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**Analysis
of the 2000 National Action Plans for Employment**

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INTRODUCTION

◆ The European Employment Strategy

The concerted employment strategy launched at the Special European Council in Luxembourg in November 1997, pursuant to Article 128 of the Treaty, provides that Member States must submit a National Action Plan (NAP) to the Commission every year, indicating what measures have been taken to ensure implementation of the Employment Guidelines endorsed by the European Council and adopted by the Council “Employment Social Affairs”.

Accordingly, in the spring of 2000, Member States submitted to the Commission their NAPs detailing implementation of the 1999 guidelines and presenting the new initiatives adopted for the implementation of the 2000 guidelines.

The Joint Employment Report, drawn up by the Commission and the Council, reviews the employment situation in the Community and assesses measures taken by the Member States, as reported in the NAPs, in implementing their employment policy in line with the employment guidelines 2000 and the Council recommendations of 14 February 2000. The Commission prepared the proposal for employment guidelines 2001 and for the Council recommendations. The employment package consists of these three documents which were endorsed by the European Council and adopted by the Council “Employment Social Affairs”. The Commission incorporated the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 in this package.

This multiannual process makes it possible to focus national employment policies on priority areas and to measure the progress made from one year to the next.

◆ A new strategic goal for the Union

In view of the profound changes stemming from globalisation and the emergence of a new knowledge-based economy, the Lisbon European Council held in March 2000 set a new strategic goal for the Union for the next decade:

"to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".

The Lisbon European Council confirmed the essential role of education and training in achieving the Union's strategic goals and acknowledged the role of the Education Council. Accordingly, it asked the Education Council to ponder the concrete future objectives of education systems, with a view to contributing to the Luxembourg and Cardiff processes and presenting a report to the European Council in March 2001. This report is to be the basis of a concerted strategy by Member States in the field of education and training in accordance with the open method of coordination defined by the Lisbon European Council, while fully respecting national diversity.

In order to achieve the objectives set out in the European employment strategy, Member States are placing increasing importance on education and training policies.

At the same time, the guidelines, which were originally based more on employment and labour market reform policies, are focusing increasingly on the education and training dimension. The 2000 Employment Package ratified by the Nice European Council represents further progress in this respect.



This document analyses the role of education and training policies in the European employment strategy. The first section presents the new 2000 Employment Package and shows that the education and training dimension has been consolidated, particularly following the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council. The second section summarises the role of education and training policies in the National Action Plans for 2000¹.

¹ A detailed analysis of each Member State's education and training policies is included in the second volume of the European report on education and training.

I - THE 2000 EMPLOYMENT PACKAGE

I.1 From the Lisbon European Council to the 2000 Employment Package

In order to support the objectives of full employment², economic growth and social cohesion, the Lisbon European Council provides for a broad range of measures in the various fields concerned. In the area of education and training, it focuses on adapting education and training systems to the new needs of the knowledge-based society and sets a number of concrete objectives to be achieved:

- increased investment in human resources;
- a reduction in the number of young people leaving school without qualifications;
- the creation of local learning centres;
- the promotion of new basic skills, particularly in information technologies;
- increased transparency of qualifications.

All of the education and training goals set by the Lisbon European Council are included in the 2000 Employment Package ratified by the Nice European Council. This package is a response to the concerns expressed by Education Ministers in the conclusions of the Education Council of 8 June 2000 and in the Opinion on the guidelines for 2001 adopted by the Education Council of 9 November 2000, concerning the priority to be given to lifelong learning and to teaching in the field of new technologies.

I.2 The National Action Plans for 2000

The joint report, which presents an analysis of the National Action Plans for 2000, illustrates in particular that the promotion of lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important in all Member States. However, most Member States still do not have a coherent education and training strategy to link the various education and training systems and to promote recognition of formal and informal learning. Secondly, although the level of adult participation in lifelong learning increased slightly in 1999 (8% as against 7.5% in 1998 and 6.5% in 1997), it continues to be insufficient in many countries in relation to the demands of the knowledge society.

The National Action Plans, however, contain few measures to improve the general quality of education. Most Member States have indeed intensified measures to support young people with learning difficulties in order to reduce the number of people dropping out of school.

² The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council set the goal of a 70% employment rate (and more than 60% for women) by 2010. The current rate of employment is 62.2%.

Nevertheless, almost 20% of young Europeans aged 18-24 drop out of school and do not have the necessary basic skills for long-term inclusion in the labour market, and the average level of education, although improving, is regarded as inadequate in six Member States.

However, in the knowledge-based society, jobs require a high level of qualification. At the same time, the bottlenecks which are appearing in many sectors often arise due to the difficulty in recruiting people with the necessary skills and qualifications. In order to be fully effective, lifelong learning policies require more intensive efforts to ensure a quality initial education to provide young people with the basic skills needed to meet the demands of the knowledge society.

The analysis of the National Action Plans also reveals many initiatives, often involving broad-based partnerships, to promote ongoing training in businesses, particularly in the new technologies, recognition of qualifications and upgrading of skills. However, it is important to note that the lack of comparable statistics and the inadequate availability of indicators make it difficult to analyse and monitor the contribution of Member States' education and training policies, particularly concerning vocational training in industry.

