

Focus: Current Developments. Adult education in Europe is changing. On a European level, increasing emphasis is being placed on the concept of assessing and developing adults' key competences, e.g. by means of the European Qualifications Framework. The function of adult education, including non-career-related aspects such as creativity or politics, is to enable these competences to be developed. In the various member states, too, a lot has been achieved in the field of adult education in recent times, as the corresponding background reports in this InfoLetter show.



Cartoon: Mester

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CEDEFOP to focus more on adult education

Europe. Interview (extract) with **Aviana Bulgarelli**, Director of CEDEFOP (European Centre for the development of vocational training)

(Michael Sommer) CEDEFOP is the oldest European agency. Can you describe the effects your work has on development in Europe?

We have just had an external evaluation, which concluded that CEDEFOP is very effective and relevant. Within this general context CEDEFOP does two major things. On the one hand we provide knowledge, which is part of our tradition to put together the best European research and to do our own research to see where the really challenging issues are. Many new policy documents, for example the council resolution on new skills for new or the current revision of the Lisbon strategy, show that compared to the past there is greater emphasis on education and training as key drivers of growth. The second important thing to know is that in the conceptual design related to the implementation of European tools, for example, the European qualification framework CEDEFOP is a key player because we provide expert knowledge to build the tools either to fill gaps or to anticipate future issues in this field.

What are the future trends?

Tools such as the European Qualification Framework (EQF) or the Europass and the validation of non-formal learning, which help assess skills, are excellent opportunities for adults. As you know, adults need to update their skills, they want the knowledge they accumulated through work and life experience to be valued and recognised. One obvious trend is the greater emphasis on out-



Aviana Bulgarelli

comes, meaning that the focus is no longer on formal aspects such as the duration of a course but on the final product of learning, on competence acquired through learning.

In several countries the public support for adult learning has been reduced. Is that a general trend?

The tradition that adult learning is financed by the public has changed step by step into a model in which adult learning is also company or individual task, financed by the participant him- or herself or by the company the person is working for. There have been some interesting new trends, such as joint agreements with social partners to establish sectoral training funds. In general member states are making some progress; countries are developing measures to integrate working and learning.

What role will adult learning play for CEDEFOP?

In the medium-term, adult learning at CEDEFOP will be given greater priority and will play a more important role. If you look at our funding regulations you can read that CEDEFOP is the centre for vocational and continuing training. Thus, we do not have to reformulate our target, but the policy has changed. Adult learning is part of our agenda so we do not need to have new concepts or structures for adult education.

As you know, adult learning is much more complex: you have several actors here. Thus, it is a challenge for us to put this field more firmly on our agenda. However, with the new approaches such as the EQF we have an excellent starting point. CEDEFOP is also involved in the new "Pisa" study for adults which the OECD has just started, and this year we started coordinating part of the Lifelong Learning Programme. It is very important in our point of view to link together the LLL programme with the policy priorities in training and education.

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Ingredients for combating the Italians' allergy to adult education

Adult education in Europe: structures and developments

Europe. On a European level, in various papers, declarations and analyses, adult education is ascribed great importance for economic and social development in the context of lifelong learning. However, there are considerable differences in the way this support is put into action by the member states, and there is a lack of general, cross-European structures and funding. ▶

The European Commission welcomes adoption of the European Qualifications Framework

Europe. The way is clear now for Member States to adopt this voluntary scheme that will promote lifelong learning and mobility by making it easier to understand and compare individuals' qualifications around Europe. ▶

What skills will Europeans need in the years to come?

Europe. Cedefop presents its first forecast of skill needs up to the year 2015. The study "Future skill needs in Europe: medium-term forecast" concludes that demand for skills and qualifications is being driven upwards in most occupations. ▶

Sharing the cost of continuing training

Europe. A Conference with focus on financing for continuing training: Investing in people: Strategies for financing vocational education and training will be held on 19-20 May at the Cedefop in Thessaloniki. ▶

Grundtvig Award

Europe. The Grundtvig Award 2008 of the European Association for Education of Adults (EAEA) for projects within intercultural learning is open for submissions. ▶

Italy. *The culture of lifelong learning is having difficulty taking off and becoming the heritage of the country. Why this delay compared to other European countries? What are the current developments and trends in adult education in Italy? We asked Francesco Florenzano, President of UNIEDA, the Italian Union for Adult Education.*

