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Professional development opportunities for in-company trainers

A compilation of good practices

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Professional development opportunities for in-company trainers

A compilation of good practices

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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training. We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice. Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

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Foreword

Trainers in enterprises and training consultants are at the front line of current initiatives aiming to upgrade the skills of the workforce and promote lifelong learning. Still, in many EU countries, trainers are not sufficiently recognised and have limited opportunities for professional development. Trainers in companies are changing roles, from the most traditional one of instruction to the most complex one of helping learning processes for learners who may differ greatly in terms of learning needs, in the context of steady changes related to work processes and labour market needs. Trainers' responsibilities are broadening, including mentoring and counselling, and quality assurance. Urgent action is required at national and European levels on trainers' continuing competence development, reflecting their specific learning needs and changing roles.

As this compilation of good practices shows, a series of initiatives across Europe endeavour to improve the status, recognition and basic qualifications of trainers. Several countries have introduced or are in the process of introducing minimum standards of basic skills and competences considered necessary to deliver training effectively, certification processes, as well as professional profiles for trainers. Continuing professional development, either formal or non-formal within communities of practice, helps trainers better respond to new requirements in companies, related to work organisation and technological innovation.

Comparative research on VET teachers and trainers tend to focus on the reform of national systems and structures for the training and development of VET teachers, and their changing roles. Research has paid little attention to the situation, functions, competences, and training needs of trainers who facilitate adult learning in companies. As part of its activities to support Member States in the development of their vocational training systems, Cedefop is also monitoring developments related to VET teaching and training and paying increased attention to in-company trainers' professional development.

Government representatives, training institutions, social partners and trainers themselves can benefit from the experiences of other countries in developing their own initiatives for the professional development of in-company trainers. The practices presented in this compilation are some of the initiatives supporting the work of trainers in Europe. The networks of trainers and online platforms, the certification processes, standards and training initiatives displayed in this report bring a wealth of experience, deserve to be better known, and even adapted and transferred, so far as they match national needs and developments. This

compilation of practices will be updated and expanded in the future, to include initiatives promoted by sectoral organisations. Sectoral bodies might prove a good route to get continuous training for trainers being taken up within companies, to transfer successful practices, and disseminate information on training provision, resources and communities of practice where trainers learn from one another.

Aviana Bulgarelli
Director

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This compilation of good practices is a team effort and reflects the contributions of all those working on the project. Particular mention should be made of Cedefop project manager Dr Rocío Lardinois de la Torre who was responsible for initiating and supervising the analysis, and of Mrs Anna Manoudi of GHK Consulting Ltd who drafted this report and undertook the research on which it is based ⁽¹⁾, together with the research team.

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This report is part of Cedefop's efforts to monitor developments related to VET teaching and training. It will provide the basis for future peer learning and networking activities and will be regularly updated to include additional examples of practices and policies related to the training, professional development, and recognition of in-company trainers.

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Executive summary

In-company trainers are important actors in lifelong learning, even though they are hard to reach since they often work in isolation within small companies. Moreover, training is sometimes only part of their role, so they do not always identify themselves as trainers. The professionalisation of in-company trainers and adequate support to their activities are crucial for the quality of continuing training in companies.

The aim of the present study was to shed light to existing initiatives promoting the professional development of in-company trainers. As a first step, the study focused on a review of existing literature relevant to the professional development of in-company trainers. The desk research confirmed that there is a very limited pool of literature throughout Europe focusing on in-company trainers.

As a second step, 13 case studies of initiatives promoting the professional development of in-company trainers were carried out between February and May 2009. The selection of case studies includes examples of:

- establishing regulation and standardisation measures for trainers;
- developing registers of training practitioners and other forms of quality assurance certifications;
- validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning of trainers;
- encouraging continuous training for in-company trainers;
- supporting trainers through online resources;
- creating networks of trainers and communities of practice.

More specifically, the case studies present the following initiatives:

In **Ireland**, a set of competence standards for trainers have been developed. The project helped distil three categories of competences for adult trainers at degree equivalent: personal competences, technical; and business-related competences. A list of 36 core competences was finally established. The competence set has been designed with the view to sit alongside the national qualifications framework in Ireland and the European qualifications framework. The trainers network proposes that trainers should have a professional degree qualification at least one level higher than their trainees and sets out an academic career progression route for the training profession.

Cyprus is developing a national system for the assessment and certification of trainers and training providers, which aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of the vocational training provided in Cyprus. A certification system

for training institutes, training infrastructures and trainers, has been established together with a national register of adult CVET trainers, such as those that exist in other EU countries. This was achieved through extensive consultation with individual trainers, companies and the social partners more generally. Cyprus has learned from the experience of Greece, and has gone on to develop a more flexible system, better suited to the characteristics of the Cypriot adult education reality. The system stresses the importance of flexibility and of recognising and valuing the previous professional experience of trainers.

In **Finland**, Amiedu is a training provider that has developed an internal competence management system for staff members offering training in enterprises. The system is built around regular discussions between employees and their supervisors so as to assess employees in relation to the key skills and job-specific competences that are required in their job description and to define targets for competence upgrading.

The **Austrian** Academy of Continuing Education evaluates and recognises the competences of adult educators according to defined standards through a two-tier qualification structure, based on a certificate and a diploma. The candidates of the Academy can achieve the recognition of their competences gained formally, non-formally, and informally throughout their professional practice. The process of validation and certification entails identifying the competences of candidates and comparing them with the competence profile designed by the Academy for adult educators; providing advice on training opportunities and institutions where the candidate can acquire the required competences; re-evaluating the competences after the candidate trainer has completed all requirements of the CVET curriculum; and certifying the student as an adult educator in Austria.

In **France**, the Association for the Vocational Training of Adults (AFPA) has developed a national certificate for CVET trainers within the validation of acquired experience (VAE) system. In-company trainers can obtain the certificate by attending formal courses as well as through the validation of their informal or non-formal training experience. The trainer prepares a portfolio of achievements and work experience and presents it to a committee at an accredited institution. The committee then decides whether to validate the work experience on a partial or complete basis, depending on the person's level of qualifications. The candidate has a period of five years in which he/she can pursue further training and acquire new experience, which can then be re-assessed.

The case study from the **Czech Republic** focuses on the training of part-time trainers and training consultants working in SMEs to whom little training and funding opportunities are available, comparing to trainers working in large

companies, which usually have departments specialised in training and organisational development. The training modules consider the changing roles of trainers, the use of advanced training methods, partnership approaches to training and the transition from training to consultancy work.

In **Malta**, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC, the Public Employment Service of Malta) has developed a train-the-trainers course to enable trainers and prospective trainers to deliver more effective on-the-job training to new employees in enterprises. The programme provides participants with the knowledge and skills needed for assessing training needs; as well as for planning, designing and delivering on-the-job training programmes in an interactive and motivating manner. More specifically, when a company applies for financial assistance from the ETC to deliver training, their in-house or external trainers must have successfully completed a train-the-trainers programme.

In **Norway**, the Akershus University College (HiAk) offers a training programme for in-company trainers, which combines theoretical learning and day-to-day work in the workplace. This has proved to be an efficient way to overcome employers' unwillingness to invest in the professional development of in-company trainers, particularly in the context of global economic crisis. The overall success of the programme can be attributed to its holistic approach to training; in-company trainers get together in workshops and continue the training process at their workplaces with specific tasks related to the nature and priorities of the company business. The possibility to obtain practical training by fulfilling certain tasks with simultaneous verification of gained knowledge is regarded as one of the key factors that contributed to the success of the programme.

In **Denmark**, the Trainerguide, has promoted a systematic approach to train trainers. In 2008, links were established with vocational training organisations in other European countries and as a result, the 'European Trainerguide' is now being developed with partners in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey. A key aim of the Trainerguide was to raise awareness of the key contributions of in-company trainers among companies, employees and trainers themselves. The guide provides illustrative examples to help trainers identify the work that they do, the knowledge they have acquired and the skills they need to be a competent trainer. Partnership is essential to this project and the social partners have been closely involved in the initiative.

In **Germany**, the www.foraus.de online platform provides in-company trainers with a wide variety of online facilities supporting their professional development and networking with other trainers, such as an information platform, which ensures access to day-to-day training tips; a professional community

where trainers discuss training issues with world-wide experts; and an online learning service that offers virtual seminars and sessions.

In **Italy**, the SPF online platform offers training based on self-learning and new forms of collaborative learning to in-company trainers and other adult learning professionals. The training catalogue covers a variety of themes such as marketing, information and communication, human resources, and foreign languages.

In the **UK**, the BLEND project has established networks of practice across the West Midlands region, bringing trainers from the adult learning sector into contact with their peers. The model used is dynamic and satisfies the needs of practitioners and strategic managers. Using a 'bottom-up' approach, trainers are directly involved in the design and delivery of all elements of the project, in particular the content of training sessions. It delivers training free-of-charge through the networks, helping in-company trainers meet their annual requirement of 30 hours of CPD.

In **Flanders**, the VOV network of trainers carried out the lights on learning project, using 'network learning' – networking combined with learning opportunities – for the continuous professional development of in-company trainers. Three learning groups were established, dealing with the cooperation between schools and companies, talent management and flexible career paths for companies' employees, and formal and informal learning possibilities in the workplace.

Following the analysis of the 13 case studies, key policy messages are put forward to develop further the training and professional development of in-company trainers. The recommendations primarily stress the need for awareness raising activities targeting enterprises, their employees and in-company trainers themselves to fully acknowledge the contributions of trainers to business competitiveness and to lifelong learning of company employees. Other proposals for action include networking of in-company trainers at sectoral, regional, national and European levels; the development of communities of practice, training opportunities and training platforms using ICT with a strong involvement of in-company trainers themselves in all development stages. Building on existing experience to promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning at national level is crucial, since in-company trainers mostly acquire knowledge, skills and competences through on-the-job learning. Standards, accreditation systems and registers of training practitioners are key contributions to the professional status of in-company trainers and the quality of training in companies.

Introduction

As part of its activities to support Member States in the development of their vocational training systems, Cedefop is monitoring developments related to VET teaching and training. Since 1998, Cedefop is coordinating TTnet (training of trainers network), a Europe-wide platform on key priority issues for the professional development of VET teachers and trainers. The Commission established a cluster of participating countries, European social partners and other stakeholders around the theme of teachers and trainers, with a subgroup dealing more particularly with VET teachers and trainers. Together with research undertaken at European but also national level, these policy networks have contributed to strengthen the knowledge and awareness about the roles, competences needed, training needs and professional development opportunities of trainers.

Despite these important efforts to identify developments and trends related to the competences, training and professional development of teaching and training professionals, some knowledge gaps remain in relation to in-company trainers, not least due to the fact that often training is understood as a role more than an occupation.

In-company trainers are important actors in lifelong learning. Moreover, professionalisation of in-company trainers and adequate support to their activities are crucial for the quality of in-company training. To support knowledge sharing, the present study describes and analyses 13 case studies of initiatives promoting the professional development of in-company trainers.

Future trends and how the case studies address them

The case studies are of a limited number and do not allow making generalisations. However, they offer the chance to discuss and further explore key trends around the professionalisation of in-company trainers, as identified in previous European studies (Institut Tenik+Bildung, 2008; Volmari et al., 2009).

TREND: the roles and responsibilities of trainers are fundamentally changing, extending from narrowly defined training responsibilities, which are centred on pedagogical issues and subject-specific instructions, to broader educational functions and more complex training-related secondary processes

such as managing training and cooperating with other departments and institutions, among others (CIPD 2008; Sloman, 2007; ESRC, 2003-08). These new features of trainers' tasks also require the adjustment of their social competences and management and coordination capacities.

The Irish, Norwegian, and VOV case studies address this trend, either through public consultations (VOV), or through competence standards to reflect changing roles and responsibilities (Ireland), or by taking these changes into account when designing train-the-trainer programmes.

TREND: closely linked to the changing role of trainers, **pedagogical and social competences are become increasingly important** to facilitate didactic processes, such as mentoring, corporate learning, team working, effective transfer of knowledge, as well as labour market inclusion of special needs groups (Institut Technik+Bildung, 2008) such as ageing workers and immigrants. Throughout Europe, there appears to be a strong demand for enhancing trainers' social competences.

The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education, the BLEND project and the Foraus.de online platform illustrate the importance of social skills for in-company trainers.

TREND: while formerly the trainer was recognised as an authority within the company, **trainers in enterprises are become more learning coaches or facilitators**. To which degree the notion of trainer as a facilitator can further develop highly depends on the internal structure of the company and the tasks and responsibilities allocated to trainers (CIPD, 2008; Attwell and Brown, 2001).

The BLEND case study deals with in-company trainer as 'facilitators of learning', while the Norwegian and Irish case studies also touch upon it.

TREND: the growing importance of in-company training within lifelong learning and skill upgrading policy strategies could affect the position and status of trainers in enterprises in a positive way, and make it easier to support investment in training of trainers as a target group.

Still, the case studies gathered anecdotal evidence that in the current dire economic climate, while some companies bet on training to see them through the downturn, these are the minority and in-company training tends to be relegated by many

enterprises. This has negative implications on the investments that companies are willing to make to support the professional development of in-company trainers.

TREND: overall, it is expected that networking and cooperation between companies, but also between companies and other institutions – such as vocational schools, training institutions, research institutes, etc. – will gain significance in the area of training and the training of trainers, particularly for SMEs seeking to optimise their resources. In this context, new technologies and learning and exchange tools, particularly those supported by new information technologies and e-learning, will become more important (Attwell et al., 2007).

Indeed, many of the case studies, including the two networking initiatives (BLEND and VOV) and the three online resources included in the case studies (TraenerGuide, Foraus.de and SPF Online) support this trend.

TREND: there is a growing interest in establishing basic qualifications and certification processes for trainers linked to the validation of their prior on-the-job learning. Also, a trend towards the sectoral monitoring of trainers' qualifications can be observed. The recognition of the overall skills and competence portfolio of trainers extending beyond their formal qualifications is expanding.

The French (recognition of informal learning), Austrian, Irish and Cypriot case studies explore these issues in detail.

Presentation of the case studies

From a long list of good practices, 13 case studies were selected for in-depth exploration, after a literature review and a consultation with key experts.

Case study examples were selected when they met most (if not all) of the following criteria:

- had documented outcomes;
- had clear links to policy;
- had been running for a minimum of six months;
- may have benefited from EU funding but were sustainable beyond the project period;
- are implemented in partnership representing a variety of relevant stakeholders.

The selection includes examples of:

- establishing regulation and standardisation measures for trainers;
- developing registers of training practitioners and other forms of quality assurance certifications;
- validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning of trainers;
- encouraging continuous training for in-company trainers;
- supporting trainers through online resources;
- creating networks of trainers and communities of practice.

Each case study has been analysed on the basis of the elements contained in Box 1, below.

Case study headings:

1. **National context**, briefly describing the CVET environment in the country;
2. **Approach**, outlining the training approach and strategies adopted;
3. **Target group**, specifying what type of in-company trainer is targeted;
4. **Innovation**, illustrating the initiatives' innovative elements;
5. **Funding** arrangements;
6. **Partnership** arrangements;
7. **Content**, offering more details on the content of the initiative according to the type of measure being undertaken;
8. **Monitoring and evaluation** arrangements and the findings from evaluating each initiative, if an evaluation has taken place;
9. **Outcomes**, describing the evidence on outputs and longer-term impacts that each initiative has on individual in-company trainers;
10. **Sustainability**, describing if and how the initiative is to be sustained in future;
11. **Success factors**;
12. **Challenges faced** and how these have been overcome;
13. **Key policy lessons** emanating from the case study;
14. **Transferability**, identifying elements of the initiative that it would be possible to transfer to other contexts;
15. **Dissemination** activities;
16. **Further information sources** and main contact persons for each case study.

Table 1. **List of 13 case studies selected, interviewees, and timetable for completion**

Case study	Country	Project title	Type of measure
Standardisation measures for trainers			
1	Ireland	Competence standards for trainers	Establishing national standards for trainers
Certification and quality assurance systems			
2	Cyprus	National system of trainer certification	Certification system that attempts to regulate the training of trainers and embraces the validation of previous work experience
3	Finland	In-house competence management system	Company-related standards for in-company trainers in Amiedu
Validation of non-formal and informal learning			
4	Austria	WBA – Austrian Academy of Continuing Education	Quality assurance system built around a competence framework, including standards and validation of experience
5	France	Validation of acquired experience (VAE)	System for the validation of non-formal and informal learning of a variety of training profiles. The system proposes clear professional pathways for the training profession
Continuous training initiatives			
6	Czech Republic	Training SME coaches and consultants in the Moravia-Silesia region	Training programme focusing on trainers working with SMEs
7	Malta	Train the trainer programme	Compulsory training programme for trainers in both SMEs and larger companies, focusing on how to fit training to the needs of companies
8	Norway	Vocational pedagogy in enterprises	Training courses for in-company trainers, including workplace projects and accreditation
Online resources for trainers			
9	Denmark	Traenerguide	Web-based training tool and platform, developed with a strong involvement of the social partners
10	Germany	Foraus.de	Web platform for trainers
11	Italy	SPF online	Web platform for trainers offering e-training and communities of practice
Networks of trainers			
12	UK	BLEND practitioner networks	Networks of in-company trainers at regional level
13	Belgium (Flanders)	VOV's lights on learning project	Promoting learning and professional development through networking

CASE STUDY NO 1

‘Establishing competence standards for trainers in Ireland’

1. National context

Ireland shares the same characteristics in terms of history and prevailing culture of workforce development as the United Kingdom (UK). The labour market is largely unregulated and skills’ training takes place mainly in the workplace. Surveys in 2005 estimated that less than half of Irish employees (48 %) had participated in employer-sponsored training. The majority of trainers in companies hold some form of trainer qualification (Attwell and Brown, 2001). So far, there is no statutory requirement in Ireland for trainers to be qualified, though mandatory certification will occur in certain sectors, particularly where health and safety regulations are prominent. In-company trainers in Ireland have access to a similar range of qualifications as in the UK, though there is far less post-graduate provision in universities in terms of master’s level qualifications. Trainers in Ireland who seek qualifications can apply to the Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD); and the UK based Chartered Institute of Training and Development (CIPD). The IITD is the Irish representative on the European Training and Development Federation and the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations. These two organisations are, therefore, in competition with each other both for members and for the right to represent the trainer community. IITD has launched a new bachelor of arts degree in training and development in the autumn of 2007 in partnership with the National College of Ireland in Dublin.