I.3 The 2001 Employment Guidelines

The Employment Guidelines for 2001, the fourth annual version since the Special Employment Summit of 1997, are the basis which Member States will use to prepare their National Action Plans. They are based not only on an analysis of the National Action Plans for 2000 but also on the conclusions of the Lisbon and Feira European Councils³. The principal innovations contained in these new guidelines are:

- consolidation of the education and training dimension by taking into account all objectives in this area, particularly the targets set by the Lisbon European Council;
- the integration of five horizontal objectives - as part of a comprehensive and coherent strategy, Member States must use these to structure the measures taken under each of the guidelines and account for their contribution to achieving these objectives;
- a high priority given to lifelong learning, which is one of the horizontal objectives and is included expressly in the guidelines under the various pillars.

Education and training policies are therefore present in both the horizontal objective and the guidelines.

³ The Feira European Council of June 2000 calls upon the Member States, the Council and the Commission to identify "*coherent strategies and practical measures with a view to fostering lifelong learning for all*".

The horizontal objective of promoting lifelong learning

One of the five horizontal objectives involves the implementation of global strategies to promote lifelong learning. More specifically, these strategies must encompass all levels of education and training and need to be designed in such a way as to link the various levels of responsibility shared between the public authorities, businesses, the social partners and individuals.

To this end, Member States are requested to set national objectives to substantially increase investment in human resources, as required by the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, and adult participation in education and ongoing training.

The principal elements of education and training policies in the 2001 guidelines

The goal of adapting education and training systems is essential in order to allow young people to acquire the necessary basic skills and to allow adults to increase their employability and adaptability in the labour market via lifelong learning.

Education and training systems therefore need to meet the needs of the labour market and respond to the current skills shortage which is slowing down growth and employment in the majority of EU countries. As a result, Member States are called upon to improve the quality of their education and training systems and set up local learning centres⁴. More specifically, the measures planned will have to:

- provide young people with the necessary basic skills;
- halve the number of young people dropping out of school by 2010;
- promote access for adults to lifelong learning and set targets to achieve this;
- facilitate mobility by improving recognition of qualifications;

⁴ Guideline 4 : “Member States will therefore improve the quality of their education and training systems, as well as the relevant curricula, including the modernisation of apprenticeship systems, and the development of multi-purpose local learning centres, in order to :

-equip young people with the basic skills, including IT and language skills, relevant to the labour market and needed to participate in lifelong learning;

- eradicate illiteracy and reduce substantially the number of young people who drop out of the school system early, in particular by developing appropriate support for young people with learning difficulties. Member States will in this context develop measures aimed at halving by 2010 the number of 18 to 24 year olds with the only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training;

- promote conditions to facilitate better access of adults, including those with atypical contracts, to lifelong learning, so as to approach gradually the proportion of adults working age population (25-64 year olds) participating at any given time in education and training in the best performing Member States, doubling the existing levels by 2005, to reach at least 10% by 2010;

- ensure that their education systems deliver a continuously updated package of core skills.

In order to facilitate mobility and encourage lifelong learning, Member States should improve the recognition of qualifications, acquired knowledge and skills.”

Guideline 5 : “Member States will aim at developing e-learning for all citizens. In particular, Member States will ensure that all education and training institutions have access to the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2001 and that all the teachers and trainers concerned are skilled in the use of these technologies by the end of 2002 in order to provide all pupils with a broad digital literacy.”

- develop training in information and communication technologies ("*e-learning*") for all.

In addition to the objective of increasing investment in human resources, the 2001 guidelines, which incorporate the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, call on Member States to continue the efforts made to improve the incentive effects of training and to eliminate fiscal obstacles, and on the social partners to conclude agreements to promote lifelong learning.

I.4 The Council recommendations for 2001

Based on the analysis of the National Action Plans, on the employment guidelines and, this year, on policy developments related to the Lisbon and Feira conclusions, Member States were given recommendations which help to identify the main problems and to focus national efforts on specific priorities. While most of the recommendations for 2000 were reiterated, in full or in part, in the recommendations for 2001, the latter put greater emphasis on the education and training dimension. Ten Member States were given recommendations on education and training calling on them to:

- introduce global strategies to promote lifelong learning and further development of lifelong learning;
- improve skills and qualifications in order to combat skills shortages;
- improve the quality of education and vocational training systems to lower the number of children dropping out of school and facilitate the transition from school to work;
- develop vocational training through greater involvement of the social partners.

Member States will therefore have to pay particular attention to these priority issues and account for measures taken in their new National Action Plan.

I.5 Outlook

Having been asked by the Lisbon European Council to become more closely involved in the European employment strategy, in November 2000 the Education Council for the first time adopted an opinion on the Employment Guidelines for 2001. This was welcomed by the Social Affairs Council and by the Nice European Council.

The Education Council is thus becoming an integral part of the Luxembourg process along with the Ecofin and Social Affairs Councils and must now make this a permanent area of its work.