(Teresa La Marca) Adult education continues to be the "Cinderella" of Italian education, while in Europe it is expanding. The 2007 Budget ignored adult education and lifelong learning in spite of the European Union's policies' highlighting them as winning strategies for employment, active citizenship, and equal opportunities. In 2007 the Italian government had launched a debate on a bill on lifelong learning that introduced no true incentive, nor any plan to bridge the gap between Italy and other European Union countries. What can we expect from the new Government? Will it undertake to develop the adult education system? "Without doubt, there is an unfavourable context for policies of development of lifelong learning in Italy; adult training seems not to be a topic dear to politics," confirms Francesco Florenzano, President of UNIEDA, the Italian Union for Adult Education. Italy ranks near bottom amongst European countries (6.2% of the population aged 25-64, with the average for the EU 25 at 10.8% in 2005). Participation is still low, and the majority of those enrolling for courses are young adults (aged up to 29) and those that hold higher qualifications, with great variety according to location and gender.

"Allergic" to education

Adult education is centred on the action of the institutional school system, leaving on the sidelines the non-formal component realized mainly by associations and "popular" universities of the third age. The system is managed mainly through the "Provincial centres for adult education", distributed through the country in sites related to the school system. These centres offer mainly courses leading to a qualification and also for immigrants to learn information technology and Italian. But aside from this politico-institutional scenario, might it not be that Italians are "allergic" to education? "Adults are not sufficiently attracted by education for a range of reasons. One of the reasons is probably that they are still influenced by the old school mindset linked to the fear of being judged, by marks over merit, and by cultural growth," confirms Francesco Florenzano once more. "The problem is of course linked to the primitive approach of the educational system, which sets more store by qualifications than by content. What seem to count for more than anything in Italy are qualifications and certificates, more than enhancing the skills themselves." In some areas it still happens, although increasingly rarely, that people purchase "qualifications" like some product from the supermarket. But culture and skills have no price. "We need to reverse this trend in order to overcome the discrimination of the past and aim for an approach to learning as comparison and

mutual growth for teachers and learners." Individuals deserve to be "evaluated" not only for the marks and qualifications they possess but also, and mainly, in terms of the real skills they have. In other words, the key word is "merit". What should be aimed at to improve adult education? "A key aspect is the role of associations that can represent true innovation because they are the expression of needs that have emerged from the bottom up, from citizens themselves. It is this form of education more than any other that guarantees participation and equality, two cornerstones of citizenship." "Additionally we should emphasize the pleasure and well-being that can arise from education, as well as the usefulness," continues Florenzano.

Following this path we can guarantee and promote people's individual and civil growth, developing autonomy in planning and intellectual pursuits. How can adult education be made more accessible for everyone? "It is essential to improve the channels of information and communication, and to adjust the level and quality of current needs coming from workers, young adults, women and senior citizens." One fundamental aspect is the "certification of learning" which assumes the evaluation of the skills concretely acquired and their certification. How does he see the future for adult education in Italy? "Our hope, as in other matters, remains Europe. At the moment we put our faith for further national developments in this sector in European policy for adult education," concludes Florenzano. Italian society has sore need of places where people can meet to learn together in a learning environment free of political or commercial prejudice. Adult education could be the way to fight the widespread and growing civil and political apathy, and the lack of faith in democratic institutions – problems which have deeply influenced Italians' recent political choices. ▶

OECD to test skills of adults

Europe. *Following its successful PISA programme for testing the educational attainments of 15-year old high-school students, OECD is launching a challenging new project to assess the knowledge and skills of adults.*

(OECD) The OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) will assess the level and distribution of adult skills across countries, focusing on the cognitive and workplace skills needed for successful participation in today's work environment. PIAAC will also gather data on participants' educational backgrounds and professional attainments, as well as their ability to use information and communications technology (ICT) and their general levels of literacy and numeracy. Following development work over the next two years and a field trial planned for 2010, the first tests will take place in 2011. ... ▶

Projects, mergers and networking

Danemark. *An increased focus on low skilled workers is the most obvious trend in Danish adult education. The institutions are also going through turmoil of mergers and high expectations of new ways of cooperation. At the same time still more funding is earmarked for short term projects.*

(Michael Voss) 135.000 Danes will not be able to get a job in 2015, because they lack the necessary skills. At the same time employers will have trouble getting skilled workers for about the same number of jobs. (For comparison: In Denmark there are 3.5 million people between 18 and 67). Over the last years the government and the parliament have made a series of decisions to boost adult education for low-skilled workers. For 2008 alone state funded expenses for adult education have been increased by 135 million euro.

Guidance Networks

Decision makers have also realized that it is necessary to make a serious effort on motivating and recruiting especially low-skilled workers to adult education. Until now it has been too difficult for low-skilled workers and for employers of SME's to get an overview of the possibilities of adult education, and counselling and guidance has not been performed good enough.

