled workers in Germany. The Federal Government has launched a series of targeted measures to support vocational orientation and apprentice-ship entry maturity. One example is the “Educational Chains” Initiative, which aims to prevent school dropouts, avoid waiting loops in the transitional system and use vocational training as a vehicle for securing the supply of young skilled workers.

The questions were asked by Dr. Gabriele Schneider.
European cooperation in vocational education and training

More opportunities for young people in Europe

New BMBF bilateral cooperation agreements in vocational education and training

Volker Rieke There is a long tradition in Germany of vocational education and training cooperation with European partner countries. Over the past decades, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has built up close bilateral cooperation agreements with France, the Netherlands, Austria and Norway for the purposes of trainee exchanges and the pursuit of joint projects. In the wake of the European economic crisis, we are now experiencing a newly awakened interest in the dual system of vocational education and training and in cooperation with German partners from countries particularly affected by youth unemployment, such as Spain and Greece.

The particular quality of vocational education and training in Germany has been cited as one of the reasons for Germany’s success in largely absorbing the consequences of the economic crisis on the labour market for young people. The requirements-oriented training of skilled workers via a combination of school-based learning and company-based learning within the work process and a high degree of willingness on the part of the companies to assume responsibility for vocational education and training are particular areas that are receiving recognition and attention, including in countries where the focus has hitherto been strongly on school-based training and higher education. These countries are investigating how these particular characteristics of the dual system can be integrated into the necessary stages of reform within their own vocational education and training systems and are making enquiries regarding support and advice.

The interest in workplace-related and process-oriented training is now also being reflected at a European level. In its communication published last year – “Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes” – the European Commission expressly addressed elements of dual training and presented the concept of a European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

Against this background, on 10 and 11 December 2012 the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) joined forces with Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Slovakia and Latvia to stage a Ministerial Conference in Berlin entitled

Ministerial conference „Vocational Education and Training in Europe”, December 2012

© BMBF
European cooperation in vocational education and training

“Vocational Education and Training in Europe – Perspectives for the Young Generation” in Berlin. At the conference, a Memorandum was adopted containing joint objectives and specific measures for the promotion of youth employment and the further development of VET systems. This represents active involvement on the part of Germany in the Alliance for Apprenticeships initiated by the European Commission (cf. p. 4 f.).

The main focus is on the three areas of: policy advice for the creation of dual training structures within the educational systems; the establishment of regional VET networks and associations comprising schools, companies and chambers in the partner countries; the expansion of mobility of young people and of employees for training and employment in Germany.

In order to make cooperation more binding and to be able to monitor progress, the following specific stages were stipulated.

- Establishment of at least 30 beacon projects for the creation of regional training networks between companies and chambers in the partner countries over the next two years
- Provision of funding of up to 10 million Euro from Germany for the financing of the involvement of German partners in beacon projects, in which partnerships and cooperative training networks are set up between chambers and companies in the partner countries
- Investigation of co-financing by the partner countries for their own respective partners in the beacon projects
- Expansion of the EURES Network to form a European trainee placement service and strengthening of the EURES programme “Your first EURES-Job”, including using national funding
- Step-by-step and systematic establishment of practice-oriented vocational education and training via at least one policy cooperation project to support the reform endeavours in each respective partner country

Rather than seeking a “one-to-one transfer”, the emphasis is on implementing the elements of the dual system that seem useful and able to deliver a rapid effect under the particular prevailing economic, societal and political conditions in the partner country. For this reason, an individual approach is selected for each partner country.

Completion of at least ten study visits regarding the action areas of the Memorandum in 2013/2014.

Coordinated use of the new European Education Programme and of financing from the European Social Fund for cooperation on implementation of the Memorandum from 2014 onwards

Increase in numbers of participants, in particular for longer term training visits to Germany (including for training staff) within the scope of LEONARDO DA VINCI and the follow-up programme “Erasmus for All” 2,000 participants from the partner countries annually

Initiation of LEONARDO DA VINCI partnership or transfer of innovation projects (via contact seminars with the respective partner countries)

Establishment of a pool of VET experts in all countries with a coordinator in each

Creation of a joint cooperation designed for the longer term with a view to the further development and evaluation of cooperation within the scope of the Memorandum

The new generation of European Education Programmes and the new European Social Fund are anticipated to provide the primary funding input from 2014. In addition to this, the Commission is seeking to use the Alliance for Apprenticeships to integrate further states into the reform process initiated by Germany (cf. p. 8 f.).

The BMBF is receiving essential support from the German social partners. The umbrella organisations of trade and industry and of the chambers have already concluded cooperation agreements with their partner associations in other countries for the transfer of German training principles or else are preparing such agreements. The German Chambers of Industry and Commerce abroad and German companies located in the partner countries are being accorded a central role, especially with regard to the regional vocational education and training networks with the companies, the schools and the chambers in the partner countries.

Volker Rieke
is Head of the Department of European and International Cooperation in Education and Research at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).
European cooperation in vocational education and training

Initiatives of the European Commission

Vocational education and training for growth and jobs – what can Europe do?

António Silva Mendes ** In the context of the current economic and social situation, vocational education and training has never been as high on the political agenda as it is today. EU leaders are calling for urgent action to modernise VET, making the most of its potential as a key tool for growth and jobs.

The importance of delivering high-quality VET is increasing, driven by at least two striking trends:

1. Forecasts of future skills needs clearly show that the labour market by 2020 will require some 50 percent of all qualifications to be vocational ones, also thanks to a need to replace older workers on the point of retirement in active cooperation with enterprises/business.

2. VET, particularly work-based or apprentice-type training, can be an effective tool to ease transition to the labour market, to ensure labour market relevant training and to decrease recruitment costs for employers. Countries with dual systems report on the positive economic outcomes of such a system and highlight the win-win situation for both companies and young people.

What is being done at EU level to help Member States address their vocational training challenges?

In principle, support takes place at two levels – which are well interlinked and mutually reinforcing – the policy cooperation and funding mechanisms.

Policy cooperation takes place within the overall Europe 2020 strategy which promotes, coordinates and monitors structural reforms in all EU Member States. In this exercise, the importance of education and training has never been as high as it is today. Mobilising education and training in support of growth and jobs means reviewing existing systems with a view to modernising them and making them more responsive to the situation on the labour market. For example, in 2012, in the case of 16 out of 27 Member States, the Commission issued a country specific recommendation related to vocational education and training, particularly focused on the need to introduce or reform work-based/apprentice-type training.

In the specific VET policy cooperation framework – the so-called Copenhagen Process – an ambitious modernisation agenda to be achieved by 2020 has been defined by Member States, social partners and the Commission. The shared goal is to make VET a high quality, attractive, labour market relevant learning option which is accessible to all, supported by quality guidance and opportunities for progressions and international mobility. The Member States are working on the implementation of this agenda, with the support of the European Commission and social partners. Importantly, the commitment and engagement of all stakeholders is absolutely crucial in making VET reforms work. For instance, the implementation of a dual VET system is only possible if employers and other social partners are actively engaged in and committed to investing in VET and providing young people with apprenticeship places.

In the funding area, it goes without saying that the European Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), represents by far the main source of funding of reforms in vocational education and training. All countries are starting to define their investment priorities for the period of 2014–2020. It is important that education, skills, vocational training and lifelong learning be considered by both the Commission and Member States as a top thematic priority for the next programming period.

