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Commission's Action Plan for skills and mobility

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Executive Summary.....	5
1. The Policy Context.....	6
2. The Challenges	7
A. Inadequate occupational mobility.....	7
B. Low geographic mobility	9
C. Fragmentation of information and lack of transparency of job opportunities	11
3. Objectives and Action	11
3.1. Expanding occupational mobility and skills development.....	12
3.1.1. Ensure that education and training systems become more responsive to the labour market reflecting an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society.....	12
3.1.2. Introduce and consolidate effective competence development strategies for workers	13
3.1.3. Lower the barriers to the recognition of learning wherever acquired and promote the transparency and transferability of qualifications across Europe.....	15
3.1.4. Increase efforts in less advanced Member States and regions	15
3.2. Facilitating geographic mobility.....	15
3.2.1. Remove remaining administrative and legal barriers.....	15
3.2.2. Develop language and cross-cultural skills	17
3.2.3. Promote recognition of qualifications through encouraging increased transparency in education and training systems.....	18
3.2.4. Develop an EU-wide immigration policy.....	18
3.3. Improving information and transparency of job opportunities	19
4. Monitoring and Follow up.....	20
5. Conclusions	20
Annex I	21
Overview of actions, responsible bodies and deadlines for implementation	21
Statistical Annex.....	22
1) Levels of occupational mobility and labour turnover	22
2) Impact of educational levels on employment and unemployment.....	22
3) Employment growth in high education sectors	23
4) Educational attainment levels.....	24
6) Basic skills (literacy and numeracy)	25
7) Participation of adult workers in training.....	27

8) Shortages in ICT occupations and sectors.....	28
9) Demographic developments: change of working age population and composition by age groups	28
10) Levels of geographical mobility.....	29
12) High employment regions and skills needs.....	31
14) Migration.....	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Action Plan on Skills and Mobility is the culmination of the process launched in February 2001 by the Commission's Communication on the New European Labour Markets¹, the conclusions of the Stockholm European Council of March 2001, and the work of the High Level Task Force on Skills and Mobility, which submitted its report to the Commission in December 2001. The Action Plan builds on the conclusions of the Task Force in order to create a more favourable environment for more open and easily accessible European labour markets by 2005. It also draws on existing initiatives, notably the Communication on 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a reality'. In so doing, this action plan puts forward a coherent political vision to promote human resources in the Union in accordance with the Lisbon goals, primarily create opportunities for citizens to move around the Union for educational or professional purposes, and make it easier for them to take advantage of the benefits of European integration, including the European Single Market.

Achieving the Lisbon objectives of more and better jobs, greater social cohesion and a dynamic knowledge-based economy requires a skilled and adaptable labour force. More mobility on the labour market, be it mobility between jobs or between Member States, is integral to this ambition, and improving skills levels and removing barriers to mobility are essential in this context. The actions to be undertaken will need to be co-ordinated and consistent with the process established for the European Employment Strategy. The actions related to education and training will be taken forward in the context of the follow-up to the above Lifelong Learning Communication and to the Report on the objectives of education and training systems. In view of enlargement, candidate countries should be invited to adopt the goals of the action plan to the largest extent possible. Regardless of the fact that the labour force mobility from candidate countries into the EU after accession will be subject to a flexible system of transitional periods, the new Member States share the challenge of promoting a better skilled and adaptable labour force.

Three fundamental challenges are highlighted in the Action Plan to promote the objective of European labour markets being made more open and accessible. Firstly, there is the challenge of inadequate occupational mobility, showing up the need to adapt education and training systems more effectively to the labour market, to boost lifelong learning and skills acquisition (particularly skills in information and communication technologies - ICT), and to improve systems to recognise qualifications and competences. Secondly, low levels of geographic mobility within and between Member States suggest that the benefits of the internal market are not yet fully explored, for example in terms of dealing with skills bottlenecks or labour market imbalances. Many obstacles to mobility still exist, including deficiencies in language skills, family circumstances, as well as in relation to taxes, pensions, social security and related issues. Furthermore, a declining EU workforce due to demographic changes suggests that immigration of third country nationals would also help satisfy some of the skill needs. Finally, deficiencies in access to and the quality of information on mobility and individual sectors deter many people from considering a job move or particular career choice.

The objectives and action set out in the Action Plan are designed to address these challenges. Firstly, they aim to expand occupational mobility and skills development, by ensuring that education and training systems become more responsive to the labour market, competence development strategies for workers are drawn up, learning is recognised wherever it is acquired and qualifications are more easily transferable, and by more human resource

¹ COM(2001)116 final

investment in less advanced regions. In second place, facilitating geographic mobility calls for the removal of administrative and legal barriers where they still exist (for example through a universal health card), the development of language and cross-cultural skills, promoting the cross-border recognition of qualifications, and an EU-wide immigration policy. Finally, improving information provision means setting up a One-Stop mobility information site, improving the effectiveness of the EURES¹ jobs vacancy system, and launching a mobility information campaign.

Implementing the various actions needed to achieve the objectives will require responsibility and commitment from a range of actors; Member States, the Commission, other EU institutions, social partners and others. Where appropriate a series of benchmarks and targets are laid out in order to monitor progress towards the goals outlined, and the Commission will assess on an annual basis the implementation of the Action Plan on the occasion of the European Council meetings in springtime; this approach is essential if real tangible progress is to be achieved in supporting the overall Lisbon objectives.

1. THE POLICY CONTEXT

Fostering growth in the European economy calls for better matching between the skills demanded in growth sectors and regions and those available in the workforce. A fundamental aim of the European Union is indeed to create the opportunities which allow the individuals to take free and responsible decisions for their own life, including to move in an other Member State. This may contribute to reducing sectorial and geographical imbalances and hence creates the conditions for a better use of the resources available.

This requires more mobility of capital and of labour, in pursuit of the twin objectives of a more successful and dynamic European economy and a balanced geographical and social distribution of the rewards of faster economic growth. But lowering individual and social costs of mobility will necessitate both the strengthening of public goods supply and further efforts from social partners in the areas of basic education, promotion of higher skills and retraining of the workforce

It requires also enhanced investment opportunities in depressed and remote areas in order to create jobs and reduce unemployment rate in such a way that other regions enjoying better labour conditions do not have to cope with excessive immigration, population pressures, congestion and environmental pollution.

It is the Commission's responsibility to ensure that the freedom of movement of workers between Member States, as enshrined in the Treaties, is guaranteed and operates in reality. Action to promote skills development to combat skills shortages and bottlenecks, which act as a brake on the EU's economy, is an integral part of occupational mobility.

The achievement of a dynamic knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, as announced at the Lisbon European Council, will depend on a labour force which has the necessary skills as well as the capacity to adapt and acquire new knowledge throughout their working life. Strategies for lifelong learning and mobility are essential to achieve full employment under the European Employment Strategy.

More generally, such strategies are needed not only to promote active citizenship and social inclusion, and reduce inequality, but also to ensure the development of the Single Market and the successful integration of the European economy under the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The enlargement of the EU will provide a wider platform for these developments for the benefit of an even greater number of EU citizens in the years to come.

To assist in achieving these aims, the Commission set up a High level Task Force on Skills and Mobility as signalled in its Communication on the New European Labour Markets (COM (2001)116), and as endorsed by the Stockholm European Council. The Task Force's role was to identify the main drivers and characteristics of the European labour markets, examine the barriers to occupational and geographic mobility and develop a set of recommendations. The Task Force was set up by the Commission in June 2001 and submitted its report to the Commission on 14 December 2001.

The present document builds on the work of the Task Force by setting out an ambitious programme of action to develop European labour markets, open to all with access for all. It complements several existing initiatives designed to contribute to the mobility of citizens, in particular the Recommendation of the Council and the European Parliament on mobility², and

the associated Action Plan, to which Member States have agreed³. While these initiatives address the legal, administrative and linguistic barriers to mobility, faced by students, persons undergoing training, teachers and trainers, the present Action Plan focuses on removing the obstacles to labour market mobility. It also complements the Commission's Communication on 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality'⁴, which establishes lifelong learning as the framework for education and training policies, and which proposes priority areas for action in the field of lifelong learning. Several of the proposals in the Communication are also developed in this Action Plan, with more specific regard to European labour markets, for example in relation to recognition of qualifications. The Action Plan also complements the Report on Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems endorsed by the Stockholm European Council in March 2001. It is consistent with the Commission's Communication "A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area"⁵, of 20 June 2001, and also builds on the Commission's Communication on the impact of the e-Economy on European enterprises⁶ and the activities launched in September 2001 in co-operation with Member States to monitor the demand and the progress of actions aimed at improving the availability of ICT and e-business skills⁷ in Europe.

The presentation of this Action Plan must also be seen in conjunction with the Commission's recent report on "Increasing labour force participation and promoting active ageing"⁸ and the Commission's invitation to the social partners for a dialogue on how to anticipate and manage the social effects of corporate restructuring, including those of employability and adaptability⁹. In its Communication to the European Council in Barcelona¹⁰, the Commission has underlined that all these elements are essential components needed to drive the Lisbon strategy forward.

2. THE CHALLENGES

Ensuring that European labour markets are open to all, with access to all will mean tackling and overcoming three main challenges (see also Annex II for statistical data).

A. Inadequate occupational mobility.

The EU is traditionally characterised by low levels of occupational mobility – the movement of workers between jobs or sectors, whether within or between Member States – and labour turnover. Yet in an increasingly knowledge-based, service-sector economy in the EU, occupational mobility is essential for adapting to structural change, and for driving such change in a competitive world, thereby contributing to a better functioning of labour markets and higher productivity, employment, growth and competitiveness. Skills mismatches are often a major cause of imbalances in the supply and demand for labour across sectors and regions, and the rapidly changing world of work make increasing demands on people to equip themselves with the capacity to adapt to new ways of working, technologies, sectors and working environments.

All citizens must have a decent level of initial education, and the opportunity to update knowledge and acquire new skills throughout their working lives and beyond. This should be a matter of shared responsibility between Government, public authorities, employers, social partners and individual citizens. In many instances, changing jobs can mean more than moving from one enterprise to another or from one industry to another; it can also mean taking up a different career and occupation. It is therefore essential to ensure that the mix of learning opportunities is responsive to the need to ensure both employability and adaptability of workers throughout their working life, thereby enhancing their capacities for occupational mobility (Annex II, pt.2).