2. Approach

Ireland’s National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) initiated the trainers network in 1998, with EU ADAPT funding. The aim of the network was to develop international best practice in competence standards for trainers in Ireland.

The trainers network follows three specific objectives:

- to contribute to a robust quality management system in the training sector in Ireland;
- to improve trainers' competences in their particular areas of expertise;
- and to make a significant contribution to the up-skilling of the 500 000 employees identified in the national training strategy.

The trainers network initiative to establish national competence standards for trainers has been informed by previous research on training providers, as well as recent developments in the wider VET context in Ireland where a number of key reports and policy documents have stressed the paramount importance of education and training to the future socio-economic progress in Ireland (Byrne, 2009). Some of these key documents include, amongst others, the report of the taskforce on lifelong learning (2002), Ireland's place in the global economy (2004), Towards a national skills strategy (2007) and the national development plan (2007-13). Furthermore, in the near future, under the national register of trainers, certified training providers need to prove their competences as a quality assurance measure at the national level and in line with the European common quality assurance framework. This initiative addresses the absence of a nationally recognised core competence set for trainers in Ireland.

A survey on training providers carried out by the trainers network and funded by Skillnets ⁽²⁾, has identified the following gaps and competence needs for the provision of vocational training in Ireland:

- lack of measurement of training effectiveness;
- trainers' lack of continuous and robust self-development;
- lack of national trainer competence standards, beyond the basic minimum criteria required by FÁS and the national trainers register that were set up some time ago and needed to be updated;
- minimum certification of training programmes;
- need to increase the level of learner assessment in training programmes;
- feeling of isolation by independent trainers.

Furthermore, new challenges have recently emerged triggered by the economic turmoil, which has shrunk the public and private funds available for training; this has required a tighter control of the quality of training programmes and courses with the view to increase the return on training investment. In

⁽²⁾ Skillnets (<http://www.skillnets.com/>) funds enterprise-led training programmes through networks of private sector companies in Ireland. Skillnets is funded through the National Training Fund and enables grant aided training for the private sector through 114 industry and regional training networks.

response to these challenges, the trainers network launched the initiative to establish national competence standards for trainers in Ireland, with the view to:

- build a more structured and systematic approach to support trainers and facilitators of learning;
- assure competence standards for trainers;
- maintain quality in training and keep abreast of new technology and innovation.

A wide spectrum of methods were employed in order to define and agree on the core trainer competences including a review of the literature on best practices in this field, extensive stakeholder consultation, online survey, interviews with key stakeholders and a final validation of the competence framework. The ultimate goal was to identify a legitimate set of competences for each of the functional areas within the training profession, which would be acceptable to trainers, FÁS, as well as HETAC and FETAC (the education training awards council) at national level.

The proposal for the establishment of the competence standards for trainers was submitted to FÁS in 2007, which later on funded the initiative. The framework of core competences was finalised by the end of 2008. The implementation and formal acknowledgment of the final competence framework at national level is still a work in progress.

In the foreword to the competence framework published in May 2009, Mr Sean Haughey, Minister for Lifelong Learning, states that:

‘The quality of training, and of our trainers, is a critical element of the strategy to enhance the skills of those in the labour market under the national skills strategy. This report makes a key contribution to the systemic professional development of trainers at a time when the promotion of lifelong learning is ever more vital in meeting the competitiveness challenge and positioning Ireland for economic recovery over the medium to longer term.’

The competence framework developed is available from Internet: <http://www.trainersnetwork.ie>. (Byrne, 2009).

3. Target group

The initiative addresses CVET trainers in general, irrespective of the sector and does not target trainers involved in IVET. Representatives of the training sector were involved in designing the competence framework.

4. Innovation

The initiative brings the following innovative elements in the Irish VET context:

- it makes a significant first step towards the improvement of quality assurance in the provision of training;
- it improves the professional status of trainers and contributes to the professionalisation of training providers providing a benchmark for measuring their professional effectiveness;
- by supporting quality standards in the provision and delivery of training, the initiative contributes to the long-term quality of training ensuring a maximum return on the training investment.

5. Strategic partnership

The trainers network brought into the project a wide range of stakeholders including representatives of FÁS, Enterprise Ireland, universities, Skillnets and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. FETAC and HETAC attended the first seminar of this project back in 2006 but they were not formally involved in the development, since HETAC and FETAC – the national awarding bodies – could not be involved in setting the standards.

6. Quality standards

The initiative aims to raise the current standards of practice in line with FÁS' intention to establish clear competence criteria for the national register of trainers. In Ireland nowadays, in-company training is minimally regulated through the standards set by FÁS in the trainers register and through various sectoral agreements (for example for trainers in the health and safety domain). FÁS and Enterprise Ireland have jointly created a national register of trainers database in order to make it easy to find qualified and approved training providers. Qualification bodies grant official certification, and work towards national and international recognition of skills, knowledge and competences obtained on-the-job.

7. Integration of trainer issues in other policy areas

This project illustrates how in-company trainer issues touch upon other strategic national VET objectives and measures, the most important being the following:

- improving the quality of VET including the professional development of VET teachers and trainers;
- better linking VET to the labour market;
- measures on governance and funding including the promotion of partnerships in VET policy-making;
- the initiative strengthens LLL environment in Ireland by providing criteria of professional development for trainers.

8. Monitoring

The competence framework was validated by the main stakeholders through a laborious methodology involving workshops, face-to-face interviews, etc. Implementation will be evaluated further on.

9. Overall success

The project helped distil a set of personal, technical and business competences for adult trainers at level 7 (degree equivalent). A final list of 36 core competences has been established, as shown in Table 2 on page 22.

10. Impact on qualifications and longer term impact on individuals

The competence set has been designed to sit alongside the national qualifications framework in Ireland and the European qualifications framework. Trainers network proposes that trainers should have a professional degree qualification, of at least one level higher than their trainees. The competence framework will be integrated in degree courses and programmes for trainers that would be approved in the future by HETAC at level 7 (degree equivalent) in the Irish NQF. In this way, a recognised academic career progression route will be established for the training profession. As for the benefits that derive from a

comprehensive competence framework: FÁS offers trainers with more than 10 years of professional experience the opportunity to validate their prior learning through competence-based assessment workshops. However, this system is very time consuming and expensive. In principle, establishing a qualification system for trainers based on clear and objective competences would help both FÁS and professional trainers to save time and cost.

Table 2. **Personal, technical and business competences for adult trainers**

Personal competences	Technical competences	Business competences
Listening and communication skills	Understanding of learning theory	Innovation and emerging technologies
Emotional intelligence /critical thinking	Identification of training needs	Information Communication Technology
Presentation skills	Understanding of training methodologies	Commercial acumen, business strategy and management (planning, budgeting)
Motivational skills	Learning design	Project management - leading the learning function
Facilitation skills	Designing learning objectives	Stakeholder management
Coaching and mentoring skills	Selecting and using learning support materials and resources	Understanding the changing nature of work at large
Conflict, mediation and crisis Management	Being a subject matter expert	Training industry policy and regulation
Personal development	Training administration	Awards, standards and certification
Computer skills, ability to use a PC competently	Applying learning technology	Supporting special needs and diversity competence
Sensitivity to equality and diversity sensitivity	Supporting learners in their environment	Networking
Adherence to code of conduct or statement of values	Training evaluation and the assessment of learning	Use technology to manage client's base
	Dealing with special needs and diversity	Organisational development and effectiveness
	Recognition of prior learning	

A nationally agreed core competence serves the following purposes summarised below ⁽³⁾:

- setting a benchmark for self assessment of professional effectiveness;
- provision of tools for identifying professional development needs;
- career planning;
- competence-based recruitment processes and the contracting of training providers;
- determining and prioritising areas for individual and institutional growth;
- building mechanisms for networking;
- sharing expertise and benchmarking between member states of the EU;
- ensuring a clear focus on the creation of a culture of lifelong learning across the member states;
- improving the visibility of the training profession;
- developing a tool for recognising and validating informal and non-formal learning;
- and acknowledging core competences, with the opportunity to add sector specific competences in the future.

The key certifying bodies at national level in Ireland have endorsed the competence framework, such as FETAC, HETAC, universities, professional bodies, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD); as well key training providers and purchasers such as FÁS.

11. Key success factors

A key success factor was the adoption of a complex and stakeholder-driven approach to establish the competence standards. The final list of competence standards was the product of consensus between the main stakeholders.

The standards are considered a workable structure that can be applicable to higher qualification levels such as managers of trainers. The elaborated set of competences could eventually be linked to government support for training intervention and development opportunities for trainers in Ireland. The trainers network cooperates with the awarding bodies (FETAC and HETAC) as well as the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with the view to support the formal acknowledgement of the competence framework at national level. Universities are already seeking to use the new competence framework as a

⁽³⁾ Trainers network (2009). 'Assuming world class nationally agreed competences for trainers'. Trainers network. April 2009.

means for developing their graduate training programmes. The competence framework will also provide an invaluable tool for the validation of informal and non-formal learning for trainers.

12. Challenges

As for the challenges, there was no unique competence set in place in Ireland. A broad range of training programmes for trainers use various underpinning competence frameworks. The solution was to strike a balance between the generality and flexibility of the framework, from one hand, and the specificity of particular competences, from the other. A clear-cut competence framework might result in stakeholders losing sight of the ultimate aim, which is the continuous improvement of trainers' skills.

There are even greater challenges such as achieving the formal acknowledgement and implementation of the competence framework at the national level; as well as raising the trainers' awareness of the importance of providing quality training services and improving their skills.

13. Key policy messages and recommendations

There is a movement at the European and international level towards the establishment of quality standards for training providers and this case study shows how important it is to have qualifications that encompass competences.

The case study points to the recommendation that there should be a national register of trainers that recognises trainers' qualifications gained both through academic learning and practical experience. Such registers would be very beneficial for employers who, for the time being, find it very difficult to evaluate or benchmark trainers and training companies. Word-of-mouth is currently the most common criterion and there should be more objective criteria to assess the differences between different providers.

14. Transferability

The initiative is transferable across the EU. In fact, institutions in Malta, Germany and France have already shown interest in this new competence framework and in how it might be transferred in their countries. ISO is also interested in taking

the competence framework as reference for new international standards that are currently discussed.

15. Dissemination

The report will be downloadable from the trainers network website (www.trainersnetwork.ie) and will be disseminated through other channels such as Cedefop's TTNNet.

Sources of further information:

<http://www.trainersnetwork.ie>

Haslam, S. (2008). *Development of trainer competencies for Ireland*. Available from Internet: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3154-att1-1-TTNetDublin_SimonHaslam.ppt#257,1,Development of Trainer Competencies for Ireland](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3154-att1-1-TTNetDublin_SimonHaslam.ppt#257,1,Development%20of%20Trainer%20Competencies%20for%20Ireland) [cited 15.03.2010].

Final report on the competence framework outlining the recommended set of trainer competences with a foreword from the Irish Minister for Lifelong Learning, published by Trainers network, May 2009.

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CASE STUDY NO 2

‘National system for the assessment and certification of training providers’, Cyprus

1. National context

In Cyprus, the recent lifelong learning strategy covers all levels and types of education and training. While CVET is well established, the dominant actor in the field is the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), which approves and subsidises training programmes implemented by public and private institutions and enterprises. The HRDA is responsible for the promotion, gradual establishment and operation of a system of vocational qualifications. A new law ⁽⁴⁾ authorises the HRDA to ‘set standards of vocational qualifications for any category or categories of persons employed, provide for the assessment and issue the relevant certificates of vocational qualifications’. As a result, the HRDA is now responsible for developing a national system for the assessment and certification of trainers and training providers, as described in detail below.

2. Approach

Cyprus is developing a national system for the assessment and certification of trainers and training providers, which aims to contribute to the improvement of the quality and the effectiveness of vocational training provided in Cyprus. Part of the system will be to develop a certification system and a national register of adult CVET trainers, such as those that exist in other EU countries and a certification system for trainers. The system includes also the certification of training institutions and training infrastructure.

The system addresses all training providers in Cyprus. This includes all categories of in-company trainers (trainers in SMEs and larger companies, company employees and subcontractors, trainers from Cyprus and abroad).

⁽⁴⁾ Law No 125 (I)/99.

The system is built around four elements:

- an introductory register of trainers: a pre-register where all interested trainers sign up before starting the certification process;
- two training programmes at basic and at advanced levels that trainers will need to undertake before they can be certified, according to their level of competences (or may even be exempt from undertaking training, if they are very experienced);
- the certification procedure relies on a committee that assesses trainers' teaching competence through the simulation of a training session or in a real classroom situation. In some cases, the committee may visit the trainers' company or classroom in order to assess training ability in real circumstances;
- A register of certified trainers: as a last step, listing all certified trainers.

Certified in-company trainers will receive the vocational qualification of 'vocational trainer'. A total of 1 000 applications from trainers are expected, throughout the first three years of implementing the system. Full-time or part-time in-company trainers will make up more than 50 % of these figures. If freelance trainers are included in this estimate, the proportion of in-company trainers together with freelance trainers, is expected to reach 70 % of total applications.

HRDA launched an open competition in 2006 and subcontracted the National Accreditation Centre of Greece (EKEPIS), to assist with the development of the Cypriot accreditation system. The consultation and design phases were completed in 2008, while the implementation phase will start in 2010. The system comprises the reassessment of trainers after three years and then every five years.

The development of a standard vocational qualification for CVET trainers is an integral part of the system, outlining the knowledge, skills and competences that a CVET trainer should possess. The profile offers a benchmark to individual trainers who can see what knowledge, skills and competences they already possess and what they need to develop, thus offering a pathway for their professional development.

The training programme is based on blended learning given that the training programme will be of a long duration (circa 150 hours). The training content covers the main functions of a CVET trainer, mainly, designing, implementing and evaluating training programmes.

3. Funding

The project will be funded mainly by HRDA, but it will be decided at a later stage whether the individual trainers will contribute, by paying a small fee. However, it is important to mention that by law HRDA is exclusively funded by the so-called 'human resource development levy' paid by all employers in Cyprus (with the exception of the government) as a percentage (0.5 %) on their payroll.

4. Success factors

The key success factor is the extensive public dialogue to build consensus on the certification system. In the planning, design and implementation of this certification system, all stakeholders were involved, including social partners, in-company trainers, self-employed training consultants and training managers in companies. The aim of the HRDA was to help upgrade the level of existing trainers, and accompany them through the accreditation process.

The Cypriot accreditation system is a good example of transferring experience from other EU countries and fruitful cooperation with institutions developing similar systems, such as EKEPIS in Greece. Cyprus has learned the lessons from countries that have developed analogous certification systems, such as Greece and Ireland, to avoid similar pitfalls. For example, in Greece the criteria for inclusion in the register of trainers (three years of experience and higher education degree) are quite strict, so as not to weaken the certification system; as a result certification is open to a limited category of trainers. On the contrary, Cyprus emphasises on-the-job experience of trainers as a key element for certification and aims to upgrade existing trainers, without exception. For instance, by establishing two levels in the training course that trainers have to undertake as part of the certification process, there is some flexibility on whether a trainer needs to be trained at all, and at what level.

The Cypriot certification system has taken on board inputs from trainers in relation to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and the assessment of training ability, where the certification committee can base its decision on real classroom training.

5. Transferability

The initiative builds on the experience of Greece where an accreditation system was developed. EKEPIS, the institution responsible for accreditation in Greece, has been contracted by HRDA to assist in the development of a certification system for trainers and for training structures in Cyprus. Cyprus has learned from the experience of Greece, and has gone on to develop a different, more flexible system, better suited to the characteristics of the Cyprus adult education reality. It is interesting that transferability is two-way, in this case. Greece, following its collaboration with Cyprus, is now considering how to make the respective accreditation system in Greece more flexible.

6. Monitoring

The certification system will be evaluated within the context of the ex-post evaluation of all HRDA initiatives that takes place every five years. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected to make adjustments to the certification system and make it more suited to the needs of trainers and companies.

7. Impact on individuals

The system will support the professional development of in-company trainers. The accreditation system aims to upgrade the competences of trainers, while incorporating the needs of companies and trainers in Cyprus.

8. Sustainability

The certification system is a long-term project of the HRDA and the plan is for it to be self-sustained in future.

9. Key policy messages

HRDA understood the importance of adapting the approach of a trainer certification system to the specific national context of Cyprus, through extensive

consultation with individual trainers, companies and the social partners more generally. The certification system stresses the importance of flexibility and of validating previous experience of trainers.

10. Dissemination

The system is already widely known in the trainer community of Cyprus through this public consultation that took place during the design phase. Further, since most SMEs apply to the HRDA for funding of their training programmes, certification could eventually be a prerequisite for HRDA cofunding of in-company training programmes.

Sources of further information:

http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/upload/etvnews/news/3154-att1-1-ttnet_dublin_ioannis_zenios.ppt [cited 18.03.2010].

http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/upload/etvnews/news/3154-att1-1-ttnet_dublin_presentation_19_02_08.papaefstathiou.ppt [cited 18.3.2010].

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CASE STUDY NO 3

'In-house competence management system', Finland

1. National context

In Finland, companies select and recruit trainers. Most trainers are part-time trainers, while full-time trainers are the exception. Most of the continuing learning of Finnish trainers to update their competences is self-initiated and voluntary. A flexible system based on guidelines and recommendations to promote the training of trainers is thought to be more effective and suitable for Finland than a strictly formalised system. In general, Finland has a tradition in developing innovative programmes for both trainers and trainee employees, both in the public and private sector. The in-house competence management system developed by Amiedu and presented here is one such initiative.

2. Approach

Amiedu offers training solutions, consultancy and coaching to enterprises, as well as to other organisations and individuals. Amiedu also trains staff in enterprises to act as in-house trainers. In many enterprises, as part of the management role, managers are expected also to deliver some in-house training. Amiedu assists in this by running a set of workshops with the management group of specific companies, who will subsequently implement a training strategy or programme. Last but not least, Amiedu provides in-house training to its own employees through a competence management process to build own staff competences. Thus, Amiedu has developed a clear, step-based system for competence appraisal and development.