Member States now have to draw up the 2001 National Action Plans on the basis of the guidelines and recommendations to Member States for 2001. These give the ministers responsible for education and training extensive scope for action. It is therefore essential for these ministers to be closely involved, in each Member State, in preparing and monitoring the National Action Plans, which will have to be forwarded to the Commission by May 2001.

II - ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT 2000

II.1 The 2000 Employment Guidelines

The National Action Plans (NAPs) 2000 describe how the Member States implemented the measures taken in the 1999 NAP and how they took the guidelines for 2000 into account. This is an ongoing process and highlights the results achieved and the priority areas which require specific measures.

The guidelines for 2000 were not very different from those of the previous year and the four-pillar structure (employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability, equal opportunities) was retained. However, education and training have a more prominent role:

- guideline 6 calls on Member States to set objectives for lifelong learning;
- guideline 7 involves improving national education systems in order to reduce the school drop-out rate;
- guideline 8 is intended to modernise learning and vocational training systems and to consolidate skills in the field of new technologies;
- in the entrepreneurship pillar, guideline 11 calls on Member States to promote training in entrepreneurship;
- in the adaptability pillar, two guidelines (15 and 17) call on Member States to promote in-company training, with the support of the social partners and by means of an appropriate fiscal policy.

Other amendments concern the role of the social partners in developing vocational training (guideline 5), the role of the public employment services (guideline 12) and ways to facilitate the reintegration of men and women into the labour market, for example by means of training (guideline 21).

II.2 Developing human resources

◆ Increasing investment in human resources

The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council call on Member States to ensure "a substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources". In 1997, in the European Union, the public funds allocated to education represented an average of 5% of gross domestic product.

In future, trends in education expenditure will depend on Member States' policies concerning teachers' remuneration (as staff expenditure makes up 72% of the state schools' budget) but also on the increase in the average duration of study and on the growing number of young people going on to higher education.

To meet the demand for education and training, Member States will have to increase their investment in human resources.

Implementation of comprehensive strategies by the Member States requires sufficient financial resources combined with a shift in the focus of expenditure towards active labour market policies. The European Social Fund (ESF) under the new structural funds regulations has a specific mission to contribute to the actions undertaken in pursuance of the Employment strategy. Member States are pursuing actions under the new operational programmes to develop a lifelong learning infrastructure and implement concrete lifelong learning actions at national, regional and local levels.

◆ Improving the general level of education

In the European Union, more than 60% of the adult population of working age (25-64) have had an upper-secondary level education. A considerable effort has been made in all Member States to improve the levels of education and training. In 1997, fewer than 50% of those in the 50-59 age group had obtained an upper-secondary level qualification, as against almost 70% in the 20-29 age group. Women now have similar levels of education to men.

There are still marked differences between Member States. However, the most rapid progress is seen in the countries which had the lowest levels of education and are now catching up on the countries with the highest level.

In general, as the level of education improves, the rate of unemployment falls. In 1997, in the EU, the rate of unemployment among graduates was 6%, as against 9% for those who had at most upper-secondary level education and 13% for those who had completed their compulsory schooling at best. The only exceptions were Greece and Portugal, and this should change with economic modernisation in these countries.

It must therefore become a priority to raise the general level of education, particularly in order to prevent labour shortages. These are most often linked to inadequate qualifications and are identified as a significant obstacle to economic growth in the NAPs for Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and northern Italy.

◆ **Increasing the rate of employment**

The European Union has set itself the target of achieving an employment rate of 70% by 2010. In 1999, the rate of employment, although increasing slightly, was only 62.1% of the population of working age. This is due to the fact that there are still not enough women and in particular older workers in the workforce, and also to insufficient qualifications and skills among the working population. All Member States are aware how important this issue is and are proposing measures to resolve it. Accordingly, special efforts are being made for women, for example to encourage them to take scientific or technical courses which open up more job opportunities, and for older persons in the form of measures to promote lifelong learning.

II.3 Lifelong learning

On the basis of guideline 6, "in order to reinforce the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce, both Member States and the social partners will endeavour to develop possibilities for lifelong learning, particularly in the fields of information and communication technologies, and each Member State will set a target according to national circumstances for participants benefiting from such measures. Easy access for older workers will be particularly important."

The NAPs focus on lifelong learning, thus indicating how important Member States consider this issue to be. However, while many measures have been taken by the Member States, there is still no comprehensive framework. The majority of Member States must develop stronger links between the various measures in order to devise and implement lifelong learning policies within a comprehensive framework.

Only a minority of Member States reported the national objectives which they had been asked to set (the Netherlands and Denmark). Germany is drafting an action programme on "lifelong learning for all", which includes all the measures taken by the Federal Government in this area, the objective being to promote lifelong learning in the long term.

Adult participation in lifelong learning is still inadequate in many countries, where participation in a recent course was less than 6 %.

There are also significant differences between age groups. In the European Union, young people aged 25-34 are today seven times more likely to take a course than people in the 55-64 age group. In addition, those who start out with a higher level of education are also more likely to take part in lifelong learning as adults; for example, this is five times more likely, on average, for those who have a higher education qualification than for those who got no further than lower-secondary level.