Education and training systems still, however, need to adapt to the needs of the labour market and to an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society; such adaptation is essentially the responsibility of individual Member States. Over the last five years, employment growth in so-called high education sectors (i.e. sectors with at least 40 % of their workforce having attained higher education level) was three times higher than the average employment growth across all sectors (Annex II, pt.3). However, educational attainment levels are still low in the Union as a whole. While the average share of the population having attained at least upper secondary education amongst 25-64 year olds across the EU was over 60% in 2000, it varied in different Member States from 78% to less than 20% (Annex II, pt.4). At a time when fewer young people will be coming on to the labour market, and in order to face up to the challenges and opportunities of the knowledge society, it is crucial that a maximum number should be educated to the highest degree possible. Continuing to achieve good levels of education is particularly important for women, who may temporarily withdraw from the labour force for child bearing and family rearing, and for whom a good level of education is essential for them to rejoin the labour market.

The adaptability and employability of workers over their working life therefore depends on high quality initial education and training and on a reduction of the drop-out rate from education. There is still a worryingly high share of the population leaving school without formal qualifications, the average rate of this 'early school leaving' across in the EU being 18.5% in 2000, ranging in different Member States from 8% to more than 40% (Annex II, pt.5). Accordingly, from an early age, in addition to the foundation skills of numeracy and literacy (Annex II, pt.6), all citizens should have the chance to acquire new key competences. Innovation in school curricula is therefore needed to prepare young people for the demands of increasingly dynamic labour markets, formal education and training systems must become more open and flexible, and formal and non-formal sectors of provision must become better integrated so that they become more responsive to the needs of the learner and the labour market. The Commission's White Paper 'A new impetus for European Youth'¹¹ underlines that education and training whether at school, university or vocational training institutions require innovation to ensure the quality and effectiveness of education systems and stresses the complementary character of formal and non-formal learning.

More importance has to be attached to developing a European dimension in education and training systems, including through mobility, in order to respond to the labour market demand for workers with European outlook and experience, and to enhance career opportunities for such workers.

On the labour market itself, adult workers should be given more opportunities to improve their skills, so that the generally low levels of participation of adult workers in training can be raised significantly, particularly for those with low to medium levels of educational attainment (of whom 6,1% took part in education or training in 2000 across the EU, compared to a 15,4% participation rate for those with high educational levels) (Annex II, pt.7). Technological and industrial changes mean that new types of skills profiles have to be developed to enable enterprises to provide relevant training to their employees, with account being taken of the needs and circumstances of SMEs. The development of ICT and eBusiness skills profiles in particular is needed to help ease shortages in ICT occupations and sectors¹² (Annex II, pt.8).

Beyond general measures to raise educational attainment levels, special interventions may be needed to promote the skills and mobility of those who are at a disadvantage in the labour market. The participation of women in training has improved, but there is a need to adapt training provision to the circumstances of many women (often coping with part-time work,

child care and family responsibilities). By the same token the skills gap of those who suffer from forms of exclusion or disadvantage needs to be addressed, bearing in mind that technological changes may exclude many citizens – particularly low skilled workers, unemployed people and older people, who may not have the chance to acquire the necessary skills. Demographic developments in the Union must also be taken into account in workforce development strategies, given the bleak prospect that in the near future there will be fewer young workers in the labour force (who tend on the whole to be more skilled and mobile), and a greater proportion of older workers (who tend to be less mobile and less skilled) (Annex II, pt.9). The ageing of the population requires a life-cycle approach to education and training to ensure that future generations of older people are able to upgrade to the skills needed, adapt to changes in the business and work environment and be equipped to take advantage of more flexible career paths.

Occupational mobility and workforce upskilling can also be enhanced by better access for workers and employers to information, guidance and counselling services. Such services to date have tended to be disparate within and across education, training and employment sectors in most countries, and largely absent from the workplace itself.

Problems associated with the recognition of non-formal or informal learning¹³ by employers and educational institutions can be a significant barrier to occupational mobility, whether within or between Member States. For older workers in particular, acceptance of the value of experience and on-the-job training is often more important than formal qualifications. But also for young people the acceptance of non-formal learning acquired in, for example, civil society and voluntary activities, plays a crucial role and has to be improved. For small and medium sized enterprises, which often encounter difficulties in making finance or time available for training, the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning can bring mutual benefit to employees and the enterprise.

Low-skilled workers in Europe have a low propensity for occupational mobility and the proportion of low-skilled workers tends to be highest in Member States and regions with low employment rates and high unemployment, i.e. those which are lagging behind. Expanding opportunities for occupational mobility therefore requires the greatest efforts to raise education levels and improve skills and competences in those Member States and regions

B. Low geographic mobility

Geographic mobility in the EU is also relatively low, particularly between Member States, but also within Member States (Annex II, pt.10). This is partly due to the existence of legal and administrative barriers, and partly to economic, social and cultural constraints and habits. Although patterns of geographic labour mobility have changed over the years (with increasing trends towards temporary migration, long distance commuting, and cross-border commuting) (Annex II, pt.11), the overall rate of labour mobility is still subdued. Although geographic mobility is not a goal in itself, it may offer people better career prospects or professional alternatives.

Improving the potential for geographic mobility is linked to the existence of dual labour markets in Europe, with regions of high unemployment existing side-by-side with regions suffering from skill shortages (Annex II, pt.12), and occupational mobility is often a pre-requisite for geographic mobility. Efforts to support geographic mobility must thus be combined with measures for occupational mobility in order to provide openings for workers simultaneously to move between sectors and regions. Such measures must, however, be developed in the context of promoting sustainable growth and development in the less

advantaged regions. Therefore encouraging geographic mobility does not contradict the need for creating new employment opportunities and improving the quality of life, in particular in the least advantaged regions. This will be even more crucial for the enlarged EU.

The European economy is increasingly based on services. Improving the conditions for the free movement of services across national borders and ensuring freedom of establishment should release the dynamism inherent in the internal market and thus enhance competitiveness, growth and employment creation. Removing existing barriers in services should also enhance the mobility of workers, be it as employed or self-employed. Such barriers include, for example, rules which preclude a company from enabling all its staff to move across borders to provide a service, restrictions on the setting up of a company in another Member State, or restrictions on the use of temporary workers and of employment agencies. Examples are also to be found in some aspects of lack of clarity, certainty and flexibility in the regime for the recognition of qualifications for the regulated professions which has developed piecemeal over some 25 years. Resulting problems have been identified in terms of some potential for confusion from overlapping texts, specific practical difficulties in managing the system and keeping it up-to-date and concerns of citizens over sometimes unnecessarily uncertain, complex or non-transparent processes.

Moving to a job in another region or country involves weighing the costs against the economic benefits to be gained, including a judgement about existing levels of job security and social protection compared with those pertaining elsewhere. Within Member States, in spite of persistent regional disparities, there is often only little geographic labour mobility to regions with lower unemployment and higher income. Empirical research suggests that people migrate only if they expect an increase in purchasing power, taking into account the costs of moving, local prices, taxation, social transfers, etc. Regional wage differentiation, the design of the tax-benefit system and the functioning of the housing market therefore strongly affect the propensity to move. In many Member States, wage agreements need to take better account of regional differences in productivity and in labour market conditions. Reforms of tax-benefit systems may be necessary to help people make up their minds to move to a location where they can get a job, focusing on improving incentives which make work pay while ensuring that the social objectives of welfare systems are not undermined. A crucial element affecting the housing market is the extent to which there are low transaction costs, such as taxes and fees for real estate agents, notaries and land registration.

The costs of moving are often more significant for a move to another country, the introduction of the Euro making it easier to assess the comparative advantage of moving to another Member State within the eurozone, such as comparing wage differentials and the fiscal burden on labour (e.g. social security contributions and income tax). Moving to another country, even to another EU Member State, also means overcoming a range of legal and administrative barriers, largely but not wholly, related to the tax and social security systems.

This is usually complicated by the need to have familiarity with the local language and culture. Overall foreign languages are not sufficiently taught or learned in schools, and a considerable commitment to investment in this field is called for (Annex II, pt.13). Progress in foreign language learning would remove one of the main cultural and psychological barriers to mobility, and also provide the basis for acquiring the inter-cultural skills for understanding what is involved in moving to another country to live and work. In this respect the value of educational mobility cannot be underestimated, not least because of the linguistic and intercultural skills that mobile students acquire. Evidence indicates that students who have been internationally mobile are more likely later in life to consider, seek or take up job opportunities in a Member State other than their own.

In addition, with the spread of the dual-income household, and in order not to inhibit the scope for geographic mobility, more attention has to be given to the need for both people to find suitable employment opportunities in the same geographic area. There are also further important social issues related to geographic mobility. Being a fully integrated member within the host society requires, among other things, access to affordable housing and health and social services. Access to these basic services and related costs can vary considerably between different regions of the EU, which can play a significant role in people's willingness to move.

While the lack of recognition of non-formal and informal learning can pose problems for those changing jobs, either within or across Member States, the lack of recognition of formal educational and vocational qualifications across Member States, and the lack of transparency of education and training systems, are major barriers to seeking work in another country. This applies not only to the person looking for work, but creates difficulties for family members who may have to switch between different educational systems in a relatively short period of time.

Migration of EU nationals between Member States makes up only part of the total migratory patterns affecting the EU (Annex II, pt.14). Immigration of third country nationals into the EU, including from the candidate countries, is now the only source of population growth in several Member States, and therefore a significant means of adding to their labour force. Some of this migration will become "internalised" once the provisions for freedom of movement will fully apply to the candidate countries. However, the existence of a common immigration policy would also help geographic mobility into and throughout the Union by removing some of the obstacles to the freedom of movement for third country nationals.

C. Fragmentation of information and lack of transparency of job opportunities

In order to be able to make informed choices, those wishing to change jobs or sectors, or move to another country need, first and foremost, adequate and appropriate information on employment conditions, living conditions and information about the availability of jobs and relating training. While there is much information collected by both private and public bodies, there is considerable fragmentation in the access to such information. A first priority is to bring together the information into an easily accessible format and promote networking among the relevant organisations and agencies at local, regional, national and European levels, and ensure that people are aware of its existence through adequate publicity and promotion.

