

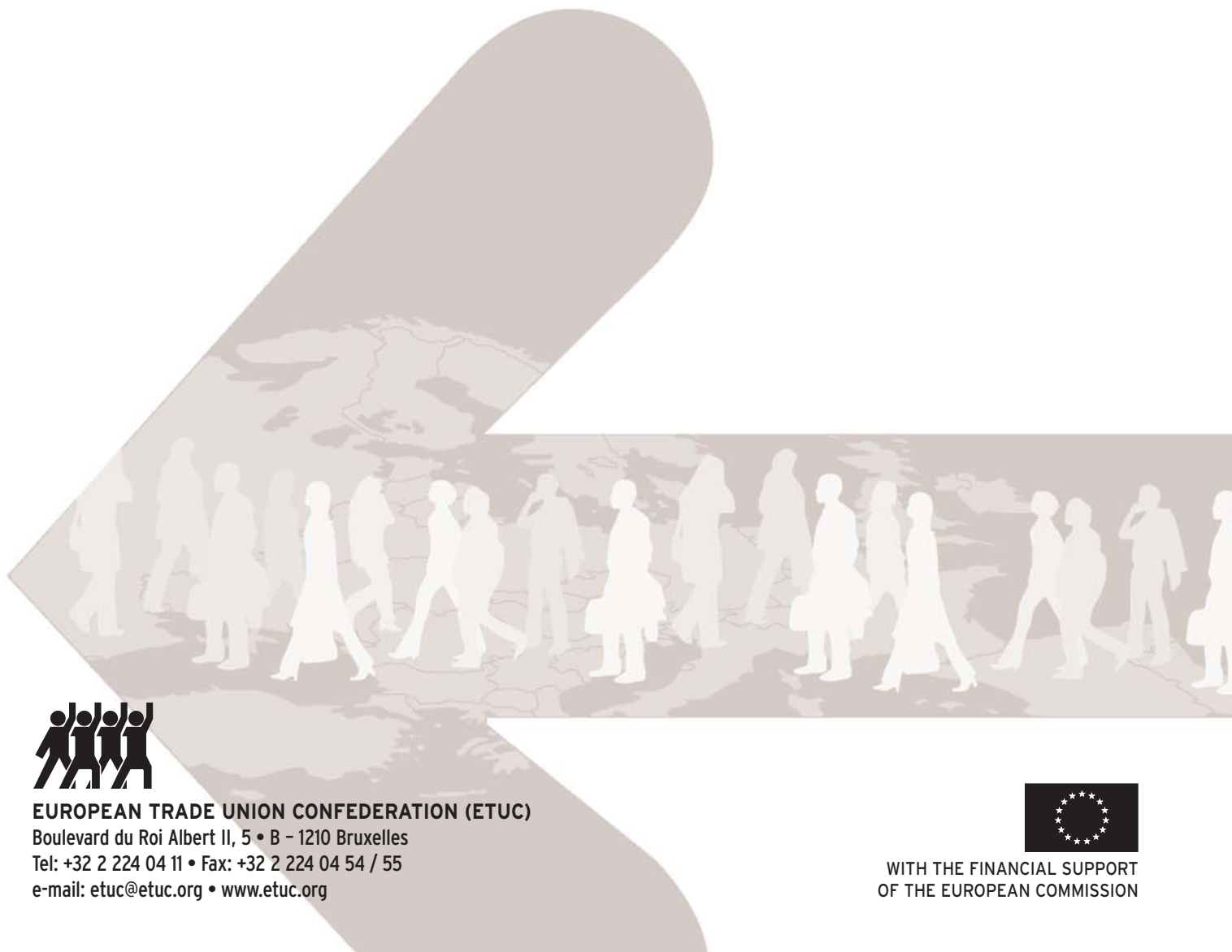
# Mobility on the labour market and lifelong learning



EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)



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## Introduction

As part of the European year of worker mobility organised by the European Commission in 2006, the ETUC has undertaken a study for the labour market and lifelong learning.

This study and the report have been drafted by Petri Lempinen, the adviser responsible for lifelong training and education, and Michel Joubier, a member of the ETUC working group on 'Lifelong training and education'.

The study was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire and the responses from our members, and finalised at a conference held on 8 November 2006.

The report indicates that there are indeed several types of mobility: 'geographical, professional, etc', which overlap, and that the responses may vary from country to country.

However, it indicates the correlation existing between the level of security of professional career paths, lifelong training and deepening, the validation of formal and informal skills and their transferability. Moreover, it also confirms the need for a strong social dialogue at all levels, in particular at the professional branch level.

**Joël DECAILLON**  
Confederal Secretary

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## Introduction

The European Commission has designated 2006 as the European Year for Workers' Mobility. The campaign aims to ease job mobility and to help Europeans work across borders and change jobs.

By this campaign the European Commission wishes to inform citizens of Member States of the benefits and the costs of both geographical mobility and job or labour market mobility. The initiative aims to promote the exchange of good practice between different stakeholders within the EU.

Mobility of workers can be divided into three categories.

Occupational mobility means changing jobs, which can also take place within a company. Geographical mobility means leaving one's place of residence and moving to another country, region or city to work. Commuting inside a country or cross-border is the third category of mobility of workers.

An important aspect of mobility in the labour market is transfer between employment and unemployment. This is also partly a gender issue as women are more likely than men to be out of work. For example in Italy, 36% of women aged 35 and over have never worked, compared to only 2% of Italian men who have not entered the labour market.

This report examines the relations between mobility on the labour market and lifelong learning. Special focus is on the resources and possibilities available to the social partners to promote education and training for increased mobility, and on trade unions' role.

The analysis is based on a survey done among ETUC affiliates and the final evaluation report for 2005 of the framework of actions for lifelong development of skills and qualifications.