Member States have adopted various measures to implement a lifelong learning strategy:

- **measures to promote vocational training for the unemployed** (Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, United Kingdom);
- **increased opportunities for skilled workers to obtain qualifications in the field of information technologies** (Germany, Austria);
- **participation of more unskilled workers in ongoing training measures within companies** (Germany, Austria, Denmark, Portugal);
- **assistance for older workers to continue their training** (Germany, Austria, Portugal);
- **the possibility of job rotation for employees undergoing training** (Denmark, Germany, Finland);
- **development of distance learning and adult education** (Austria, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, UK, Sweden);
- **reform of continuing education** (Denmark, Italy);
- **facilities to continue studies following basic training** (Finland, United Kingdom, Sweden);
- **development of on-the-job training** (Finland, Netherlands);
- **recognition of experience** (France, Netherlands, Portugal);
- **introduction of individual learning accounts** (Netherlands, United Kingdom).

Recognition of the fundamental role of lifelong learning in raising the level of skills and qualifications of employees in Europe must not result in reduced efforts to improve the quality of basic education and training systems. In fact, the implementation of comprehensive lifelong learning policies will be even more effective if the level of basic education and training is increased.

II.4 Improving the quality of education

Guideline 7 called on Member States "*to improve the quality of their school systems in order to reduce substantially the number of young people who drop out of the school system early. Particular attention should also be given to young people with learning difficulties*".

The quality of an education system may be assessed in various ways: the percentage of young people who reach a certain level of education (for example upper-secondary level), the percentage of young people who obtain a recognised qualification, or the percentage of young people who have joined the workforce six months after leaving the education system.

Despite the measures they have taken, Member States will have to continue their efforts to increase the quality of education systems in accordance with the objectives set out by the Lisbon European Council.

II.4.1 Improving the quality of education systems

The Member States have taken measures at various levels of school education. Italy is the only Member State to reform its whole system. In 1999 it decided, *inter alia*, to raise the school-leaving age to 18. There is increasing emphasis on improving the training of teachers and of training supervisors. Greece, the Netherlands and Portugal have undertaken ambitious teacher training programmes.

The Netherlands is endeavouring to reform teacher training programmes, increase and diversify recruitment, modernise working conditions and implement a dynamic personnel policy. Training teachers in the use of new technologies is included in all Member States' Plans.

◆ *Pre-primary*

In 1997, the rate of attendance of pre-primary educational facilities by children aged four was greater than 50% in all countries of the European Union except Finland (where it was only one third). In Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands the rate of attendance was more than 90%.

There has been considerable progress in the last forty years in the majority of countries. This growth is mainly linked to recognition of the importance of pre-primary education for the development and socialisation of young children.

In their National Action Plans, Sweden and Portugal state their intention of developing pre-school education. Finland introduced free pre-school education for all children aged six in August 2000; and Sweden will for all children aged 4-5 years from 2003.

◆ *Primary education*

Few NAPs report measures in this field. It should be noted, however, that the Netherlands has taken measures to reduce the maximum class size to 20 pupils for children aged four to eight by 2002.

◆ *Secondary education and vocational education*

Vocational education, which is more closely linked to employment policies, is the main component of the proposals drafted by the Member States. Most of the National Action Plans contain measures designed to adapt vocational education to suit the needs expressed by industry.

France has undertaken a reform of vocational education which is based on a closer partnership with businesses, a stronger link between general education and vocational training, greater continuity of learning between the training establishment and the company, and adapting qualifications to current requirements.

The Netherlands has undertaken a reform to improve the level of education by making greater use of informal education, actively involving pupils and taking into account the differences between pupils. In Sweden, the number of hours of teaching per pupil will be increased in upper secondary level curricula.

◆ *Higher education*

There are also many actions related to higher education. Several Member States are already obtaining satisfactory results in secondary education and are trying to increase the number of young people who take on higher education courses in order to meet industry's need for increasing qualifications. However, in many Member States there is a high drop-out rate in higher education.

In France, in 1998, 91 000 young people left the higher education system without having obtained degrees (24%). In order to ease the transition for young people from higher education into the world of work, vocational degrees (baccalaureat - school leaving certificate - plus three years' study) have been developed jointly with industry. A master's degree has been introduced (baccalaureat plus five years' study), which is between a degree and a doctorate. It will be available to anyone who has completed the baccalaureat plus five years' study and by means of recognition of studies, vocational or personal skills and periods of study or work placement in a European country.

In Italy, higher technical education programmes are being set up by the regions on the basis of local needs. The qualification obtained by students is recognised throughout Italy. The Netherlands is developing dual training programmes in higher education. The United Kingdom is seeking to improve the employability of university graduates. Sweden is increasing significantly the number of places offered in higher education, its goal being to have half of all age groups go into higher education.

II.4.2 Reducing the number of young people leaving the school system prematurely

The conclusions of the Lisbon Summit call on Member States to "*develop measures aimed at halving by 2010 the number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training*".