On another level, some occupations – such as those in the engineering sector and requiring scientific knowledge - often suffer from being relatively less attractive for many young people, in particular girls, which makes them reluctant to take advantage of the career opportunities available in these fields. Providing attractive information about such jobs and the opportunities they offer, and relating school curricula and learning experiences to this type of work, would help in the removal of a number of bottlenecks in the labour market, and consequently in the economic development of the sectors concerned which is being frustrated by the shortage of skilled workers in these fields.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTION

In response to these challenges the Commission considers that urgent action is needed under the following objectives:

3.1. Expanding occupational mobility and skills development

3.1.1. Ensure that education and training systems become more responsive to the labour market reflecting an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society¹⁴

1) As a basis for long-term employability and further learning, all citizens should be able to have free access to the acquisition of key skills, including literacy and numeracy but also other key skills, such as maths, science and technology, foreign languages, "learning to learn" skills (i.e. the ability and the desire to continuously acquire and update knowledge and competences), cultural awareness, social/personal skills, entrepreneurship, and technological culture (including ICT skills, to be validated, for example, through tools such as the European Computer Driving Licence, and the use of ICT and e-learning to assist a wider range of learning).

Member States should strive for a genuine right of free access for all citizens to the acquisition of key skills, regardless of age¹⁵. The Commission, in close co-operation with the Member States, will examine approaches at national level to ensure the quality of ICT based and e-learning, in particular learning software, with a view to developing seals of quality at European level in the interests of consumer protection¹⁶.

2) In order to combat existing and prospective skills deficits in industry, manufacturing and ICT-related sectors, young people's interest and achievements in mathematics, science and technology should be better stimulated and, consequently, numbers taking up these subjects increased¹⁷, especially amongst girls and young women. The teaching profession in these fields should be made more attractive in order to improve the quality and quantity of recruitment. Learning facilitators, especially careers information and guidance workers, should receive training to raise their awareness of, and ability to promote as appropriate, study, research and careers related to science, engineering and ICTs, especially amongst girls and young women. More young people qualified in these areas should be attracted and recruited into related careers.

The Commission will work with the Member States to define appropriate indicators and targets for improvement in these fields, the timetable for achieving them and to monitor progress towards them.

Social partners, in co-operation with education authorities and the scientific community, are invited to introduce suitable awareness-raising measures aimed at students and in particular encourage more girls and women to take up relevant job opportunities. Member States and social partners should co-operate to bring about improvements in the quality of information about careers in these fields made available by public and private careers information and guidance providers.

3) The share of the population having attained at least upper secondary levels of educational attainment should be raised in order to reduce the risk of unemployment, which disproportionately affects less qualified workers more than better qualified ones. Currently the three best performing countries average a 77% rate of attainment. The share of the population leaving school without formal qualifications must also be reduced¹⁸ in order to improve the employability and adaptability of a greater number of workers on the labour market.

The Commission will work with the Member States to define appropriate targets for improvement in educational attainment, the timetable for achieving them and to monitor progress towards them. Member States should reduce by half (by 2010 compared with 2000) the number of 18-24 year olds with only lower secondary education or less and who are no

longer in any form of education or training¹⁹. Member States should intensify support for integrating into the education and training systems young people at a disadvantage, particularly disabled youngsters, those with learning difficulties, and those from immigrant communities or from ethnic minorities.

4) In order to make them more open and responsive to the needs of learners and the labour market, education institutions and other learning providers should develop closer links and partnerships with business, the wider labour market, information and guidance services, and with society at large, including through transnational educational and vocational mobility actions²⁰.

Member States, regional and local authorities should encourage these links and foster public-private partnerships with such measures as study/site visits, work experience, joint projects, mentoring and exchanges involving teachers and managers/employees from the world of work. The Commission will establish a network of industry/educational advisory bodies to strengthen co-operation between the world of work and the education systems as a whole. This network should be established by 2004. In implementing this initiative, full attention must be paid to the specific links between academia and industry in the research area, in order to overcome existing barriers to mobility. Member States should evaluate their policies and practices with respect to the provision of information, guidance and counselling services in order to ensure transparency and coherence of provision²¹.

3.1.2. Introduce and consolidate effective competence development strategies for workers

5) The future needs for continuing training should be identified, and the amount and quality of continuing training in enterprises or research bodies increased with a view to promoting the adaptability, employability and retention of workers in employment. Participation in continuing training should be raised, including by ensuring access for all to training throughout their working lives (particularly for low paid/low skilled workers, workers with disabilities, and workers from disadvantaged or minority groups). Greater efforts should be made for older workers to be trained, retained and recruited, building on the skills and knowledge – formal, non-formal and informal – that they have acquired during their working life, and given the opportunity to achieve information society literacy. Competence development strategies should take into account the particular situation of women, for example in relation to caring responsibilities, and make specific provision for improving their access to training. Enterprises should improve their capacity to develop as learning organisations, make the best use of ICT and e-learning solutions, maximise access to "state of the art" knowledge, and draw up competence development plans at individual and at enterprise level. Use should be made of existing information, guidance and counselling services in education, training and employment sectors to provide workplace guidance to support the competence development plans of enterprises and workers.

Member States and social partners should undertake joint initiatives²² by 2004 to retain workers in employment, focusing on access and participation of workers in company training to be monitored using comparable statistics and indicators. These should include specific targets and measures for older workers, which would indicate how the 50% employment target for such workers (aged 55 to 64) by 2010 would be achieved.

Member States and the social partners, where appropriate, should create the conditions to promote women's access to education, training and lifelong learning, with a view in particular to promoting women's access to careers in information technologies.

In the context of these initiatives the social partners at all levels are invited to implement specific workforce development strategies which include targets to increase participation in training and improvements to quality in work; these strategies should take account of the possibility of economic restructuring and promote workers' adaptability and long-term employability. The social partners are invited to agree that each employee should have an individual competence development plan, based on an assessment of his/her individual competences, and in accordance with overall competence development plans at the enterprise level²³. They are invited to take fully into account the particular needs and circumstances of SMEs. Employers are invited to assume greater responsibilities and increase their investment in human capital, with special attention to training and developing career opportunities being envisaged for low paid/low skill workers and for workers with disabilities.

In supporting these initiatives Member States should introduce incentive measures aimed both at employers, (for example tax breaks, social security rebates, rewarding best practice e.g. through a system of lifelong learning labels, and by providing for enterprises to contribute to training funds) and at individuals (for example learning accounts or vouchers); they should also promote access to local guidance networks, and ICT based learning and guidance services, to support both individual competence development plans and corporate strategies²⁴. This support would be based on the understanding that these benefits are of wider interest and benefit to society and may entail a reallocation of public funds in favour of this area.

6) European lifelong learning awards should be promoted to recognise employers – in both the public and private sectors – who introduce innovative competence development strategies.

The Commission will promote awards to particularly innovative companies or public sector organisations in the area of lifelong learning²⁵, and publish examples of best practice by employers.

7) ICT and e-business skills definitions should be developed taking account of industry needs to make such skills transparent, globally approved and available within and between Member States, to be backed up by European-wide standards and validation, accreditation and recognition schemes for such skills.

The Commission will foster the co-operation of the relevant authorities within Member States with social partners with a view to developing ICT and e-business skills definitions. It will support the development, the maintenance and the promotion of European-wide standards as well as validation, accreditation and recognition schemes by 2005. Member States should build these ICT and e-business skills standards and schemes into their systems and comply with the European-wide standards.

8) The demand for ICT and e-business skills should be better monitored, building notably on the activities of the “ICT skills monitoring group”²⁶, so that they can be better defined and prioritised and matched against industry requirements, including those of SMEs. Detailed skills profiles should be generated (e.g. along the principles used by the Career Space consortium²⁷ in the ICT sector), along with related curricula and training facilities, and e-learning promoted.

Member States should encourage public/private partnerships, both for large and small companies and the public sector, to implement the measures called for relating to ICT and e-business skills, and exchange information on progress in the e-learning Working Group and in the ICT Skills Monitoring Group. In 2002 the Commission will intensify the debate on the

e-Economy and develop an agenda for maximising the benefits of the e-Economy for European enterprises, including SMEs²⁸. A high level conference – eSkills Summit – will be organised in October 2002 in co-operation with the ICT industry.

3.1.3. Lower the barriers to the recognition of learning wherever acquired and promote the transparency and transferability of qualifications across Europe

9) A European framework of methodologies and standards should be developed for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, work experience and training provided by or on behalf of industry and other working environments, to be supported by a systematic exchange of experience in this field.

The Commission will initiate by the end of 2002 a systematic exchange of experience and good practice in the field of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. The European Forum on the Transparency of Qualifications, managed by the Commission and Cedefop²⁹, will co-ordinate this process, in close co-operation with the Member States, the social partners, non-governmental organisations, OECD, Eurydice³⁰ and the European Training Foundation³¹.

10) Instruments supporting the transparency and transferability of qualifications should be developed and strengthened to facilitate mobility within and between sectors.

Member States, in co-operation with the Commission and the social partners where appropriate, should undertake a joint commitment to implement and further develop such instruments as the European Credit Transfer System, Diploma and Certificate Supplements, Europass and the European portfolio and CV³² by 2003. The Commission will, by 2003, in co-operation with the Member States, develop a 'modular' system for the accumulation of qualifications, allowing citizens to combine education and training from different institutions and countries.

3.1.4. Increase efforts in less advanced Member States and regions

11) Particular attention should be given to greater investment needs in human capital and ICTs, in particular in Member States and regions that are lagging behind, and to ensure the efficient and productive use of such investment. This will be even more important in the new Member States.

Member States in co-operation with the social partners should aim to ensure that adequate resources are made available for investment in human resources especially in the lagging regions. Sources of support include the private sector and other stakeholders and, where duly justified, co-financing in the framework of the programming of the Structural Funds, notably the European Social Fund. . The Commission will urge Member States to pursue this objective at the time of the mid-term review of the implementation of the Structural Fund programmes in 2003. Concerning future Member States, particular attention has to be given, following an assessment of their needs, to the development of human capital in the negotiation of these programmes.

3.2. Facilitating geographic mobility

3.2.1. Remove remaining administrative and legal barriers

12) The provisions relating to free movement of workers (Regulation 1612/68) and the co-ordination of social security schemes of the Member States (Regulation 1408/71) should be

applied more rigorously, to ensure for example non-discriminatory access to employment (in the public sector in particular) as well as the calculation and export of benefits (taking into account facts and events which occurred on the territory of the Member States). Remaining problems with the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality in the field of tax and social advantages must be resolved.