The Amiedu management came to the conclusion that since their own trainers were developing staff competences in their customer companies, the same standards should be followed within Amiedu itself. The rationale for introducing this system in 2003 was for Amiedu to respond more efficiently to the needs of its customers. This move had been preceded by a reflection on the nature of Amiedu business, as well as the core competences that staff should possess for the company to be successful and innovative. Two questions were

raised: firstly, what services were currently delivered to customers and what were customers' expectations and secondly, how these expectations would be changing in the future.

As the result of internal discussions, four core Amiedu competences were identified, which gave the grounds for establishing the system of competence management:

- understanding the customers' world and their business as well as the challenges they are facing;
- developing a deep knowledge of training solutions and a competence in building learning and training schemes;
- delivering relevant training services to customers,
- possessing pedagogic knowledge on how people learn and how other people's competences can be built up.

As part of the competence management system, a discussion is held between each employee and his/her supervisor twice a year, in order to record where each employee sits in relation to each of the key competences and specific competences required by his/her own job description. The information is recorded against a five-step scale (where one denotes 'beginner' and five denotes possessing a competence at expert level). For example, someone new in the company may have a competence at level 2, when the requirement for that job may be a level 3 or 4. When such gaps are noted, a target is set to improve that competence. A software application is used to document and follow up performance and qualifications' targets for each employee.

3. Target group

The target group are Amiedu's staff members – approximately 370 persons, 50 of whom are part-time employees, in particular those who are acting as subcontracted trainers for companies and public institutions. The project of in-house competence management is not limited to trainers, but covers the entire staff of Amiedu, including sales and customer accounts personnel, as well as management and administration teams.

4. Innovation

The innovative approach in this project is associated with looking at every training as a project, and regarding the trainer as a project manager. The trainer

is not solely a learning facilitator but should take over the responsibility for the success of the training, taking into account resource management and cost monitoring. The key factors for successful training within long-term and complex assignments is to carry out continuous discussions with a customer on needs and expectations, and negotiating various elements of the training, as the project develops.

5. Funding

The appraisal system is entirely covered by the Amiedu budget. At the current stage of development its basic cost concerns time allocation for the appraisal of every employee twice a year. If an external training course is required to develop the skills of an employee, advantage is taken of the rich offer of training courses subsidised by the Finnish Ministry of Education. The software being used, which is served by an external supplier, implies a significant cost. No external funding was used to start or uphold the activity.

6. Content

According to Amiedu, employees can enhance their competences in three ways, by doing specific tasks (for example if customer service is the competence that has to be improved), through in-house training or external training. Amiedu staff members participate in 1 000 days of training every year, which means that, on average, each person is trained for three days per year. In the case of trainers, special emphasis is put on professional pedagogical background. To develop this type of expertise, trainers take part in external courses organised by the Finnish Ministry of Education.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

Ongoing monitoring of project's progress and its outcomes is guaranteed by an IT system, providing an instant access to employees' data and the history of appraisal. It is crucial to keep the system updated in the context of changing employee teams and supervisors. Amiedu's in-house competence management project has not been the subject of an independent evaluation, however the organisation has an ISO-based system, so it is audited both internally and

externally. Currently the organisation is moving towards implementing the EFQM⁽⁵⁾ excellence model involving self-evaluation of personnel and their competences. Besides, every year Amiedu participates in an annual competition organised by the Finnish Ministry of Education, which reviews education and training organisations. Another practice performed by Amiedu to measure progress is benchmarking to other business organisations and enterprises.

8. Results

Amiedu has achieved an undisputable success by introducing its in-house competence management system and maintaining it over the past five years. No external funding was used either to start or to uphold the activity. The biggest achievement of this project is a change of perception of trainers' roles, and the adoption of a customer-oriented approach throughout the organisation.

As a result, Amiedu permanent staff members (approximately 320 persons) are appraised twice a year, allowing them to understand better the organisation's goals and strategies as well as their role in meeting these challenges. Every person has an opportunity to discuss with their supervisor, the key competences and specific competences required for the job, identify gaps and plan career progression, professional development and training to meet the requirements for their job. The outcomes of such discussions are recorded in the computerised data system.

9. Key success factors

The key success factors in Amiedu's competence management process have been:

- the requirement that all trainers receive a professional pedagogic background and have certified knowledge on adult learning;
- a trainer is no longer a learning facilitator only but acts more as a training manager, responsible for the overall implementation of a training project;
- adopting a holistic perspective, by understanding customers' businesses and training needs;

⁽⁵⁾ The European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model is a practical tool to help organisations develop and establish an appropriate management system. For further details: www.efqm.org

- the implementation of each training project within the context of a continuous discussion with the customer, thus allowing for the training to be better tailored to customer's expectations.

10. Challenges

Changing the perception of trainers' roles (from a learning facilitator to a training manager) has been the main challenge. A five-year implementation period has been long enough to change attitudes to training.

11. Key policy messages

Amiedu believes that competence management systems based on IT solutions are a way to promote further the professional development of in-company trainers in Europe. Prior to that it is necessary for any organisation or in-company trainer to examine how training roles and tasks are changing so as to understand what kind of competences in-company trainers would have to build.

12. Transferability

The Amiedu in-house competence management system is transferable to other sectors, localities or countries. The continued appraisal of all staff members backed with dedicated IT software is a practice that could be applied in any type of organisation. The matter of discussion is the four core competences identified for Amiedu employees – these should be developed independently for each organisation in a clear correspondence with the nature of their business, mission and development strategy.

A system of regular appraisals to assess competences, meet training needs and plan career progression could be transferable to any company or organisation making use of in-company trainers.

13. Dissemination

There has been no dissemination policy adopted with regard to the Amiedu project. Nevertheless information on the Amiedu system is circulated within

Finland and outside. As mentioned above, the organisation takes part in an annual competition organised by the Finnish Ministry of Education. Its success in implementing the system is known and there are groups visiting Amiedu to learn about the project.

Sources of further information:

Amiedu website: www.amiedu.fi [cited 18.3.2010].

Finnish Ministry of Education: www.minedu.fi [cited 18.3.2010].

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CASE STUDY NO 4

‘*Weiterbildungsakademie – WBA*’ (Austrian Academy of Continuing Education), Austria

1. National context

Austria’s (Institut Technik+Bildung, 2008) system is heavily influenced by its federalist structure and the relationship between departments and bodies supporting employers and those supporting workers. As such, VET has a large priority in national education policy. The responsibilities of VET training in companies are split between six bodies made up of government departments, apprenticeship offices and CVET provider institutions. Austrian companies are important actors in the organisation of CVET.

In Austria, company-based CVET is not regulated except for some specific qualifications such as the master craftsperson certificate. As CVET trainers in companies are not required to possess any particular formal qualification, it is up to the companies to assess the skills and competences of their trainers. CVET is therefore open to anyone with good subject-specific qualifications and relevant work experience. During the last decade, several private and public institutions that offer training programmes for trainers were established. As a result, a growing number of companies select CVET trainers with a special certificate. Regarding pedagogical skills, there exist opportunities for trainers to attend courses in education and training methodology but there is no obligation to follow such training. As a result, in-service training of CVET trainers is not regulated either. In Austria, trainers increasingly assume educational and social inclusion functions with special needs groups. While they assume these functions, they are not always qualified to do so.

The Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb), under the authority of the Federal Ministry of Education, was concerned with enhancing the professionalisation of CVET trainers and since 2007, has implemented a specialised CVET academy, as described in the case study that follows.

2. Approach

The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education aims to assess and recognise the competences that adult educators and trainers in companies have acquired on-the-job, according to defined standards through a two-tier qualification structure, based on the provision of a certificate and a diploma. The academy also plans to make a lasting contribution towards the professionalisation and enhancement of the quality of Austrian adult learning and adult education.

Austria, similarly to most other EU countries, has no standardised system of vocational training for people who work in the field of adult learning. There are currently about 1 700 autonomous institutions that provide adult learning and adult education from schools to public employment services, interest groups and adult education institutions. More than 100 000 people work in this field. There is no legal framework for adult learning and adult education, no legal standard for managers of training or counsellors but only recommendations in this field. Austrian adult educators are often good experts in their specialised field but they can lack training, or more specifically pedagogical skills. Therefore, there was a need for setting certain standards in the adult learning sector and for developing a recognition model that would allow adult educators to start any upgrading process from their actual level of competences. The underpinning assumption was that people working in the field of adult learning already have professional competences that are worth being acknowledged. The academy is currently looking at ways to support trainers who want to continue their education at university level after having acquired the WBA certificate or diploma.

The early project of the academy was initially informed by robust research work, including a feasibility study, involving a high number of stakeholders at the heart of VET and adult education in Austria. During the preparatory phase, stakeholders also reached consensus over the set of competences that would be used as a benchmark for the validation and certification of competences.

3. Target group

The academy targets four main professional groups: training managers, IVET and CVET trainers, and guidance counsellors. The demand for advice and guidance with regard to training and vocational education courses in Austria has soared. CVET and freelance trainers represent the main target group. The academy estimates that at least 15-20 % of the beneficiaries work as in-company-trainers.

4. Innovation

To support professionalisation and quality development of VET and adult education, the Academy of Continuing Education is the first initiative in Austria that aims to validate competences acquired by adult learning staff on-the-job in a systematic manner. The certificate and diploma issued by the academy offer a competitive advantage since they are recognised by key institutions in the training market. The academy has excellent links to policy-makers and efforts are being paid to emulate the certificate and diploma to the NQF in the near future. The academy is currently describing and mapping the learning outcomes at each level and the Steering Committee for NQF already shows keen interest in the progress of the academy. The academy is also leading discussions with various universities in Austria to facilitate access to university for the academy's qualified adult trainers through a master in lifelong learning.

5. Funding

The academy is equally financed through the Ministry of Education, the ESF and students. Students can have their fee covered by their employers in cases where the certificate and training acquired is of relevance to their companies. The project is funded until 2013 when the academy intends to apply for further national or European funds.

6. Partnership

The Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb) as a partner is responsible for the organisational and financial handling of this initiative. The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education is the result of a successful and enduring collaboration between 10 nationwide institutions (KEBÖ institutions), which provide intellectual leadership without a formal contracting relationship:

- Association of Austrian Residential Educational Centres/Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Bildungshäuser;
- Vocational Training Institute/Berufsförderungsinstitut;
- Austrian Library Association/Büchereiverband Österreichs;
- Catholic Adult Education Institutions/Forum Katholischer Erwachsenenbildung;

- Austrian National Economy Society/Österreichische Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft;
- Federation of Austrian Educational Associations/Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke;
- Association of Austrian Trade Union Education/Verband Österreichischer Gewerkschaftlicher Bildung;
- Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres/Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen;
- Institute for Economy Promotion of the Economic Chamber/ Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut;
- The Education and Training Institute of the Chamber of Agriculture/ Landwirtschaftliches Förderungsinstitut.

7. Validation of experiential learning

The trainers participating in the academy can achieve the recognition of their competences gained formally, non-formally and informally throughout their professional practice. The process of learning validation and certification entails the following steps:

- identifying the competences that the beneficiary trainer already possesses;
- comparing the trainer's existing competences with those specified in the competence profile designed and applied by the Academy for adult educators;
- identifying competence gaps;
- providing advice on training opportunities and institutions where the trainer can acquire the newly required competences;
- reassessing competences after the trainer completed all requirements of the CVET curriculum;
- certifying the student as adult educator in Austria. The academy does not provide training courses or programmes, the clients being free to choose the training/course provider.

As previously mentioned, the validation and certification process is anchored in a comprehensive competence profile, which defines seven areas of competence for trainers, as follows:

- educational theory and practice;
- teaching skills;
- educational management skills;

- counselling skills;
- information management skills;
- social skills and
- personal skills.

The academy certifies adult educators and trainers at two levels:

- for the **certification level**, all target groups (training managers, IVET and CVET trainers and counsellors) need to meet the same seven core competences (worth a total of 30 ECTS);
- the **diploma level** is optional and participants can choose to specialise in educational management, training, or counselling by acquiring 30 further ECTS.

The two levels entail two different types of evaluation. During the certification process, the student has to attend a three-day long certification workshop that requires passing a multiple-choice test and a test-training module. For a CVET diploma, the student is required to present a thesis in one of the above-mentioned fields of specialisation. The certification phase is compulsory for those who want to proceed to acquiring a diploma.

At the first level of certification, it is possible to fulfil the academy requirements by validating competences that have been acquired informally, up to 80 %. There are different types of proof that the student can bring forward, such as a written confirmation from former and current employers; a written paper, and portfolios demonstrating project management skills or competences as a counsellor or coach. The process of documenting competences helps the candidate to be more reflexive about potential career paths.

In terms of links to other policies, there is a clear connection between the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education and the ongoing development of the NQF in Austria.

8. Monitoring

The monitoring system put in place at the academy describes a feedback loop: VET experts monitor and evaluate the performance of candidates while students have the opportunity to feedback on certification workshops and experts' performance. The academy takes student feedback seriously and tries to improve the service offered accordingly. For example, students can give suggestions to improve the reading list that is compulsory for those who want to pass the multiple-choice test during the certification workshop.

9. Evaluation

The project is formally evaluated yearly, through surveys and focus groups with the academy's team of experts and beneficiaries. Around 70 % of participants rated the academy's validation programme and support as very good. Beneficiaries also reported that obtaining a certificate that validates their competences was the main reason for attending the academy.

10. Results

The certificate and diploma issued are recognised by the Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb) and the Austrian Employment Service Centre (Arbeitsmarktservice). As a result, training professionals who possess a certificate issued by the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education gain a competitive advantage. The number of registrations and certificates issued has steadily grown. The evaluation report issued by an independent organisation highlights the robust progress of this very recent initiative.

11. Impact on qualifications and longer-term impact on individuals

The entire process of accreditation and validation makes trainers more aware of their professional strengths and weaknesses, and more conscious of possible ways to improve further their skills. The acquired diploma or certificate makes them more confident in the labour market.

12. Sustainability

Established in 2007, the academy's long-term sustainability is ensured through the strong commitment of the partners involved. Further funding sources will be considered from 2013 and collaboration with a university to broaden professional development opportunities will be in place in the near future. The Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture contributes to the good reputation of the academy by providing financial support for the self-development of adult educators in Austria.

13. Key success factors

Key success factors for in-company trainers who attend the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education, include the following:

- the certificate and diploma is widely acknowledged and backed up by the KEBÖ institutions and other key national partners;
- the standards that the academy has set have helped greatly improve the professionalisation of in-company trainers;
- the academy functions within a solid quality assurance framework and is well linked to VET policy;
- the academy is also closely related to practical experience through an effective trans-institutional network of adult education centres;
- the initiative is supported by a broad range of partners, including well-known representatives from significant adult education and VET institutions, such as the Austrian Federal Institute for Adult Education, universities and teacher training colleges. The partners have been closely involved in the academy since the early days ensuring its long-term sustainability;
- the academy also benefits from the excellent dissemination of results done through a professional PR agency;
- last but not least, a key success factor has been the solid preparatory phase during which research on needs to be met was undertaken.

14. Challenges

Access to academic paths can be crucial for in-company-trainers, since very often they do not possess higher qualifications, and cannot follow further education at the university. In this context, the project partners intend to ease access to university paths for the academy's qualified adult educators via a cooperative venture with a suitable academic partner and this might be challenging to achieve. Another challenge is to broaden the national acceptance of the academy and its certificates and diplomas.

15. Key policy messages

As for the key policy messages, it has been crucial to mobilise support both from policy-makers and practitioners in developing such an approach. The academy

has managed both to be well linked to VET policy and to maintain close links to practitioners while developing its quality assurance framework. A broad partnership supporting the project has been critical. Moreover, institutions such as the Austrian Employment Service Centre now acknowledge trainers with the academy diploma or certificate.

Furthermore, it is necessary to follow a scientific approach, by taking advantage of scientific expertise and investing in needs' analyses to develop a method for the validation of trainers' on-the-job learning.

16. Transferability

Under the management of the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres, the Academy of Continuing Education is developing into an exemplary model within Europe, and is raising the interest of policy-makers in other Member States. The key conditions for successful transferability would be to mobilise support by a broad range of stakeholders and raise consensus around an efficient model of certification and quality assurance. There is a need to use scientific expertise to elaborate the validation methods; this should include investing in the preparatory phase when research would have to be carried out on needs to be met.

17. Dissemination

The academy benefits from the professionalism of a public relations agency that is involved in the dissemination of the results. Dissemination is done through the official website of the academy, brochures, mass-media and events in which information points provided potential beneficiaries with information about issues such as the oral examination, validation portfolios and certification workshop at the academy.

Sources of further information:

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CASE STUDY NO 5

Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience – VAE (Validation of non-formal and informal learning), France

1. National context

The term 'trainer' in France refers to different profiles in the company, such as training managers responsible for organising the training of employees according to the company requirements, as well as trainers, tutors, coordinators and other learning facilitators who directly provide training to employees. Their status is not covered by any particular regulation. In France, more than one million people are estimated to be involved in training as occasional trainers, while around 30 000 people provide training as the main occupation ⁽⁶⁾.

2. Approach

The Association for the Vocational Training of Adults (AFPA) under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour has developed a national certificate of professional trainer of adults ⁽⁷⁾ for CVET trainers. Trainers can obtain the diploma by attending formal courses (run for example by AFPA) or through the validation of their training experience. The validation process provides professionals with at least three years of training experience with a diploma, which recognises their competences and skills. The trainer prepares a portfolio of achievements and work experience and presents it to a committee at an accredited institution (e.g. AFPA). The committee then decides whether to validate the work experience on a partial or complete basis, depending on the person's level of qualifications. The candidate has a period of five years to pursue further training and acquire new experience, which can then be reassessed. Any paid, unpaid or voluntary activity (within a union or an association) is taken into consideration.

⁽⁶⁾ Eurotrainer country report: France.

⁽⁷⁾ *Certificat de Compétences Professionnelles Formateur/Formatrice Professionnel(le) d'Adultes.*

The process can lead to a full validation of the certification, which means that the certification acquired through VAE would be the same as the one obtained through initial and continuing training. In the case of partial validation, the panel specifies the skills, knowledge and aptitudes to acquire; and recommends ways for the candidate to develop them. AFPA offers a range of training courses of long or short duration, targeting all trainers, whatever their specialisation, which are offered throughout France, several times a year.

3. Results

There are no specific data on the number of in-company trainers participating in the validation of learning.

4. Funding

Depending on the status of the trainer (jobseeker, self-employed, company employee) the training and the accreditation process can be financed by the company (as part of training investment), by OPCA (public funding body) or by participants.