According to data from Eurostat, which takes into account the number of young people leaving school with a low level of attainment (which could be termed dropping out of school), the school drop-out rate across the European Union was 18% in 1997. In some Member States (Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain) the drop-out rate is 30% or more. In Portugal, 45% of young people leave school with no more than a lower-secondary level education. Sweden, Finland and Denmark have the lowest proportion of young people dropping out of school at the basic level (average 9.6%).

In Italy, most youngsters who drop out of school early live in the south of the country. Except in Germany and Austria, the drop-out rate is higher among boys than among girls. Portugal and Greece have set a goal for all young people in an age group to complete the nine years of compulsory education, while Sweden and Denmark are concentrating on the rate of participation by young people in higher education.

In Denmark in 1998, 84% of an age group completed secondary education and 42% completed higher education. Over the next 10 years, the proportion of young people completing secondary school should reach 95%, with 50% of them going on to complete higher education. The vocational training reforms which will enter into force at the beginning of 2001 should halve the drop-out rate, and the drop-out rate for higher education should fall from 27% to 17%.

All National Action Plans have introduced measures to combat early school leaving. Some Member States, however, are placing their bets on implementing measures to enable the acquisition of tertiary qualifications, particularly through apprenticeships or various on-the-job training procedures (Germany, Finland) rather than on the ability of education/training systems to retain young people.

In order to reduce early school leaving, Germany is compensating for the increased number of young people leaving school without a diploma by increasing the supply of three-year pre-work training programmes, with the result that the proportion of young people without qualifications in the 17–20 age group has fallen to approximately 5%.

Finland has established "innovation workshops" for young people (8 000 in 1999) who have left school early and are in danger of exclusion.

The Netherlands, Ireland and Italy have established a registration system for young people who have dropped out of the education system in order to provide them with individual advice.

France is making efforts to develop pathways towards qualifications after lower secondary school and to offer more level V training at local level, working with businesses with requirements at this level to help them develop training courses.

The Member States have taken a series of measures to improve the quality of education/training systems and to encourage more young people to study:

- **renovation of training programmes** (Germany, Italy, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden);
- **updating of knowledge, decentralisation of education/training systems** (Italy, Spain, United Kingdom);
- **modularisation of vocational training** (Belgium);
- **development of sandwich courses** (Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal);
- **strengthening of part-time education** (Belgium, Ireland);
- **use of multimedia educational tools, development of information and guidance, particularly for girls** (Austria, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal);
- **reform of vocational training** (Spain, France).

The United Kingdom, Finland and Denmark are developing post-compulsory education. Portugal has introduced a transition year following compulsory education, so that young people can acquire a vocational qualification, and wants to increase the number of places for training leading to qualifications. Austria has established a programme enabling young people who left school early to complete their studies at a later date.

II.4.3 Help for young people with learning difficulties

Most National Action Plans contain measures to increase support for young people with learning difficulties, in order to reduce the numbers leaving school early and combat the high levels of illiteracy persisting among certain groups and in certain areas.

These measures aim to support individual pupils at risk of leaving school without qualifications owing to their difficulties in achieving the levels required, and to support groups of pupils in disadvantaged areas where drop-out rates and the risks of social marginalisation are high. The target groups also comprise disabled people and young people of foreign origin.

In Germany, young people with insufficient knowledge or results will be offered remedial classes, practical courses and special vocational measures such as work experience or a preparatory training year.

France is continuing to develop priority education: increasing by 40% the number of schools included in priority education areas, increasing the number of bridging classes which take on a specific and temporary basis pupils dropping out of school, and introducing specific measures to train and integrate young people under the generic title of "general integration policy".

Greece has implemented a programme of "supplementary teaching support" for less able pupils in order to reduce the school drop-out rate, improve the level of education among those leaving secondary education and facilitate the entry of young people into higher education or the job market. The programme covers 25% of pupils in each class, who can have 12 hours of supplementary teaching in the main subjects. In parallel with this, remedial education has been introduced in those geographical areas with a high drop-out rate.

In Ireland, the support programme for young people offers two years of education, training and work experience or in-service training to young people leaving school with no qualifications. In parallel with this there are measures to encourage pupils to stay on to obtain their school leaving certificate.

Portugal, where the problem of dropping out of studies is more acute, has adopted a raft of measures: establishment of priority education areas, support for young people with learning difficulties, introduction of alternative training programmes.

II.5 Adapting to technological and economic changes

The globalisation of the economy, the pace of technological change and the taking into account of new social and cultural aspirations lead to changes which frequently claim as victims those who are less well-trained or do not have the resources required to maintain their capacity for occupational integration.

Bringing education/training systems into line with the requirements expressed by the world of work helps to facilitate the transition of young people from school to employment. This is a common concern for all Member States.

In accordance with guideline 8, the Member States *"will make sure they equip young people with greater ability to adapt to technological and economic changes and with skills relevant to the labour market. They will seek in particular to develop and modernise the system of apprenticeship training, develop suitable training programmes which enable pupils and teachers to acquire knowledge and skills in computer technology, supply schools with computer equipment and ensure that pupils have Internet access by the year 2002"*.

Closer cooperation has been established between schools, businesses and public services responsible for employment and training.