Member States should intensify efforts to ensure the full application of the respective provisions. In order to alleviate the problems faced by migrant workers in public sector employment, the Commission will publish a Communication on free movement of workers in the public sector in summer 2002. The European Parliament and Council should endeavour to adopt rapidly the Commission proposal for a Directive on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States which aims to facilitate free movement and residence in the Union by simplifying administrative formalities³³.

13) Social security co-ordination should be modernised and simplified through the extension of the material and personal scope of Regulation 1408/71 and by simplifying its wording and implementation. In this respect an EU-wide health card should be introduced, aimed at transforming the relevant European paper forms into an electronic card. Card holders will be able to claim access to immediately necessary health care in a Member State other than the one where they are insured, the latter being nevertheless responsible for the cost.

The Council and the European Parliament should ensure, on the basis of the Commission's proposal and the parameters agreed by the Council, the necessary modernisation and simplification of social security provisions by 2003. The Commission will present a proposal for the introduction of an EU-wide health card early in 2003 for agreement by 2004.

14) Progress should be made in the portability of the supplementary pension rights of migrant workers.

Social partners, Member States and Community institutions should intensify efforts to ensure that portability is improved. The Commission will consult with the social partners in spring 2002 with a view to further legislative or equivalent action. The European Parliament and the Council should intensify their efforts to adopt by December 2002 the proposal on occupational pension funds which also aims at facilitating cross-border mobility within the same company. In this respect, it should also be noted that in its Communication of 19 April 2001 the Commission already concluded that national tax rules denying equal tax treatment to pension schemes operated by pension institutions established in other Member States are in breach of the EC treaty³⁴. Member States need to comply or may be taken to the Court of Justice on the basis of Article 226 of the EC treaty. The possibility for migrant workers to remain in their original pension scheme may significantly contribute to cross-border mobility. Moreover, on the basis of the Commission's Communication, the ECOFIN Council of 16 October 2001 asked COREPER to work on the elimination of double taxation of occupational pensions in cross-border situations, which will also contribute to cross-border mobility³⁵.

The advisory role of the relevant EU-committees in monitoring the implementation of these provisions and the eliminating of the remaining administrative and legal barriers should be strengthened. The Commission will examine the establishment of a mechanism to analyse and report on obstacles to geographic mobility encountered by workers.

15) Comprehensive improvements should be made to the existing Community system for recognition in the regulated professions to make it easier to manage and clearer, quicker and

more friendly for users, and thereby facilitate employment opportunities and the provision of services.

The Community institutions and Member States should undertake the wholesale consolidation of the existing regimes of professional recognition in the regulated professions with a view to a more uniform, transparent and flexible system with amendments particularly directed to ensuring clearer and more up-to-date and automatic conditions of recognition, through the adoption of proposals in 2003 and for implementation by 2005.

16) The internal market for services should be strengthened.

The Commission and the Member States should intensify their efforts to implement the strategy for an internal market for services in order to remove the existing barriers to cross-border provision of services and freedom of establishment³⁶.

17) In order to improve the opportunities for geographical mobility also within Member States, existing barriers to mobility should be studied and appropriate measures taken. Existing barriers already identified include a lack of wage differentiation, disincentives arising from tax-benefit systems, and the cost of moving (influenced by high transaction costs in the housing market).

Member States should undertake studies on the obstacles to labour mobility across regions and undertake appropriate measures, and should encourage social partners to consider how wage-mechanisms can take better into account productivity and local labour market conditions.

3.2.2. Develop language and cross-cultural skills

18) All pupils should be encouraged to learn at least two European languages in addition to their mother tongue. Workers already on the labour market should have the opportunity to improve the language skills relevant to their working life as part of lifelong learning.

Member States should provide for the early acquisition of foreign language skills in pre-primary and primary schools and for its strengthening in secondary schools and in vocational training institutions³⁷. They should introduce the teaching of the first foreign language to all pupils as early as possible, for example from age 8 at the latest. Member States should take the appropriate measures to provide by the end of compulsory education (which varies between 16 and 18) the opportunity for pupils to be competent in at least two European languages in addition to their mother tongue. By 2005 the relevant authorities in the Member State should have developed a strategy and timetable for achieving this objective, identifying the requisite language teaching capacity, and proposing the use of appropriate technologies. In doing so the language needs related to the European labour markets should be taken duly into account. Social partners should be invited to make provision for suitable language training for workers where appropriate as part of their competence development plans (see action 5). Following the European Year of Languages, the Commission will come forward with further proposals for action with a view to promoting foreign language learning.

19) All higher and further education courses should include a European dimension which gives opportunities for all students and trainees to work with students, teachers and teaching material from partner institutions in other European countries. More opportunities should be provided for students and trainees to undertake a significant part of their learning (for

example, one third) in another Member State³⁸. Mobility of the categories of people involved should be improved by the removal of obstacles of various kinds.

Member States should provide the necessary support and incentives for all universities and post secondary level learning institutions to maintain or develop connections and relations with at least one other similar institution in another Member State, building on the substantial basis already provided by the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes. In the same context they should intensify efforts to remove obstacles to mobility in this field in implementing both the Mobility Action Plan³⁹ and the Council and European Parliament Recommendation on mobility for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers⁴⁰, and exchange information on progress. As and when appropriate, existing instruments and processes, such as the ECTS credit transfer system, and the "Bologna" process, which encourages convergence within tertiary education in Europe, should be utilised and supported. Maximum benefit should also be drawn from the increasing range of technological possibilities to be mobile in a virtual manner. Member States should also introduce or develop cultural awareness activities in the school system which encourage pupils to be more inclined to search actively for opportunities to continue or pursue education or training in another EU country.

3.2.3. Promote recognition of qualifications through encouraging increased transparency in education and training systems

20) A new approach should be developed for the recognition qualifications in non-regulated professions within the EU. This would help to facilitate geographic mobility both within the Member States as well as between them. Such an approach could be based on voluntary minimum standards in education and training, thereby creating a stronger basis for transparency and trust.

The Commission and the Member States, together with the social partners, where appropriate, will jointly examine the role and character of voluntary quality standards in education and training. The development of such standards, accompanied by a peer-review approach, would increase the transparency and coherence of national education and training systems, creating a stronger basis for mutual trust and recognition of qualifications. In addition, the Commission will, in co-operation with the Member States and higher education institutions, actively support the 'Bologna process' in the field of Higher Education. Experiences from this process will be used as a basis for promoting closer co-operation within other areas, such as vocational education and training⁴¹.

21) The scope of provisions in collective agreements relating to qualifications should not be restricted to particular local, regional or national qualifications and should facilitate equal treatment of workers with equivalent qualifications from other localities, regions or Member States.

Social partners are invited to ensure the elimination of such limitations in the context of collective bargaining, and that the provisions of article 7.4 of Regulation 1612/68 are effectively implemented⁴²

3.2.4. Develop an EU-wide immigration policy

22) Changing demographic conditions call for a serious analysis of the interaction between immigration policies and employment and social policies in the Union, current demographic and employment trends suggesting a greater dependence in many Member States over the coming years on the skills and labour of third country nationals. A common immigration

policy for third country nationals should be developed which, while respecting existing bilateral and multilateral agreements and commitments, and taking into account the particular needs of developing countries, could build on the experience of successful national practices to facilitate and accelerate entry into the EU labour market of those third country workers for whom there is a demonstrated need. The policy should be based on the principle that those who have been accepted for work in the EU should enjoy rights comparable to those of EU citizens and proportionate to the length of their stay. It should, for example, ensure that third country nationals with residence permits should have the same rights to the recognition of qualifications as EU citizens⁴³. Furthermore, migrants should be offered access to appropriate services when necessary to assist with their social integration within the host society.

The Council should proceed towards a swift adoption of the proposed directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self-employed economic activities (COM(2001)386) and of the proposed directive concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents (COM(2001)127) which includes a chapter giving third-country nationals who are long term residents in one Member State the right of residence in the other Member States. They should also agree on the extension of Community provisions on social security for migrant workers to third country nationals. Agreement on the legal base for the Commission's proposals to this effect⁴⁴ should be followed up rapidly by the adoption of the proposal. Member States should ensure that migrants have access to the appropriate services to assist with their social integration within the host community. The Commission will examine the interaction between immigration and employment and social policies in the EU and report on this in 2003.

3.3. Improving information and transparency of job opportunities

23) Drawing on existing initiatives such as the Dialogue with Citizens and Business and EURES, a One-stop European Mobility Information Site should be established as part of a wider European network to provide comprehensive and easily accessible information to citizens on key aspects of jobs, mobility, learning opportunities and the transparency of qualifications⁴⁵ in Europe (including databases on jobs, learning opportunities, and researchers), and other relevant information. A more comprehensive service is required to provide information and advice specific to the individual interests and rights of professionals in regulated professions in order to support their geographic mobility.

The Commission will establish the Site in 2003, building on existing databases, and co-operate with the Member States, and where appropriate with social partners, to ensure its wider connection in a European network, including information centres on educational and vocational qualifications. Member States should guarantee the availability of relevant national databases and should make possible the inter-operability of these databases at the European level. Member States should establish a more comprehensive information service for professionals in regulated professions by 2005.

24) EURES should be modernised, re-enforced and integrated into the Member States employment services. These services should use a comparable classification of occupations, requiring that the current systems of classification should be revised in order to achieve an easier comparability of occupations across the EU.

The Commission will submit proposals for the modernisation of the EURES system in 2002 and co-operate with Member States to ensure that it is made an integral part of the national systems by 2004. The Commission will examine in co-operation with the Member States the

most appropriate means of effecting the classification of occupations with a view to enabling their comparability across the EU for job mobility purposes.

25) An EU-wide mobility information campaign should be launched targeted at employers and workers on the key dimensions, opportunities and possibilities provided by the Internal Market and the European labour markets for skills. More sectorally focused information campaigns should be launched to help update and improve the image of some occupational sectors and aim to bring more skilled women into such sectors.

The Commission and Member States should launch the information campaign on mobility in 2003. Social partners and other interested parties are invited to initiate the sectoral information campaigns.

4. MONITORING AND FOLLOW UP

The Action Plan is designed to promote the objective of the European labour markets being open and more accessible for all by 2005. To this end, the Commission will ensure that this Action Plan is reflected in the forthcoming review of the European Employment Strategy.