5. Longer-term impact on individuals

In France, no formal training is required for employees to access the in-company trainer function. Trainers are selected according to their competences and company's needs. The recognition of the job experience of trainers increases their awareness of their training function and professional development opportunities, and may imply salary increases in some cases. Thus the VAE initiative provides in-company trainers with the opportunity to improve their performance and their career prospects through a formal recognition of their work experience.

6. Sustainability

The VAE initiative has a long history behind it in France, since it builds on an earlier law from 1985, which entitled people with work experience to ask for a

diploma equivalence, mostly for vocational degrees. A significant legislative change came in 2002 ⁽⁸⁾, enabling universities and other higher education institutes to grant regular degrees based only on the work experience of the candidate. The required minimum work experience was lowered from five years to three years. Already since 2001, the AFPA, under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment, developed the national certificate of 'professional trainer of adults'.

7. Success factors

A key success factor of VAE is that it gives access to a diploma or a professional certification through the recognition of on-the-job learning. The guidance and support being offered to candidates throughout the validation process is another key success factor.

8. Challenges

In-company trainers in particular, may find the process of obtaining the VAE certificates more challenging than other types of adult trainers, such as those employed by AFPA or by training centres. This is because, in France, in-company trainers are often skilled workers who may possess limited pedagogical skills and competences. Hence, when it comes to obtaining the VAE certificates, while they may be experienced in the preparation and animation of training and can validate this experience, they may also lack competences with regard to the design and development of training courses. As a result, in-company trainers who wish to obtain the VAE certification would usually need to undertake one of the training courses for the professionalisation of trainers offered by AFPA to gain all the required competences.

9. Transferability

The French validation system is applicable to many sectors. It could be beneficial for institutions across Europe to share experiences on success factors and

⁽⁸⁾ *La Loi de Modernisation Sociale*, 17.1.2002.

challenges encountered in the validation of in-company trainers professional experience and informal learning.

10. Dissemination

Dissemination of information on VAE to interested persons takes place through:

- networks of information points such as Centre-Inffo and Gip-Carif;
- relevant websites hosting extensive information on VAE, supported by AFPA and by the Ministry of Employment; and
- open information days that AFPA regularly organises throughout France.

Sources of further information:

National Association for Training of Adults (Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes, AFPA): <http://www.afpa.fr> [cited 18.3.2010].

National Institute of Training Professions (Institut National des Metiers de la Formation, INMF), an institute of the Directorate of Engineering of AFPA: <http://www.inmf.fr>

About VAE in general, and about the title of professional trainer of adults, in particular: <http://www.infovae-idf.com> and <http://www.vae.gouv.fr> [cited 18.3.2010].

<http://www.infovae-idf.com/html/txt/juridique.html> (Social Modernisation Act of 17 January 2002 No 2002-73) [cited 18.03.2010].

GIP CARIF (network of VAE information points) http://www.carif-idf.org/jcms/c_5033/validation-des-acquis-de-l-experience [cited 18.3.2010].

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CASE STUDY NO 6

‘Helping SME coaches and consultants to learn in the Moravia-Silesia region’, Czech Republic

1. National context

In the Czech Republic, the training of employees in enterprises is a new professional area that has developed over the last 15 years. Social partners in the Czech Republic are involved in vocational education and training on a voluntary basis, which means that their participation is not legally regulated.

Except for specific training of employees in certain occupations or industries, CVET generally is not regulated by law. In the healthcare, energy, public administration, transport and defence sectors, training is legally regulated. In addition, continuing vocational training in enterprises is not funded publicly but by the employer; while foreign-owned enterprises spent more resources on training than Czech companies. No formal qualification and professional standards exist for CVET trainers in companies, thus companies define their own requirements. CVET trainers who are self-employed need vocational qualification through a trade certificate as a formal requirement for carrying out training tasks. Since there are no legal and uniform regulations for the qualification of CVET trainers, informal learning plays an important role. Whilst there are no nationwide accreditation schemes, various programmes aim to enhance CVET trainers' vocational and training skills and competences.

2. Approach

The Association of Management Trainers and Consultants (ATKM) of the Czech Republic has developed a series of projects to upgrade the competences of training consultants working for SMEs, with ESF funding. ATKM was launched in 1998 as a result of a successful training-of-trainers project funded by the British Know-How Fund (KHF). ATKM is a professional association of trainers, training consultants and other stakeholders who are involved in continuous vocational training in the Czech Republic. The main objective of ATKM is to promote good

quality training and to support the networking and professional development of trainers and consultants in the Czech Republic.

The overall aim of the project was to improve the skills of trainers, consultants and coaches working in or for SMEs in the region; improve the effectiveness of their training activities and broaden their portfolio of training methods and instruments. The needs of trainers working with and for SMEs were previously identified in an extensive survey carried out by ATKM across the Czech Republic in 2000, involving trainers and consultants in the field. ATKM had previously run a wide range of training programmes and the feedback received helped them to distil the real needs of this professional community.

The target groups are teachers, consultants, coaches, trainers, managers, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as freelance trainers who usually work for SMEs in the Czech Republic. Consultancy companies providing coaching and training are usually SMEs and their trainers lack the training and funding opportunities that large companies may offer through their own departments specialised in training and organisational development. The project was run in the Moravian-Silesian region, which was once heavily industrialised and has suffered from economic decline and high unemployment rates since the restructuring and privatisation of industry that started in 1989.

3. Innovation

Through an ESF project, five innovative modules for the advanced training of trainers were designed and applied. At that time, there were no other support resources and structures in place for delivering advanced training for trainers in the Czech language. The modules help trainers to deliver better their own programmes as well as to develop their business and consultancy skills.

Beneficiaries were given the opportunity to feed into the process during the training programme following the principle of partnership between trainers and trainees to avoid a bottom-up approach and provide the most relevant training.

4. Funding

The project was financed from ESF (75 %) and national funds (25 %).

5. Strategic partnership

ATKM was responsible for the design and implementation of the training programme, while various stakeholders were involved in the project on a less formal basis (designing and delivering the modules, evaluating and revising the pilot course). Trainers were engaged in the preparation, delivery and evaluation of the training.

6. Content

Each module comprises all the resources needed for designing and delivering a training programme for in-company trainers. These include details regarding the training content, timing, theoretical framework, exercises, methodological recommendations, handbooks and evaluation tools. As for the themes addressed in the modules, these consist of:

- use of interactive training methods such as project-based-training;
- the role of ICT and the development of training materials;
- partnership approaches to training;
- transition from training to consultancy work;
- personal training, coaching and advance training skills.

7. Outcomes

The project has resulted in the following outputs: a working methodology, training modules, and supporting materials for future programmes to train the trainers;

As for the outcomes, trainers participating in the programme acquired the following benefits during the project:

- training know-how (tools, approaches, methods);
- opportunities for networking with other trainers and consultants;
- a chance to identify their strengths and weaknesses as trainers, and to define self-development strategies;
- confirmation of their learning outcomes through a certificate;
- boosted motivation and stronger professional identity as trainers;
- and new job opportunities through increased networking between companies and trainers, since employers were also attending the training.

8. Sustainability

The training modules will be used in a retraining scheme for new trainers accredited by the Ministry of Education in the Czech Republic.

9. Key success factors

The key success factors identified include the following:

- the training modules met target groups' demands through needs analyses, consultation and feedback from trainers participating in the pilot phase;
- the reputation and legitimacy of ATKM helped to build trust and bring together a broad number of beneficiaries, since ATKM possessed an excellent knowledge of the various local stakeholders, particularly trainers and consultants;
- experienced and knowledgeable trainers developed and delivered the training modules;
- the participants demonstrated high levels of motivation.

10. Challenges

The project leaders found it was challenging to run a training course for already skilled trainers. This challenge was overcome by getting continuous feedback from participants and adapting the course to their needs.

Each training participant received a certificate, which has not been accredited. However, this aspect needs to be considered within the Czech context of vocational training where there are no national general standards for training programmes and real competences and experience are more valued than formal certificates.

There are also other challenges that may threaten the sustainability of this project. The market for training in the Czech Republic is still underdeveloped and has been severely affected by the financial crisis. Furthermore, the ATKM course is competing with other training companies and multinational competitors, and relies on volunteers to disseminate the programme due to insufficient funds. These various factors have all negatively impacted on the demand for training courses in general, including the ATKM course for trainers. In response to these

challenges, ATKM is currently offering the modules in printed and electronic format to all ATKM members (and the members' clients) at very low prices.

11. Key policy messages

The project has focused on the professional development of trainers working in SMEs. The aim of the project was to give trainers in SMEs the same opportunities to develop that in-company trainers enjoy in larger enterprises. Trainers were involved in all stages of the project, including design, delivery and evaluation of the training programmes. The programme stressed the need to offer opportunities (time and resources) to allow in-company trainers to self-develop, particularly in periods of economic turmoil.

12. Dissemination

The project outcomes were disseminated in two major conferences organised at national level. The training beneficiaries, professionals, members of ATKM as well as policy-makers were among attendees. The results are also publicised online on the official website of ATKM at www.atkm.cz. The modules for trainers are offered upon demand to ATKM members and to other trainers through vocational training institutions in the Czech Republic (e.g. Association of Training Organisations).

Source of further information:

<http://www.atkm.cz/n/>[cited 18.3.2010].

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CASE STUDY NO 7

'Train the trainer' programme, Malta

1. National context

Malta is a small open economy whose distinctive features include the dominance of small and medium sized enterprises, of which many are micro-enterprises. Malta also has a strong public sector. The main investment in initial and continuing VET remains state provided. As for the formal training of trainers in the public and private educational sectors, they should possess a recognised university degree. The situation in the private sector, however, is different given the fact that no formal certification and recognition of trainers presently exist. Private sector teachers and trainers have had to rely on own resources or market reputation to enhance their knowledge and skills and find employment.

However, in October 2005, Parliament approved the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Council, whose main objective is to steer the development of the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning. The council will also establish and maintain a qualifications framework for the development, accreditation and award of professional and vocational qualifications, other than degrees, based on standards of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes to be acquired by students.

2. Approach

The Employment and Training Corporation runs a training programme that contributes to enhancing the training status. The programme enables in-company trainers as well as those who anticipate taking up a trainer role to give more effective on-the-job training to new employees. The programme provides participants with the knowledge and skills to assess training needs, design and deliver effective on-the-job training programmes in a motivating manner.

The programme is compulsory for those who do not possess other relevant training qualifications or equivalent and would want to be considered as eligible trainers for the current training grants schemes operated by the ETC. More specifically, if a company is applying for financial assistance for training from the ETC, their trainers, whether in-house or external, must have successfully

completed the train-the-trainers programme (or an equivalent programme that may be delivered by another institution approved by the ETC). Under the new training aid framework, the ETC provides financial assistance to companies that invest in the training of their employees and the subsidy varies according to the type of training and the size of the enterprise. The training aid provides assistance to instil a lifelong learning culture in the private sector.

The train-the-trainer programme is delivered by the Night Institute for Further Technical Education (NIFTE) of the ETC. NIFTE, which was established in 1999 in consultation with the Federation of Industry and the Department of Education, provides training solutions to support employers' everchanging business needs. The ETC emphasises that their competence-based training programmes reflect labour market needs for better skilled in-company trainers in Malta, since they are designed in consultation with employers. The ETC ensures that quality is maintained throughout the programmes and consults its stakeholders on current and new training programmes.

In-company trainers do not form a regulated profession. In this context, the ETC has been lobbying for minimum regulation, or at least, formal professional recognition of in-company trainers.

3. Target group

The initiative was initially launched for IVET trainers or employees who wanted to act as trainers in apprenticeship schemes, and has been extended to include CVET trainers. The target groups are in-company CVET working either as full-time trainers or providing ad-hoc training in their enterprise, as well as team leaders, and employees who have the potential to be instructors for their work colleagues.

4. Innovation

As for the innovative elements of the programme:

- the training accommodates the needs of employers and employees identified in advance;
- the course arrangements are flexible, and the training can be run on companies' sites and in the evening, at the trainers' convenience; and
- there are no restrictive entry requirements, the course being open to trainers of all levels.

5. Funding

The training programme is funded through the ETC budget, that is, from national government funding. The training programme is currently free of charge for trainers who want to participate in the programme.

6. Strategic partnership

The programme, which is run and coordinated by the ETC, emerged through informal discussions with employers. The ETC is currently looking into potential collaborative arrangements with City & Guilds in the UK and trainers network in Ireland with the view to improve the training design and content.

7. Content

The programme covers trainers' roles; the training cycle; training needs assessment; learning and training styles; and the design, delivery and evaluation of training. The course enables trainers to transfer more efficiently the knowledge they have gained through professional experience to their own trainees. Although for the time being the course does not follow a formally established competence framework for trainers, the ETC is currently looking at different ways of improving the course in light of existing competence framework developed elsewhere (e.g., the trainer competence framework in Ireland; case study 1).

8. Registers of practitioners and quality standards

Upon successful completion of the course, candidates receive a certificate of achievement recognised by the Maltese government. The certificate is graded with a 'distinction', 'credit' or 'pass' accompanied by a transcript of subjects. Several foreign institutions have already accredited the ETC certification. ETC intends to collaborate with the Malta Qualifications Council, responsible for the development of the NQF, to obtain accreditation for the course, starting at the second level of qualifications.

9. Monitoring

The quality of the training course is monitored on a systematic basis through feedback from participants. The trainers responsible for the delivery of the ETC course are also given feedback. For example, the attitudinal changes are evaluated during the feedback phase of the course. The overall feedback given so far by participants has been very positive.

10. Outcomes

Before the ETC course was launched, there was no formal, nationally acknowledged training for trainers in Malta. The course, with a duration of 30 hours, provides trainers with a clear and comprehensive structure to apply to their own courses.

The number of participants has increased since the launch in 2 000 and the course has benefited from positive word-of-mouth. The institute trains around 50 people each year and the candidates receive a NIFTE certificate at the end of the programme. The certificate enables the successful participants to provide training that satisfies specific job and company requirements.

11. Longer-term impact on individuals

Employers from both the production and service sectors are encouraged to train employees who are responsible for in-company training. The course improves trainers' ability to train as well as to retrain employees in cases of company restructuring. The course aims to trigger an attitudinal change amongst trainers, by encouraging them to reflect on their contributions to companies' productivity and innovation. This is particularly important for in-company trainers in Malta, as they are often unaware of the importance of their professional role in the company. The age of participant's ranges from 25 to 60, and it is encouraging for older trainers and employees to see that they can develop their careers through learning at different stages of their professional lives. Companies also provide feedback to the ETC, which suggests that trainers improve their skills after attending the course.

Trainers also acquire a certificate upon the completion of the course, and some of them decide to continue their professional development by acquiring a diploma in training, which usually takes two years (on a part-time basis).

12. Sustainability

The 'train the trainer', which started in 2 000, is ongoing and is run by Malta's Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) on a demand basis. In the most recent calls for employers' applications under the training aid framework, one of the eligibility conditions refers to trainers having completed the 'train the trainer' programme or an equivalent training, not necessarily provided by the ETC.

Moreover, the ETC has been in contact with the trainers network in Ireland through the TTnet activities. The object of their informal discussions has been the trainer competence framework that the trainers network recently elaborated which can be implementable to the ETC training course for trainers. In terms of ongoing improvement of the course, the ETC is currently planning to adjust the programme to Malta's NQF.

13. Key success factors

NIFTE trainers are usually highly qualified and carefully selected. Because the ETC is a nationally recognised professional body, there is a great deal of trust in the quality of their courses. The course also engages learners through multiple delivery techniques in a participant-friendly environment.

Such 'train-the-trainer' courses had been made mandatory for trainers who apply for traineeship grants (e.g., training aid framework). As a result of the newly introduced rule and through positive word-of-mouth, the number of in-company trainers attending the 'train-the-trainer' course delivered by the ETC has recently increased. The number of participants is limited (maximum 13 attendants) ensuring a high quality training experience for each participant, who receive personal attention throughout the course.

14. Challenges

Since the course has no entry requirements, the trainer needs to adapt the course to participants of different levels. Another challenge stems from the different cultures that some of the participants might come from, due to the fact that some participants often work for multinational companies that invest in Malta. Having said that, the ETC tries to run the course in English or Maltese. Overall, as the project leader reiterated, the training approach remains flexible, customised to each group of participants, including participants with disabilities.

15. Key policy messages

There is still a great deal of work to be done for in-company trainers in Malta as they often lack the training literacy or the awareness about the important role training plays in a company. The course is also a 'living example' of the fact that it is never late to be trained as the course often helps older trainers (even 58 year-old participants) to discover their untapped career potential.

16. Dissemination

The outcomes of the delivered courses are presented on the ETC website, as well as in newspapers. The ETC sends a monthly newsletter to all employers, with details about new training schemes and courses. The ETC also publicises the programme on the website of other institutions such as the Foundation of Human Resource Development. Word-of-mouth has also played a role in making the initiative known and in attracting more potential trainers to participate in the course.

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CASE STUDY NO 8

‘Vocational pedagogy in enterprises’, Norway

1. National context

In Norway (Institut Technik+Bildung, 2008), education and training are considered a public responsibility. Equality in access to and quality of education regardless of social or geographical factors are fundamental political principles. As such, CVET is comparatively well regulated, sophisticated and devolved in Norway. There have been no regulations regarding formal qualifications for individuals functioning as trainers or learning facilitators outside the regular training institutions. They may attend educational courses on a voluntary basis, either as pre-service or as in-service training. No specific benefits accrue from such training, but it might be helpful for promotion. However, each company has to make a plan for the training, which is recognised by the local training boards.

In Norway, since the 1980s, there has been an increasing awareness of the general importance of having a highly educated population and updating training in order to meet changing labour market needs. Organised non-formal learning in the workplace and learning through daily work are considered the most important types of continuous vocational education and training (CVET) with 54 % of the economically active population aged 22 to 66 participating in some form of education and training. Accordingly, a wide range of various CVET and personally- oriented courses have developed to respond to an increasing need among in-company trainers and learning facilitators for more flexible modes of delivery, such as part-time and evening courses, distance education, including e-learning, etc. (Nielsen, 2002). In addition, larger enterprises, more often than small companies, offer CVET to their staff and tend to rely on their own training experts who arrange internal tailor-made training courses that correspond to the needs of the production cycle. With regard to smaller firms, they usually send out their workers to participate in shorter training courses – a practice also taking place in larger corporations (Nyen et al., 2003) In this context, it is important to mention that Norway has experienced a vast institutional reform in the provision of VET to teachers and trainers. Whereas until 1993, more than 100 colleges provided this kind of training after reorganisation, the activities were reduced to a network of only 10 colleges.