The Lifelong Learning programme, including its LEONARDO DA VINCI strand, is an important complementary tool to the ESF and especially a source for innovative practices. The LEONARDO DA VINCI programme supports mobility projects for VET students and professionals, as well as innovative networking and partnerships to contrib-
uro cooperation in vocational education and training

Apprenticeships

3 pillars:

1. Improvement of apprenticeship-type systems across Europe through a federation of efforts for targeted knowledge transfer
2. Change of mind-sets through a spotlight on the benefits of apprenticeship systems
3. Smart use of EU resources to support apprenticeships, notably through the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and Lifelong Learning Programme/Erasmus for All

Let me just outline one of the actions of the Alliance which is of most interest to the National Agencies. The LLP will support a thematic network of LLP National Agencies on work-based learning. Thematic networking aims to increase the impact on policy and practice of the innovative projects in the LEO- ARDO DA VINCI Programme. The present call envisages building on the LEO- ARDO and Erasmus experiences, to exploit complementary projects and share expertise and knowledge between them. A restricted call for proposals to National Agencies is in preparation and activities should commence in September.

A user-friendly toolbox on work-based learning

The expected work of the Network includes the development of an online toolbox of materials for use by stakeholders who are developing work-based learning, including apprenticeships. Depending on LLP project results, the toolbox could be used by policy makers, social partners, higher education institutions and VET providers and should provide support on topics such as:

- Cooperation on work-based learning between VET schools and enterprises / workplaces;
- Cooperation on work-based learning between higher education institutions and partners from outside academia;
- Assessment of future skills needs and incorporation of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in curricula;
- Helping SMEs to host apprentices;
- Improved vocational guidance;
- Cooperation with social partners and all other relevant stakeholders;
- Qualification of trainers of apprentices;
- Common curricula for apprenticeship programmes.

National Agencies will thus be able to identify gaps in the specific fields of work-based learning which can be highly relevant when making recommendations for the new programme or for other EU programmes, including cohesion and structural funds and for policy-making in general.

This action of the Alliance perfectly illustrates how policy-making and programmes can be mutually reinforcing. The Commission hopes for a strong interest from the LLP National Agencies in participating in this action, which has strong potential to translate project results into effective policy support.

European Alliance for Apprenticeships

To support Member State efforts to encourage more work-based learning, the European Commission has committed to: ‘set up a European Alliance for Apprenticeships to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships and to promote national partnerships for dual vocational training systems’. The European Council of February 2013 confirmed that the highest priority should be given to promoting youth employment, including the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. The Alliance concept was presented at a recent workshop of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, addressing work-based learning in SMEs.¹

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAEA) will bring together efforts of EU Member States, social partners, business, chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, other relevant actors and the European Commission to develop high-quality apprenticeship-type training and excellence in work-based learning in VET.

Alliance activities will be based around 3 pillars:

1. Improvement of apprenticeship-type systems across Europe through a federation of efforts for targeted knowledge transfer
2. Change of mind-sets through a spotlight on the benefits of apprenticeship systems
3. Smart use of EU resources to support apprenticeships, notably through the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and Lifelong Learning Programme/Erasmus for All

Let me just outline one of the actions of the Alliance which is of most interest to the LLP Community and notably to the National Agencies. The LLP will support a thematic network of LLP National Agencies on work-based learning. Thematic networking aims to increase the impact on policy and practice of the innovative projects in the LEO- ARDO DA VINCI Programme. The present call envisages building on the LEO- ARDO and Erasmus experiences, to exploit complementary projects and share expertise and knowledge between them. A restricted call for proposals to National Agencies is in preparation and activities should commence in September.

A user-friendly toolbox on work-based learning

The expected work of the Network includes the development of an online toolbox of materials for use by stakeholders who are developing work-based learning, including apprenticeships. Depending on LLP project results, the toolbox could be used by policy makers, social partners, higher education institutions and VET providers and should provide support on topics such as:

- Cooperation on work-based learning between VET schools and enterprises / workplaces;
- Cooperation on work-based learning between higher education institutions and partners from outside academia;
- Assessment of future skills needs and incorporation of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in curricula;
- Helping SMEs to host apprentices;
- Improved vocational guidance;
- Cooperation with social partners and all other relevant stakeholders;
- Qualification of trainers of apprentices;
- Common curricula for apprenticeship programmes.

National Agencies will thus be able to identify gaps in the specific fields of work-based learning which can be highly relevant when making recommendations for the new programme or for other EU programmes, including cohesion and structural funds and for policy-making in general.

This action of the Alliance perfectly illustrates how policy-making and programmes can be mutually reinforcing. The Commission hopes for a strong interest from the LLP National Agencies in participating in this action, which has strong potential to translate project results into effective policy support.

1. The presentations and background documents of the workshop are available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/sme_en.htm

The author

António Silva Mendes

is Director for “Education and vocational training” at the Directorate-General Education and Culture in the European Commission.
European cooperation in vocational education and training

Learning from one another

Task Forces support bilateral initiatives for the promotion of dual training in Europe

Birgit Thomann

The term “task force” suggests a rapid need for deployment in a crisis situation. Daily media reports indicate to us that the current situation in the euro zone is indeed an acute crisis. With average EU youth unemployment running at 22.8 percent and robbing large numbers of young people of their career prospects, the focus needs to be on bringing all our forces to bear in a unified fashion. At the same time, the figures contained within the annual Data Report to accompany the Report on Vocational Education and Training show that the dual system of VET in Germany is ensuring relatively successful transitions between training and employment. For this reason, a growing number of European countries are seeking to enter into partnerships with Germany in order to develop or bring about the long-term establishment of dual forms of training within their own vocational education and training systems.

1 Source: Eurostat, 2012, Age group < 25 years
2 See Data Report to accompany the 2012 Report on Vocational Education and Training, Bonn 2012, p. 267

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) reacted to this development last December by launching an important cooperation process via the vehicle of the Ministerial Conference “Vocational Education and Training in Europe – Perspectives for the Young Generation”, at which a Memorandum was signed. This charges the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) with the task of supporting VET with the six partner countries of Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain in organisational and conceptual terms. In order to plan and manage this cooperation, task forces or bilateral working groups are being set up in the partner countries by the respective departments responsible for vocational education and training. In Germany, this is taking place on the initiative of the BMBF. The aim is for these bodies to work in conjunction with the institutionalised stakeholders to support the expansion of dual vocational education and training, support relevant company-related training projects and agree exchange and learning programmes.

A key prerequisite for successful measures aimed at fostering dual training which integrate into the respective national reform strategies is successful cooperation between those stakeholders making the relevant contributions towards reform. These include the
ministers responsible at national and regional level, chamber organisations, employer and employee organisations and vocational training providers. In many of the partner countries, close cooperation and joint responsibility between all VET stakeholders do not take place as a matter of course. With regard to the establishment of regional networks, German Chambers of Industry and Commerce abroad and German companies located in the partner countries are playing an important pioneering role for joint dual training projects. One positive aspect is that the umbrella organisations of German trade and industry and the chambers have already concluded initial cooperation agreements with their partner associations for the promotion of dual training principles. The National Agencies will provide support by initiating LEONARDO DA VINCI partnership and transfer of innovation projects. And, last but not least, the European Commission will be providing back-up to these bilateral processes by integrating further states into the reform process via its Alliance for Apprenticeships.

Cooperation with Spain, Portugal and Italy takes shape

Cooperation between Germany and Spain is one of the six policy cooperation agreements concluded in the wake of the Ministerial Conference in Berlin. The first German-Spanish task force had already been set up a few weeks before the conference. This initial bilateral cooperation was particularly kindled by a meeting between former Minister of Education Schavan and her Spanish counterpart Wert Ortega in Stuttgart in July 2012. In the following weeks and months, the German side worked together with the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs to agree on a road map, which was adopted as an ongoing work programme at the inaugural meeting with the involvement of representatives from German and Spanish companies, trade unions and chambers. In thematic terms, the road map focuses on fostering the attractiveness, permeability and quality of vocational education and training, on the structuring of transitions to the labour market and on increasing the willingness of companies to provide training. Endeavours are also being undertaken in respect of measures aimed at increasing the mobility of trainees, creating a network of training staff and strengthening cooperation between training institutions and companies, whereby the commercial occupations and the field of vehicle mechatronics could be objects of joint interest.