II.5.1 Matching qualifications to the requirements of the labour market

One of the challenges facing education and training systems is to ensure that the supply of education/training meets demand from both individuals and businesses. Labour shortages in some sectors are a sign that supply is out of step with market demand.

There must be an awareness, however, that this imbalance is not solely due to problems linked to the quality of education/training. The image of certain occupations, the level of remuneration, the arduousness of work and the lack of opportunities for professional advancement contribute largely to the difficulties encountered by some sectors in recruiting personnel.

This obviously is no reason for education/training systems not to do their utmost to encourage better matching of education/training to the requirements of the labour market.

The Member States, aware of this problem, are proposing a wide-ranging series of measures together with the social partners, consisting of modernising and adapting the content of education/training programmes:

- **ongoing review of education and training programmes** (Germany, Austria, for university curricula; Sweden for upper secondary);
- **increased emphasis on practical elements in vocational training establishments** (Austria, Greece, Portugal, Sweden);

- **in-service training organised throughout the training period and particularly during the final year of study, to familiarise young people with the world of work** (Belgium, Greece, Italy);
- **strengthening of sandwich training** (Belgium);
- **measures enabling teachers and trainers to acquire an understanding of the situation in the business sector** (Belgium).

In Germany, the "school-business-workplace initiative" launched by the Federal Government, the Länder and the social partners is intended to promote better cooperation between schools and businesses.

In Spain, the development of social guarantee programmes is intended to provide practical training for young people who did not complete their compulsory education and give them practical skills enabling them to integrate into the labour market. Modules for practical training in businesses have been extended and will be generally available by 2002.

In Finland, the aim is to include a period of practical training in all basic vocational training courses. During 1999, 61 000 people registered for training linked to the labour market, aimed at a vocational qualification or additional vocational training.

In France, the aim is to reinforce expertise on the relationship between training and employment and cooperation with the social partners.

In Greece, the reform of education and vocational training is aimed particularly at taking more account of labour market requirements. Work experience for university and technical college students should be extended to cover all schools.

Luxembourg has established frames of reference for training in relation to occupational tasks, and analyses vocational training courses, particularly highly technical ones, at regular intervals with a view to adapting them to the requirements of businesses.

Portugal is trying to increase employers' involvement in the education/training process.

II.5.2 Developing and modernising apprenticeship training systems

Apprenticeship has long appeared to be a means of training reserved for young people without the ability to pursue long-term studies and seeking a rapid way into a job, or for young people whose families did not have the financial means to guarantee their studies.

The image of apprenticeships has changed greatly. Their scope is no longer limited to low-skill occupations, but now covers occupations and professions requiring a high level of skills.

Some universities offer programmes of training through apprenticeships and many post-secondary training courses ally theoretical and workplace training.

The system of dual training implemented in a number of Member States appears to work well. Germany, where two thirds of young people enter the dual vocational training system, has decided to radically overhaul and develop it by ensuring sufficient places in high-quality training for young people, particularly in growth and innovation sectors.

Austria is developing the system of apprenticeships in new occupations to meet the requirements of the labour market, and gives financial incentives both to pupils and to businesses taking them on. Belgium has adopted a project to improve the quality of apprenticeships and extended their scope.

In Denmark, an action plan aims to provide young people with sufficient places in high-quality apprenticeships to meet the requirements for skilled labour in various sectors. France is developing apprenticeship training courses for young women.

Greece is increasing the number of apprenticeship schools, which will have a total of 10 000 pupils in the 2000/2001 school year. Ireland has practically doubled the number of young people in apprenticeships over the last five years and is working to improve the quality of this type of training.

Italy has begun an operation to develop apprenticeships, which will shortly become the main route to workplace qualifications for young people. Portugal aims to double within five years the number of young people in apprenticeship training. The United Kingdom is developing apprenticeship training, including at higher education level.

II.5.3 Developing knowledge and skills in the field of new technologies

All the Member States have adopted measures to master and use the new information and communication technologies in education/training systems, in implementation of Guideline 8.

The information and communication technologies are an effective tool for acquiring skills, maintaining them at a high level or improving them and enabling individuals to retain and enhance their employability.

In addition, the European Union is endeavouring to build an information society, and maintaining social cohesion requires the whole European population to master the new technologies as quickly as possible.

In 1999, Germany launched an action programme entitled "Innovations and jobs in the information society of the 21st century", aimed at speeding up the use and dissemination of the new media in all sectors of education and improving access to the new technologies, particularly the Internet, for women. By 2001, every education establishment will be equipped with computers offering multimedia facilities and Internet access.

Austria has taken measures to raise the level of education in information technologies in schools and create education establishments specialising in these technologies; all schools should be connected to the Internet in 2002.

Belgium is implementing an action plan, "A PC for everyone", with the aim of providing all schools with computer tools. In Flanders, the integration of technological components into education will be reinforced by the use of information and communication technologies for educational purposes at all levels and in all sectors of education.

In Denmark, information technologies have become a compulsory subject in all vocational training programmes. An action plan for information and communication technologies has been drawn up for the period 1998-2003 to promote the use of information and communication technologies at all levels of the education system. 93% of secondary school classes use computers and 85% are connected to the Internet. All classes should be connected in 2002.