## The situation today

According to an EU labour force survey done by Eurostat in 2003, 8.2% of the EU's total employed labour force had moved to another job after one year (yearly job-to-job mobility). But there were marked differences across Europe – in Denmark and the UK yearly job-to-job mobility was around 13%, while in Sweden and Greece it was around 5%. As far as job tenure was concerned, in 9 Member States, 40% of the working population had been with the same employer for over 10 years, the overall EU average being around 38%. Workers in the EU stay in the same job for an average of 10.6 years, as compared to 6.7 years in the US.

Moving across EU borders is not only restricted by a variety of institutional and legal hurdles between Member States, but also by cultural barriers. Euro found points out in its study that the social cost of leaving one's family, friends and local community strongly influences individual decisions to move. One must also understand that an extremely mobile Europe would evoke serious social problems. As the number of rootless people rose the sense of community and cohesion would fall. From the point of view of both the company and the national economy, increased mobility of the workforce might cause severe problems due to a brain drain. Loss of skills could damage productivity of companies more than the positive effects from an increase in the supply of workers.

According to Eurostat, approximately 1.5% of EU-25 citizens live and work in a Member State different from their country of origin – a proportion that has hardly changed for the last 30 years, even if mobility of citizens is one of the key values of Europe. Every year, an average of 7.2% of EU citizens change their place of residence; 15% of them refer to a change in job as the main reason for the move. This compares to 16.2% of US citizens moving home every year, 17% for occupational reasons. These figures may be rising as workers from new Member States seek better jobs and a higher standard of living inside the EU.

The Eurobarometer survey "Europeans and Mobility" indicates that in the EU-25, one third of Europeans have moved out of their region of origin at least once during their lives.

Employees with higher educational background are more likely to change their place of residence.



Cross-border commuting between Member States with no change of residence has been steadily increasing in recent years, but still remains quite low. According to EU statistics Belgium has the highest rate, with 1.7% of its working residents working in neighbouring countries. On average only 0.2% of the EU-15 working population commutes between Member States.

Freedom of movement for people is one of the most fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Community law. It is also a precondition for building a single market and European labour market. Free movement of persons, goods, services and capital in an internal market is seen as a crucial mechanism that generates economic growth. In this context, figures showing rates of mobility might be low, but they must also be seen from the point of view of ordinary people.

Denmark and Sweden, which are the two countries with the highest job mobility, strongly believe that job mobility is good for people (72% and 79% respectively). However, more than two-thirds of Belgian, German, Estonian and Greek respondents showed reservations about the benefits of job mobility. Attitudes of the public seem to be divided between mobility as an opportunity and mobility as a threat of unemployment. At micro level individuals judge the benefits and costs of mobility with their family and friends. Economic possibilities linked with employment or a better job are set against the economic, cultural and social losses caused by change of residence. In future, job mobility might increase especially among youth. The new generation is facing a more dynamic labour market where continuous change creates possibilities. At the same time changes cause uncertainty as long lasting jobs seem to be shifting into precarious employment. For one, change means opportunities in one's career path. For another, change represents the threat of losing one's job.

## Skills for mobile workers

The link between skills and mobility of workers was officially recognised in 2001, when the European Commission adopted an action plan on skills and mobility. In the action plan, low levels of skills were recognised as one obstacle to occupational mobility. To overcome this, education and training systems must answer the needs of the labour market more effectively.

One year later, in November 2002, EU Member States, EEA states, candidate countries and the European social partners adopted the Copenhagen declaration on enhancing European cooperation in the field of vocational training. Actions taken under the umbrella of the Copenhagen process have aimed to remove obstacles to mobility caused by differences in education, training and qualifications systems in the Member States. The European Union has taken a number of other measures to make it easier for individuals to move across borders by protecting the rights of mobile people and increasing transparency of labour markets.

It has been estimated (Maastricht Study 2004) that new jobs in Europe will require higher employee skills and qualifications. At the same time there are 72 million low- or non-qualified workers on the European labour market. Boosting the skills, competences and qualifications of these citizens is crucial to Europe's survival and prosperity. After all, most of the new jobs in Europe will be filled by adults. Since we expect these new posts to demand higher skills than traditional ones, the question is simple: How do we ensure that Europeans are qualified to meet the rising demands of the labour market and mobility?

At macro level, mobility of the labour market is a question of supply and demand for labour. On the one hand, workers seeking a position should be able to work at the level of competences, skills and qualifications that they have acquired. At the same time, workers should have the possibility to gain recognition of their skills or to have access to training, so they can seek for new jobs requiring new skills and qualifications. From this point of view, the question of occupational mobility is closely linked to lifelong learning, and validation and recognition of learning outside training institutions e.g. at workplaces.

On the other hand, companies are looking for a suitable workforce. From the workers' point of view, mobility must not lead to social dumping. A European internal market needs a social approach where workers' rights are recognised and valid. Both domestic and migrant workers must have the right to a maximum working week, job protection and decent wages.





## Social dialogue

The social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. According to the ILO, social dialogue can exist as a tripartite process, with the government as an official party to the dialogue, or it may consist of bipartite relations between trade unions and employers' organisations only, with or without indirect government involvement. Procedures can be informal or institutionalised, and often they are a combination of the two. Social dialogue can take place at the European, national, regional or at enterprise level. It can be inter-professional, sectoral or a combination of all of these.

The main goal of the social dialogue is to promote consensus building and involvement among the main stakeholders in the world of work. Successful social dialogue structures and processes have the potential to resolve important economic and social issues, encourage good governance, advance social and industrial peace and stability and boost economic progress.

To facilitate social dialogue, both workers and employers need independent and strong organisations with the capacity to work together towards common ends. These social partners need support and political commitment to engage all parties in the social dialogue.

## European social dialogue on lifelong learning

In February 2002, the European social partners concluded their negotiations by adopting a framework of actions for the lifelong development of skills and qualifications. This was the European social partners' contribution to implementation of the Lisbon strategy.