To ensure progress in the overall implementation of the Action Plan as well as the individual actions, a clear monitoring and follow up procedure must be established as an integral part of this Plan. Wherever possible, existing procedures and channels should be used, particularly those set up under the European Employment Strategy. The proposals which relate to the improvement of education and training systems will be taken forward notably in the context of establishing the European area of lifelong learning⁴⁶ and the follow-up to the Report on the Concrete Objectives of Education and Training Systems⁴⁷. Maximum use should be made of sources and structures of the European Statistical System to acquire the internationally comparable statistical information needed for monitoring progress towards the objectives set.

The Commission will assess on an annual basis the implementation of the Action Plan on the occasion of the European Council meetings in springtime.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Commission welcomes this opportunity to present this Action Plan on Skills and Mobility to the European Council in Barcelona, building as it does on the Communication on the New European Labour Markets, the conclusions of the European Council in Stockholm and the work of the High Level Task Force on Skills and Mobility. It urges the European Council on the one hand to confirm its analysis of the challenges facing the European Union in this field, and on the other to invite the various Council formations to adopt the relevant measures which will be presented to it in the implementation of the Action Plan.

Overview of actions, responsible bodies and deadlines for implementation

<i>Action</i>		<i>Responsible & deadlines</i>
Occupational Mobility & Skills development		
1	Acquiring key skills	Member States, Commission
2	Maths, science & technology skills + careers for scientists	Member States, Commission, social partners, scientific community - by 2006
3	Raising post-secondary education + fewer unqualified	Member States, Commission - by 2010
4	Closer links between education & industry + careers guidance	Member States, Commission, social partners - by 2004
5	Lifelong learning & continuing training	Member States, social partners - by 2004
6	EU awards	Commission
7	ICT skills definition	Member States, Commission, social partners - by 2005
8	Monitoring ICT and e-business skills	Member States, Commission, social partners - by 2002
9	Recognition of non-formal & formal learning	Member States, Commission, social partners, - by 2003
10	Transferability of qualifications	Member States, social partners - by 2003
11	Investment in less advanced regions	Member States, social partners, Commission - by 2003
Geographic mobility		
12	Free movement	Member States, European Parliament, Council, Commission - by 2002
13	Social security Health insurance card	Council, European Parliament, Commission - by 2003 & 2004
14	Supplementary pensions	Member States, social partners, Council, European Parliament, Commission - by 2002
15	Professional recognition for regulated professions	Member States, Council, European Parliament, - by 2003 & 2005
16	Internal market for services	Member States, Commission,
17	Tax-benefits and housing	Member States
18	Language skills	Member States, Commission - by 2005
19	More learning in other Member States	Member States
20	Recognition of educational qualifications	Member States, Commission, social partners, - by 2003
21	Qualifications in collective agreements	Social partners
22	Immigration policy	Council, European Parliament, Commission - by 2003
Information and Transparency		
23	One-stop mobility information site + information on qualifications	Member States, Commission, - by 2003 & 2005
24	EURES integration + classification of occupations	Member States, Commission, - by 2002 & 2004
25	Mobility information campaign	Member States, Commission, - by 2003
Monitoring and Follow-up		
Benchmarking and implementation		Commission - annual spring report

ANNEX II

STATISTICAL ANNEX

1) Levels of occupational mobility and labour turnover

Europeans generally tend not to change jobs frequently: although the respective figures have been rising since 1995 in most EU member states, on average in 2000 only 16.4% had been with their employers less than 1 year (comparable figures suggest around 30% in the USA, Source: OECD Employment Outlook 1996).

	Rate of Employees by duration of current employment 1995			Rate of Employees by duration of current employment 2000		
	less than 1 year	Between 1-2 years	more than 2 years	Less than 1 year	Between 1-2 years	More than 2 years
A	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
B	10.2%	7.6%	82.3%	13.7%	9.3%	77.0%
D	14.5%	9.6%	75.9%	14.9%	10.5%	74.6%
DK	22.7%	11.3%	66.0%	23.2%	13.3%	63.5%
E	28.3%	5.6%	66.1%	20.9%	10.2%	68.9%
FIN	16.4%	6.3%	77.4%	21.7%	8.7%	69.6%
F	13.7%	7.9%	78.4%	15.9%	9.7%	74.5%
GR	8.7%	6.6%	84.7%	9.6%	6.1%	84.3%
IRL	14.4%	10.0%	75.6%	21.9%	12.8%	65.3%
I	6.8%	6.7%	86.5%	11.2%	7.8%	81.0%
L	10.0%	8.1%	81.9%	11.6%	8.6%	79.8%
NL	13.3%	8.9%	77.8%	20.5%	10.7%	68.8%
P	11.0%	8.2%	80.7%	14.7%	9.2%	76.2%
S	14.3%	7.8%	77.9%	15.9%	9.6%	74.5%
UK	18.0%	10.6%	71.3%	19.5%	12.3%	68.3%
EU-15	14.8%	8.5%	76.7%	16.4%	10.1%	73.5%

Source: Eurostat – LFS (Labour Force Survey)

2) Impact of educational levels on employment and unemployment

Across the EU it is clear that there is an unequivocal connection between individual's level of education and their risk of unemployment. High levels of educational achievement translate into higher rates of employment and lower rates of unemployment, while lower levels of educational achievement render workers more vulnerable to unemployment.

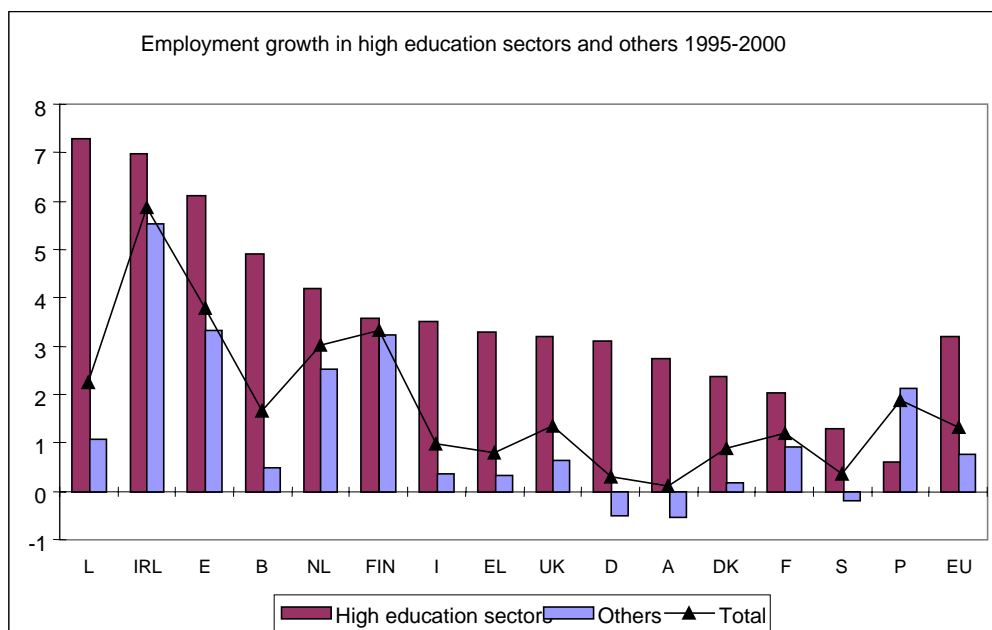
Employment and unemployment rates (ER/UR) by educational levels in 2000								
	Total education		High		Medium		Low	
	ER	UR	ER	UR	ER	UR	ER	UR
AT	67.9	4.7	85.8	2.3	73.7	4.2	47.8	8.2
BE	60.9	6.6	85.4	2.7	66.0	6.8	43.4	10.4
DE	65.3	8.0	83.0	4.3	69.9	7.9	55.3	12.7
DK	76.4	4.5	88.2	2.6	80.1	4.4	62.1	6.3
ES	54.7	14.1	74.4	11.2	53.2	14.4	50.4	15.4
FI	68.1	11.2	84.0	5.2	72.4	11.1	50.0	19.0
FR	61.7	10.3	78.7	5.6	69.0	9.1	46.1	15.4
EL	55.9	11.3	80.2	7.9	56.2	15.0	48.5	9.4
IE	64.5	4.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT	53.4	11.0	81.0	6.2	63.5	10.7	44.1	12.2
LU	62.7	2.4	80.3	1.2	64.3	1.9	53.7	3.7
NL	72.9	2.7	86.3	1.7	79.3	2.0	60.0	4.4
PT	68.1	4.1	89.9	2.6	63.4	4.8	69.0	4.3
SE	71.1	5.5	82.7	3.0	77.5	5.7	55.7	8.4
UK	71.2	5.6	87.5	2.5	77.3	5.8	51.8	10.8
EU	63.1	8.4	82.4	4.9	69.8	7.9	50.1	12.1

Source: Labour Force Survey

Note: Educational levels are defined as "high" if the individual has completed tertiary education, as "medium" if upper-secondary education, and as "low" if less than upper-secondary education. Employment, unemployment and activity rates in the column "Total education" are calculated on the basis of the LFS for all individuals with non-missing information on the educational attainment level. They might differ from the rates which are calculated on all observations, including those with missing information on the educational attainment level.

3) Employment growth in high education sectors

Between 1995 and 2000, employment growth in high-education sectors, as, for example, manufacture of office machinery and equipment, computer and related activities, education, health and social work, or activities of membership organisations, was 3% per year as compared to 1% in other sectors (Source: Eurostat, LFS).



4) Educational attainment levels

In the EU, 60% of 25-64 year olds have successfully completed upper secondary education. Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark are in the lead with an average of 77 %. Portugal and Spain have the lowest percentages, with 19% and 37% respectively. The rates for younger people are significantly higher (25-34 year olds: 72 %) compared to those of older people (55-64 year olds: 44 %)

Percentage of persons with at least upper secondary education by age group in 2000					
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Total (25-64)
AT	83.8	81.2	71.9	62.9	76.1
BE	75.4	62.4	51.5	37.2	58.3
DE	81.4	81.3	76.7	67.0	76.7
DK	84.8	78.7	78.0	68.2	78.0
ES	56.2	43.1	27.0	15.4	37.1
FI	85.6	82.8	67.8	49.3	72.5
FR	76.3	65.3	56.9	43.6	62.2
GR	72.5	59.2	43.4	26.6	51.2
IE	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IT	58.6	50.8	38.4	21.8	43.9
LU	66.7	63.2	55.9	47.4	59.6
NL	72.0	66.8	58.7	50.4	63.2
PT	31.0	19.3	14.1	7.7	19.2
SE	86.6	81.8	73.7	62.4	76.8
UK	82.7	77.4	66.4	45.7	70.0
EU-15	71.5	65.8	56.1	43.5	60.3

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

In terms of higher education, 20,5 % of 25-64 year olds had higher education qualifications in the year 1999 (compared with 18,2 % in 1996). In the lead are Finland (31,3 %), Sweden (28,5 %) and the UK (27,3 %), while the lowest are Portugal (9,8 %) and Italy (9,5 %).