In Spain, there are plans to make intensive use of new technologies in education and training in order to prevent exclusion or marginalisation from the information society and obtain higher skill levels in order to gain access to new jobs.

Sweden has launched inservice training for teachers in the field of ICT.

In Finland, 80–90% of general education establishments, 90–95% of higher secondary education establishments and all vocational education establishments have been linked to the Internet. University-level training in the information technologies sector is well-developed, and reconversion training is offered to those wishing to reorient their career towards the new technologies sector.

France has speeded up the general adoption of the use of information technologies in school education.

All general and technological *lycées*, 50% of vocational *lycées*, 60% of secondary schools and 15% of primary schools already have access to the Internet. These efforts will continue until all education and training establishments, at all levels, are connected to the Internet.

Greece has launched a range of measures to ensure that the education system can provide the knowledge and skills needed by the information society. In 1999, 441 schools were connected to the Internet; this figure should reach 1 000 this year. In Ireland, all pupils will have access to the new information and communication technologies. All schools are linked to the Internet, with the aim in the future being to link each class.

In Italy, a programme has been set up to develop the new technologies in education. 62% of schools are connected to the Internet. There are significant financial incentives for all secondary pupils to buy a personal computer (unsecured interest-free loans).

In Luxembourg, an introduction programme to the new technologies was introduced in the three years of lower secondary technical education. In the Netherlands, all schools will be connected to the Internet by 2001, and education will be able to make greater use of information and communication technologies. In Portugal and the United Kingdom, all schools will be connected to the Internet in 2002.

II.6 Encouraging the development of self-employment

Guideline 11 encourages "*development of self-employment by examining, with the aim of reducing, any obstacles which may exist, especially those within tax and social security regimes, to moving to self-employment and the setting up of small businesses, promoting training for entrepreneurship and targeted support services for entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs*".

Several Member States have thus taken measures to ensure that school and university curricula cover business start-ups. Self-employment has great potential, particularly for university graduates in the scientific sector, but also for young people with few qualifications, for whom the creation of micro-businesses often provides a real opportunity for social integration.

Belgium has launched support and training initiatives to stimulate entrepreneurship via the "new entrepreneur" project in Flanders, based on an individual plan, and the CREA start-up system in Wallonia.

In Germany, a pilot programme covering nine Länder is aimed at giving young people the aptitude to establish self-employment, and the "Exist" programme supports those wishing to start new businesses on the basis of university or research establishments.

Some Austrian universities have established chairs for business creation, and practical training in vocational schools will focus more on entrepreneurship.

In Greece, under the Community's ADAPT initiative, a series of measures encourages entrepreneurship, particularly among young people. In Finland, the school system will examine ways of encouraging more favourable attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurship aspect will be reinforced in curricula and in basic and ongoing teacher training.

France is developing the promotion of entrepreneurship in higher scientific education. In Italy, a programme has been implemented aimed at disseminating the enterprise culture in schools. In the Netherlands, students will have to learn how businesses operate. In the United Kingdom, raising awareness of enterprise culture is aimed at students, but also at young people in disadvantaged areas.

II.7 Encouraging in-house training and adaptability of workers

Guidelines 15 and 17 come under the "adaptability" pillar and are aimed at promoting and improving training in businesses.

II.7.1 Modernising work organisation

The ageing population, the globalisation of the economy and the accelerating pace of technological progress are the key factors in the growing need for more ongoing training, of which in-house training is the main component.

In Europe in 1993, nearly one third of employees followed training courses. This average conceals wide disparities between countries and sectors. In general, the lack of comparative data and common indicators makes it difficult to evaluate the provision of vocational and in-house training, as well as the impact of steps to improve workers' participation in training measures.

To develop ongoing in-house training, the support of the social partners, and particularly employers, is essential. Concerted action by the social partners is necessary for improving workers' skills in order to increase their productivity and adaptability in the labour market.

Guideline 15 calls on the social partners *“to agree and implement a process in order to modernise the organisation of work, including flexible working arrangements, with the aim of making undertakings productive and competitive and achieving the required balance between flexibility and security. Subjects to be covered may, for example, include training and re-training, the introduction of new technologies, new forms of work and working time issues such as the expression of working time as an annual figure, the reduction of working hours, the reduction of overtime, the development of part-time working, and access to training and career breaks”*.

In the majority of Member States, the national authorities and the social partners have established broad partnerships based mainly on promoting ongoing training, with a view to extending the supply of training or targeting it more closely in order to cover the shortages of skilled labour. In some Member States, the social partners work increasingly with local and regional authorities or other operators at that level, who are taking on greater responsibilities for training. However, despite clear examples provided in the NAPs, the overall picture for training offered through partnership agreements remains incomplete.

In Belgium, in the Wallonia region, a pilot "job rotation" experiment was a success and will be extended to cover the whole region. In Denmark, a job rotation plan is aimed at improving adaptability within businesses. The Danish leave system enables employees to take part in training measures and thus improve their qualifications and skills.