2. Approach

The training programme 'Vocational pedagogy in enterprises' was established in 1992, through the cooperation between the Association of Norwegian Process Industries (Prosessindustriens Landsforening, PIL) and Statens Yrkespedagogiske Høgskole, now part of Akershus University College, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education in Norway. The Association of Norwegian Process Industries (PIL) created a study plan for the project in cooperation with representatives from various companies, which called for a multiplication of effort to strengthen pedagogical competences in enterprises. The Akershus University College (Høgskolen i Akershus, HiAk) took over the project and developed it further. Amongst the teacher training institutions' network, HiAk acts as a national centre for the training of vocational teachers and trainers in pedagogical disciplines, by carrying out initial teacher training courses, further education programmes, master's degrees in vocational education and a variety of continuous in-service courses.

The programme aims to strengthen pedagogical competences in enterprises, to improve the quality of workplace training, and to enhance the pedagogical skills of workplace instructors and in-company trainers. The combination of academic and workplace training is at the heart of the programme. Against this backdrop, vocational pedagogy in enterprises responds to challenges regarding the role of teachers and trainers. When in-company trainers return to the workplace after a training period, new skills acquired through various courses are often not exploited, because this would require organisational changes, in particular, restructuring training and working practices at the company. One way to address this problem is through the continuous involvement of workplaces, alongside campuses, in the vocational pedagogy in enterprises. Learning initiatives should create a dynamic interaction between employees' work and learning, both individually and in groups. In HiAk's practice, it means that upon agreement between a trainer and an employer, a trainer works on an actual training project during the course of study and uses the company as a learning arena. Such combination of theoretical learning and daily work at the workplace raises awareness of the importance of trainers' professional and personal development. Engaging with the employers of individual in-company trainers participating in the programme has proved to be an efficient way to overcome companies' unwillingness to invest in the professional development of in-company trainers, particularly in the context of global economic crisis.

3. Target group

The programme brings together a heterogeneous group of participants from several companies and sectors. More specifically, it is delivered to groups such as:

- staff members of professional organisations, training agencies, academic institutions and resource centres that deliver training and guidance for employees in companies;
- trainers responsible for the training, guidance and coaching of employees;
- quality managers and training managers.

The most successful way of engaging with and reaching the target group is through former programme participants. Not only do they recommend the programme, but also their increased professionalism resulting from undertaking the course, usually persuades their employers to encourage more staff to sign up for the programme. Moreover, the structure of the modules which involves a preliminary agreement between the trainer and the employer and a final meeting to assess the programme results makes it popular among company owners who have a say and can stay involved in the whole learning process. To promote the programme, besides networking with companies and schools, a website with video interviews of previous participants is also used. Finally, new participants also join the programme on the basis of an established cooperation between the college and larger companies, such as Norwegian railways, the postal service or oil companies (e.g. Statoil).

4. Innovation

Interestingly, despite their different backgrounds, most of the in-company trainers who join the programme share similar teaching and instructing experiences. Hence, the objective of the vocational pedagogy programme is to stimulate trainers' reflection on their own workplace experience. The combination of experience and reflection, combined with workplace practice as a part of the process, is beneficial and particularly useful for both companies and trainers who broaden the range of techniques and processes that they can use in their training activities. By implementing development projects at the workplace, programme participants are also attempting to change the general learning environment within the company.

An important element in this process is a preliminary meeting during which participating in-company trainers and other employees discuss how the training

project, which is part of the programme, can meet expectations and how much time and resources will be needed to develop the project content. Consequently, during the final meeting, it is assessed whether vocational pedagogy in enterprises has met the expectations of the employer and other employees, and whether it has helped develop and/or change the learning environment in the company. In this way, the initiative is not only taken very seriously by companies but it also gives participating employees an opportunity to choose issues that are interesting for them, as a part of their own personal development.

5. Funding

The courses on Vocational pedagogy in enterprises at the Akershus University College are funded from tuition fees, paid by participants or by their employers. It is worth mentioning that, in general, larger companies (with 200 or more employees) often provide employer-funded courses. Taking a closer look at the private sector, 34 % of those who undertake continuous education activities are sponsored by their employers (Nyen et al., 2003).

6. Strategic partnership

The involvement of the Association of Norwegian Process Industries (PIL) was particularly important to build a programme that will be relevant to both employers' and trainers' needs. Moreover, to develop a learning system that could support the competence upgrading of in-company trainers while transforming working and learning arrangements in companies, close interaction between the trainers, the employers and the university was needed.

7. Content

Central to the study programme run by the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education is the emphasis on building on the experience and insight of participants and on connecting learning activities directly to the participants' work in their own enterprise. The programme consists of three modules, with the first two lasting approximately six to seven months, and the last one nine months. The modules are further divided into three-day-long meetings that take place every five to six weeks on campus. Between the meetings, participants design and

develop their training projects in their own workplace. When they return to the campus, they present what they have done, reflect upon it, apply the theory and then try to improve it.

By completing the whole programme, 60 ECTS (10) can be obtained. The programme is tailored around the following topics:

- basic methodology in communication and education (15 ECTS);
- competence and planning of training (15 ECTS);
- learning and development (30 ECTS).

Course participants work on a development project within their workplace that seeks to identify what kind of competences the company or a specific department needs, and define in cooperation with employers, the training solution to be performed.

Despite being the longest and most demanding part of the programme, the final part is perceived as the most valuable by the participants. The main feature of the final module is the planning and implementation of the programme assignments for a specific company, industry or agency. Therefore, the goals of the final stage differ in each individual case, depending on the company's and employees' needs. In particular, in-company trainers focus on:

- a training needs analysis in the company;
- the formulation of goals;
- the planning and foundation of the training project;
- the assessment of communication and interaction processes, project progress and deviations, project results;
- the use of evidence in the dissemination of results and learning and development;
- the use of ICT in learning and development;
- the management of teams and team development;
- and peer guidance in workplace learning and development.

Regarding the work requirements, in-company trainers have to participate in all phases of the training project, reflect upon it and then summarise their own learning, in a written report, possibly supplemented by video clips or other documentation. For instance, if the goal was to develop training products, these should be presented as part of the documentation, together with a process description and a plan for further implementation. Finally, in-company trainers present the project results, as well as the lessons they learned while carrying out the project.

In conclusion, the programme aims at equipping in-company trainers to cope with and evaluate different working practices, skills and techniques, which they can use in their own activities. Therefore, the learning process occurs through

practical exercises, assignments and project work, supported by guidance from teachers and complemented by theoretical reflections.

Networking between participants and peer learning are a key aspect of the training programme. In this way, in-company trainers receive alternative views and advice for their own work and learn how to support one another within the group.

In-company trainers also have access to online communication for common information, support and discussion. For instance, when building up their development projects, in-company trainers can describe the process step by step, highlight the main problems and place it on the ICT 'Classfronter' learning platform. Other in-company trainers can then respond with their own experiences from dealing with similar obstacles. Interestingly, the problems discussed are usually very common and cut across various sectors and professions.

Validation of experiential learning and accreditation of prior learning

Since 2000, Norwegian higher education institutions have been required to assess applicants with non-formal or informal backgrounds and integrate them into their study programmes. Universities and university colleges are entitled to decide whether applicants aged 25 or over who have no formal qualifications can be admitted, if the documented non-formal learning shows that they have the necessary competences for the requested programme. Evaluations indicate that students admitted to higher education on the basis of non-formal and informal learning in the chosen fields of study are succeeding as well as those admitted on the basis of formal learning (Tarrou and Holmesland, 2003).

The same entry requirements, namely general admission and experience (e.g. according to years spent fulfilling specific functions within the company) apply to the vocational pedagogy programme at the Akershus University College. After completion of the programme, in-company trainers receive a certificate that states that they have accrued 15 ECTS for each of the first two modules and 30 ECTS for the last one.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Participants in the programme receive feedback from both their workplace and their trainers. Feedback is based in the assignments undertaken in their workplace, measuring progress through practical training. The information is then sent to the university to assess whether the participating trainers have met the requirements of the study programme. The process is similar to monitoring

activities in all of the college's academic courses and it follows national standards.

In Norway, the National Body for Quality Assurance in Education (Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen, NOKUT) is responsible for conducting external quality assurance. All quality assessments are carried out through external expert panels. NOKUT acts independently of the government and the institutions inside the framework of law and ministerial regulation. According to the last evaluation, the HiAk programme is carried out in line with the accepted study plan.

9. Outcomes

The overall success of the programme can be attributed to its holistic approach to training; in-company trainers get together in workshops and continue their learning at their own workplace with specific tasks related to the nature and priorities of the company business. The possibility to obtain practical training by fulfilling certain tasks with the simultaneous verification of gained competences is regarded as one of the key factors contributing to the success of the programme. According to programme participants, this balance between studying theory at the university and then practising the learning at their workplace, helps to achieve better results in terms of professional development.

Since the beginning of the programme, approximately 600 people have completed one or more modules. Both this impressive number of graduates as well as an increasing interest from potential participants signals its success.

10. Impact on qualifications and longer-term impact on individuals

The impact of the programme on the qualifications of its participants is twofold: both formal and informal. Firstly, after finishing the course, trainers receive a certificate from Akershus University College confirming the number of received ECTS. The certificate can then be used when applying for bachelor or masters programmes at the college. It also opens doors to further education in other Norwegian and European universities. Secondly, the general impression amongst the programme instructors is that trainers receive more recognition in their workplace, upon completion of a course at a public institution. As one professor stated, 'already after finishing the first module, many participants feel that they are being perceived differently, by both their colleagues and their

employer. They are seen as more knowledgeable, more reflective persons, who can reason in a different way and who have a strategic view on many things.'

11. Challenges faced

In order to be a good trainer of trainers on this programme, the recipe for success is a combination of knowledge of both pedagogy and vocational practice so that one can understand what kind of problems and general learning environments in-company trainers face in their workplace. Therefore, trainers of trainers' backgrounds cannot be limited to academic experience. However, the combination of vocational practice and high academic education is uncommon, which poses a challenge for this initiative in recruiting appropriate staff. Employing trainers who were once students of the vocational pedagogy programme itself, could offer a solution.

12. Key policy messages

A key strength of the project, most appreciated by programme participants is its focus on work-based training which combines both learning and practice. Direct experience with practical exercises, collaborative work, feedback, conversations and peer supervision among in-company trainers is supplemented by learning materials, reports and literature. 'Working practice as the syllabus' could be regarded as the main principle guiding the programme.

Networking is also highlighted as one of the most important aspects of the programme. Participants value the opportunity of being able to network with other in-company trainers within the class (20-25 students) or group (4-6 students). During the course, participants are encouraged to share their professional experience, to work together in project groups, to solve group problems and to integrate theory and practice. Having various backgrounds, from their peers, they can learn about how other companies organise learning and staff development or how they tackle similar problems.

Last but not least, a key policy message is the need for the programme to engage with the employer of each in-company trainer participating in the training.

13. Transferability and dissemination

This learning system, based on a mixture of theory and class discussions combined with practical in-company service, confronts the all too common educational problem of abstract learning which is separated from real life practice. The approach developed by the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education has the potential to evolve into a model for general transfer since it is relevant for various educational fields. Practice-based learning and the cooperation between the college and the workplace are at the heart of the programme.

More intensive networking and collaboration with other universities is required for further development of the vocational pedagogy approach. For instance, establishing common research programmes could reap significant benefits in this regard ⁽⁹⁾.

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⁽⁹⁾ At the moment, the faculty collaborates with the universities of Bremen in Germany and Gras in Austria.

CASE STUDY NO 9

'Trainerguide', Denmark

1. National context

For Denmark, the state takes overall responsibility for the framework and provision of education, even though the municipalities are in charge of providing vocational training and education, within the framework set by the government. VET legislation also specifically mentions that the social partners should be involved in the process of VET and their role is both advisory and executive. The state has the key role in the framework of VET in Denmark, formulating the legal basis for VET provision, institutions, quality assurance etc., and financing IVET and part of CVET (Institut Technik+Bildung, 2008).

In general, trainer issues are the responsibility of the enterprises. Usually trainers are skilled workers or workers with a long work experience within their respective professional field. For in-company trainers, there are no formal training requirements. Traditionally, companies are used to manage themselves and to avoid rules and regulations. However, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in quality in-company training and training the trainers more systematically. There has been a large pilot project together with DEL (vocational teacher education institution) and some trade committees to arrange a standard trainer course in 2006 with the aim of standardising the trainer training across different sectors. This has led to many trade committees discussing this same issue. There are new initiatives from trade committees to integrate trainer courses into the Danish system of labour market training systems (AMU system). This means that the vocational colleges' CVET department would be able to offer trainer courses in the future.

2. Approach

Together with several trade committees and companies, the Danish Institute for Education of Vocational Teachers (DEL), now part of the Metropolitan University College, developed the original version of the Trainerguide, which has been operating in Denmark since 2006 and aims to promote a systematic approach towards the training of trainers. Generally, in-company trainers in Denmark are

skilled professionals who deliver training to other employees as part of their job. The majority have not been trained as trainers and often, do not acknowledge training as a part of their day-to-day job.

Providing support to trainers strengthens the quality of training and thus contributes to solve topical challenges for vocational education and training. At national level, the guide is used in companies across the country targeting employees in the industrial, construction, gastronomy and transport sectors. As news spread, other sectors also started to use the guide, including the health and safety, office and hospitality sectors. The pilot project ended in 2007; however, several trade committees (official bodies represented by the social partners) have formed an association and continue to support the Trainerguide for its maintenance and further development, discussing updates to the guide and activities related to it.

In 2008, links were made with vocational training organisations in other European countries and as a result, the 'European Trainerguide' is now being developed. It has partners in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey. Croatia and the United Kingdom are also involved as silent partners. Each country has responsibility for developing the TrainerGuide in the respective national language. The European TrainerGuide is elaborated by all partners in common and acts as a framework model for the national guides.

The guide aimed to raise awareness of training activities among companies and trainers themselves. It provided illustrative examples to help trainers identify the work that they do, knowledge they have acquired and the skills they need to have to be a competent trainer. Central to the guide's development was the view that trainers can train others more effectively, if they are trained on how to deliver training.

3. Target group

In Denmark, the target groups are employers and skilled workers, particularly those in technical sectors, as well as training coordinators in companies and in-company trainers. This includes public and private sector employers in construction, industrial, nutritional and transport sectors. Furthermore, the Trainerguide is used in companies' induction programmes for new employees, or for a better understanding of cultural problems with bilingual employees.

4. Innovation

Trainerguide has a number of innovative aspects. First and foremost, it is a tool that can be accessed by trainers everywhere. Trainers can participate in learning when it is convenient for them – *'it can be used here and now'*. This has been critical to continuing project activities.

Transferring the guide to other countries is another area of the project's innovation. During the transfer process, it became apparent that trainers experience the same issues and challenges in each country. Trainers often have questions that require short, informative answers. A web-based version of the guide is an ideal means of delivering this information. This reinforces the need for a European Trainerguide, where trainers across Europe can access information related to their role and CPD. Best practice in training of trainer methods from all partner countries is included in the guide. Trainers can benefit from the experiences of other trainers in similar sectors in other countries.

The surveys suggest that trainers mostly use the guide during their work, such as during breaks or in situations with less workload. Above all, trainers find themselves and their problems/questions represented in the Trainerguide. This is fairly new in Denmark, since there are no established methods for in-company trainers.

5. Funding

The original version of Trainerguide, in Denmark, was funded by the national government. Funding came to an end in 2007 and the project seeks continuously alternative funding mechanisms. At present, the project relies on the commitment of those involved to keep it going. The European Trainerguide is EU cofunded through the Leonardo Da Vinci programme.

6. Strategic partnership

Partnership is essential to this project. There is significant involvement from social partners as well as inputs from training institutions and public bodies. In particular, there is a robust dialogue between social partners and the project lead in Denmark. Due to the collective bargaining system in Denmark, the project first made contact with the so-called company trade committees. Effective working with trade committees was considered essential for the project's success. In

Denmark, IVET and CVET are considered a social partner remit. Social partners initiated and were involved in the Trainerguide's development and implementation in companies. In the first instance, the project worked with trade committees in the industrial, construction, gastronomy and transport sectors and asked employers if they were willing to participate. Once trade committees were aware of and open to the project's activities, work could begin.

Other countries are also building on their work with social partners. Platforms for cooperation, referred to as national quality panels, are established in each country, including vocational schools, associations of trainers, centres of expertise on vocational education, vocational schools, higher education institutions, national and regional government representatives, chambers of commerce and industry, and social partners. All stakeholders are involved on an informal basis, although commitment is high. The exact make-up of the quality panels varies from country to country.

Partner organisations will be able to cascade the guide in their countries. The respective organisations already have significant experience in improving the VET practice of trainers and want to further this work. Each country is topically developing a web-based guide, specific to the needs of trainers in their own country. Working with their partners they promote the guide and develop further the CPD of trainers.

7. Content

The trainer guide is available online and consists of 10 modules, including:

Module 1 – Recruitment and employment of apprentices including legislation, employment contracts and notice periods;

Module 2 – The work place, company culture, principles of cooperation and how to meet the training needs of customers;

Module 3 – VET training system;

Module 4 – The trainer and training methods;

Module 5 – The apprentice's learning processes;

Module 6 – The apprentice's background;

Module 7 – Cooperation;

Module 8 – Safety/security and company climate;

Module 9 – Evaluation/assessment;

Module 10 – New – Lifelong learning.

Although the guide was conceived first for apprenticeship schemes in enterprises, it is relevant for the training of employees. In-company trainers can

select the modules most suitable to their needs. An increasing number of training consultants are recommending Trainerguide to companies. When visiting and screening the companies, the VET consultants identify and recommend modules, where the companies are experiencing difficulties. This may include questions such as 'how to run an appraisal conversation' or 'how to create an induction programme'.

In addition, trainers using the online tools can benefit from up-to-date best practices as well as simple training tools for download and tips. The training offer is updated using a peer learning approach: best practice and lessons learned are shared between partners and fed back into the guide.