In this framework, the social partners asserted the principle of shared responsibility of all players with regard to four priorities, and called for the intensifying of dialogue and partnership at the appropriate levels. The social partners believe that lifelong development of skills depends on the implementation of the following four priorities:

1. identification and anticipation of the need for skills and qualifications,
2. recognition and validation of skills and qualifications,
3. information, support and guidance, and
4. resources.

Three annual follow-up reports and a final evaluation of the actions taken during 2002-2005 demonstrate that the social partners have debated issues of competence development in EU Member States. Trade unions and employers' organisations have used different tools to foster lifelong learning at national, sectoral and enterprise levels.

Four priorities are relevant to the issue of occupational or job mobility, as actions related to these priorities should support workers, enterprises and training-providers in promoting skill development in order to facilitate new job creation and to match job-seekers to enterprises.

Vertical occupational mobility can be compared to a positive career progression. The employee advances in employment and qualifications as experience or continuing training is taken into account.

Horizontal mobility can be defined as the mobility of an employee who moves from one job to another, from one company to another or within a company without changes in skills and qualifications. This is in particular the case when job cuts are made under redundancy programmes or for reasons of



company relocation and so on, and the employee is forced to find a new job. Development of skills should support transfer from job to job instead of leaving workers unemployed in situations of change.

All trade unions in all countries are calling for the development of lifelong learning as a means of occupational advancement for employees, for social promotion and skills development.

Occupational mobility as such is not usually a subject of social dialogue. Instead the question of mobility is tackled as a question of lifelong learning, vocational training or skills development at work places. These topics are usually subjects of tripartite or bipartite negotiations.

### **National examples of tripartite cooperation**

The social dialogue on skills and qualifications is formally organised in tripartite bodies in countries like Cyprus, Estonia and Finland. These official bodies often deal with questions related to training of workers, adult learning or qualifications. They may also have responsibility for anticipating future skills and qualifications on the labour market.

In Cyprus, the subject of mobility is addressed by the tripartite committee known as the Labour Advisory Board, chaired by the Minister for Labour and Social Protection, and by the National Employment Committee. There are also a number of tripartite committees dealing with occupational issues such as training needs.

In Estonia, trade unions participate with employers and training institutes in skills councils that make up part of the network of the Estonian qualifications authority. The objectives of these councils are to formulate, develop and implement training and qualifications systems for employees, on the basis of an agreement. The unions are also involved in the process of qualifications approval.

In Finland, the social partners are involved in 33 sectoral education committees which anticipate sectoral needs for skills and qualifications. Through education committees appointed

by the government, the social partners also contribute to qualitative development training and participate in the preparation of legislation concerning education and training.

UK has Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), which are now responsible for developing occupational standards and Sector Qualification Strategies. Many trade union officials will be involved in the SSC task groups in charge of this aspect of SSCs' work but this is not the case in all SSCs, especially where union density in the sector is low and union representation on the SSC is fairly minimal. In some cases, trade union officials in UK are more involved in providing input to develop apprenticeship frameworks.

In the Czech Republic, Italy and Luxembourg, occupational mobility is part of social dialogue. In France, mobility is not yet covered by social dialogue but it is addressed in the national debate on protecting career advancement. Belgium has no national level agreement between the social partners directly addressing this issue. On the other hand, many cross-industry, sectoral or enterprise-level agreements contain clauses linked to vocational training or outplacement, which in fact deal with occupational mobility.

Several countries like Ireland, Malta, Romania and Spain reported that occupational mobility is not covered by the social dialogue, or is a minor or rare issue in negotiations at national level. In Slovakia, the subject of occupational mobility is not an issue for the social dialogue at national level but these questions may be found as a question for the social dialogue or bargaining in collective agreements on sectoral or company level.

### **Trade union actions to support occupational mobility**

Trade unions also work on improving working conditions, as in Belgium, so that mobility would be less of a necessity and to keep from forcing it on workers. In Cyprus as well, the public service trade unions are very involved in developing vertical mobility.

In the Czech Republic, they also act in support of solutions in



the field of housing, as part of horizontal mobility, and transport networks for getting to work.

In Estonia, unions are trying to get a financial commitment from the state for the training and vocational reorientation of at least one third of workers, whether active or unemployed, to improve their employability.

In France, the question is dealt with in particular through trade union demands for the protection of mobility or of occupational social security, depending on the union. This concerns guarantees for workers that mobility is the company's initiative, for mobility between employment and unemployment, or the employee's initiative, for mobility from one company to another or from one geographical location to another.

In Malta, on the other hand, in the light of the social situation, demands are currently more focused on protecting employment and raising salaries, given the increase in the cost of living.

In Slovakia, trade union demands on vertical and horizontal occupational mobility are negotiated at sector and company level. Related issues such as special measures for transport and housing bonuses are handled in negotiations.

### **Upward mobility or social dumping**

Occupational mobility is closely linked to the concept of flexibility which is important both for firms and workers. But security for workers is also important: a secure workforce is a productive workforce, which is open to innovation and change. So, a balance must be struck between flexibility and security.

Lifelong learning and training as a right of the individual worker is an important means to increase the worker's possibilities for re-employment in situations of restructuring of the labour market. The Eurobarometer findings published in 2006 indicate that 'changing employer seems to be the best way of acquiring new and different skills' – 25% of workers declared that they had to use different skills when they changed employers but only 15% have learned different skills within a company.

Chances to improve one's skills within a company seem to

decrease the longer one stays with an employer – 46% of those who never changed employer claim to use the same skills as when they first started, while 39% use more skills, and only 5% use different skills.