Bilateral cooperation between Germany and Portugal is taking shape in a similar way. On the basis of a proposal made by BIBB, there are plans for beacon projects focusing on the acquisition of companies providing training, on increasing the mobility of young people in vocational education and training, on continuing training for school-based teaching staff and on training for company-based trainers. A parallel objective is to implement an effective public relations campaign to raise the attractiveness of dual vocational education and training within Portuguese society and to foster German-Portuguese VET cooperation.

Within the scope of the bilateral working group between Germany and Italy, which was inaugurated in February this year, the intention is the development of beacon and network projects for the establishment of company-related training structures in the fields of mechatronics, transport, logistics and energy efficiency.

Cooperation with Greece, Latvia and Slovakia in the starting blocks

In addition, the plan is for the working groups between Germany and Greece, Latvia and Slovakia respectively to be set up within a year in accordance with the agreements contained in the Berlin Memorandum. Within the context of the cooperation between Germany and Greece, the signs are that the main focuses will be topics such as the training of training staff, quality assurance in training and the establishment of regional centres of excellence. Thoughts are also turning to beacon projects in the areas of renewable energies, agriculture and tourism.

Forecast

The important thing now is to ensure that momentum is maintained in establishing the bilateral initiatives for the promotion of dual training and in structuring the framework of cooperation. The coming months and years will show the strength of the impetuses the bilateral groups are able to generate, how these are picked up by the partner countries and the extent to which they are firmly established at a national level. For the implementation of the Memorandum, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is making a budget of 10 million Euro available over a period of two years. The aim is for this to be supplemented by European financing and by funding from the partner countries. The crucial factors in the initial phase currently ongoing are to establish joint understanding of the objectives of the reform measures forming the object of endeavour and a joint willingness to develop good examples to be disseminated at a national level and become a permanent part of further reform processes. Despite the strong appeal it currently exerts, German dual vocational education and training should not lose sight of the reforms needed within its own system if it is to retain its effectiveness and attractiveness for the long term. The working groups have thus achieved an important goal by initiating approaches for the promotion of dual training whilst viewing themselves as a mutual learning project in which the respective National Agencies of the European Lifelong Learning Programme are integrated via the vehicle of exchange and mobility measures.

The author

Birgit Thomann is Head of the Department “Internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training/Knowledge Management” at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB).
Network “Work-based learning” starting soon

Definition, stock taking and objectives

Carl Callewaert *** National agencies in 33 countries coordinate the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. They are eyewitnesses of what is going on in the world of education and training because they monitor (innovative) projects of beneficiaries in their own country. To bring this knowledge to a higher level and look for the added value of the European dimension, thematic networks can be set up by national agencies. It was therefore no surprise that most of the agencies welcomed the idea of the German National Agency (NA at BIBB) to join forces in setting up a thematic network on work-based learning (WBL) as an answer to a specific call launched by the European Commission.

One of the basic rules of good communication is defining how a concept is understood by partners living in different educational settings. Educational systems have different zones of development in establishing the connection with the world of work, with different opportunities and needs for the integration of WBL. It became clear that the concept WBL covers quite a lot. The following model was used to describe the different zones.

The national agencies were asked to estimate the mere existence and the relative importance (ranked from 1 most spread to 6 least spread) of the different zones of development in their countries.

- Situations 1 and 2 are present in almost all countries, in half of the countries situation 1 is even the most common approach of WBL in schools.
- Situation 3a can be found in every country and is of great importance (rank 1, 2 or 3 in relative importance)
- Situation 3b can be found in 80 percent of the countries, but there is a great difference in the relative importance. 50 percent of the national agencies rank this situation from 1 to 3, 30 percent rank it from 4 to 6.
- Situation 4 is recognized in 65 percent of the countries, situation 5 appears only in 60 percent of the countries. Both situations are described as less important in the educational system (mostly ranked 4 to 6).

To look for the European added value the Lifelong Learning Programme could bring to the development of WBL in the own country, the agencies decided to look for “zones of interest”. These zones describe topics that could be of use for educational and training institutions, advisors or policy makers. They determine what good practices resulting from the Lifelong Learning Programme are worth to be mentioned in a toolbox for WBL to be developed by the network.

A questionnaire was sent out to the agencies with a shortlist of possible zones of interest:

The table below shows the results.

The results indicate that there is a great interest in almost all of the suggested topics. The following remarks were given:

1. “Learning facts”: learning takes place in schools, learning content is based on existing business processes and practical examples are given.
2. Within the school a kind of learning by doing is put in place (e.g. practice firm, simulator)
3. “Learning from practice”: learning by doing is organized in working life. There is a very high degree of guidance involved: working situations and tasks are adapted to achieve desired learning outcomes defined in the curricula.
   a. Students are enrolled in a school which is responsible for the training outcomes.
   b. Apprentices have a contract with a company which is responsible for the training outcomes.
4. “Learning at the workplace”: learning takes place by participating in a normal work process, the process is not adapted to learning plans but the trainee can get guidance whenever needed. This aims at improving vocational skills, the “student role” of the trainee is well recognized.
5. “Learning by working”: the work processes are causing people to learn, employees (or volunteers) only.
European cooperation in vocational education and training

- Career guidance: this is linked to guidance of the trainee during the training pathway to obtain a formal qualification, but also concerns the (guided) transition to the labour market and even lifelong career guidance. Professionalization of guidance practitioners and transparency of educational systems seem to be useful building blocks.

- Involvement of companies (acquisition of training places) and cooperation of companies with schools or higher education institutes: there is a need for full-proof ways to attract companies in order to provide learners with the training they need in order to function in the current economy and educational environment. Special attention should also be given to legislative and financial issues of this involvement.

The cooperation is bidirectional, schools and higher education institutions can help to develop competences of companies’ employees, e.g. in the field of tutoring.

- Involvement of social partners: the approach is very different, from being the decision maker for curriculum development and planning to almost no involvement.

- Attractiveness of educational systems using WBL: in a lot of countries this is a key question, often it is a second choice for young people or a sector that attracts students with low qualifications. This does not correspond with the long term labour market forecasts that indicate a shortage of employees with a medium qualification.

- Teacher and trainer qualification: teachers and trainers are the backbone of the VET system, new methods of teacher training for VET and the involvement of practitioners in training are of special interest. Special attention for mentoring: follow up of the learning process is not the same as giving technical training.

- Curriculum development: bringing all stakeholders together should create flexibility towards new knowledge and skills linked with new technologies

- International dimension of WBL: globalisation has until now only a little impact in VET curricula, some countries are looking for a transnational dimension of learning. The key issue will be validation of learning outcomes.

The thematic network “Work-based learning” is expected to start work in September. The great interest in the short survey and the wide range of the proposed topics shows the high interest in a European exchange of good practice in this area. We look forward to a productive and profitable cooperation.

Zones of interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Interest Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career guidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement companies – acquisition training places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement companies – school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International dimension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, training qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement social partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation company – HEI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation different learning places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author

Carl Callewaert

is Director “Training Programmes” at vzw EPDS, the Flemisch National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme in Belgium.
Work-based learning in Italy

Challenges and perspectives for a European cooperation

In Italy, institutional responsibilities on education and vocational training are shared between the State and regional authorities. General education falls under the exclusive competence of the central administration, while the design and delivery of vocational education and training is managed by the Regions, in the framework of minimum performance levels established centrally. The governance of education and VET therefore involves the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and regional authorities; social partners also play an active role in the design and organisation of training provision.