The version of the guide, which was developed in English within a transnational partnership, is a merge of partner countries' best practice and developed to be adaptable to specific conditions in different European countries.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The board of the Trainerguide Association in Denmark meets every second month to discuss any necessary changes and updates for Trainerguide. At national level, the quality panels also play an important role in the monitoring of Trainerguide's activities. Specifically, the panels will monitor the relevance of the guide at national level and ensure it is meeting the needs of labour market organisations and stakeholders.

As for evaluation, so far there has been no official or independent evaluation of this initiative. A survey was undertaken with service users in 2007. It revealed that the main users of the guide were in-company trainers and training coordinators. Robust strategies, including the national quality panels, are in place to ensure the objective evaluation of the initiative.

9. Overall success

In a short space of time the project has achieved considerable success. Notably, it has built on a national level initiative for Denmark and has transferred it to other European countries. This approach will ensure that the good practice achieved through Trainerguide for in-company trainers will spread throughout Europe.

Other successes of Trainerguide include:

- raising awareness of the role and the activities of in-company trainers as well as the potential of workplace learning;

- highlighting the need for the continuing training and professional development of in-company trainers;
- increasing partnership working at national and European level, with the participation of social partners, and adapting the Guide to different national VET systems.

10. Impact on qualifications and longer-term impact on individuals

As this is a fairly new initiative, it is too early to assess the impact on individuals' qualifications.

Examples of how companies have benefited from and used Trainerguide include:

- undertaking systematic evaluations, using resources that are downloaded from the Trainerguide;
- initiating international exchange (mobility), inspired by the Trainerguide project;
- designing induction programmes and education plans for apprentices and new employees.

In general, the project has received feedback that companies have become more conscious about diversity of management and training strategies to training staff policy and their positive contributions. A wide variety of companies have signed up to the project's newsletter. It is here where the project publishes new examples of best practice in companies – including in-company training of staff, apprenticeship and CPD of trainers – and links to new tools from social partners or the government. Companies and VET schools also send materials to the web-editors for publishing in the Trainerguide.

11. Sustainability

Trainerguide has given considerable thought to its sustainability. Through its development of an online guide it has been able to transfer its activities to countries throughout Europe. Funding for Trainerguide was not secured after the initial project period ended in 2007. However, project staff are always seeking alternative sources and are confident further funding will be available in the future. At present the project's activities rely on the commitment of partners involved at all levels. As Trainerguide is led by social partners in trade

committees and steered by their cross-branch Trainerguide Association, it is difficult to continue project activities over the longer term without further financing. The Danish Trainerguide Association invests a significant proportion of their time into the Trainerguide; they have built it into their day-to-day job and this has helped to keep momentum for the initiative going.

12. Key success factors

Trainerguide has succeeded in:

- building effective links with policy-makers and social partners at local and national level – this supports the sharing of good practice and raises awareness of in-company trainers issues;
- establishing commitment and ‘buy-in’ from partners at all levels, which supports the longevity of the initiative and maximises successes;
- being adaptable to different national policy contexts and VET systems: surprisingly, the European Trainerguide project has found that up to 80-0 % of the Danish Trainerguide matches the needs in other countries.

13. Challenges

In its start-up period, Trainerguide encountered some challenges. Ensuring effective working relationships with social partners was critical to the project’s success. As social partners initiated Trainerguide, this collaboration proved to be a clear advantage to the project. When working with companies in Denmark, the support of social partners is essential for an initiative to be successful. The project had to work closely with trade committees and present the aims and objectives of the guide before they could be pursued. Having trade committees on board also helped to ensure the involvement of employers and employees (in-company trainers). The guide wanted to present detailed information in a non-academic format and offering a range of resources for inspiration and further adaptation to the particular needs of enterprises and trainers.

In terms of tracking users, a challenge will be to record the figures of in-company CVET trainers who have used these tools in Denmark and in the countries where the Trainerguide is being transferred. In this context, Trainerguide has experienced challenges in its transfer to other countries. Although the issues related to in-company trainers are similar in each country, legislation, policy and national VET systems differ. As a result the guide could not

be transferred in its original format. This issue was addressed by national partners adapting the guide to their VET systems and according to the needs of labour market organisations.

14. Key policy messages

One of the key messages is that the CPD of in-company trainers needs to be recognised by employers, to ensure trainers are 'fit for purpose'. In-company trainers should be able to identify their role as a trainer and their professional development needs. The awareness of employers, employees and in-company trainers themselves needs to be raised in this respect.

Trainerguide has links with policy-makers at national level in Denmark. Activities and progress of the Guide are communicated through the national quality panels, which include representatives from regional and national governments.

- VET policies and strategies tend to concern teachers and trainers in further education institutions. In-company trainers are a forgotten group and policies give little attention to their needs. At the moment, they sit outside the formal national qualification system. Subsequently, any training they undertake has little impact on their qualification levels. To address these issues Trainerguide recommends that:
- VET policies need to reflect the needs and potential of in-company trainers – skilled professionals with substantial knowledge mostly compose this group. This potential should be integrated into mainstream policy to create good learning at company and national level opportunities;
- projects similar to Trainerguide should be based on voluntary agreements between employers and state training authorities. This helps employers take ownership of the training activities taking place inside their own companies and will enhance their commitment to the initiative;
- any training should fit the needs of the workplace or local labour market – Employers should be able to adapt the training to their own needs. If this is not possible, then employers will not adopt such training methods and potential learning outcomes will be lost;
- the guide – or similar resources – should especially cater for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It should be free-of-charge and a tool that they are able to access as required.

A key policy message of Trainerguide is that the initiative has been transferred in other countries in Europe by being flexible and adaptable and by taking account of each national VET system.

15. Transferability

Trainerguide has demonstrated that it can be adapted and transferred to other countries and other sectors. At national level, the guide has progressed from its initially targeted sectors and now supports a broad range of trades and employers. At European level, the guide has been developed into a framework-style generic model that national partners can adapt to their needs.

16. Dissemination

Dissemination has already taken place at EU level through conferences, where partners have promoted Trainerguide to other VET organisations in other countries. At national level, dissemination of the national guides – which are under development – is planned to take place through the partners and the national quality panels, in which a broad variety of stakeholders participate. An online newsletter is also published every three months. It promotes the initiative's progress and advertises changes to the guide.

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CASE STUDY NO 10

'foraus.de', the BIBB online service for the promotion of training personnel in Germany

1. National context

The German regulatory system for training is characterised by cooperation between employers and trade unions at various levels. CVET also has a high status in Germany, though it is comparatively deregulated with the state playing a subsidiary role (Institut Technik+Bildung, 2008). The term in-company continuing vocational education and training usually refers to CVET at the initiative of the company. It does not matter whether it actually takes place in the company or outside it. Traditionally this definition has also meant that the company pays for the provision and that the training takes place during regular working hours. Individuals themselves both in terms of financing participation in continuing training and dedicating personal time assume recently more responsibility. Employees tend more often to finance their CVET and also CVET increasingly takes place outside regular working hours.

In most cases trainers themselves finance courses to obtain a formal qualification certificate. For skilled workers, the 'trainer aptitude regulation certificate' (AEVO, see below for more details) is an incentive to raise trainers' market value within the company. There are no regulated requirements to work as a trainer. Various trainer certificates are offered on the market. CVET trainers are not registered as a standardised occupational profile. There are no specific training models that characterise pre-service training for CVET. The few university courses offered differ considerably. Most of them are more related to management functions in adult education than to specific training tasks in the company. Most trainers have an academic degree in their specific domain of technical knowledge (university or university of applied sciences) and possess one or more trainer certificates, which can be obtained through various trainers' associations or education providers. Germany is an exceptional case where most of its in-house trainers hold a trainer certificate (not least thanks to the formal regulations of the German trainer aptitude decree).

2. Approach

The organisation responsible for this online training resource is the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung - BIBB). The foraus.de platform was created to respond to the needs of an IT-based society in which businesses have to compete in a global economy marked by increasingly shorter innovation technology cycles and cost-reduction pressures. This calls for learning processes that are faster, more dynamic and adapted to the users' needs. IT-based information and learning environments enable necessary knowledge to be acquired independently of time and place. According to a BIBB report (BIBB, 2007), the foraus.de platform responds well to this need.

In general, BIBB has been very aware of the changes resulting from the information society and the global economy as it was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in conjunction with the second Europe-wide company survey of continuous training in enterprises (CVTS-II) to run a survey on the situation of vocational training in Germany. The overall results highlighted that 85 % of German companies are aware of the contribution of in-company continuing training to the lifelong learning opportunities of their employees⁽¹⁰⁾. In addition, there are new challenges for German trainers such as migrant workers, an ageing population and unskilled young workers, all these challenges requiring trainers to update their training skills and methods.

In this context, foraus.de provides trainers with the following facilities:

- an information platform or online library which ensures access to day-to-day training tips such as how to organise the first day of training, assessment systems for vocational education and training, and the electronic report book;
- online professional community which provides trainers with the opportunity to discuss issues with worldwide experts in the field;
- online learning service that offers train-the-trainer opportunities through virtual seminars and classes.

3. Target group

The core group of users consists of in-company trainers. In the German context of the dual system of vocational education and training, the division between in-

⁽¹⁰⁾ The results of the CVTS-II survey are available online at www.bibb.de [cited 18.3.2010].

company IVET and CVET trainers is not clear-cut. Hence, the foraus.de platform is designed for the use of CVET trainers who may be taking care of both apprentices and adult employees in a company. The platform was designed to address trainers in all sectors, including the service sector. In practice, there is a slight focus on technical sectors (for example, metalworks, automotive, etc.) because of the higher demand from trainers coming from these specific sectors. Basically, information about training and trainers in all economic sectors find their place under the Foraus umbrella.

The foraus online seminars are selected via BIBB's continuous communication with trainers in companies and are designed in the light of trainers' expressed needs for improving their daily training. BIBB usually selects an expert who is able to design an online seminar on a topic in demand, plans the content of the seminar, writes a preview paper, informs the trainer community about the seminar, publicises it, supports the delivery of the seminar as well as evaluates and disseminates the results of the seminar. Participation is open to everyone who is registered and who is engaged in training activities as a trainer, planner, decision-maker or HR specialist.

4. Innovation

Using the Internet, foraus.de brings together trainers and stakeholders interested in initial and continuing vocational training, forming a community of trainers who can exchange ideas, share expertise, benefit from online learning facilities and inform themselves about the latest news in their field. Members of the community also get involved in the organisation and design of the online community by submitting proposals for new learning, opening chats or forums and setting up working groups. BIBB makes the technical tools available for this purpose and helps out in the implementation, through the 'foraus.de' platform.

5. Funding

The project is exclusively funded by BIBB who receives government funds from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. BIBB submits a proposal to renew its funding every four years. The project is ongoing and it is expected to have an indefinite life.

6. Partnership approach

The project per se is managed by BIBB solely. There are no formal agreements, and the use of foraus.de is totally free and based on individuals' self-interest and engagement in training. The evaluation of the project is done in collaboration with their Internet provider, Thinkhouse GMBH.

BIBB collaborates with other institutions when deciding on the content of the seminars and learning resources. Such decisions can involve public and industry bodies such as the Confederation of German Trade Unions.

The project is based on the belief that the independence of the professional body that coordinates this project (BIBB) is a condition that ensures the preservation of the quality of the services offered and that such projects should not be run with or by lobby groups. Furthermore, the underpinning principle of the initiative is that Internet can be a rich, free and readily available information resource. Collaboration on a non-formal basis works very efficiently through direct exchange of information, ad-hoc meetings regarding the coordination of joint activities (workshops, marketing campaigns and joint publications).

7. Content

With the Knowledge-Börse (knowledge exchange) service, foraus.de users can ask questions directly to experts in vocational education and training. The topics covered include: process orientation in vocational education and training; assessment; conflict management; e-learning in training; vocational education of disadvantaged people, etc. Furthermore, the platform has been updated in the light of regulatory changes introduced in 2005 (see below for details). Hence, this interactive platform helps in-company trainers to get the most recent news in the VET field, acquire new skills through using the learning centre offering virtual rooms and online seminars as well as engage with experts through the discussion boards and knowledge exchange functions.

Foraus has recently offered IT courses to tackle the overall poor IT literacy among German trainers. IT courses on social softwares such as Moodle and mapping techniques have been particularly well received by users.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

BIBB in collaboration with the Internet provider Thinkhouse GMBH publishes yearly evaluation reports on the foraus platform (www.thinkhous.de). Using this information, BIBB issues reports about the foraus.de service, which provides practical information on indicators such as number of registered users per year, posted contributions and questions, membership increase rate, etc. The reports are available online at www.bibb.de.

BIBB's virtual information and communication forum is constantly expanding its services from creating virtual seminar rooms to enlarging the pool of experts involved in the forum discussions. Learning provision is broadened with the following goals in mind: support trainers facing evolving demands and challenges, providing information about new developments, establishing contacts with other trainers, and promoting discussion among those involved in initial and continuing vocational education and training. New functions were added in 2006 to help disabled persons to freely access the online sources at foraus.de. In April 2009, the platform was relaunched with newly improved functions benefiting from recent IT developments such as social software and broadcasting.

9. Results

The www.foraus.de project has resulted in tangible outputs as follows:

- the foraus.de community provides trainers with opportunities for online professional development, peer learning and networking. Membership is free of charge;
- a learning centre with 15 learning modules and documents related to the Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude (Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung, AEVO) as well as a modular system of professional development focused on task and process-oriented training ('Handlungs- und Prozessorientierten Ausbilden');
- a member forum which allows users to participate in professional discussions at their convenience; users can also search by topic for postings in over 20 forums and receive e-mail notification of new forum postings;
- online seminars with independent learning materials and 'virtual classroom' sessions with audio-based and whiteboard support.
- the foraus newsletter, which is sent out to all the members of foraus.de at least once a month.

- a resources library containing literature sources on vocational education and training as well as databases of institution and association names and useful addresses.
- notice board for updated notices, questions and expressed views on vocational education and training.
- possibility to set up one's own foraus homepage with a foraus business card.

The foraus.de forum has around 10 000 registered members making it the largest online community for training personnel in Germany. By October 2006, the platform was already hosting 42 thematic forums, moderated by experts. Almost 90 % of the foraus.de users are German, but the number of users from German-speaking countries (Austria, Switzerland) is growing.

10. Impact on qualifications and longer-term impact on individuals

There are short-term and long-term benefits for foraus users. In the short run, users get access to news and quick advice on training; in the long run, they improve their skills and network with experts in their own field.

11. Sustainability

The project started in 2001 and is ongoing, with the possibility to renew its contract for government funds every four years. New developments are also envisioned: the provision of online courses and joint publications in collaboration for example with DLGI (a company which provides training courses in line with the European IT certification standard-ECDL certificate).

12. Key success factors

One of the key success factors of foraus.de, is the fact that the organisation responsible for this project is an independent and well-known professional body in the field. BIBB is recognised for its expertise, independence and excellent ties with employer and employee representative bodies across Germany.

Success factors identified are that:

- the project resulted in easily accessible and user friendly online outcomes;
- the online resource uses simple language and has an attractive style that renders it more appealing to users;
- the outcomes can be used for company-based vocational training processes in the long-run;
- the training platform encourages trainers to share and disseminate good practices within and outside the trainer community.
- the project increases the efficiency and attractiveness of vocational education and training through the use of modern multimedia-based forms of teaching and learning.

13. Challenges

One of the greatest challenges faced by foraus organisers was the poor IT and media literacy among German trainers, as one of the main impediments to using online platforms and learning resources. Although the improvement of IT literacy is not an objective of the platform, the foraus online documentation centre provides trainers with e-learning materials from past and more recent IT courses provided by BIBB. In addition to that, BIBB is also actively involved in the provision, launching, monitoring and evaluation of government-funded programmes aimed at raising the level of media literacy among trainers.

Another challenge is the lack of continuity in the use of the foraus platform, due to time constraints on the trainers' side. It seems to be rather common to have users who occasionally set up a blog or a discussion forum only for the short duration of a specific training project but stop using it when the project is finished. Both research and practice largely agree that personal training, tutoring and support are usually necessary for online learning. Experience shows that online communities of practice are not without challenges as they need intensive support from the mediating institution (BIBB). Only a small number of users make information available on-line from their own initiative or take an active part in discussions.

The economic turmoil can negatively affect the demand for training courses and programmes, but online services can save money at the same time because trainers can access training in a flexible way at their workplace.

14. Key policy messages

One of the key messages from this example is that online VET platforms require the direct involvement of independent and national professional bodies (such as BIBB in Germany). It is also recommended that the project is not managed and/or coordinated by a lobby group but rather by an expert body that has wide experience in the VET field. This type of project also demands secure and serious investment as well as a competent institution that can permanently mediate the online discussions, forums and seminars.

Online virtual spaces for in-company trainers are useful in improving the daily work of trainers. Hence, more information about successful pilot projects in the area of online communities for trainers across the EU is also needed so that existing initiatives can become known, more widely used and built upon.

15. Transferability

The project believes that the information and training services that are run by foraus.de and the online courses are transferable to other countries provided that well-established professional VET bodies run them. Investment would also be needed in such initiatives to ensure that various impediments to using online platforms such as poor IT literacy amongst trainers are tackled.

16. Dissemination

The dissemination of the project results is achieved through BIBB's daily information services, web-platforms (AF and foraus), presentations at congresses and related trade fairs as well as through articles published in magazines and handbooks. The project leader's job is to set up joint projects with industry in order to improve the training offer and over the years BIBB has been able to create a very visible and attractive profile for foraus.

Sources of further information:

More information (in German) about the content of specific online seminars moderated by various experienced trainers is available at the following web addresses:

www.bibb.de [cited 18.3.2010], www.foraus.de [cited 18.3.2010], www.af-bibb.de [cited 18.3.2010].

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CASE STUDY NO 11

'SPF online', Italy

1. National context

According to surveys carried out by ISFOL and other national research institutes (ISTAT, Unioncamere), one of the main barriers faced by Italian teachers and trainers is inconsistent and insufficient vocational training investment levels. This particularly concerns small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that consider the provision of in-company training overly expensive. In-company training activities account for little more than one working week per year in companies with less than 49 employees, while the national average of training is around five days per year.

There are no formal recognition and qualification requirements for in-company trainers in the country, and no specific national standards for trainers, but only general standards for employees of certified training providers by regions. The main association of trainers is the Italian Association of Trainers that organises 2 500 professional trainers.