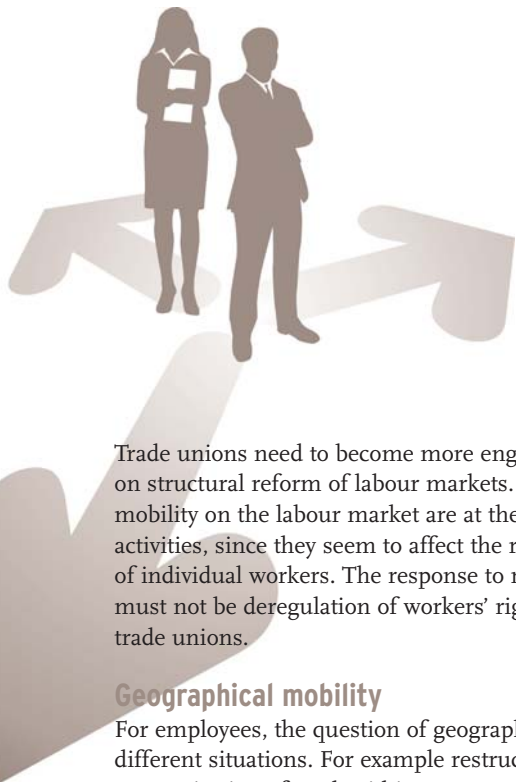
Increasingly, in the former EU-15, industrial jobs are disappearing and being replaced by jobs in the services sector. The new jobs often involve more flexibility, lower pay and less security. The loss of jobs in industry far outweighs the creation of stable jobs in services.

Because of global competition, economic structures are changing everywhere in Europe. Traditional industrial jobs seem to be disappearing as industrial manufacturing is constantly seeking new more profitable locations. At the same time, new jobs, enterprises and even sectors are being created. Services are replacing lost industrial jobs, but there is a danger that the number of people in a precarious situation will rise along with the number of part-time jobs.

On the other hand, this era of change and restructuring provides opportunities for individuals and communities. Taking advantage of these opportunities necessitates investments to provide skills and assistance for retrenched workers so they will be skilled for new and productive jobs, and to tackle gender inequalities. It is possible to address 'change' in Europe as a positive opportunity for upward mobility through development of skills for future jobs. This is possible to achieve, if there is political will in Europe.

However it is an illusion to think that this agenda for skills and upward mobility can replace the agenda of workers' rights. It would amount to no more than a source of insecurity, and would be counter-productive.

Taking competition based on precarious working conditions out of the equation serves to focus business strategies on innovation instead of 'flexploitation' of the workforce. The workers' right to fair working practices is not a relic of the past – on the contrary, it is an essential basis for building the knowledge society of the future.



Trade unions need to become more engaged in the discussion on structural reform of labour markets. Desires to increase mobility on the labour market are at the core of trade union activities, since they seem to affect the rights and possibilities of individual workers. The response to rapid structural change must not be deregulation of workers' rights and weakening of trade unions.

### Geographical mobility

For employees, the question of geographical mobility arises in different situations. For example restructuring enterprises or reorganisation of work within an enterprise might force workers to change residence. For unemployed people geographical mobility becomes a reality when they have to leave their homes to find a job. Differences in regional development forces people to move, if they want to find employment. Regions are hit differently by restructuring of the economy. In many countries there are measures to promote the creation of new jobs in regions experiencing high unemployment.

Differences between countries are large as Member States differ in size, population, economy and unemployment. There are many small countries where workers do not have to move in order to have a job in another region. On the other hand, mobility can be domestic or cross-border especially in the enlarged EU-25. Some of the new Member States are constantly losing workers to EU-15 countries. For example, Cyprus reported that there is no forced geographical mobility due to relatively low unemployment, unlike Malta, which is facing a brain drain as many professionals are leaving the island, but this has not been discussed by the trade union.

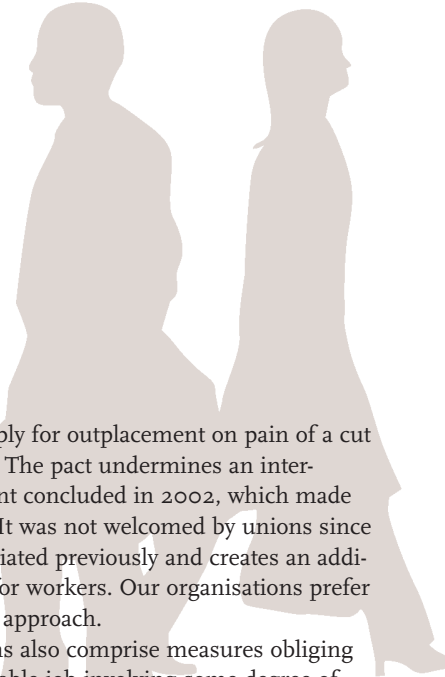
EU Member States' policies towards economic migration, which is often forced geographical mobility, should be coordinated. There is a need for this coordination, particularly in relation to determining the volume of admission of persons coming to seek work, as well as to facilitate the application procedure for work and residence permits in the interests of both the Member States and of migrant workers, as declared by the Polish NSZZ. EU policy for migration should adopt a more rights-oriented approach towards migrant workers. EU policy in the field of managing the labour market should focus more on combating social dumping in host countries and the brain drain in countries of origin than on managing the birth gap and making it easier for employers to "import" migrants. Migration policies at national and European level must secure human rights for all migrant workers.

### National examples

There are examples of measures taken by the social partners through collective bargaining or social dialogue. In Finland, the social partners and the government have agreed on financial support to employees who have to move to another town to find a job. Aid of 700 euros will be paid by the government. The question of skills and qualifications to meet the demands of a new job is important, but the biggest obstacles to mobility are not in skills but in the housing market. Financial support will remain a symbolic measure only.