In the EU and in the EFTA/EEA as a whole, participation rates decline gradually at the end of compulsory education: enrolment decreases by around 10% each year. In most EU and EFTA/EEA countries, girls stay in education slightly longer than boys, and more girls than boys acquire upper secondary qualifications.

More than 12 million students are enrolled in tertiary education in the EU (a figure which has more than doubled over the last twenty years), representing 15% of all pupils and students enrolled in the educational system.

5) Early school leavers

Even though the overall educational attainment rate of the younger generations is increasing, there remains some concern about those young people who have left school early and do not acquire additional qualifications.

Early school leavers not in further education (age 18-24) in 2000			
	Male	Female	All
AT	:	:	:
BE	14.8	10.2	12.5
DE	14.6	15.2	14.9
DK	13.4	9.9	11.7
ES	33.7	22.4	28.1
FI	12.5	7.2	9.8
FR	14.8	11.8	13.3
GR	21.8	12.9	17.4
IE	:	:	:
IT	32.4	25.6	29.0
LU	15.9	17.6	16.8
NL	17.5	15.9	16.7
PT	50.6	35.6	43.1
SE	9.2	6.2	7.7
UK	6.5	7.1	6.8
EU-15	20.7	16.4	18.5
<i>Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey</i>			

6) Basic skills (literacy and numeracy)

While the definitions of **literacy and numeracy** are being revisited in the context of a knowledge-based society, particularly in relation to the increasing need for ICT skills, it is nonetheless true that the European continent has the lowest illiteracy rate (1,3) in the world (average 20,6) much lower also compared to that of the north American continent (7,3) (source: UNESCO - year 2000 - figures expressed as an estimated % of the population aged 15 years and over). However, in many countries interest in **mathematics and science** studies is falling or only developing slowly. This is shown in the low uptake of these subjects by school pupils, the attitude of young people and parents to these subjects, and later in the level of new recruitment to research and related professions. There is also a problem of recruiting women to these fields. Attainment results in Mathematics and Science (13 year-olds) from 26

European countries show that most candidate countries perform better than EU ones and even better than the US. Compared to Japan, the average scores of the EU are also lower.

A recent OECD study (PISA) shows that some EU countries (e.g. Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) are below the OECD average for the performance on reading, mathematical, and scientific literacy.

Student performance on the combined reading, scientific and mathematical literacy scales and national income								
	Performance on the combined reading literacy scale		Performance on the combined scientific literacy scale		Performance on the combined mathematical literacy scale		GDP per capita ¹	Cumulative expenditure on educational institutions per student
	Mean score	S.E. ²	Mean score	S.E.	Mean score	S.E.	1999	1998
<i>OECD countries³</i>								
Australia	528	(3.5)	528	(3.5)	533	(3.5)	24 400	44 623
Austria	507	(2.4)	519	(2.6)	515	(2.5)	24 400	71 387
Belgium	507	(3.6)	496	(4.3)	520	(3.9)	24 300	46 338
Czech Republic	492	(2.4)	511	(2.4)	498	(2.8)	13 100	21 384
Denmark	497	(2.4)	481	(2.8)	514	(2.4)	26 300	65 794
Finland	546	(2.6)	538	(2.5)	536	(2.2)	22 800	45 363
France	505	(2.7)	500	(3.2)	517	(2.7)	21 900	50 481
Germany	484	(2.5)	487	(2.4)	490	(2.5)	23 600	41 978
Greece	474	(5.0)	461	(4.9)	447	(5.6)	14 800	27 356
Hungary	480	(4.0)	496	(4.2)	488	(4.0)	10 900	20 277
Ireland	527	(3.2)	513	(3.2)	503	(2.7)	25 200	31 015
Italy	487	(2.9)	478	(3.1)	457	(2.9)	21 800	60 824
Japan	522	(5.2)	550	(5.5)	557	(5.5)	24 500	53 255
Korea	525	(2.4)	552	(2.7)	547	(2.8)	15 900	30 844
Mexico	422	(3.3)	422	(3.2)	387	(3.4)	8 100	11 239
Norway	505	(2.8)	500	(2.8)	499	(2.8)	27 600	61 677
Poland	479	(4.5)	483	(5.1)	470	(5.5)	8 100	16 154
Portugal	470	(4.5)	459	(4.0)	454	(4.1)	16 500	36 521
Spain	493	(2.7)	491	(3.0)	476	(3.1)	18 100	36 699
Sweden	516	(2.2)	512	(2.5)	510	(2.5)	23 000	53 386
Switzerland	494	(4.3)	496	(4.4)	529	(4.4)	27 500	64 266
United Kingdom	523	(2.6)	532	(2.7)	529	(2.5)	22 300	42 793
United States	504	(7.1)	499	(7.3)	493	(7.6)	33 900	67 313
OECD total	499	(2.0)	502	(2.0)	498	(2.1)		
OECD average	500	(0.6)	500	(0.7)	500	(0.7)		
<i>Non OECD countries</i>								
Brazil	396	(3.1)	375	(3.3)	334	(3.7)	6 840	9 231
Latvia	458	(5.3)	460	(5.6)	463	(4.5)	6 164	m
Liechtenstein	483	(4.1)	476	(7.1)	514	(7.0)	22 235	m
Russian Federation	462	(4.2)	460	(4.7)	478	(5.5)	6 930	m

Source: OECD - Knowledge and Skills for Life, First results from PISA 2000

¹ US dollars converted using PPPs.

² These statistics represent estimates of national performance based on samples of students rather than values that could be calculated if every student in every country had answered every question. The related degree of uncertainty is expressed through a Standard Error (S.E.).

³ The results of the Netherlands have been published only partially in the OECD PISA report, because the Netherlands did not meet the required response rate of 80%. Nevertheless the realised response was representative (CITO, December 2001). The mean scores of the Netherlands are: reading literacy 532 (S.E. 3,35), scientific literacy 529 (S.E. 3,61), and mathematical literacy 564 (S.E. 4,01).

There is also room for improvement in the teaching of **ICT skills** in the schools systems, as provision is patchy across the EU:

- In 8 out of 15 EU Member States, ICT is included in the curriculum of primary education (1997/1998).

- In 12 out of 15 EU Member States, it is included in the curriculum of secondary education (1997/98).

- In 8 out of 15 EU Member States, ICT courses are compulsory in initial teacher training for general class teachers in primary education, 9 out of 15 in lower secondary education (1997/98) (source - *Eurydice*)

7) Participation of adult workers in training

The degree of participation of adult workers in training across the EU varies according to the level of education achieved, age range and gender. Men, older workers and those having lower education attainments participate less in training than women, the younger and highly educated. Participation rates across the board are on the increase, but still with marked differences between those Member States with an established tradition of adult training (particularly in northern Europe) and others where there is still considerable scope for progress.

	All		Male		Female		Older Workers (55-64)		Low-Medium Education Attainment		High-Education Attainment	
	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000
AT	7.7	:	9.2	:	6.3	:	1.7	:	7.09	:	15.34	:
BE	2.8	6.8	3.3	7.6	2.3	6.0	0.4	2.2	1.70	4.25	6.54	13.67
DE	5.4	5.0	6.3	5.4	4.5	4.7	0.7	1.0	4.95	4.59	8.00	7.13
DK	16.8	20.8	14.8	17.8	18.8	23.8	5.5	11.0	14.10	17.32	23.96	30.73
ES	4.1	4.9	3.6	4.4	4.6	5.4	0.4	0.8	2.37	2.70	13.38	12.82
FI	6.7	19.6	6.1	17.7	7.4	21.5	0.4	8.3	5.77	14.75	10.32	30.10
FR	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.6	3.0	3.1	0.2	0.4	1.75	1.72	7.99	6.91
GR	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.72	0.87	2.26	2.03
IE	4.3	:	4.4	:	4.3	:	0.9	:	2.79	:	10.59	:
IT	4.0	5.2	4.1	5.0	3.9	5.3	0.6	1.2	3.59	4.82	8.89	9.72
LU	2.9	4.8	3.5	5.7	2.3	3.9	0.4	0.8	2.35	3.45	5.99	11.42
NL	13.1	15.6	13.9	16.4	12.2	14.7	4.2	6.4	:	12.12	:	18.88
PT	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.4	0.1	0.3	2.69	2.85	7.96	10.51
SE	:	18.6	:	16.6	:	20.7	:	10.8	:	14.78	:	27.64
UK	10.6	20.3	10.7	17.9	10.5	22.7	3.3	10.3	7.87	16.56	22.27	34.74
EU-15	5.7	8.0	5.9	7.6	5.4	8.4	1.1	2.9	4.13	6.10	11.36	15.37

Source: Labour Force Survey

8) Shortages in ICT occupations and sectors

One of the biggest concerns of enterprises remains to find employees with ICT expertise or e-business¹ skills. The emergence of e-business is also driving demand for people that possess insights into the industry that they intend to target.

According to an IDC/EITO² 2001 study, the employment opportunity related to the development or the usage of the Internet was more than 14.5 million equivalent jobs in 2000. Demand for ICT skills³ hit 10.4 million in 2000 (supply 9.2 million). Some 2.8 million were for e-business professionals (supply 2.3 million), and 1.3 million were for call centre professionals (supply 1.2 million). Overall the shortage of skills for ICT and e-business professions reached 13% in 2000 and an ICT skills shortage equivalent to 1.2 million jobs was identified in Europe in 2000, with a possible increase to 1.7 million in 2003. Europe's shortage in e-business skills was estimated at 0.7 million in 2000, growing to 2.2 million in 2003 (24% of total demand).