In Italy, the economic system is based on SMEs. However, it is large enterprises that are the major training suppliers and are more likely to provide training services. According to 2005/06 data, there have been 60 315 vocational training courses at regional level, which have involved nearly 700 000 enrolled students. In 2005, there were 37 438 SMEs that offered training to their employees, through these courses.

Italy has undergone recent changes to decentralise the VET system with 20 regional training systems designed to fit the needs of local labour markets, enterprises and workers. The training provision is managed by the social partners and supervised by the Ministry of Labour. Companies that request financial support for in-company training need to meet recently introduced quality criteria, which are also relevant for the qualification of trainers.

The level of training increases proportionally to the size of the enterprise with large enterprises being major training suppliers and paying more attention to the development of employees' skills. The majority of trainers work on a freelance basis and companies outsource their training provision. Trainers working on a freelance basis are often more committed to upgrading their skills through informal learning (e.g. communities of practice). Management does not always consider training as a strategic dimension for company development. Action to

encourage a training culture particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises is needed.

2. Approach

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social affairs launched in 2005 the permanent system of training online (SPF online), which provides online training services (www.xformare.it), with the technical assistance from the Italian Institute for Vocational Training (ISFOL) and Italia Lavoro. SPF online aims to improve the competences of teachers and trainers who operate in a variety of fields and settings. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) is one of the fields in which teachers and trainers need to enhance their competences significantly and the SPF online encourages the use of ICT in training. Currently, SPF online is the biggest open and free of charge European web-based public service, which targets approximately 400 000 users, including in-company trainers. The platform offers a vast range of training courses and services, including collaborative learning support services (about 3 000 learning online tools, ranging from web seminars to educational games, totalling approximately a possible 1 000 hours of online use) and innovative forms of multilevel e-tutoring (Ludovisi, 2008). The web platform, with appropriate safety and privacy settings provides a system of extensive training in both quantitative (users involved and hours of training), and qualitative terms (diversification of services provided and relevance of training activities) (Montedoro and Infante, 2006).

3. Aims and objectives

More specifically, SPF online:

- aims to improve the competence of trainers, working in a variety of settings and sectors, such as apprenticeships; compulsory training; post-secondary training and continuing training;
- supports the development of learning communities of practice;
- and creates integrated training systems covering a broad range of fields in the training job market.

The design of SPF online is based on self-learning and collaborative learning. Users can construct personalised training paths, choosing from a wide range of training opportunities and by participating in collaborative activities and practice communities.

The training catalogue consists of more than 200 courses and more than 70 complex courses combining several training units on a variety of themes, such as marketing, information and communication, human resources, security and foreign languages (English, Spanish and French). The trainee is given an outline of the training pathway, which is reviewed periodically, so as to have a clear picture of what he/she should be able to achieve. The presentation of the training content will be adapted in the future to integrate sets of learning outcomes.

A variety of training tools is available, including: a tracking system that follows users' activities; a forum for thematic discussions between trainers; and a virtual room ('aula virtual') for thematic sessions with experts. These tools allow the experts to assess users' needs and on this basis, to modify actions. Both during and after completion of a training activity, a team of experts provides methodological support and helps the trainee further develop the pedagogical and technical competences needed for example for mentoring.

4. Target group

The SPF online system targets teachers and trainers, working in a diversity of institutional environments and training fields, such as private and public institutions, initial and continuing training. The project aims to reach over 400 000, from which 50 000 are professional trainers either in-company or working as freelancers in the CVET field. The current group of users includes trainers, training managers and coordinators, lecturers, tutors and evaluators who work in training centres, in training agencies or within companies.

5. Innovation

The SPF Online project is an ambitious attempt to build up an integrated training system in Italy. Another important aspect of the project is the particular structure of the technological platform that enables a high degree of personalisation of the training path. Whereas discussions with tutors and coaches take up to 30 % of total learning time, 70 % of the training is based on self-learning.

6. Funding

In Italy, the training of trainers is mainly financed by public funds within the framework of national laws ⁽¹⁾, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the joint multisectoral funds for continuing training (industry-based training funds). The ESF represents more than 80 % of the resources for continuous training within the framework of regional and national operational programmes. SPF online has received funds in the region of EUR 29 million from the ESF budget.

7. Strategic partnership

SPF online is a national continuous training project promoted by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy, carried out in association with ISFOL and Italia Lavoro. The Ministry of Labour is strongly involved in the monitoring of the training platform and supports synergies with the social partners and regional authorities. ISFOL performs a fundamental role in the project, in the design and development of training content, activities, multimedia learning materials and support services, the development of training software, and the quality management of the platform. Italia Lavoro another agency of the Ministry of Labour also takes part in the platform development and dissemination. The social partners and 20 Italian regions are represented in the steering committee.

8. Networks of trainers

SPF online's contributes to the establishment of communities of practice between different kinds of training professionals, which motivate and support trainers to further develop their skills. The users, informally tied together by a common activity, continue to collaborate and share knowledge and experience in the communities of practice of SPF online.

9. Validation of experiential learning

Currently, SPF online trainers' competences are recognised with a certificate at the end of the course. However, this validation is not legally binding, as yet. SPF

⁽¹⁾ Law 236/1993 and Law 53/2000.

online currently allows users to create a *personal electronic portfolio*, detailing their acquired competences or skills, further to their online training participation.

In this context, the University of Padua is experimenting with formal certification with an academic course for operators in the training and education system. Using the online training offer, training participants can receive 60 out of a total of 180 credits during a degree course that will end in 2011. To achieve the required number of credits; the student must complete the course and the related collaborative learning activities.

10. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of the SPF training offer is facilitated by the specific design of the system, which allows the collection of quantitative data about the users (registration on particular platforms, registration on learning activities, courses completed and more). By tracking the steps that the user takes throughout his/her educational process, qualitative and quantitative information is gathered, processed and analysed in order to improve the supply of online training.

11. Results

The project promoters believe they have achieved both quantitative and qualitative success. Primarily, whereas the initial objective of the project was to involve around 80 000 trainers and teachers, 150 000 persons have registered on the platform and over 86 000 people are actively involved in training activities. Regarding the qualitative success of the project, it has given teaching and training professionals a space to share within communities of practice know-how and best practice, and has created a reference point in the field of education and training. A further successful outcome is the general progress and increased familiarity with ICT tools observed amongst the users namely, teachers and trainers (not only in terms of using and designing online courses but also with regards to improving communication skills).

12. Sustainability

The SPF Online pilot phase finished in mid-2009. Despite the overall success of the project, the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008 had an impact on the

provision of funds for its continuation. In the current economic climate and in order to sustain the project the most probable solution will be to decrease the scope of the project.

13. Key success factors

In the context of SPF online, success factors include compliance with human resources standards; technical, technological and organisational skills, monitoring system implemented by ISFOL, through feedback from users and consultation amongst the stakeholders responsible for the programme. The SPF online project offers teachers and trainers the opportunity to make use of a fully updated structured learning environment. Specifically for trainers, they are given the opportunity to come into contact and cooperation with in-company trainers working in a diversity of sectors and companies.

14. Challenges faced

The large number of tools offered by the system poses a challenge in terms of technological and human resources needed to run it on a daily basis. It must be noted that in the context of the current global economic crisis, it is uncertain whether enough resources can be secured to address this problem.

The problem of the digital divide can be overcome, as far as the project itself is concerned, by bringing in ICT assistance, in the form of a call centre, to minimise problems around the system's accessibility and usability.

15. Key policy messages

Notwithstanding Italy's good teaching system, the field of training still requires significant improvement. The experience of SPF online reveals that there is scope for creating an open and permanent system of training-the-trainers and can help solve major problems.

16. Transferability

SPF online offers a consolidated methodological approach, which is transferable and can be applied to the training of many different target groups, beyond in-company trainers.

ISFOL, recently signed a partnership, in collaboration with other Italian private companies and with the Romanian Public Employment Service (the National Employment Agency). It aims overall to improve and support the qualification retraining of training staff working in provincial and local employment centres in Romania.

17. Dissemination

The project has two different levels of dissemination. The first level concerns the communication and promotion of the project at conferences, forums and other political and institutional events managed by the Ministry of Labour, with the assistance of Italia Lavoro and ISFOL. The main targets of this campaign are opinion leaders, managers, administrators and company executives, enterprises and public bodies. The second dissemination level regards the final users who can be reached through specific activities managed by ISFOL and the learning service support, such as direct mail campaigns, periodic newsletter and mail-shots of brochures and other materials.

Sources of further information:

www.xformare.it [cited 18.3.2010].

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Montedoro C.; Infante V. (2006). Permanent system of online training for the development of human resources of the integrated training system [Il sistema Permanente di formazione on line per lo sviluppo delle risorse umane del sistema formativo integrato]. *Webmagazine on training*, October 2006, No 43.

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CASE STUDY NO 12

‘The BLEND practitioner networks’, UK

1. National context

In the UK, a number of policies and strategies closely integrating employment and skills agendas have an effect on the competences and qualifications of in-company trainers. A relevant strategy is the *workforce strategy for the further education sector in England, 2007-12* ⁽¹²⁾: During 2007-08 partnership working between Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and the wider further education (FE) sector led to the development of a one-year implementation plan, a companion document to the first workforce strategy for the further education sector in England. The strategy was developed to support the overall aim of the workforce becoming more responsive to the changing learning needs of adults and employers. The overall purpose of the strategy and the implementation plan is to support individual employers’ strategic workforce planning. Both documents are reviewed on an annual basis to reflect policy drivers, regulatory issues and environmental factors that impact on the sector. Given these relatively frequent changes in the strategy, it is likely that this policy will have an ongoing impact on the CPD of in-company trainers.

The management and development of skills policy in England rests largely with two government departments and the implementation of such policies is the remit of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which funds all post-compulsory education (excluding higher education) and all government-funded training schemes. Scotland has a largely devolved skills policy that has developed an all-age approach to careers advice and guidance while England has a separate provision for young people and adults. In England, successive governments have adopted a market model having a largely voluntarist and unregulated approach to the organisation of work-based training.

In-company trainers and teachers in the English and Scottish VET systems follow different initial training and professional development routes. In England, however, all trainers come under the classification of ‘teaching professionals’ in the system of national occupational standards (nos) from which national

⁽¹²⁾ Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK). *Workforce strategy for the further education sector in England 2007-12*. Available from Internet: <http://www.lluk.org/fe-workforce-strategy.htm> [cited 18.3.2010].

vocational qualifications (NVQs) are derived. Additionally, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) has created a separate unit, the standards verification unit (SVUK Ltd), to oversee the maintenance and regulation of the occupational standards used in the lifelong learning sector. All providers, including universities, in England now have to ensure that their curricula and assessment procedures are based on the standards in order to gain accreditation from LLUK. However, there is no requirement in England and Scotland for in-company trainers to have a training qualification. The most commonly used qualifications for in-company trainers are those provided by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The recruitment of vocational trainers in the UK has recently been linked to a short in-service training and to an institutional commitment to provide opportunities for continuing professional development.

Interestingly, while in the UK, most trainers are not qualified as skilled workers; the majority of trainers in companies hold some form of trainer qualification (Attwell and Brown, 2001). Accreditation systems and regulation of qualifications for trainers are important in the UK. Since 2001, it has been a requirement that all teachers in further education must have or must be working towards a teaching qualification ⁽¹³⁾. Linked to this, is the requirement for 30 hours of continuous professional development (CPD) that trainers have to undertake each year to remain licensed practitioners. Trainers working in companies that receive LSC funding are required to complete the 30 hours of CPD per year; companies that do not receive this funding are under no such obligation.

The BLEND project described below, supports the delivery of CPD to in-company trainers and is a significant resource in delivering this training to practitioners in the black country region of England.

2. Approach

The BLEND practitioner CPD networks for the black country addresses the needs of in-company trainers and teachers. This project originally started as the region's 'teachers' centre', for further education (FE) colleges and lifelong learning (LLL) providers. A CPD network was created in 2006 and operated until March 2008. This particular initiative builds on this legacy and has secured

⁽¹³⁾ Department for Education and Skills, success for all, initial teacher training, making the reforms happen. available from Internet:
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/initialteachertraining-makingthereformshappen-229-355.pdf> [cited 18.3.2010].

funding until 2010. It uses existing networks and partnerships within the region to deliver training to FE trainers (this includes those delivering training in companies). It builds on a previous BLEND project that had a recognised logo and brand at local level and further afield. In collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton, the black country professional development for literacy, ESOL and numeracy (BLEND), holds overall responsibility for the project and budget, although it is largely a collaborative initiative. There is significant input from the regional stakeholders and partners, who deliver organisation, day-to-day activities and training.

The project has had considerable success with in-company trainers from SMEs. Trainers have been drawn from colleges, prisons, and community and workplace settings across the region. As a result, the project has now been awarded a large cross-regional contract with the West Midlands LSC to work exclusively with tutors from SMEs, who deliver training to company employees.

More significantly, the project established practitioner networks across the West Midlands region in the UK bringing colleagues from the adult learning sector into contact with peers. The project works builds on previous work to promote the training of in-company trainers. Partners decided to continue this work as its success was well documented and there are no other networks of this type in the region.

BLEND's key aims and objectives include:

- to build communities of practice;
- to lead joined up thinking in the region;
- to improve educational outcomes for learners through the CPD of trainers.

3. Target group

The primary target group for this project has always been teachers and FE trainers, largely drawn from the work-based learning sector. Originally, the project did not focus specifically on in-company trainers. This project provides substantial support for in-company trainers working for small and medium-sized enterprises in the new role of 'facilitators of learning' that they are expected to take on.

4. Innovation

The project has developed innovative, bespoke training courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications. More significantly it has established practitioner networks of practice across the West Midlands region in the UK. The model used is dynamic and satisfies the needs of practitioners and strategic managers.

The innovation of this project lies in the model used for the network. Everyone involved in the project has an opportunity to steer it. Using a 'bottom-up' approach, trainers are directly involved in the design and delivery of all elements of the project. Similarly, strategic managers are involved in the steering group and ensure that the project delivers training to meet policy requirements.

The content of particular training sessions is designed and delivered by members. This represents a key success factor of the project. Each member brings his or her own specialism and area of expertise to the network. Thus, the project is making full use of the array of skills available in its existing network and delivering learning throughout the region. Furthermore, it is raising confidence of members delivering training and enhancing their skills.

E-learning is also used and is a valuable addition to the network. 'Pebblepad'⁽¹⁴⁾ developed by the University of Wolverhampton has been adapted to support the network. In between sessions, participants can log in, access learning materials and converse with other trainers. This resource helps to maintain the momentum of learning.

5. Funding

The main funding source for this project has been the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This funding source has been sufficient for the project to deliver all of its stated aims and objectives. The project is looking to build its capacity at European level and access funding from alternative sources.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Pebblepad (www.pebblelearning.co.uk) is a personal learning system being used in diverse learning contexts (schools, colleges, universities, professional bodies), by learners, teachers and assessors; for PDP, CPD and L&T.

6. Strategic partnership

Collaboration and effective partnership working are the cornerstones of this project. Although no formal contractual arrangements between partners exist, all organisations involved are fully committed to the project's aims and objectives. Partners from a range of organisations have been heavily involved in the design and implementation stages of project activities. The project has found that involving the right people, from a cross-section of organisations is crucial. Commitment and buy-in at all levels is essential.

Current partnership arrangements rely on goodwill and a commitment to achieving the same goals. The steering group view this method as a maturation of the development of CPD in the region – moving from a centrally-organised, policy-orientated model to a more dynamic, practitioner driven alternative.

7. Networks of of trainers and other interest groups

Through the network, the project has developed a sense of professionalism among in-company trainers. Network members are able to see themselves as part of a wider professional community. The network has given in-company trainers greater professional confidence.

The network has been instrumental in enhancing the CPD of in-company trainers. It has provided members with contact details of relevant learning and teaching organisations. Members are able to take this information back to their workforce and set-up appropriate training measures for in-company trainers. Furthermore, this project has responded and supports the implementation of changes in UK legislation. Through workshops and the provision of information, the project support trainers to meet the requirement of 30 hours of CPD per year.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The networks use a relatively robust monitoring system that has been designed for change, *'it allows for serendipity'*. This has been reflected in the network's response to changes in UK legislation, which the monitoring system has had to respond to accordingly.

So far, the project has not been independently evaluated. However, plans for evaluation include the selection of nine case studies in which network members will reflect on their involvement in the networks.

9. Outcomes

The project has been successful in continuing its legacy in the West Midlands region in the UK. It has raised the profile of CPD of in-company trainers and has provided fundamental support in this area. In meeting the requirements of UK legislation the project is a valuable resource for in-company trainers and their respective employers. It delivers training free-of-charge through the networks, helping in-company trainers meet their annual requirement of 30 hours CPD. The project has over 200 members listed on its database. Furthermore, the networks support the building of knowledge and skills capacity of everyone involved. Members have the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns and share good practice with others in similar situations.

10. Impact on qualifications

The project delivers and supports licence of practice to in-company trainers. It also encourages membership of the Institute for Learning (IfL). The project has had a significant impact on the qualifications of in-company trainers.

11. Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, these networks are seen by the LSC and by the project partners as an important legacy of the BLEND project. However when funding for these networks ends in 2010, the challenge then will be to assure that this important legacy is sustainable in the longer term. Early thoughts around sustainability are centring on individual or institutional subscriptions. The project considers that it will have to follow a mixed economy approach, where larger institutions such as FE colleges will pay a larger subscription and smaller organisations will pay a smaller one.

The main obstacle, that may affect the continuous professional development of trainers, is funding. However, it will be one of the key roles of the networks to determine their own sustainability model beyond 2010. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has provided funding for an additional network, which will support the project in the immediate term.

12. Key success factors

The networks are coming to their first year of operation and have been cited as an example of good practice and value for money in a recent UK national publication. More specifically, the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) published an occasional paper on CPD of teachers in post-compulsory education where the networks were cited as an example of good practice (UCET, 2008).

Critical success factors of this approach include the collaborative working with a diversity of organisations. The networks provide an opportunity for members to work with organisations they would otherwise have no contact with. They bring together specialists from across the region and work towards a dynamic model of CPD development. This model is user-driven, making the best use of local resources. As a result, innovative, tailor-made courses are developed.

13. Challenges

Overall, the project has experienced very few challenges in its set-up phases. For example, encouraging all members to use pebblepad and 'blogging' facilities was a challenge. People's general enthusiasm has helped to address such challenges and get involved in all project activities.