The CISL in Italy has another strategy. It is committed to obtaining more funds for research, training, technological and physical infrastructures in vulnerable regions. It also asks for tax relief regions in southern Italy. In the Czech Republic, trade unions have participated in various bodies and committees tackling and supervising regional development programmes oriented to regions experiencing high unemployment, in order to help to create new jobs. Estonian trade unions have been participating in round tables on the promotion of job creation in some regions in Estonia where that problem has been significant. In Ireland, investment in quality public transport and a balanced regional policy are seen as the key.

In Belgium, the pact between the generations adopted by the government at the end of 2005 obliges employers to provide outplacement for workers aged 45 and over. The workers in



question are obliged to apply for outplacement on pain of a cut in unemployment benefit. The pact undermines an inter-branch collective agreement concluded in 2002, which made such measures voluntary. It was not welcomed by unions since it disrupts a balance negotiated previously and creates an additional threat of exclusion for workers. Our organisations prefer a positive, incentive-based approach.

Unemployment regulations also comprise measures obliging the jobless to accept a suitable job involving some degree of travel (2 x 2 hours a day). A system to monitor the availability of the unemployed was also set up in 2004. It requires all jobless workers on unemployment for a certain period to look actively for a job, and their efforts are measured in the sub region and neighbouring regions. Insufficient efforts can lead to temporary or permanent cessations in benefit.

In France, the geographical mobility of workers, due to a lack of employment stemming from the absence of jobs in the area or the inadequacy of skills to jobs, is a real problem.

Mobility in border regions does not necessarily involve long journeys, but on the other hand it causes administrative difficulties with social security bodies. In certain regions salary differences are such that workers find mobility appealing, even if their enthusiasm is often dampened by more binding working conditions.

Trade union actions related to this phenomenon:

- 1) Working to stem company relocations,
- 2) Providing support for the creation of new, innovative firms,
- 3) Promoting regional and cross-border consultation on spatial development,
- 4) Favouring the development of public transport,
- 5) Participating actively in the development of training better adapted to job offers.

## Access to training and education


As employment and competitiveness depend on the skills of the workforce at all levels, workers' access to training is a key issue. Business tends to under-invest in training, however. Moreover, not all workers have access to training. The main problem is that those with the lowest levels of education and training are least likely to participate in training organised by employers or other providers.

There are examples of good practice in how collective bargaining and social dialogue can be used to favour employees' access to training. In many cases collective agreements try to ensure access to training as a right of individual workers. In many countries, trade unions have pushed for paid educational leave under the ILO C140 decision taken already in 1974. There are also cases where the social partners have agreed on financing of training from a wage fund. Collective funding can be channelled through special funds. In several countries, vocational training of workers is also mentioned in the Labour Code in some way. Unfortunately there are also examples of agreements that are not applied in every day work life. In many cases, employers and enterprises neglect regulations whether they are based on legislation or collective agreement.

## National examples

In Belgium, the question of training is raised in collective bargaining by sector every other year. Since 1998, the target of training investment based on total wages has been accepted in the central agreement, but it has not been put into practice. To reach the European target for 2010 in the pact of generations, the social partners have agreed on additional efforts to enable 1 worker out of 2 to get training during the year.

In Cyprus, employees can participate in training promoted by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), provided their participation in such training programmes will be of direct benefit to the enterprise and the employer has planned for it. In certain sectors, this is stated formally in the collective agreement (i.e. Hotel Industry, Banking Sector, Cabinet-making and Carpentry Industry and Private Clinics). Despite these collective agreements, the level of participation of employees from those sectors is very low and access to training programmes is not easy for them, mainly due to the employers' negative attitude with regard to time off.



In Cyprus, as elsewhere, employees who participate most in adult education are the ones with the best training and qualifications, whereas low-skilled workers do not have access to training (high-level occupations 50% (managers, professionals and technical assistants and clerks/ secretaries), medium-level occupations 49% (clerks, secretaries and cashiers, service workers and salespersons, farmers, craft workers and machine operators and assemblers) and low-level occupations 1% (unskilled workers).

In the Czech Republic training is partly regulated through collective agreements. The training especially concerns legislation, health care and safety at the workplace and the social dialogue. In the National Action Plan for Employment, training programmes are included among the questions to be treated by cooperation between the social partners concerning the sphere of training programmes.

Estonian trade unions have been discussing lifelong learning issues (vocational training and re-training) in their meetings, and have demanded that these issues should be included in collective agreements and social plans (concluded for collective redundancies in large enterprises) – mostly in connection with employees' opportunities for getting new qualifications needed in the company (or the region). That kind of agreement has been concluded in the railway and mining sectors for some years.

In France, collective bargaining on lifelong learning reached an agreement in December 2003. *L'accord national interprofessionnel sur la formation tout a long de la vie*, (the national inter-professional agreement on lifelong learning) (ANI) defines the details for participation of workers in training organised by the employer. The heart of ANI is 20 hours training per year to

which the worker is entitled. Women, workers over 45 and young persons have priority for training.

In Italy, inter-professional (cross-industry) bilateral funds for continuous vocational training were established in several collective agreements during the '90s (Two bilateral agreements (CGIL, CISL, UIL and representatives of employers) in 1993 and 1995 and in tripartite agreements (government, CGIL, CISL, UIL and representatives of employers) in 1993 and 1998. These agreements have been transposed in national law. They establish a bilateral system of continuous training for workers.

This system will be detailed by national branch agreements on the aims and organisation of each fund. At the moment, CGIL, CISL and UIL are involved in 8 funds in industry, SME, crafts, the service sector and cooperative societies. The funds are financed by a contribution of 0.30% of private sector wages.

In Ireland, the practice varies. The best practice is in the public service where employees can have study leave and reimbursement of fees on successful completion of a course. Also in Malta many collective agreements contain clauses providing for special leave for educational purposes.

In Finland, legislation guarantees the right to educational leave for those who have worked full-time for the same employer for at least one year. Those who take educational leave can apply for economic support for adult learners.