Education is compulsory until 16 years of age and such obligation can be accomplished through upper-secondary school, three/four-year vocational training courses or apprenticeship. Early school leaving is above the European average (18.2 percent); educational attainment both at secondary and at tertiary level is significantly lower than the EU 27 levels (56 percent of people aged 25–64 holding a secondary education qualification, compared to 73,4 percent in the EU27 and 24 percent in the euro area, respectively) which is the third highest rate in Europe after Greece and Spain. The difficulties of youth in entering the labour market are almost regardless of the level of qualification held (in the same age group 15–24, the employment rate amounts to 22.7 percent of youth with ISCED 5–6, compared to 29,4 percent of youth with ISCED 3–4).

Current challenges

One of the main current challenges for Italy is therefore improving the access to the labour market and the employability of young people. This implies on one hand increasing the investments and efforts for improving the overall quality of training provision, in terms of enhanced cooperation between education and VET providers and economic operators, greater orientation of training pathways to labour market needs (including also a more generalized shift towards the learning outcome-based approach in both education and training design and delivery, and a more widespread recourse to work-based components in learning processes), enhanced fight against school leaving, more systematic and “institutional” recognition of learning achievements – especially those acquired out of the formal pathways. On the other hand, it is a matter of developing, promoting and further exploiting of those devices which can support and ease the transition between education/training and employment, and, among those, in

2 Data sources: Istat and Eurostat, April 2013.
European cooperation in vocational education and training

particular traineeships and apprenticeships.

National measures

Several legislative measures have been recently adopted in this direction. First of all, the reform of apprenticeship (Testo Unico no. 167/2011) aimed at relaunching the device, which should serve as the main modality for young people to enter the labour market, and re-organising it around three different typologies (apprenticeship leading to a qualification and professional diploma; professional apprenticeship, which allows to obtain a regional qualification; apprenticeship for higher education and research, to achieve qualifications at upper secondary and tertiary levels). Then, Law no. 92/2012 has broadly reformed the labour market, outlining an integrated system which acknowledges the individual right to lifelong learning, while linking it to the country strategies for promoting economic growth, access of young people to the labour market, welfare and active citizenship. Among the implementing measures of such reform, it is worth mentioning in particular decree no. 13/2013 on the national system for the certification of competences and the recent guidelines for traineeships (January 2013). Moreover, late last year Italy has completed the first referencing report to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

International cooperation

Transnational cooperation – for instance like the one allowed in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) – can also be a key element for the development of work-based learning. In particular, the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme has offered important opportunities to this purpose: first of all through its Mobility action, which since 2007 to nowadays has funded over 33,000 placements abroad of Italian VET students and jobless young people, thus representing one of main schemes for supporting transnational traineeships in our country (still little exploited, so far, for the target group of apprentices); but also the other LEONARDO actions (Transfer of innovation projects and Partnerships), which have allowed some interesting exchanges of experiences in the field with other European countries, notably those with more advanced work-based learning practices and consolidated dual systems as Germany. New initiatives are being launched at the European level in this field: in particular the “Alliance for Apprenticeships” for closer cooperation and mutual learning among Member States and the forthcoming thematic network of LLP National Agencies on WBL (cf. p. 12 f.), aimed at valorizing interesting experiences funded by the Programme in this area for the benefit of potential promoters of new initiatives. And also the new Programme for education, training, youth and sport 2014-2020 can offer several grounds for further WBL developments through its renewed Learning Mobility for staff and individuals (with a greater emphasis on mobility of apprentices) and the opportunities for developing, exchanging and mainstreaming good practices offered in particular by the Strategic Partnerships and Sector Skills Alliances.
The opportunity offered by the European Education Area

What impetuses can European projects generate

Klaus Fahle

Combating youth unemployment, Youth Guarantee etc. – and what does this have to do with the Lifelong Learning Programme? Can projects change anything at all? And now the National Agency is telling us that European educational cooperation agreements should solve this problem too ...

Such thoughts may have passed through your mind as you held this journal in your hand for the first time. I would like to turn the question on its head. What view would we take of an EU Lifelong Learning Programme that was unable to make any noteworthy contribution towards addressing or alleviating the current crisis? I am sure you will agree with me that this would be a real problem for the programme and for the European Union.

It is unlikely that education and training will resolve the major problems in many European countries. They may, however, form part of the solution and put the kind of general conditions in place that will offer people better opportunities and possibilities both on the labour market and in society.

The search for best practice

The most important characteristic of the Lifelong Learning Programme ( LLP ) is its European dimension. No project receives funding unless at least two countries are involved. No other funding programme facilitates such a large and systematic degree of cross-border dialogue. Many projects concentrate on seeking out the better element from the respective participants – i.e. the best each country has to offer. The programmes also set out topics and main focuses (priorities). It is, however, the partners involved at a local level who bring these European cooperation agreements to life by adding a diverse range of contents, experiences and examples.

Development and transfer of innovation projects process innovative solutions which are adapted to the prevailing conditions of the countries and partners involved.

Partnership projects provide a dialogue platform for cooperation and exchange between the participating institutions.

Very little use has been made thus far of trainers as teachers abroad. But why should a trainer not work abroad?

Mobility projects enable participants from Europe to gain experience of training in Germany. Likewise German trainees who visit other European countries are ambassadors of our training culture – often without consciously realising it.

The LLP thus already offers a wide range of opportunities to support locally based stakeholders in particular with the introduction of work-based learning. What is frequently needed is a more targeted use of the existing framework rather than any additional endeavours. I would strongly like to encourage everyone to take action in this regard. Educational policy changes are only successful if they become part of educational practice.
Development of vocational education and training in Lithuania

As long ago as 2010, before workplace oriented VET at European and national level was ascribed the importance it enjoys today, the topic was addressed within the project “DEVAPPRENT LT – Development of apprenticeship in Lithuania/Further development of the company-based vocational education and training system in Lithuania”. Partner institutions from Germany, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom came together under the lead management of the Institute of Technology and Education (ITB) at the University of Bremen in order to support the introduction and firm establishment of company-based training in Lithuania. The project presented its results in the autumn of 2012. The NA at BIBB believes that the products, experiences and findings that emerged serve as a model.

The concept of company-based training was enshrined in the Lithuanian Vocational Training Act in 2007. However, since the system had thus far been exclusively school based, there was virtually no experience of the company as a learning venue that could have offered the stakeholders any guidance with fundamental legal, organisational and methodological issues.

DEVAPPRENT LT supported the reform process that had been initiated by adapting the experiences of other European countries to the Lithuanian context. A targeted selection was made of the countries in which company-based learning is integrated into the vocational education and training systems in very different forms. This enabled diverse approaches, options and possible solutions to be considered and investigated as to their suitability.

The range of reference models included the German dual system, the various interlinkings of school-based and company-based training in the Netherlands and France and the modular system (NVQ) that is used in England and Wales.
Results of the DEVAPPRENT LT Project

The project initially produced individual reports on the implementation of company-based learning in the reference countries. These were then collated into an overall comparative report, in which the respective strengths and weaknesses of the systems are presented "neutrally", i.e. without focusing on any target country (in this case: Lithuania). The report also contains examples of good practice and describes measures and instruments that are fundamentally capable of being transferred to another system. The resulting summary is also highly suitable for deployment in other projects seeking to achieve an effect at a structural or system level. The same applies to the highly culturally sensitive policy learning approach applied in DEVAPPRENT LT.