Europe's long-term demand for skilled ICT people remains strong and short-term events do not undermine the basic growth trend. It is true that there has been a reduction in ICT industry growth resulting in some significant redundancies, e.g. during 2001, the telecoms, computer and electronics industries announced over 350 000 job cuts⁴. These jobs affect, in the main, production workers rather than highly-skilled workers. Inevitably some of these redundancies will narrow the 'gap'; however, the 'gap' between ICT skilled worker supply and projected needs across the European Union alone is still estimated to reach 1.6 million in 2003. (Source: IDC, June 2001). There are several reasons for this, one being that while there have been several thousands of redundancies in ICT companies, few have laid-off large numbers of skilled ICT people. Another is the cross-sector use and need for ICT skills; many organisations need more people now simply to make full use of the equipment they already have, let alone what is on the leading edge horizon.

To cope with the shortage of indigenous skills, some Member States have relaxed job permit rules to allow in skilled ICT workers from outside the EU, for example Germany and the UK. However, this external supply does not significantly affect overall demand.

9) Demographic developments: change of working age population and composition by age groups

Demographic projections predict that the total of the working age population will be decreasing in the coming decades. There will also be a shift in the composition of the

¹ The content of e-business professions encompasses all the strategic planning, decision-making processes and implementation activities related to:

- The creation, development and delivery of e-commerce products and services;
- The execution of business or organisation processes over the Internet (such as e-training or teleworking);
- The creation and delivery of services over the Internet in public or non-profit organisations.

² IDT – International Data Corporation / EITO – European Information Technology Observatory

³ ICT jobs represent 8.3% of total employment in Western Europe. They will account for a share of some 13.4% in 2003. Source EITO.

- ICT professionals who support and develop technology environments in the industries that use ICT or services vendors selling their ICT professional resources time;
- E-business professionals focused on supporting business strategies related to the Internet;
- Call centre professionals providing sales and support activities in the emerging phone channels.

⁴ Source Outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas

workforce, with a strong growth of ageing workers (55-64 years) and a parallel decrease of younger workers (15-24 years).

<i>EU - 15</i>	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Total (15-64)	251810547	254090234	248817256	235047607	219455884	210606286
15-24	18.6%	17.6%	16.9%	17.0%	17.6%	17.7%
25-54	64.9%	63.9%	61.4%	59.6%	60.8%	60.6%
55-64	16.5%	18.5%	21.7%	23.4%	21.6%	21.6%

SOURCES: Eurostat–NewCronos: Population by sex and age on 1/1/2000 (for 2000), Eurostat–BASELINE scenario (for projections)

10) Levels of geographical mobility

Geographic mobility between EU Member States remains relatively low, with 225,000 people – or 0.1% of the total EU population – changing official residence between two countries in 2000. But geographic mobility between regions is becoming increasingly important, with about 1.2% of the total EU population changing official residence to another region in 1999 (essentially within the same Member State). Furthermore, some 2 million workers aged 15-64 have changed residence between regions, representing about 1.4% of the EU employed population. By comparison, in the US, 5.9% of the total population changed residence between counties in 1999.

Population by residence in another region one year before (NUTS 2 level, 1999)		
	Overall Population	Employed
AT	5.2%	4.4%
BE	1.1%	0.4%
DE	0.9%	1.1%
DK	n.a.	n.a.
ES	0.1%	0.1%
GR	0.2%	0.2%
FI	1.2%	1.3%
FR	1.5%	1.5%
EI (1997)	0.9%	1.0%
IT	0.9%	1.2%
LU	n.a.	n.a.
NL	1.3%	1.7%
PT	1.0%	0.9%
SE	1.7%	1.3%
UK	1.9%	2.3%
EU	1.2%	1.4%

Source: LFS, Eurostat.

11) Commuting mobility

In addition to the population changing residence between member states and regions, geographical mobility also exists in the form of commuting (daily, weekly), or temporary secondment to another workplace.

Share of workers working in country other than own residence			
	Total	In a non-EU country	In another EU MS
A	1.1%	0.3%	0.8%
B	1.8%	0.1%	1.7%
D	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
DK	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
E	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
EL	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
FIN	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
F	1.2%	0.7%	0.5%
IRL	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
I	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
L	1.0%	0.0%	0.9%
NL	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
P	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%
S	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
UK	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
EU	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%

Source: LFS, Eurostat.

Cross-border commuting in Western Europe in 1999 - Overview

Countries of origin	Countries of destination																total	Tot %				
	AT	BE	DK	FI	FR	DE	IE	IT	LU	NL	PT	ES	SW	UK	NO	CH			AN	LI	MO	SM
Austria						15528		300**								7352		5241			28421	5.72%
Belgium					5348	5712			22100	16740											49500	10.04%
Denmark						1339							500**								1839	0.37%
Finland													600**								600	0.12%
France*		19062				61084		352	41500		1438			2702		97391	181		23690		247400	49.78%
Germany	5388	582	1141		591				14800	16534						32475					71511	14.39%
Ireland														9000**							9000	1.81%
Italy	1600**				687											34106			3010	4324	43727	8.80%
Luxembourg					108	298															788	0.16%
Netherlands		6200				16573															22773	4.58%
Portugal												3000*									3000	0.60%
Spain**					762							1000*					1899				3451	0.70%
Sweden			2500*	320**																	2820	0.57%
United Kingdom							2500*														2500	0.50%
Norway					129	827							2210*								2210	0.44%
Switzerland	546																	4335			5837	1.17%
Andorra					x																	0.00%
Liechtenstein	30															1036					1066	0.21%
Monaco					129																129	0.03%
San Marino																						
TOTAL	7564	26226	3641	320	7754	101381	2500	652	78400	33274	1000	4438	3310	11702		172390	1880	9576	26700	4324	496982	100 %
TOTAL in %	1.52%	5.28%	0.73	0.06	1.56	20.40%	0.50	0.13	15.78%	6.70%	0.2 %	0.89	0.67	2.35 %	0.00	34.68%	0.38	1.93	5.37%	0.87	100 %	

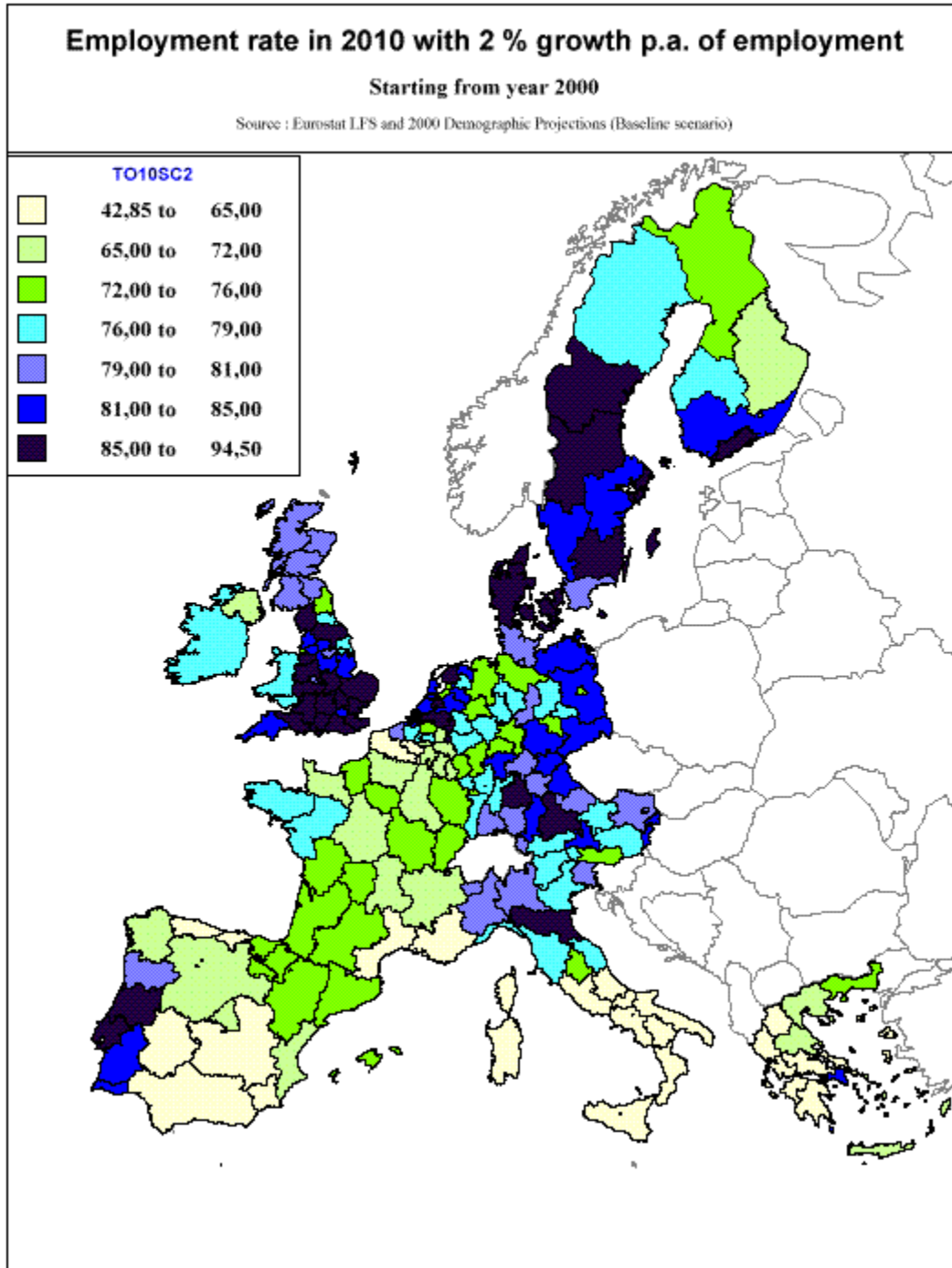
X = No data or insignificant *without 964 commuters between Paris-London **without 1,270 commuters between Gibraltar and Spain