In Luxembourg, the agreement of 2 May 2003 governs individual access to continuing vocational training.

In Romania, there are articles in favour of employees' access to training in the central collective agreement and in the Labour Code. In reality, many companies do not apply these points in practice.

In Poland, some collective agreements include regulations on training. In many agreements, particularly on the enterprise level, such regulations are negotiated and trade unions monitor compliance with these regulations. This has happened especially in companies which are subsidiaries of multinational corporations and have strong trade unions. In branch collective agreements (i.e. railway, metallurgy), vocational training regulations constitute a separate chapter in the agreement and define the rules whereby employees can get training and develop their professional skills. The collective agreement in Philip Morris Poland in Cracow can be given as an example of a com-



pany level collective agreement that also regulates the field of vocational training. It defines the general rules for access to training as well as the problem of training costs and days off work in order to be able to participate in training. The rate of trade union membership in Philip Morris in Poland is 70 %. In Slovakia, collective agreements favouring employee access to training solve these problems by means of Paid Education Leave for participants in training programmes / 2 – 5 days per year. In some sectoral agreements we can find so-called “Agreements for further self-improvement” enabling employees to gain paid educational leave during whole study periods and a financial contribution from the social fund, the creation of which is mandatory at company level.

In the UK, unions play an important role in access to training and education. There are more than 14,000 union learning representatives (ULRs) in workplaces offering advice and support on learning, brokering access to training and working with their unions to negotiate learning agreements and time-off arrangements. This work is supported by public funding, including Union Learning Funds in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. ULRs have been particularly successful in engaging hard-to-reach learners, and in attracting learners to information and communication technology (ICT) and literacy and numeracy courses. There has been an increase in learners who do not have English as their first language, including migrant workers. A further boost to union learning occurred in May 2006, when the Trades Union Congress (TUC) launched “unionlearn” in England, a new organisation to help unions spread the lifelong learning message to even more members. Other countries are considering similar arrangements.

### Access to training schemes for the jobless

In most countries, the state or tripartite bodies are generally responsible for dealing with access to training schemes for the jobless.

In Belgium however, further to a 1993 agreement by the social partners, 0.05% of the wage bill is levied to finance training actions for the unemployed through the public employment offices. A number of professional sectors are also stakeholders in the financing and co-management of training centres for employees or the jobless. Certain sectors have recently taken initiatives to finance outplacement.

In France, the unemployment insurance agreement is a joint agreement signed by a majority of trade unions. It provides for the financing of training actions to enable the jobless to benefit from the same systems as the employed. In Italy as well, at national or company level, joint or tripartite agreements can exist, and include measures for the jobless.

In Poland, training is organised at regional level by employment offices. Often this training is organised in cooperation with the main local employer, who helps finance it.

### Employees and owners of SMEs in skills development

In Belgium, the public authorities have put in place systems providing financial incentives for training schemes for workers in SMEs with up to 50 employees.

These include training cheques and adaptation credits. These systems have met with considerable success. They have just been extended to workers in companies with up to 250 employees. A support system for language training came into existence recently. Paid educational leave has been in place since the 1980s. This measure introduced by the social partners is aimed at providing support for individual training. Today, several thousand workers are resuming studies or enrolled in training programmes of various lengths while still being paid as employees.

In Spain, part of the national budget is earmarked for training activities for workers.

In France, employees of small and very small enterprises are among the priority targets of the 2003 agreement on training. In Italy, there are two specific joint funds for continuing training of employees of SMEs and craft undertakings.



In Luxembourg the law on support for and development of continuing vocational training includes provisions on skills development, as do certain collective agreements.

In Malta a project exists to subsidise the training of employees of SMEs who would like to develop their skills further.

In Poland, Slovakia and Sweden, various actions can be organised with the aid of European funds.

### **Social partners in the recognition and validation of learning and skills**

Validation of learning serves the needs of the individual worker and learner. Validation supports social integration, employability and the development and use of human resources.

Certification of formal or informal learning and the skills acquired from professional and social experience, meet workers' needs. This favours transfers of skills, mobility from one company to another, from one professional sector to another, geographic mobility, and achievement of goals in career plans. Validation is especially important to individuals who seek integration or re-integration into education and training, the labour market and society. Validation makes skills visible and comparable and consequently can promote workers' employability and mobility on the labour market. Recognition and validation of qualifications is also essential for skill development policies in companies.

The development of skills and qualifications after initial education or training mostly takes place in situations in daily work or informal training. Especially low- or non-qualified workers learn or develop their skills outside official educational structures. Recognition or validation should not take account of the way the skills have been acquired.

The Education Council of the European Union had already adopted conclusions on validation of learning in May 2004. The Education Council stressed the need for common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These principles should be implemented at national level with the cooperation of the social partners. Recognition and validation of qualifications developed from previous informal or non-formal learning must be an important part of lifelong learning policies and practices.

The Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications by the European social partners, which was adopted in 2002, endorses validation of learning as a shared objective and main priority of action.

### **National examples**

The social partners are involved in initiatives and projects to develop practices on validation of skills in several countries. The social partners also promote national measures to enable adults without basic qualifications, immigrants, older workers and unemployed people to join the qualifications system (Norway, Portugal, Denmark).

The development of a competence-based qualifications system is a high priority in a number of countries. There are also several countries like UK, France and Finland where competence-based qualifications already exist. Tripartite preparatory work on validation or recognition of competencies is going on in Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Spain among others. In these countries, work is expected to lead to national system based on legislation.

Cyprus has committed itself to developing a Competence-based System of Vocational Qualifications within the National Action Plan for Employment and the National Programme for the Lisbon Strategy. The HRDA, a tripartite body, is the authority that will implement the validation system.

