



UEAPME Vocational Training Priorities

The two principal lines of action of the Training committee are:

- respond to the initiatives of the European Commission
- act in a pro-active manner and be a « force de proposition ».

The priorities identified thanks to the contributions of the members are as follows:

1. THE PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIFELONG LEARNING TRAINING

Situation:

Apprenticeship is the first act of lifelong learning. However, despite the initiatives already taken, the world of SMEs and craft enterprises is still confronted with the same difficulties of recruitment due in particular to the lack of valorisation of apprenticeship. We therefore call on the European Commission and the Member States to pursue the efforts made since 1997 for the promotion of sandwich course or “alternating” training, in which apprenticeship has a major role.

Proposals:

- a. The support of the dissemination of the CEDEFOP glossary to increase transparency of the different forms of initial vocational training throughout the EU.
- b. The reinforcement of Craft and SMEs’ position in the financing systems for apprenticeship (in-company initial vocational training or “formation en alternance”).
- c. The promotion of quality, development and accompaniment of the training of trainers in the enterprise notably through the exchange of good practices.
- d. The improvement of mobility of apprentices in Europe through the creation of a special programme for apprentices and young people in alternating training under the umbrella of the European integrated lifelong learning programme. Thus this initiative will strengthen the participation of SMEs in mobility projects.
- e. The promotion of all SME-friendly and SME-useful initiatives to ensure mutual recognition of qualifications. A special focus will be put on the greater transparency of qualifications (promotion of tools such as Europass, EQF and ECVET) on the viability of transparency instruments in and for SMEs - especially at sectoral level - which aim to assure appropriate equivalences, between different countries as well as bridges between the different types of acquisition of qualifications. The recognition of qualifications remains, however, the competence of the individual member state. All relevant partners and institutions must be taken into account.

The European Commission should provide financial means for the translation of the content of vocational qualifications.

- f. The fostering of the validation of informal and non-formal learning as well as competences acquired in the workplace. Numerous entrepreneurs and employees do not possess any official qualifications but do have many skills and competences acquired on the job. It cannot be the task of an individual SME to recognize and validate informal learning, therefore the role of Chambers and Skilled Craft Associations in providing external certification should be strengthened. Any body which is assigned these tasks must consult and involve representatives of SMEs.
- g. The establishment of equal value between education and vocational training and general education and training through among others the use of level 6, 7 and 8 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- h. The reinforcement of the cooperation between the world of education and the economic world through the necessary cooperation between universities and Craft and SMEs.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Situation:

The development of the teaching of entrepreneurship is of utmost importance, not only because we need future entrepreneurs to create and takeover enterprises, but because SMEs need workers with a spirit of initiative.

Proposal:

Entrepreneurship and the spirit of initiative must be integrated into all programmes of education and training from the youngest age. This subject should also be integrated in school curricula, especially with a focus on SMEs (start-ups, entrepreneurship).

3. GUIDANCE

Situation:

Individuals and enterprises are constantly confronted with personal and professional challenges which oblige the world of work to be pro-active and adapt permanently.

Proposals:

- a. Occupational guidance must allow each person to find the ways and means of training pathways and contact with enterprises adapted to his/her individual capacities in relation to the needs of the economic world.
- b. Craft Chambers and associations must therefore be strengthened in their function of providing orientation and guidance. Any body which is assigned this task must involve and consult representatives of SMEs.

- c. The EU should provide financial means facilitating SME-relevant guidance structures able to better take into account the size and employment potential of SMEs and craft enterprises (e.g. “human resource developers for SMEs”).

4. **THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF CRAFT ENTERPRISES AND SMEs**

Situation:

SMEs and craft enterprises must adapt to competition and evolution of professions. In order to develop every enterprise needs that each individual, whatever his/her qualification, can regularly be trained so that they can respond to the needs of the economy.

Given the age pyramid in all the countries of the EU, the validation of acquired competences and guidance and lifelong learning must be priorities for all ages throughout professional life. Special focus should be put on disadvantaged groups to keep up their employability.

Proposals:

Continuous training must be permanent. The European Union must give the necessary impulse so that every country integrates this necessity in its policies and implements adequate framework conditions for SMEs in order to enhance their participation in lifelong learning, (e.g. promoting appropriate incentives for individuals and for enterprises, etc.).

SMEs should be able to determine according to their economic situation their own needs for further training. Therefore, an appropriate SME-support structure should be developed for fostering the culture of “a learning business”, the human resource management and the development of individualised pathways.

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The implementation of these proposals by UEAPME and its members demands greater networking so that good practices and innovation in initial and continuous training can be shared and transferred.

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