Comprehensive guidelines specific to Lithuania were drawn up. These are the result of matching the report against a previous inventory of the prevailing circumstances in Lithuania. They contain recommendations for the further development or establishment of company-based learning in Lithuania and scenarios for the country’s future VET system. The recommendations are directed at policy decision makers, associations, other stakeholders, VET providers and companies. They address the following aspects.

- Roles of all participants in company-based training, in particular the social partners
- Quality control in company-based training
- Financing of company-based training
- Development of the legal basis of company-based training
- Curricular design of company-based training
- Promotion of company-based training and acquisition of trainees
- Training organisation
- Assessment

The recommendations were presented in Lithuania via several workshops, and a sample practical phase of VET was conducted in the field of emergency ambulance services. The response was highly positive in each case.

DEVAPPRENT LT is a clear example of how LEONARDO DA VINCI innovation transfer is able to assist with the strengthening of company-based learning in vocational education and training. The decision regarding the future system and responsibility for the implementation of such a system ultimately lies with the countries seeking to instigate changes in their VET system, in this case Lithuania.

Manfred Kasper: In the summer of 2012, Carolin Frank spent a week in Trofa in the North of Portugal, where she received an insight into the work of the training company CENFIM. 26-year old Frank was the first trainer at a dual partner company to take part in the LEONARDO DA VINCI mobility project PRATAFOTEA [Practical Training for Teachers] initiated by the Main-Spessart State Vocational School in Karlstadt. Since 2008, she has been responsible for dual training at Braun GmbH in Marktheidenfeld, part of the multinational consumer group Procter & Gamble.

Andreas Tergeman, coordinator of mobility projects at Main-Spessart Vocational School, wishes to facilitate participation in mobility projects for both pupils and teachers. He stresses: "I believe that it is also important for trainers from our dual partner companies to see how training works in other European countries." Tergeman is further of the view that trainers make a crucial contribution to vocational training in both human and professional terms and that this makes such an opportunity even more vital.

Carolin Frank immediately decided that she would take the school up on its offer and make use of the chance given her. She also received the full support of her employer. The young trainer, who had begun her apprenticeship as a mechatronics fitter at Braun in 2003...
before going on to pursue continuing training in a systematic way, was thus able to familiarise herself with the training measures used at CENFIM as well as exploring technical aspects from the fields of hydraulics, pneumatics, open and closed loop control technology and metal working. The approaches adopted differed considerably from the practices to which she was accustomed both in terms of content and methodology. She believes that one of the reasons for this was the different nature of the training systems, although she concedes that similarities were also discernible, particularly in respect of contents imparted on the basis of a general training plan. “What I found particularly interesting was the topics that we do not have in the same form, such as the etching of circuit boards or the practical resolution of problems with pneumatic circuits”, Frank emphasises.

She was astonished at how modern the training process was at CENFIM, especially technically, and also reported on the excellence of the machines and learning facilities. What Frank felt she missed as a trainer, however, was the reference to practice provided in Germany via the specific involvement of trainees as workers in the company. All the impressions she had gained had shown her just how much training situations can vary in different European countries. This made both the heterogeneity and the diversity of the European common market almost seem tangible. And, as Carolin Frank’s stay at CENFIM demonstrated, such diversity also represents an opportunity.

The overall mix was the element that was right. Alongside her insight into technical matters, she stresses that she also had the chance to get to know the country and its people. Carolin Frank is convinced that the visit abroad was very important to the development of her personality, and she has brought a host of impressions and ideas home with her. These will also be useful in her work. The lively exchange of views on techniques, methods and teaching materials has enabled her to introduce a number of innovations into the everyday working routine in Marktheidenfeld. This is also in the interests of her employer, who is benefiting from the experience of mobility its employee has undergone as well as from the competences she has acquired.

To this extent, Carolin Frank was a kind of “pioneer”. She now aims to pass on to her trainees the experiences she has gained in the project and to impart to them how important it is to broaden their own horizons. Frank has already presented her experiences at a meeting of Procter & Gamble trainers from all over Germany. The response was extremely positive. Andreas Tergeman, who has “kicked down a few doors” at many companies with the idea of involving trainers in this way, is hoping for a similar effect. This seems to be a good basis for acquiring even more companies to take part in the programme in future.

“We are also benefiting from the programme”

Three questions to António Luís, Director of the CENFIM locations in Trofa und Arcos de Valdevez

1. Senhor Luís, various German teachers, pupils and trainers have spent time visiting the CENFIM Institute as part of the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme since 2011. Why are you interested in conducting a dialogue at a European level?

The experiences which mobility visits of this kind generate are of interest to trainees and trainers alike. Not only do they learn from one another professionally, but the cultural exchange and the understanding of the situation in other countries also play a part.

2. Where do you see benefits for CENFIM?

I believe that an exchange of knowledge and ideas and the discussion of various training methods is also a considerable enrichment for us. By coming together with people from other nations and cultures, we learn about their experiences with education. We can improve both our methodological and language competences. This particularly applies in the case of German and English and creates a good basis for transnational projects in the future.

3. What are your expectations regarding the future development of the European educational market?

The systems in the individual countries are very different. We hope that this type of mobility will bring about a rapprochement within Europe. From my point of view, this is the only way of making progress with the exchange of skilled workers in particular. This both strengthens cohesion and makes Europe more competitive in overall terms.

Manfred Kasper is a freelance journalist in Cologne. He has been writing on educational matters for many years and interviews participants in programmes managed by the National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB) on behalf of the agency.
Ümüt Karatas, 33, came to Germany at the age of 20. Unable to find a job in his occupation of industrial mechanic, he began to work as an industrial cleaner at a major power station in the Rhine-land. “Of course, I didn’t earn much”, says Karatas. He became unemployed as a result of the economic crisis of 2010 and subsequently worked for various temporary employment agencies, although not in his actual occupation. In 2012, he once more found himself unemployed. “I sent out applications all over the place, but I was unable to get a job because I did not have any recognised training”, he goes on. In April 2012, the new Recognition Act for Foreign Professional and Vocational Qualifications entered into force. “I decided that I had to get recognition for my qualifications in some way or another.” Karatas submitted an application for the recognition of his Turkish vocational training qualification to the Foreign Skills Approval Competence Centre of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK FOSA), which acts as a central body for the chambers in this regard. Because Karatas was in receipt of welfare benefits at the time, the Employment Agency paid the 420 Euro for the recognition procedure. Once full equivalence of his qualification had been certified, his search for work finally got moving. Karatas is now employed by a new company in the Westerwald region. “I’m really happy with the job”, he says smiling.

New Recognition Act regulate procedures

Many other skilled workers with foreign qualifications are able to profit from the Recognition Act in the same way as Ümüt Karatas. The declared aims of the law are to make the potential displayed by migrants more useful to the German labour market and to secure requirements for skilled workers in Germany. The Act has now been in force since 1 April 2012. Officially entitled “Law to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad”, it is referred to in abbreviated form as the “Recognition Act”. It simplifies, standardises and expands the procedures for the evaluation of foreign professional and vocational qualifications at federal level. The states of Hamburg, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony and Saxony have thus far enacted relevant laws to regulate occupations that are governed at federal state level.

Johanna Elsässer

The Law for the Recognition of Foreign Professional and Vocational Qualifications has been in force since 1 April 2012. Its aim is to help job applicants and employers to compare foreign and German professional and vocational qualifications more easily. An initial evaluation shows that both the need for information and interest in the procedure are rising and that the law is effective.
“Recognition Finder” shows the way to the right competent body

The “Recognition Finder” tool on the main website offers a particularly important service to those interested in seeking recognition for their qualifications. Its database currently contains more than 1,000 different bodies nationally which handle recognition procedures for occupations regulated by federal law. There are more than 600 such occupations.