To improve this work 22 Adult Guidance Networks are now being established.

"The government wants the institutions to network and collaborate much closer "Counselling taking place in one institution must direct the individual to another institution, when that is the most relevant. A counsellor at a Labour Market Training Centre must have the knowledge to be able to guide an applicant to one of the more general Adult Education Centres, if that is what is needed.

It seems obvious, but it has not always been the case," Agnethe Nordentoft explains. She is a development officer at Danish Adult Educational Association.

Knowledge Centers

Agnethe Nordentoft is also a consultant at the newly established Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning, one of a series of Knowledge Centres that are being established with a wide range of educational institutions as partners.

"These centres are another way of motivating the actors to collaborate, and they are examples of the kind of relatively loose networks that are the organizational trend today," says Agnethe Nordentoft.

The goal of the Knowledge Centres is to collect experiences and best practices. On this basis they will develop new knowledge, disseminate it and offer advice for authorities and institutions.

"Enhanced collaboration between the actors certainly has the potential of making adult education more available and more suited to the needs. But these recent developments are not without problems," says Agnethe Nordentoft.

"Ten years ago technical schools and business schools began merging into vocational school centres and some of these also include labour market training centres. Now they are encouraged to expand even more and include diploma courses

and becoming vocational and business academies.

One wave of mergers is not in place before a new wave is being introduced.

The same is happening for the institutions offering medium length further education. Before one phase of mergers was completed, a new law stipulated that all professional schools should merge into huge University Colleges.

Along this process they have had to establish Knowledge Centres and in some instances also participate in Guidance Networks. From this turmoil follow organizational problems, and the price of organizational problems is often paid by an immediate drop in competence level and less efficiency in the actual work of education."

Dynamic or ...?

Part of this trend is the ever increasing number of short-termed projects. The Knowledge Centres are examples of that. At the end of a three year period it will be decided if some of them are going permanent on the basis of an evaluation.

"It may create a new dynamic, when you base research and development on a defined need and then close it down if there is no further need for it - instead of creating perpetual motion machines.

On the hand this method does not take into account that research and development in such complex matters takes time. Hiring staff makes up for the first 3-4 months. Then you must develop work plans and establish a division of labour before really getting started. And about two and half years into the period you must start evaluating the results.

This is not much for a brand new project to get results and develop its potentials," says Agnethe Nordentoft.

Supporting and encouraging people. On the mission of Catholic Adult Education in Europe

Europe. *In its educational activities, Catholic Adult Education in Europe attempts to include the human lifeworld together with moral-ethical dimensions. Its goal is to provide people with answers to major questions of the day, to support and encourage their development as person and to make the society more equitable.*

During the past two decades, the political, social, economic, religious and personal prerequisites of Catholic Adult Education in Europe have been in the process of fundamental transformation and continuous change. Contemporary diagnosticians, sociologists, social ethicists, theologians and business managers are of the virtually unanimous opinion that the morally depleted society (Johann Baptist Metz) of the 21st century must develop a "savoir-vivre" especially as response to learning how to live within and among various lifeworlds.

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European terminology database, helps on European projects

Europe. The European terminology database IATE has now been online for a year. It provides valuable assistance for everyone working in adult education on a European level. ▶

Legal right to further education in EU?

Europe. EU Commissioner for Employment Vladimír Špidla has called upon employees and companies to become more involved in further education. ▶

Latest developments in policy and praxis

Nordic Countries. Guidance counselling systems differ in the Nordic countries but all 5 countries put a strong focus on the individual employee or learner and attempt to bring guidance, working life and the world of education closer to one another. ▶

Pro-Skills basic skills for life-long learning

Projects. The Grundtvig-project Pro-Skills (2006-2008) promotes social and personal skills in socially unprivileged persons as basic conditions for life-long learning. ▶

Training of transition professionals for early childhood education

Projects. The conference "Sharing the responsibility for Europe's children's life course trajectories" takes place on June 27th 2008 in Berlin. ▶

How to organise training courses

Projects. Book "Grundtvig Mobility - How to organise training courses for an international audience" now out in a new edition. ▶