In Spain, a public national catalogue of qualifications is determined by a tripartite body. A national regulation on the recognition of non-formal and informal training is under discussion and is expected to be adopted soon. The recognition of certifications issued in another country is part of the discussions.

In Italy, recognition of informal or non-formal training is under discussion between the social partners and authorities at





regional and national level. So far, no final agreements have been concluded between the social partners or under national legislation.

In Ireland, informal and non-formal learning has not been regarded as particularly relevant although it can be facilitated within the national qualifications structure.

Sweden has a tripartite governmental body called “the Delegation of Validation”, whose main task is to develop and underpin the work to develop validation in different branches. Swedish social partners have started projects on validation of sector skills as well as of skills corresponding to companies’ needs for specific qualifications. At company level, validation is usually given within the frame of the employers’ separate dialogues with employees to identify their needs for skill development.

The UK has competence-based National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) that can contribute input at a strategic level. The TUC is active in a national social partnership body called Skills Alliance. Some trade union officials are involved in the development of the occupational standards underpinning these qualifications, but there is not a systematic social partnership arrangement that requires this. NVQs in UK are achieved through assessment and training. Assessment is normally through on-the-job observation and questioning. The Craft Chambers in Poland have recognised and validated skills acquired through work experience over the years. The chambers organise exams and issue certificates confirming the right to practise a certain profession. Usually the costs of courses or exams must be borne by the participant, however in some cases, EU funds (i.e. EFS) and state supports are used, which makes the training free for participants. Problems con-

cerning recognition of learning are often discussed in public, but so far there are no agreements to solve difficulties.

In France, the recognition of training takes place mostly through certifications issued by the state. Jointly defined certifications also exist. Most certifications are recognised through their listing in a “National Directory of Occupational Certifications” drawn up by a tripartite committee. Official titles and diplomas are systematically entered in the directory. Joint certifications first have to be analysed by a committee that checks the validity of the certification.

A French law passed in 2002 introduced the validation of skills acquired on the job (“VAE”). Anyone who has been engaged in an occupational activity for at least three years can apply for the validation of the skills acquired through that experience. The jury is made up of representatives of the profession concerned. Total or partial certification can be granted and can take the form of an official title or diploma, or joint certification listed in the Directory.

Costs can be paid, depending on the case, by the state, region, unemployment fund, company or training bodies, or even by the individual concerned.

The Finnish system of competence-based vocational qualifications for adults is based on tripartite cooperation. There are more than 350 different qualifications to meet the needs of the labour market. These qualifications are managed by tripartite qualifications committees which are different from the tripartite educational committees. Qualifications committees sign contracts for arranging tests of skills, usually with adult education institutions. In principle, these tests can be taken without any preparatory training to validate skills and qualifications, but in practice most learners take training courses. In this way, the system has shifted from pure validation to development of competencies.

In Belgium, the social promotion training system issues certificates. It can also take into account training courses taken previously or, based on an application, can evaluate experience and thus reduce the number of training modules required to qualify for certification. This procedure is in fact used very little because it involves considerable formalities and is not sufficiently financed. The Communities recently put skills validation systems into place.

Based on validation profiles defined and approved by the social

partners, workers and job-seekers can have their skills recognised by means other than exams at the conclusion of training or study courses. The professions covered are determined by the social partners.

In Luxembourg, under the law of 12 August 2003 (creating the University of Luxembourg), anyone who has been engaged for at least three years in an occupational activity can apply for validation of the skills acquired on the job to prove all or part of the knowledge and aptitudes required for obtaining a diploma or title.

The jury is made up of instructors and other persons competent to assess the nature of the competences. The jury bases its opinion on the applicant's file, a personal interview and, as necessary, a mock-up of an occupational situation. The validation can be total or partial. The system is public.

In Malta, while there is no formal agreement on the recognition of informal or non-formal training, employers generally recognise training provided by training institutes.

In Slovakia, there is no legislative framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal training, which depends on the employer's goodwill.

### Identifying and anticipating needs for skills

Identifying and anticipating needs for competence, qualifications and skills are an important but extremely complex matter. Anticipation can be carried out at national, regional, sectoral or enterprise level. An analysis of the need for skills can be quantitative or qualitative. In both cases, it should be linked to industrial change, restructuring of the economy and the change to the information society. The results of this identification and anticipation should lead to changes in the training provided within enterprises and by public institutions.

At enterprise level, identification and anticipation should be part of Human Resources Development and belong to the business strategy. Anticipation should be linked to training plans at company level and at individual level. As a follow-up of the social dialogue on lifelong learning, national social partners reported on practical actions taken (e.g. trade union guidelines for negotiations studies and surveys, consultation services to companies, collective agreements which include provisions on tools, such as individual interviews,) to identify and anticipate needs for skills at company level, and action plans at sectoral level to guide companies in the sector.



### National examples

In Belgium, this dialogue essentially takes place at sector level. At sub-regional level, employment and training committees analyse sectoral dynamics. The committees are joint bodies and work closely with the public employment services.

In Cyprus, there is no social dialogue on these matters. However the semi-governmental tripartite body HRDA deals with human resources and the labour market, female human resources and the labour market, foreign resources and the labour market, SMEs and craft undertakings, and mobility of human resources and the labour market.

In the Czech Republic, the social partners work at national level in sectoral groups on the content of training programmes.

In Spain, the national commission for vocational training, a tripartite body, reviews these issues, along with sectoral committees of workers and employers.

In France, the inter-branch agreement of 2003 provides for the creation of occupational observatories in each occupational branch. They are steered jointly.

A law passed in 2005 creates the obligation for European companies with more than 300 employees to launch, within three years of the law's entry into force, negotiations on future-oriented employment and skills management.

The law on the validation of competences forms part of the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired on the employee's initiative. The 2003 agreement, which organises an individual right to training, is expected to give impetus to such recognition.