Visitors to the site are able to enter their occupation into the “Recognition Finder” and use the occupational profile shown to search for the German qualification that matches the qualification acquired abroad. In order to identify which body is responsible for the application, enquiry is made as to (intended) place of residence in Germany. This means that merely a few clicks of the mouse are required to discover the address to which an application for an equivalence assessment procedure should be submitted. A summary of all the important information regarding the preparation of the application is also provided at this point, such as the documentation that will be needed. The new law also makes it possible to submit an application prior to entering Germany, i.e. from abroad.

Online provision in strong demand

The number of hits on the website in the first year show that the level of interest in the recognition procedure is extremely high. There were almost 400,000 visitors to the site between the launch last year and the end of April 2013. 78 percent of foreign visitors are from countries in the EU or European Economic Area (especially Portugal, Spain, Poland, Rumania, the Netherlands and Italy), and 22 percent originate from third countries (in particular Russia, Turkey and India). The most popular German occupational profiles accessed in the Recognition Portal in 2012 included medical occupations where academic qualifications are required, engineers, healthcare occupations, teachers, nursery school teachers, social workers and office management clerks.

Initial evaluation of the Ministry of Education is positive

The conclusion drawn by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) one year after the law entered into force is also a positive one. “The law is proving effective. Estimates indicate that around 30,000 applications for recognition have already been submitted. Most foreign professional and vocational qualifications have been judged to be equivalent”, commented Federal Minister of Education Johanna Wanka in a press release at the beginning of April.

The majority of applications were submitted in occupations in which recognition is a prerequisite for practising in Germany. The federal state authorities, which are responsible for implementing the federal regulations in these occupations, expect that the figures for the period leading up to December 2012 will show that they dealt with over 20,000 applications in healthcare occupations alone (e.g. doctor, physiotherapist, dispensing chemist, midwife). Specific figures are already available for two occupations. Almost 12,000 applications were submitted by doctors and nurses alone between April 2012 and the end of February 2013.

Interest is also high in the training occupations (such as commercial clerks, mechanics or electricians). According to the BMBF, a total of nearly 4,000 applications for procedures in these occupations have been received by the relevant chambers since April 2012. The most frequent objects of enquiry regarding recognition are, however, metal working and electronics occupations.

The initial figures from the Ministry of Education show that most of the assessment notices issued certify full or partial equivalence of the foreign qualification with the German reference occupation. Of the assessment notices issued by the chambers, for example, 66 percent attested full equivalence and 30 percent partial equivalence of the foreign qualification. Only 4 percent of applications have been rejected thus far.
Paradigm shift in education

**Educational staff crucial to the shaping of the European Education Area**

Education as a profession is not equally developed and secured. This means that very many people work under extremely different conditions within the educational sector. For this reason, one of the most important educational policy objectives in Europe is to work together to identify exemplary procedural methods and guiding principles for the competences and changing profiles of educational staff in order to ensure adequate qualification via various development pathways. At the same time, a further aim of this approach is to create transparency and permeability for educational occupations. What support can educational staff expect in order to be well equipped to meet these new requirements and objectives?

Andrea Mohoric: The economic strength of Europe is essentially based on the knowledge and skills of its citizens. For this reason, the shaping of the European Education Area has an extremely significant role to play within the European reform process. This joint “learning area” stands or falls by the educational staff that work in it. In the “Education and Training 2020” strategic framework, even greater emphasis is being placed on educational staff as a key target group for high quality in education in their capacity as innovators of educational establishments and multipliers for mobility. What support can educational staff expect in order to be well equipped to meet these new requirements and objectives?

The field of education encompasses regulated areas with clear occupational profiles as well as unregulated sectors where activity profiles are not defined. Although the LEONARDO DA VINCI and GRUNDTVIG programmes include many European projects which accord priority to educational staff by dint of the fact that they work on methods and teaching materials for learners, only a small number of projects have thus far expressly addressed educational occupations, occupational profiles and the qualifications of educational staff. One reason for this is the fact that the projects come up against particular challenges with regard to the transfer and sustainability of their results when the focus is on regulatory policy in order that the concepts that they have developed are able to contribute to transparency and permeability for educational occupations and the qualifications of educational staff.

**Adult education/continuing training staff**

Ute Lefelmann-Petersen, Project Coordinator at ver.di-Forum Nord in Kiel (an organisation run by the ver.di service trade union), concludes: “The wide range of continuing training provision shows that the development of professionalisation in adult education is constantly progressing. Nevertheless, it is difficult to implement standardised processes for the profile development of adult education tutors in such a varied branch. Although very good tools for ascertaining the competences of trainers are in place – tools which are based on a scientific competence profile – these are yet to be deployed at a national level.”

The European projects “Flexipath – Flexible professionalisation pathways for adult educators between the 6th and 7th level of EQF” (www-flexi-path.eu) and “Qualified to Teach – Core competencies and a qualification framework for teachers in adult and continuing education” (www.qf2teach.eu) have used the European Qualifications Framework to face up to this challenge. This provides an opportunity for systematising the profiles of adult education staff in the unregulated sector of continuing training.

**Vocational education and training staff**

Vocational education and training presents a different picture. The occupational profiles of Certified Vocational Educator for Initial and Continuing Training and Certified Vocational
Educator developed in Germany are currently proving to be popular exports in Europe. Although dual vocational education and training scarcely exists in most other European countries, those states with high youth unemployment in particular are now demonstrating an increased interest in introducing company-related training concepts as a response to the economic crisis. For this reason, the European project “European Workplace Tutor” (www.workplace-tutor.eu) has set itself the task of internationalising the profile of the vocational educator. Erwin Siemens, Head of Initial and Continuing Training at Meyer Werft GmbH Papenburg, a shipyard, sees much potential in the approach: “We consider the development opportunities provided by the occupational profiles created to be very good. Previously, only a few cross-cutting upgrading training courses were in place for trainers. The possibility afforded to the company to professionalise our company-based training staff increases transparency and permeability enormously, especially as there will in future be vocational educators with a Bachelor or Masters degree.”

Using learning support to deliver competence-oriented training

The future educational policy task set out in the Bruges Communiqué is that learning should be based on (learning) outcomes and take labour market requirements into account. The roles, tasks and requirements of VET staff have been subject to a process of change for several years. These changes have been triggered by technical development, the associated organisational alterations that have taken place in companies and the internationalisation of trade and industry and of the labour market. The objective of the knowledge society demands lifelong learning. The increasing heterogeneity of learners requires inclusion and therefore educational opportunities and equal participation for all. Heidi Hagelüken, Seminar Head of the Study Seminar for Vocational Schools in Kassel arrives at the following conclusion: “Competence orientation in initial and continuing training is placing a greater focus on the learning subject. As well as according due consideration to the relevant subject classification, the planning of teaching and learning processes also needs to take the development of learners into account and aim to establish networked knowledge and skills. The new learning support role played by teachers is the equivalent of a paradigm shift and is changing the culture of the vocational school dramatically.”

Educational staff are above all expected to facilitate learning and support the learning process by increasingly acting as a tutor, advisor, mentor or coach. For this reason, the European project “Staff for learning companions and process facilitation in SME” (www.gala-prozessbegleiter.de) has developed a handbook and a continuing training concept for trainers who train trainers and group leaders in SME’s. Erwin Siemens: “In order to shape competence orientation and learning support, it is important to adopt a holistic view of work ability. The competence of company-based training staff lies in the identification and evaluation of company requirements as compared to the individual ability of the trainees in order to use such requirements to design learning situations.”

Competence diagnostics and informally acquired competences

This is associated with a comprehensive view of all competences of the learners, including competences acquired by informal and nonformal means. Training staff are expected to be in possession of knowledge of such aspects as possible learning difficulties and particular support requirements. “Learning groups in vocational schools are strongly heterogeneous and require competence diagnostics from teaching staff. Competence analysis forms the basis for the individual support of self-directed learning processes”, states Heidi Hagelüken.