14. Key policy messages and recommendations

Recommendations for the further promotion of the professional development of trainers in Europe include:

- a bottom-up approach is critical – this allows the model to be tailored to the needs of individuals. Using this approach will ensure the model is fit for purpose and member organisations can take the lead. Taking account of the practitioner voice is vital;
- developing a sense of community – this is particularly important for in-company trainers, who often work on their own. Networks and communities provide people with an awareness of what is happening elsewhere and raise motivation levels among in-company trainers.

15. Transferability

The model has worked very well throughout the UK's black country region. There is potential for the transfer and adaptation of this project to other regions. One particular element that should be transferred is making the practitioner voice heard and developing a model that is user-driven. Adopting this approach supports the original aims and objectives of the network.

The project aims to generate links at national and European level. The project would like to create partnerships with vocational educational institutions in other European countries to build on its work and share good practice.

16. Dissemination

Limited promotional activity for the network has taken place, as it has not been necessary. Through its use of existing partners and networks in the region, promotion of the network has led to demonstrable success. The 'BLEND' brand and logo are used by a range of partners in a variety of circumstances, which has helped reach the target group. The project now includes more than 200 members on its database.

A case study about the project has already been published in a UCET occasional paper. This is an influential voice and has promoted the project at national level. Dissemination has largely taken place at regional level, among partners and members. However, the project did not include a budget for dissemination and this has affected the level of dissemination that can take place. Finally, the nine self-reflection case studies produced for evaluation of the project, will lead to academic dissemination.

Sources of additional information:

<http://www.ucet.ac.uk/downloads/1111.pdf> [cited 18.3.2010].

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CASE STUDY NO 13

‘VOV lights on learning’ (Flanders, Belgium)

1. National context

In Belgium, participation by companies in training varies from region to region. Employers' training schemes are a big part of continuing vocational training in Flanders (Cedefop, 2001). Training for trainers in Flanders is organised by the Flemish Public Employment and Vocational Training Service (VDAB). The Flemish community is working to develop qualification and certification procedures as well as procedures for the recognition of acquired competences.

2. Approach

Lights on learning is an initiative from VOV – Lerend netwerk vzw, the Flemish learning network for those professionally involved in the field of learning and development of people and organisations. Learning and networking are core activities of VOV, with 880 members in the field of training and development (HR-professionals, trainers, training professionals, etc.). The trainers working in-company are about 70 % of total VOV members as company employees, while the remaining 30 % cooperate with companies as external training consultants.

The lights on learning project provided a forum for training and development professionals to discuss trends in learning and development within organisations. As a starting point, trainers discussed the competence agenda of the Ministry of Labour and Education (relevance and implications for training professionals, and areas needing further development), and formulated recommendations to the government. Following the policy debate, three activity lines were chosen and three learning groups were set up, as described below.

- The first group explored the links between companies and education institutions, in particular, how schools and companies can work together to improve adult learning and in-company training, through discussions of good practices.
- Another group focused on ‘talent management and flexible career paths for tomorrow’s employees’. Trainers involved in this thematic group

wanted to develop their own ways of practising and understanding talent management in their day-to-day reality. Participants debated how to equip trainers with adequate resources for talent development and management.

- The third thematic group on 'working and learning: partners in learning' considered through several company visits the formal and informal learning possibilities in the workplace, and how learning is implied in day to day work. VOV has secured a new ESF co-funded project on how to further develop and facilitate informal learning at work.

The goals of lights on learning were to:

- formulate recommendations for training policies, HR policies and for everyone who determines policy-making such as the government. VOV supports that training professionals should have a say in policy-making;
- inform training professionals about policy issues in the field of training and development;
- describe best practices and develop new knowledge in practices to develop the talents of people;
- create an open debate where different viewpoints can be discussed and questioned;
- innovate and do trend-watching. To find the questions for the future, through the examination of the policy document, how do we have to respond to this as HRD professionals, to anticipate to be ahead not only to be reacting to developments;
- stimulate a dialogue with external stakeholders.

3. Funding

The funding sources come from VOV's own resources and membership fees.

4. Strategic partnership

VOV set up a group of stakeholders to discuss the results and approach of 'lights on learning', with a representation from very different stakeholders: government, education departments, universities, labour unions, employer federations, experts, etc.

5. Content

The forum discussions are responding to the changing role of trainers that now entails increased teamwork, mentoring and the development of skills to facilitate learning. Trainers participating in the learning groups defined the focus, objectives and the steps to reach the agreed learning goals. The applicability of the findings to daily practice was a building block of the project. Lights on learning is not connected to any formal form of accreditation or quality standards.

6. Networks of trainers and other interest groups

VOV develops networks of trainers and uses 'network learning' to enhance the continuous professional development of in-company trainers. Network learning is a social process by which individuals through their active participation in formal and non-formal networks, transform their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Everyone is an equal participant in the process, independently of the experience level (network-learning is learning from and for practice, from and for experience). VOV gives trainers and HRD-professionals the opportunity to learn from one another, to discuss empirical and theoretical knowledge, to develop new insights, new practices and training solutions.

VOV provides several forms of learning and networking combined (study-days, communities of practice, regional groups, projects, info-sessions, etc.) to professionalise VOV members, to innovate in the field and to valorise learning and development in companies and training organisations. The lights on learning project was also based on this combination of learning and networking to develop training solutions together.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

The results of the evaluation of lights on learning were overall very positive. The project followed a continuous evaluation process:

- a steering group (SG) followed the project and evaluated it. Board members and VOV staff, people involved in the learning groups, continuously reported to the SG on what was and was not working well and discussed action points;

- after the end of the project, there was an evaluation with group discussions with participants in the three learning groups giving feedback to VOV on what worked well and not so well for the groups;
- each group had a facilitator who was a VOV staff member following every meeting of a specific learning group. The facilitator role was really important in discussing how to move forward with each group and to steer the learning processes.

At the final evaluation stage, VOV considered to have reached the goals it had set, developed a wider network, reached more senior professionals and got them engaged in a learning process, and reached a wider audience. Trainers taking part in the learning groups stated that their involvement contributed to their own personal learning; they were satisfied with the content and interactive working methods. They appreciated the opportunity to show their work to a wider audience and wanted to continue the work in some way.

8. Results

Lights on learning gave participants one year of collaborative learning in groups, where they set out what they wanted to learn, how they wanted to learn it, keeping in mind that the timeframe included the preparation of a publication and a conference. The learning groups wanted to produce something of value to themselves and to others. They also decided on the methods they would use for the learning processes, including visits to three companies of the group, interviews, and case studies in their own companies.

9. Longer-term impact on individuals

The lights on learning process helped the professional development of the in-company trainers who participated in a variety of ways. At the very least, they broadened their perspectives, in other cases they were able to find new solutions to apply to their daily work and they also created contacts for future assistance and discussions. In-company trainers often work in isolation, and the networking opportunity assists their professionalisation and learning, as compared to very formalised structures. Participants still contacted one another informally.

10. Sustainability

In the long term, VOV plans to hold such a process (learning groups, publication and conference) every two years on issues of concern to trainers' and HRD professionals' practice and professional development.

11. Success factors

The project enjoyed the very active involvement of trainers and HRD-professionals, who defined what they needed to learn, developed their own learning methods, activities and resources, presented their work to a wider audience, etc. Trainers and HRD specialists fed their learning groups with relevant experience and explored issues that were useful in their day-to-day work, supported by a recognised practitioner from VOV who acted as facilitator.

In a wider forum, the three learning groups worked together to develop proposals at policy and practitioner level for the professional development of in-company trainers and other HRD specialists. Knowing that the outcomes of the learning groups would be published and presented to a wider audience at a conference gave a stimulus for participants to reach their goals within the project time boundaries.

12. Main challenges

From the point of view of VOV, the challenge was to facilitate the learning groups and provide support without leading the work and interfering in the process that should be driven by participants themselves.

13. Key policy messages and recommendations

It was important for VOV to nurture cooperation with policy-makers. VOV regularly met with representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Education to share progress on the light and learning project and establish synergies with relevant events and initiatives organised by the government. The project was closely linked to policy developments in Flanders through a think tank, involving representatives from the ministry, the social partners, the university and

temporary work agencies to discuss the themes explored in the learning groups in the light of the Flemish agenda for skills development.

VOV follows policy developments, informs its members, trainers and HRD specialists, on the implications for in-company training. VOV considers the practical translation of policy trends in the actual work of training professionals. VOV sees itself as an expertise centre, and relies in the know-how of trainers and HRD specialists ('who formulate the right questions and can develop relevant solutions based on their daily practice'). Trainers and HRD specialists can make proposals in relation to training in companies and their own professional development. VOV facilitates this process, helping its members being responsible for their own continuous learning.

14. Transferability

The network learning approach is applicable to many sectors and countries. VOV is exploring with institutions from the Netherlands, Wallonia, as well as well as with the European Training and Development Federation (ETDF) to transfer the network learning approach to other contexts.

15. Dissemination

Dissemination of the results has mainly taken place at regional level, through the conference (with 350 participants of which 200 were not members of VOV) and a book that was sent to all relevant stakeholders in Flanders.

Sources of further information:

www.vov.be [cited 18.3.2010].

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Key messages

This subsection summarises the key messages and lessons that have emerged from the 13 case studies.

1. Raising awareness and recognition

The trainer position tends to lack recognition within companies and therefore opportunities for professional development remain insufficient. Current policies do little to support in-company trainers in this area, in particular, for skilled workers providing training on a part-time basis. *'Policy developments are focused on trainers that are easy to reach'*, as stated by an interviewee, *such as those in further education institutions and apprenticeship schemes*. To challenge this state of affairs, many of the case studies have established cooperation with policy-makers at national and regional level, by sharing knowledge, establishing synergies, participating in policy consultations, and keeping in-company trainers informed of policy developments that can have an impact on competence requirements and training practice.

According to recent European studies (Institut Technik+Bildung, 2008; Cort et al., 2004), the main reason for in-company trainers not engaging in continuing learning is a lack of incentives (for example, financial incentives, improved career prospects, higher professional status), followed by inadequate support by employers and scarce training offer. This is confirmed by anecdotal evidence collected during the exploration of the case studies. It is important to remember that the trainer is not only a provider of training but is also his/herself a lifelong learner. How to make companies aware of trainers' contributions to competitiveness, innovation, and change management? Professional associations, social partners, in particular sector organisations; public authorities and training institutions can take a number of actions to support the CPD of in-company trainers, as shown in this compilation of practices. These can include awareness raising and training activities targeting both enterprise management and in-company trainers, competence standards and certification processes that comprise the validation of on-the-job learning, and making existing networks and CPD initiatives more visible for trainers to be able to participate in them.

These are some of the initiatives supporting the work of trainers in Europe. Government representatives, training institutions, social partners and trainers

themselves can benefit from the experiences of other countries in developing their own initiatives for the professional development of in-company trainers. The networks of trainers and online platforms, the certification processes, standards and training initiatives displayed in this report bring a wealth of experience, deserve to be better known, and even adapted and transferred, so far as they match national needs and developments. This compilation of practices will be updated and expanded in the future, to include initiatives promoted by sectoral organisations. Sectoral bodies might prove a good route to get continuous training for trainers being taken up within companies, to transfer successful practices, and disseminate information on training provision, resources and communities of practice where trainers learn from each other.

2. Evidence-based policy-making and training practice

Little research has been devoted specifically to in-company trainers. Many of the case studies have highlighted either the lack of data on in-company trainers or have stressed the utility they see in the EU supporting further research on the profiles, competences and training needs of in-company trainers. Not directly related to the professional development of in-company trainers but equally important, would be research collecting evidence on the bottom line business benefits that in-company training bring to an enterprise. Such research would be a powerful argument in convincing companies to value the trainer role and, as a result, promote trainers' professional development.

3. Meeting the needs of both employers and trainers

The case studies presented in this report cannot be considered to be representative of the situation throughout Europe but have given anecdotal evidence that the development of social and pedagogical competences is a concern in the relevant good practices examined and more emphasis should be given to this area. Continuous professional development, either formal or non-formal in communities of practice, can help trainers to respond successfully to new demands related to work organisation and innovation. The Malta case study underscores that in-company trainers often lack the 'training literacy' or the awareness about the important role training plays in a company.

As the case studies illustrate, the success of any training initiative being set up at national, regional or sectoral level, requires that both in-company trainers

and employers are involved in different development stages. The latter will ensure that the programme is relevant in addressing company and trainer needs, thus contributing to its eventual sustainability. Key success drivers include the following:

- VET policies should consider the needs and potential of in-company trainers – this group are largely skilled professionals with substantial knowledge- and create the conditions to support their professional development (incentives, including recognition). Learning opportunities, including training platforms and communities of practice require public support to be mainstreamed;
- a further lesson is that it is important to develop flexible approaches that can be adapted to different enterprises and sectors and remember that ‘no one size fits all’. Training opportunities for trainers should fit the needs of the workplace and local labour market, both in terms of content and delivery methods. There should also be a commitment from the promoters to continuing evaluation to ensure that the programme remains relevant for the workplace;
- trainers are a diverse group and this should be acknowledged by training policies and strategies. Special training arrangements and resources need to be created for trainers in small and medium-sized enterprises, adapted to their needs, cost-effective and flexible, so as to have access as required. A bottom-up approach is critical when developing a CPD initiative for in-company trainers at national, regional or sectoral level. The practitioner voice is important and allows the model to be tailored to the needs and fit for purpose.

Online training platforms and communities of practice can improve the daily work of trainers. Successful Internet-based projects and networks for trainers across the EU should become better known and built upon. As the case studies outline, much time and effort has been invested at national level in developing ICT tools to support trainers. However, it has also been noted that in-company trainers tend to have low ICT skills and that companies’ operating systems may not always be able to support tools based on the most up-to-date technologies. Needs analysis to determine the level of ICT skills amongst in-company trainers and uptake of such ICT tools is necessary. This type of project also demands secure and serious investment, as well as commitment to permanently mediate and animate online discussions, forums and seminars. Complementing online networks and training platforms, trainers can be offered a face-to-face space in which to explore current training practices, trends and needs.

4. Raising the quality of training through professional standards, certification processes and registers of trainers

There is a lot to learn from initiatives that support the quality of CVET by establishing professional standards and competence requirements for in-company trainers, including certification processes and registers of training professionals. Exchanges and peer reviews, as well as comparative analyses, could nurture policy-making. There is a movement at the European and international level towards the establishment of new competence standards for training providers, which could have implications for full-time trainers and training consultants who might gain competitive advantages in relation to trainers not complying with the standard. As shown in the Irish case study, efforts are made to establish international standards within the ISO 9 000 family of standards for learning service providers. Designing occupational standard for trainers is a complex initiative that requires great expertise, time, financial resources and a consultation with a broad range of stakeholders including trainers, in order to be successful. A further possible initiative to support and enhance the status of trainers could be the development of certification processes and register of certified trainers, outlining trainer competences encompassing formal learning and practical experience.

5. Validating and recognising on-the-job learning

Many in-company trainers have acquired knowledge, skills and competences through on-the-job learning. The validation of their previous learning, as part of a certification process or a qualification programme, helps them discover untapped career potential, and make them more aware of their professional strengths, weaknesses and ways to improve further their skills. As the case studies have shown, any certificate acquired in the process can make them more confident, as the documents issued may be recognised in the labour market. Experience shows the necessity to use scientific expertise and to invest in a needs' analysis at the start of any initiative aiming to develop a method for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. In this context, the European guidelines for the validation of informal and non-formal learning give clear indications for countries and institutions ready to follow this approach. A key policy message from the experience of the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education is the importance of

mobilising support from a broad range of stakeholders, including policy-makers and from practitioners in developing such an approach.

6. Supporting networks of trainers and communities of practice

In-company trainers themselves should take responsibility for their own learning and continuous professional development. Individual in-company trainers can seek to become members of professional associations or networks of trainers in their region or country. The diverse nature of training and the participants it addresses demands that in-company trainers confront issues for which they need to find innovative solutions on a daily basis. Networking for the often isolated in-company trainer is an invaluable form of trainer support, as demonstrated in some of the case studies presented above. Networking allows in-company trainers to exchange ideas and best practice with fellow trainers from the same or different sectors and opens trainers' horizons. As in the BLEND and the VOV examples, developing a sense of community is considered particularly important for in-company trainers, who often work in isolation (only very large companies will have a number of in-company trainers), which can in turn lead to burn out and poor performance.

Communities of practice also promote a knowledge-sharing culture that encourage and facilitate a shared repertoire of communal resources that have been built up over time. Networks and communities make trainers aware of relevant practices developed elsewhere and raise motivation. These opportunities for exchanging and working with their peers to elaborate common solutions, contribute to the CPD of in-company trainers, as shown in the case studies.

A trainer exchange programme would go one step further, giving trainers the opportunity to gain alternative perspectives as a result of spending a short spell in a different company. The establishment of national or regional trainer exchange programmes or on-site visits between interested companies could serve as a cost effective way of providing training for trainers. Of course, such approaches can be considered by companies to present potential pitfalls, such as industrial espionage for example. Such ventures would also help create networks between in-company trainers, enhancing the development of vocational pedagogy.

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Professional development opportunities for in-company trainers

A compilation of good practices

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The trainer position tends to lack recognition within companies and therefore opportunities for professional development remain insufficient. Current policies do little to support in-company trainers in this area, in particular, for skilled workers providing training on a part-time basis. Moreover, professionalisation of in-company trainers and adequate support to their activities are crucial for the quality of in-company training. In-company trainers are important actors in lifelong learning. To support knowledge sharing, the present study describes and analyses 13 case studies of initiatives promoting the professional development of in-company trainers.

This report presents a selection of initiatives that support the recognition, training and professional development of in-company trainers in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Malta, Norway and UK. The selection of case studies includes examples of:

- establishing regulation and standardisation measures for trainers;
- developing registers of training practitioners and other forms of quality assurance certifications;
- validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning of trainers;
- encouraging continuous training for in-company trainers;
- supporting trainers through online resources;
- creating networks of trainers and communities of practice.

Building on existing experience to promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning at national level is crucial, since in-company trainers mostly acquire knowledge, skills and competences through on-the-job learning. Other proposals for action include networking of in-company trainers at sectoral, regional, national and European level. Communities of practice, training platforms using ICT, standards, accreditation systems and registers of training practitioners are key contributions to the professional status of in-company trainers and the quality of training in companies.

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