In Finland, sectoral tripartite committees for education analyse



and define developments in the area of skills and qualifications. The law defines the necessary skills and qualifications for regulated occupations. There is also an intergovernmental expert group in place that works on quantitative anticipation of training provision. Social partners take part in consultation. In Italy, social dialogue covers skills and qualifications needs. Detailed analyses are conducted in many branches of activity as part of this dialogue. The analyses must join up with the national system accepted by the social partners and the national and regional authorities to investigate needs. There is no national agreement on the recognition of skills acquired on the initiative of the employee, but locally certain agreements include the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired by and on the initiative of employees to advance in their career. In Ireland, an expert group deals with future skills needs. All competences can be recognised through 10 national qualifications levels.

In Luxembourg, social dialogue brings together employers and trade associations and the National Education and Training Ministry. Qualifications and skills acquired by employees are recognised in collective agreements, at company and sector level.

In Romania, needs analysis and definition takes place at national level in sectoral committees.

In Poland, a tripartite body analyses and describes 40 occupations and adopts professional qualification standards. In the context of drawing up the law to promote employment – which could also determine the vocational training model in Poland – consultations were held at national and company level. The aim of the law is to regulate the financial aspects of training programmes, to determine criteria for access to a specific train-

ing programme and to clarify the practical aspects of acquiring new occupational skills. There is no social dialogue on future skills needs. There are forecasts and simulations on needs and developments, but they are not satisfactory.

In Slovakia, the State Vocational Training Institute has set up expert groups for different sectors to evaluate innovative training proposals.

In Sweden, certain branches have set up social dialogue on skills and qualifications needs and developments at national level.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of the ETUC is to develop a modern concept of full employment, based on the right to individual choice in a labour market open to all. This makes job mobility a key question for the European labour market and trade union activities. To fulfil the right of the individual worker to choose a job, there is a need for more and better jobs on the labour market. Questions of lifelong learning and gender equity are also crucial as a means of providing high-quality jobs for everyone, since there are many obstacles to personal mobility on the European labour market.

From the trade union point of view, mobility on the labour market is a way to promote social inclusion and cohesion. As a fundamental means of subsistence, work is a basis for welfare and active participation in society. Without work, the fight against poverty is an impossible task.

Since 2002, European cooperation in lifelong learning has intensified, on both bipartite and tripartite bases. In the next phases, the results of this work need to be implemented at national, regional or sectoral level. Only local implementation of the tools and policies developed can help workers at enterprise level.

The results of the ETUC survey show that trade unions and social partners have a significant role to play in promoting lifelong learning for mobility. Still it is obvious that trade unions should intensify their efforts to promote lifelong learning for all workers and unemployed.

The social dialogue on lifelong learning must be strengthened at European and at national level. Social dialogue is an important tool for creating possibilities for workers and unemployed



persons to participate in education and training. Social dialogue can be channelled through tripartite committees to deal with the needs for skills and qualifications on the labour market. Existing national examples should be studied to secure trade union participation. Issues related to access to training, funding of training, paid educational leave etc can be tackled through collective bargaining or tripartite social dialogue. Tripartite cooperation can be used to promote recognition and validation of training. Different models of competence-based qualifications systems can be used to improve skills in the workforce and provide workers with proper qualifications. Europass, which is an existing EU tool, and sectoral skills passports make qualifications, skills and experience more visible and transparent. Skills passports can help individual workers to be mobile on the labour market and even inside companies. Trade unions' role is to see that such tools are developed also to meet the needs of workers, not only those of employers. Trade unions also have responsibility for disseminating information on these tools so that they are available for individuals. Anticipation and identification of the need for skills should be utilised to develop training at work places and to provide vocational training and higher education. Curricula should be updated as a response to that anticipation. Forecasting of skills needs in the labour market is crucial to creating a base for employment in Europe. Europe should also look beyond 2010. Development of skills and competencies during education and training should meet the demands of tomorrow better than it does today. This is a concern at all levels of education and training in every Member State. Anticipation of skills needs is not only a quantitative question but also a qualitative challenge. European projects should be used to anticipate skills needs and to transfer them to training demands. As insecurity in the labour market seems to be increasing, trade unions should see lifelong learning as a mean to increase workers' security. Trade unions' interests can be channelled through direct actions and projects to create learning and training possi-

bilities for those in needs. In this work, trade unions and their partners should make use of available EU funding. Other important channels are social dialogue and political lobbying. The social partners' capacity to bargain collectively on the rights and conditions that will allow for access and time for training should be supported. On the labour market, lifelong learning should have a more central place in collective agreements, including facilities in time and funding coming from the employer to facilitate involvement in vocational training, also at later stages in life. Political processes are important so that trade unions can push for national lifelong learning strategies and reforms. National lifelong learning strategies should eventually be written and implemented in all Member States. Every strategy should also involve an action plan, where measures to improve provision of training and access to training should have central focus. Without national action plans which include funding, strategies will remain empty papers.

To create a dynamic labour market where mobility is a possibility instead of being a threat, Europe needs to invest more on education and training at national and European levels. In this way, it is possible to create a win-win situation for workers as well as for companies by emphasising the quality of employment and industrial relations.

Europe needs a system of social relations securing mobility and professional careers. This will develop potential for workers and for jobs. This presupposes policies to promote lifelong learning and active policies on employment, social protection and support for workers during all forms of transition. To make this possible one of the first steps would be to increase investments in education and training, which are a necessity, not a luxury for Europe. Lifelong learning which involves vocational training and higher education must be developed so that European workers have the ability to answer the challenge of global competition. ■

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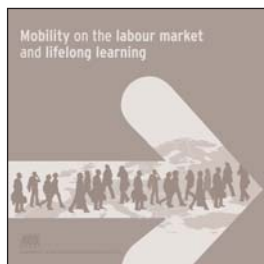
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