For this reason, the European concepts “PraeLab – Qualification of staff in vocational education concerning the identification and counseling of apprentices with a high dropout risk” (www.praelab-hdба.eu) and “KODE-NQF – Recognition and validation of nonformal and informal competencies in the context of National Qualifications Frameworks” (www.kode-project.eu) offer both diagnostic instruments and continuing training for educational staff.

In future, educational staff will both possess skills for the identification and documentation of learners and be in a position to apply advisory methods and coaching and mentoring techniques. Ute Leiflmann-Petersen concludes: “In order to be able to act professionally in the role of an adult educator, trainers need a clear idea of their competence spectrum.” The European project “CAPIVAL – Validation of (Adult) Education Competences Acquired Nonformally and Informally” (www.capival.eu) facilitates a secure self and external evaluation of methodological and didactic competences.

European educational policy objectives may give a boost to the professionalisation of educational occupations at a national level. Within this process, the European projects for the further development of the skills of educational staff are playing an important intermediary role between the educational systems in Europe, and their project results are delivering interesting impetuses for the shaping of the European Education Area. The new European Education Programme, which follows the Lifelong Learning Programme, will increase opportunities to continue to work on concepts to support educational staff.
A desire to align vocational education and training more closely to the labour market and thus bring about a permanent improvement in the ability of individuals to realise the opportunities available to them within the employment system forms the background to a large number of international educational cooperation agreements currently in demand at the Federal Institute of Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). Such cooperation agreements may be viewed as a reaction to the economic and social challenges that have arisen in the wake of globalisation and European integration. The focus is on the issue of how the various educational systems can be organised in such a way so as to be internally effective whilst also displaying international connectivity.

Cooperation with foreign partners is not a “one-way street”. In Germany too, debates centring on reforms within the VET system are taking place against the backdrop of the “European Education and Employment Area” in particular. BIBB’s respective committees provide the main vocational educational and training policy venue in which many of these discussions are conducted. The keywords in this regard are securing the supply of skilled workers, permeability, internationalisation, competence orientation and equivalence between academic and vocational education.

There is no contradiction in the fact that the German dual system exhibits an internal need for reform whilst increasingly being lauded as a successful model for other countries, especially in the foreign press. Such a circumstance is evidence of the dynamism released by Demographic change, the consequences of such change and the effects it exerts on the impending shortage of skilled workers are major issues both in Germany and across Europe. Good vocational education and training facilitates access to the labour market. Such training is associated with the acquisition of social status and with individual career pathways. These are highly prized economic, social and societal values for which Germany is an object of envy abroad.

Professor Friedrich Hubert Esser
Vocational education and training in Germany

For detailed information on the German VET system please refer to the CD-ROM on page 15.

This is reflected in the fact that BIBB is currently cooperating with many institutions in over 30 countries both within and outside Europe.

Despite all the differences that exist due to the nature of the various systems, one characteristic shared by all successful foreign cooperation agreements is that there is always a central contact partner to act as a “common address” for the stakeholders working to shape the vocational education and training system in the respective countries. Such institutes or bodies are, however, not only highly significant for the (policy) stakeholders. They represent centres of excellence, in which advisory and research expertise in the field of vocational education and training are established and developed. These centres are indispensable if we wish to seek to overcome the current global challenges in the economy, in the field of policy making and in society.

The author

Professor Friedrich Hubert Esser
is President of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB).

Vocational education and training is never static. It undergoes a permanent process of adaptation to the requirements of the labour market and of the employment system. All of this is reflected in the way in which a VET system is composed and aligned.

The German system of vocational education and training is characterised by a multitude of “dualities”. These exist between the company and the vocational school, the two learning venues involved, as well as being expressed in policy management mechanisms and in the interaction between the Federal Government and the federal states on the one hand and the social partners and chamber organisations on the other. In its capacity as the “common address” for the shapers and decision-makers of VET, the main functions performed by BIBB are as a moderator and advisor.

In order for BIBB to be able to adopt the role of a neutral and strong mediator that acts in the best interests of vocational education and training, a legal basis is required. In Germany, this foundation is provided by the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) as amended on 23 March 2005, in which the statutory tasks of the institute are stipulated. To cite a few examples only, these tasks include the drawing up of training regulations in accordance with the instructions of the relevant federal ministry, participation in the execution of VET statistics and in the preparation of the Report on Vocational Education and Training, funding and evaluation research for pilot projects and involvement in international cooperation. These tasks are currently being carried out by over 600 members of staff fulfilling research, development, advisory and service roles.

All of this makes BIBB the “workbench” for VET stakeholders in Germany. The results produced by BIBB provide the foundations for the preparation and implementation of VET policy measures with regard to areas such as the development or modernisation of training occupations. They are also the basis for the launching of programmes and initiatives in order to respond to current educational and training policy needs – examples here include improved vocational orientation and the creation of additional jobs – or for the piloting of innovative pilot approaches in vocational education and training with objectives such as to improve permeability between vocational and academic education.

The manner in which BIBB fulfils its tasks is geared towards shaping the advice it provides on policy and practice in an evidence-based way and on developing concepts or practical applications on the basis of valid research data. In order for this to happen, empirical foundations need to be in place in the form of meaningful databases and sophisticated research methods need to be deployed.

BIBB reflects upon and processes topics related to vocational education and training in terms of academic research, educational policy and practical orientation. All of this takes place in close collaboration with the social partners, the chamber organisations, the relevant ministries at Federal Government and federal state level and the academic research community. Such a diverse group of stakeholders is both important and necessary in order to map all perspectives associated with VET in Germany, points of view which are also expressed via the vehicle of the vocational education and training itself. Vocational education and training in the dual system is more than just a pedagogical challenge. It is the result of negotiating processes and takes place within the area of conflict that lies between policy and practice.

BIBB is inextricably linked with the German dual system of vocational education and training. Its main fields of activity are in VET research, in policy advice and in the support for practice required at a local level. All of the institute’s services are delivered from a single source and in high quality! This combined approach bringing together academic research, policy, practice and communication is the key to success. Germany can justifiably be proud of the fact that there are only a very few institutions worldwide with a work platform, remit and perception that are comparable to those of BIBB.

Our experience thus far has demonstrated to us that the support for VET provided by BIBB via research, advisory and development services is of interest to a large number of countries.
VET system in Germany

Interview on the German dual system

VET secures qualified skilled workers and offers young people good prospects

Dr. Barbara Dorn is Head of the “Education and Vocational Education and Training” Department at the Federal Association of German Employer Associations (BDA). The BDA is the socio-political umbrella organisation for the whole of German private sector trade and industry. It represents the interests of small, medium-sized and major companies from every branch in all issues relating to social and collective wage agreement policy, employment law, labour market policy and training. The BDA operates at a national, European and international level in defending the interests of one million companies, which employ 20 million staff and which are affiliated to the BDA via voluntary membership of employers’ associations.

Hermann Nehls is Head of the Department of Initial and Continuing Vocational Education and Training Policy and European Vocational Education and Training at the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB). The DGB is the largest umbrella organisation of individual trade unions in Germany. It comprises eight member trade unions, in which over six million workers are organised. The German Confederation of Trade Unions acts as the voice of trade unions vis-à-vis political decision-makers, parties and associations at a Federal Government, federal state and local government level.

Dr. Dorn, employers are also involved in an intensive chase for training places in Germany. 95 percent of companies with more than 250 employees provide training, whereas the corresponding figure for small companies with up to nine members of staff is only 16.5 percent. What are the arguments that companies put forward for not participating in training? What general conditions do trade and industry need to have in place to enable them to commit to training?