In Greece, adapting businesses and employees to the new production and work organisation environment is a priority for employment policy. The employment agency (OAED) is organising in-house training programmes, particularly in SMEs, to promote adaptation to new technologies and working methods.

In France, negotiations between the social partners are under way covering vocational training and investment by businesses in human resources. In Finland, the government and the social partners intend to develop work organisation. A system to encourage "spontaneous" vocational training for adults was due to come into operation in August 2000.

In the United Kingdom, the social partners again stress the need for a balance between flexibility and safety. Measures have been taken by the government and the social partners to promote training at work through initiatives such as the Union Learning Fund and the Partnership Fund.

II.7.2 Eliminating barriers to in-house training

Guideline 17 asks the Member States to *"re-examine and, where appropriate, remove the obstacles, in particular tax obstacles, to investment in human resources and possibly provide for tax or other incentives for the development of in-house training; they will also examine new regulations and review the existing regulatory framework to make sure they will contribute to reducing barriers to employment and helping the labour market adapt to structural change in the economy"*.

Progress here is less marked than for the preceding guideline. Few Member States have introduced new tax deductions or new financial assistance for training. A number of countries are interested in individual training accounts, developed in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

In Belgium, in Wallonia, skill centres encourage in-house training. In addition, the "training cheque" system encourages ongoing training for the self-employed and for employees in SMEs and micro-businesses (approximately 150 000 hours of training per year). In Flanders in 1999, ongoing training was given a boost through the "Vlaminvorm" (work-related reduction in property tax, which is reinvested in additional training) and incentive loans for innovatory training.

In Denmark a special fund finances up to 50% of the cost of training for participating businesses, covering 2% of workers. In Spain, disadvantaged groups such as women, elderly people and unskilled workers are priority targets for participating in internal ongoing training programmes offered by businesses.

In France, current levels of tax credits for investments in human resources are to be increased, with the most significant credits being reserved for SMEs. In addition, commitments to develop training will be reinforced in the home help, tourism, printing industries, building trades and public works sectors.

In Ireland, measures to support in-house training are planned, based on initiatives receiving public/private co-financing. In Italy, "individual training projects" have been tested at regional level. They offer "training coupons" to be used at the workplace or outside the business. 300 000 workers have taken part, in addition to the 360 000 co-financed by the ESF.

In Luxembourg, the recent framework act in favour of ongoing vocational training (Act of 22 June 1999) is a major step towards the qualitative adaptation of businesses and employees. The act introduces tax breaks for in-house training. In the Netherlands, among the various schemes for providing funds for training workers and unemployed people, the government is studying the problems associated with the tax system and the problem of special leave.

Austria has introduced legislation to make job-related training costs tax-deductible.

In the United Kingdom, training costs are fully deductible from taxable income. The government is determined to implement other initiatives to encourage businesses to invest in human resources, in particular by continuing to offer opportunities for loans to finance training expenditure through “Career Development Loans” and “Small Firms Training Loans”, and by introducing individual training accounts. The government and the social partners have adopted measures to promote training at work, such as the Union Learning Fund and the Partnership Fund.

CONCLUSIONS

◆ Scope of the information contained in the NAPs

This report has tried to highlight the main measures adopted or envisaged by the Member States in the fields of education and training (both initial and lifelong) in relation to employment policies. However, the measures announced in the NAPs form only a part of the policies implemented in the field of education and training.

In addition, some NAPs contain detailed information while others are more concise. The fact that a certain area of activity is not referred to does not mean that the Member States in question are ignoring it. However, three years after launching the Luxembourg process, it is possible to appreciate the considerable efforts made by the Member States to develop their human resources, particularly those where the population's general level of skills was lower.

◆ Difficulties of monitoring the education and training policies of the Member States

There are three main reasons for these difficulties:

- the inadequacy of available statistics. They are often incomplete, preventing relevant comparisons between the Member States and the correct measurement of efforts by each Member State to achieve the objectives under the guidelines;
- insufficient use of indicators. In the field of education and training too few indicators are used, although they exist both at Union and OECD level;
- the lack of information on following up the measures announced. Some measures announced one year, which may appear to be "good practices", disappear from the contents of the action plan the following year. It would be preferable for NAPs to describe as clearly as possible, for example using tables, how measures begun in previous years have been followed up, or to state that they have been suspended or abandoned and give the reasons.

◆ Outlook

The new dimension in matters relating to education and training recognised by the Lisbon European Council and its translation into the new guidelines for 2001 calls upon the authorities responsible for education and training to become more involved in implementing the European employment strategy. The ministers responsible for education and training should be fully involved both in defining the objectives and in implementing the measures announced by the Member States in their NAPs.

In parallel with this, the Education Council should strengthen its role at European level by making the European employment strategy a permanent area of its work and through its own initiatives.



The concerted employment strategy launched in Luxembourg in 1997, allied to stronger economic growth, has without doubt helped to improve the employment situation. However, the European economies face many challenges, and employment growth will only be sustainable if economic operators continue to become more competitive. The development of human resources, particularly through access to knowledge for all, will be an essential element not only for economic development but also for the social cohesion of the Union.