Women & Men in Dialogue

Projects. A Course for Trainers dealing with gender issues. ▶

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Current Developments

- UK:** New reforms to improve the delivery of adult and young people's skills / New agency ▶
- Malta:** Latest tendencies in adult education ▶
- Switzerland:** An education referendum for a positive future ▶
- Ireland:** Current Status of Lifelong Learning ▶
- Serbia:** Adult Education in Serbia – suspended between its historic past and a glorious future ▶
- Poland:** Adult Education in Poland in the Light of Social Changes ▶
- Germany:** Bright spots on the horizon for German further education ▶
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- Hungary.** Librarian, as Adult Educator ▶
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- Sweden.** Hip-hop and lifelong learning ▶
- Nordic Countries.** Guidance counselling in the Nordic countries ▶
- Netherlands.** Does education yield any results or is it just a leisure pursuit? A new study ▶
- Italy.** Skills: a question of life ▶
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- Europe.** Books on the subject of "Continuing education in Europe" ▶

Need for cultural education in a knowledge-based society

Germany. *In view of the many social problems and challenges, such as demographic change, migration, globalisation, increasing poverty, etc., it will become particularly important for our society to change its attitudes and see cultural education in a different light, stresses Richard Stang, one of the foremost experts in this field of study, Professor of Media Studies at Stuttgart Media University and expert appointed by the Study Commission of the German Bundestag on "Culture in Germany".*

(Richard Stang) In continuing education, or more precisely, adult education, the strategic focus of policy is geared to employment-oriented, vocational training. The more visible advantages of efficiency and effectiveness therefore feature more prominently than long-term strategies for education as a means of promoting creativity and innovation.

If we consider the concept of lifelong learning which is a topic of discussion throughout Europe, it becomes clear that education cannot be confined to professional qualifications alone. There should be more focus on:

- A smooth flow between the divisions of education, a broad education which helps to prepare for constant changes,
- Education for people who are in a working situation, and those who are not,
- The development of skills which promote social interaction, particularly in view of demographic changes,
- And finally, a humane society, which knows how to value education as a long-term asset and not as something which can be marketed as profitable in the short term.

Key skills such as creativity, flexibility and communication skills, known as "soft skills", have become "buzz" words for the promotion of employment-oriented skills in recent years. They feature in many personal development concepts. These skills are already always at the centre of continuing education in general and in particular Adult Cultural Education. However at the moment, their potential only seems to be noticed, if they are brought up in commercially relevant contexts.

For cultural education is increasingly losing ground in the educational debate and in terms of political acceptance. Cultural education no longer tends to be classed as a "basic provision", but as a "luxury option" or is brushed aside under the "leisure, hobby and entertainment tag" with the result that several federal states have in the meantime stopped promoting cultural education altogether. At the same time the precarious financial situation of many adult education providers has led to fees in cultural education being drastically increased in some quarters. In many organisations it operates as a "Profit-Centre", in which the level of cost cover in relation to implementation costs is well over 100%, which has an effect on the make up of those taking part.

The promotion of adult cultural education in the Federal Republic is essential if the educational

landscape in Germany is to be geared to future requirements. The strategic and longer term ability of "Standort Deutschland" (Germany as an international business centre) to move in the direction of a knowledge-based society will depend on how successfully adult cultural education is integrated into the strategy for lifelong learning.

Adult cultural education can make a decisive contribution to the development of skills for a knowledge-based society in the wider population, for instance by:

- Promoting artistic skills,
- Promoting creativity,
- Promoting sensitivity towards the various forms of artistic expression,
- expanding cultural and communications skills,
- developing media skills and
- promoting awareness of life's socio-cultural and inter-cultural interconnections

Through its specific methods and approaches adult cultural education promotes open learning processes and innovative means of access and makes it possible to react flexibly to individual requirements in the development of learning and problem solving strategies.

"Social acceptability"

It essentially involves enhancing personal development skills, which help to meet the challenges of everyday life, irrespective of functional contexts such as the world of work. It will become ever more important to see skills development not only from the point of view of "employability", but increasingly from the point of view of "social acceptability".

It is therefore necessary to promote adult cultural education as a further basic provision in the educational system and to recognise it as basic education. In this context a division of options between "leisure options" and "basic provision" is not really a good idea, as they are bound up together in methodical and didactic settings and consequently represent educational units which all develop the personality. As part of their remit Federal States and local authorities are required to create an infrastructure for cultural adult education, which gives all population groups access to the development of an overall cultural skill. And this would also mean Adult Cultural Education being promoted on an equal footing with vocational training.

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Citizenship education in Germany

Germany. As recent trend analyses show, Germany displays a range of deficits in its commitment to further education. However, one clear strength of the German education landscape is that as well as politics being taught in school, there is a very diverse infrastructure of extracurricular education in politics for young people and adults, backed by a large number of social initiatives and organisations and promoted by public offices.

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