The first thing that needs to be borne in mind when considering participation in training is that only half of all companies are entitled to provide training at all. Between 2001 and 2007, almost four fifths of companies entitled to provide training actually offered training, either continuously throughout this period or with interruptions. 95 percent of companies in Germany are small companies or belong to the smallest class of company. Although such companies also commit to training, they do not have an ongoing requirement for new skilled workers. In addition to this, increasing numbers of companies are unable to fill their training places because they cannot find suitable applicants. Small and medium-sized companies in particular do not have the capacities to cover the high costs of providing second-chance training to less able young people. This makes it all the more important to achieve quality improvements in schools. School is the place where young people need to be properly armed to enter training. One of the main reasons for the success of the dual system is the autonomy of the companies. This secures the quality of training and provides good chances on the labour market. Financing training via a fund, to which all companies would be required to contribute, would therefore be the wrong approach.

Mr. Nehls, even though many in Europe view the achievements of the German VET system with a considerable degree of respect, the trade

Dr. Dorn, the public and private sectors share responsibility for vocational education and training in the dual system. Why is practically oriented training so important to the employers? The companies make qualified staff available to provide their trainees with specialist instruction and support as well as paying a training allowance and giving time off to attend vocational school. Why do they do this?

Company-based training within the dual system offers close links with the world of work and is the very best start to a career. It secures well qualified skilled workers for the companies and good occupational opportunities for young people. For this reason, the companies display broadly based support for training and invest about 24 billion Euro in their total of around 1.6 million trainees every year. The high degree of commitment shown by trade and industry and the close interlinking of learning and practice are not the least of the reasons why youth unemployment in Germany is amongst the lowest in Europe.

Mr. Nehls, the trade unions cooperate closely with the employers in the dual system. It is even not uncommon for unions and employers to hold joint positions in their dealings with the state authorities. Why do the trade unions perceive a responsibility? And what are the benefits of the German system of vocational education and training from your point of view?

Vocational education and training offers young people good prospects on the labour market. They can qualify as skilled workers and apply for well paid jobs. Training is, however, much more than this. It is part of the public education system and thus fosters societal participation. Young people learn how to assert themselves in a confident manner within the everyday company routine. Trade unions have fought in a committed way for a strong and well functioning dual VET system because they firmly believe that this system secures the very best opportunities for young people setting out on the labour market.

Mr. Nehls, even though many in Europe view the achievements of the German VET system with a considerable degree of respect, the trade
unions continue to point clearly to areas of weakness. Where do you believe that action needs to be taken most pressingly in order to improve the quality of training?

Many companies provide good vocational education and training, but not all. Although the Vocational Training Act secures minimum standards for good training, the monitoring of training quality is insufficient. The chambers, whose role it is to address such matters in Germany, are not performing this task well enough. This is an area in which we need to become better. This also applies to compliance with the training plan, to compliance with training times and, last but not least, to the quality of the training staff. Company-based training is a demanding task and requires qualified training staff.

Another area of weakness that I see is the inadequate nature of the cooperation between the two learning venues of school and company. Although the vocational school curricula and the training regulations that apply in the companies are coordinated, the reality is that cooperation depends on the commitment of the companies and of the teachers. More systematic cooperation between the learning venues is required in order to enable trainees to use coordinated learning processes as a vehicle for developing employability skills.

The Vocational Training Act provides an excellent foundation for the effective organisation of vocational education and training in Germany. Unfortunately, it does not regulate the matter of how VET is to be financed. Companies can decide for themselves whether to participate in training. This means that provision of company-based training places is subject to fluctuations in the economic situation. At present, only just under 20 percent of all companies in Germany are providing training. The trade unions are calling for a fair financing model for vocational education and training, in which all companies take part.

Dr. Dorn, Mr. Nehls, vocational education and training at two learning venues is a system that has become established in Germany. It is surely scarcely possible to produce a copy of the German system, and indeed this is not the aim of the endeavour. Nonetheless, could you tell us from your point of view a few core principles which should characterise (European) VET systems in future?

First of all, implementation of the dual principle, i.e. the interlinking of theory and practice, is a central element. This makes it possible to establish employability skills which are relevant to the labour market without being too closely aligned to the requirements of individual companies. The company is of particular importance as a learning venue because it delivers learning in real situations rather than in an artificial environment. A further core principle is the fact that vocational education is a cooperative task undertaken in the form of a partnership between the educational, economic and labour state administrations and the social partners. This ensures that all parties are strongly involved in the implementation of agreements and take an active part in processes such as the development of occupational profiles, the conducting of examinations or the acquisition of training places. Close cooperation between all stakeholders also makes an important contribution towards societal acceptance of vocational education and training. Further principles such as general legal conditions and state-stipulated minimum requirements with regard to the securing of training quality also ensure that teaching and training staff are both professionally and pedagogically suitable and that occupational profiles are regularly adapted to meet the needs of the labour market. This secures employability and thus also the attractiveness of dual training. It is nevertheless important to strike the right balance between individual company interest in skills, the interest of the branch in occupational profiles that are broader in scope and the interest of the individual in opportunities for occupational development.

The National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB) has been in existence since 2000 and works on behalf and with financial support of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the European Commission. The NA at BIBB is National Agency for the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) in Germany and in this function conducts the LEONARDO DA VINCI vocational education training programme and the GRUNDTVIG adult education programme in Germany. The NA at BIBB is also the National Europass Centre (NEC) for Germany and hosts the National Contact Point ECVET as well as the National Coordination Point for the European Agenda for Adult Learning. In addition to the above, the NA assumes responsibility for a range of Europe related special tasks. Since November 2009 the NA at BIBB has been certified in accordance with DIN EN ISO 9001:2008.

We make an active contribution to long-term European objectives and to the shaping of the European Education Area.

We put European educational and training programmes and initiatives to work through:

- Qualified information and consultancy services
- Competent project support comprising evaluation and assessment of submitted applications as well as the monitoring (in terms of contents and financially) of German projects
- Networking of European and national projects
- Support and dissemination of programme and project results

Up-to-date information about the Lifelong Learning Programme as well as the sectoral programmes LEONARDO DA VINCI and GRUNDTVIG and about other responsibilities of the NA at BIBB is available on the NA website [www.na-bibb.de].

The questions were asked by Sigrid Dreissus-Meurer.

---

27
Imprint

Editor:
National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (NA beim BIBB)
Robert-Schuman-Platz 3
53175 Bonn, Germany  Postal address: 53142 Bonn
Phone: +49 (0) 228/107-1676  Fax: +49 (0) 228/107-2964
infodienst@bibb.de  www.na-bibb.de

Responsible according to the press law: Klaus Fahle
Editorial staff: Dr. Gabriele Schneider, Sigrid Dreissus-Meurer

Copy deadline: 29. 05. 2013
Circulation: 5.000

Layout: kippconcept, Bonn
Cover picture: Werner Bachmeier
Print: Druckerei Hachenburg

No liability can be accepted for unsolicited manuscripts, picture material and other documentation submitted. Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. Reprinting permitted if source is stated, voucher copy requested.

ISSN 1616-5837

Selected web addresses

National Agencies in Germany
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)  https://eu.daad.de/de/
Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim BIBB (NA beim BIBB)  www.na-bibb.de
Nationale Agentur im Pädagogischen Austauschdienst (PAD) der Kultusministerkonferenz  www.kmk-pad.org
Deutsche Agentur Jugend in Aktion (NA-Jugend)  www.jugendfuereuropa.de

Other relevant institutions
European Commission, Directorate-General Education and Culture  http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm
European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training  www.ecvet-info.en and http://netecvet.com/

Supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union