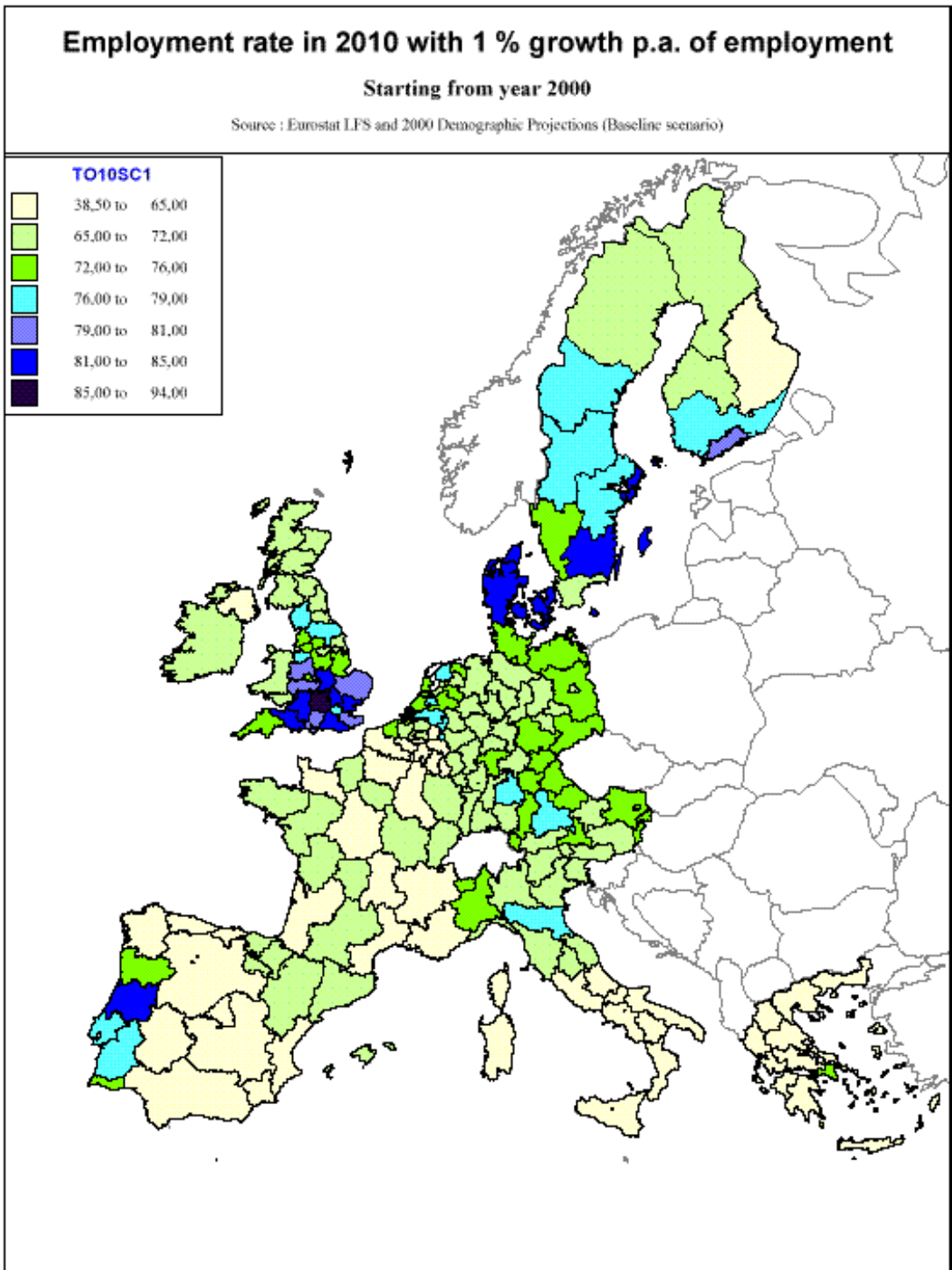
** data based on company surveys, expert talks, recently published scientific studies etc.

SOURCE: Scientific report on the mobility of cross-border workers within the EEA, Munich, November 2001, MKW GmbH

12) High employment regions and skills needs

The following maps (based on scenarios of annual employment growth of 2% or 1%) indicate which regions are expected to have high employment rates in the future and therefore likely to face large deficits of skilled labour: for example south of UK, Denmark, Sweden, centre of Portugal, the Netherlands and to a less extent different regions in Germany and the North of Italy.





13) Foreign language teaching

- The foreign language most taught in **primary schools** in the EU is English: on average 41 % of the EU's pupils learn it. The countries with the highest percentage of primary pupils learning English are Sweden (76%), Austria (75%) , Spain (73%) and Finland (63%), lowest numbers are in the French speaking part of Belgium (5%, but 32% learn Dutch as second language), Luxembourg (2%) and Germany (14%). French comes in second with 3% learning it in the EU; as a rule, in Member States the percentage does not exceed 10%.

- In **secondary education**, 93 % learn English (lower and upper), 33 % study French (lower secondary 33 % , but upper secondary 28 %) , 15 % German (in lower 13 % , in upper 20 %).

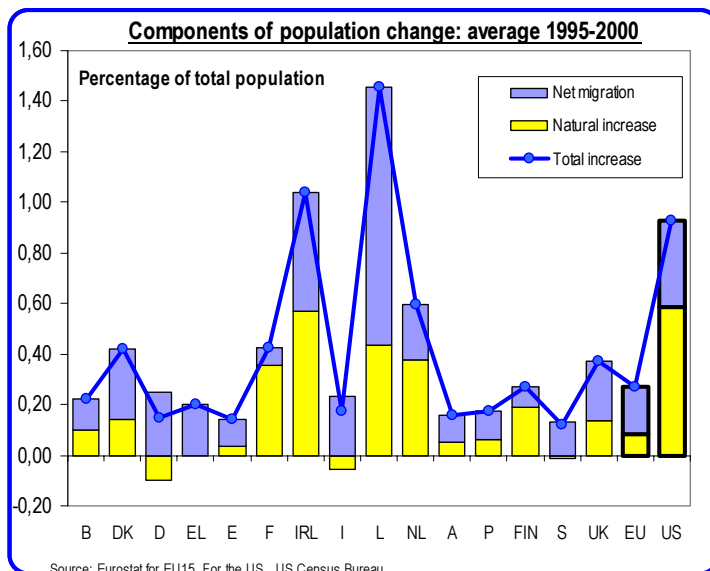
- Between 1995 and 1999, there was a slight rise in the average number of foreign languages learned in primary (from 0,3 to 0,5) and upper secondary (from 1,2 to 1,5) education. Lower secondary was steady at 1,3. (source - Eurostat)

14) Migration

Migration flows into the EU indicate a generally higher incidence of immigration from third country nationals than from EU citizens themselves.

Migration flows in the EU Member States in 1998-99				
	Total immigration (registered long-term migrants according to national definition)	% of Working Age Population	Citizens of another EU country	Third-country nationals
			% of total	% of total
A	72723	1.4%	35.0%	65.0%
B	68466	1.0%	56.5%	43.5%
D	874023	1.6%	38.4%	61.6%
DK	51372	1.5%	59.4%	40.6%
E	81227	0.3%	56.9%	43.1%
FIN	14744	0.4%	56.5%	43.5%
F	100014	0.3%	6.1%	93.9%
GR	12630	0.2%	77.1%	22.9%
IRL	40711	1.6%	83.0%	17.0%
I (1996)	171967	0.4%	22.1%	77.9%
L	12794	4.5%	72.1%	27.9%
NL	119151	1.1%	51.4%	48.6%
P	14476	0.2%	31.6%	68.4%
S	49839	0.9%	48.4%	51.6%
UK	354077	0.9%	50.1%	49.9%
EU 15	2038214	0.8%	41.3%	58.7%
Source: Eurostat				

A comparison between the EU, its Member States, and the USA shows considerable differences in capacity to ensure the natural increase in population and recourse to immigration. Germany, Italy and Sweden have witnessed an average natural decrease in their population that was more than offset by positive net migration.



¹ EUROpean Employment Service

² Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (2001/613/EC).

³ Action Plan for Mobility (OJ 2000/C 371/03 of 23.12.2000)

⁴ See Communication from the Commission 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' COM (2001) 678 final.

⁵ COM(2001)331 final

⁶ COM(2001) 711 final, 29.11.2001. "The impact of the e-Economy on European enterprises: economic analysis and policy implications "See: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/e-economy.htm>

⁷ See: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

⁸ COM(2002)9 final of 15.01.2002

⁹ The Commission launch of a formal consultation with social partners on how businesses and workers can anticipate and manage the social effects of corporate restructuring, 15/01/2002

¹⁰ "The Lisbon Strategy — Making Change Happen" (COM(2002)14 final)

¹¹ European Commission White Paper « A new impetus for European Youth » - COM(2001) 681 final

¹² The High Level group on the Employment and Social Dimension of the Information Society (ESDIS) has been working on the role of ICT in ensuring that there is quality and the necessary change in the information society. It will issue a report in early February.

¹³ Non-formal or informal learning may take place, for example, in voluntary and civil society activities, work experience and non-formal training provided by or on behalf of employers.

¹⁴ In the context of the open method of coordination introduced at the Lisbon European Council, the Education Council was asked to reflect on the future objectives of education systems over the next 10 years. A report on the concrete objectives of education and training systems was endorsed by the Stockholm European Council in March 2001; a detailed work programme is currently being developed jointly by the Council and the Commission on the basis of a Commission draft (COM(2001)501 final) to follow up that report.

¹⁵ See objective 1.2 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems and section 3.5 of the Commission's Communication 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' COM(2001) 678 final. (Lifelong Learning Communication).

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- ¹⁶ See the fifth action point under ‘New teaching and learning methods and the new role of teachers, trainers and learning facilitators’ in section 3.6 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication.
- ¹⁷ See objective 1.4 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems.
- ¹⁸ See Employment Guidelines 2001, and objective 2.3 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems.
- ¹⁹ See Employment Guidelines 2001 (Guideline 4) and objective 2.3 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems, in line with the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council.
- ²⁰ See objective 3.1 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems.
- ²¹ See action point 3.2 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication. The establishment of the European Guidance Forum and the current OECD study in this field should assist such assessment and development.
- ²² COM(2002)9 final of 15.01.2002, point 3.2.A
- ²³ See section 3.4 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication.
- ²⁴ See the first action point under ‘Encouraging and supporting learning at the workplace –including in SMEs’ in section 3.4 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication.
- ²⁵ See sections 3.4 and 3.6 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication.
- ²⁶ withSet up with representatives of Member States in September 2001 it is working in co-operation with industry. See: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>
- ²⁷ The Career SpaceThe consortium is led by EICTA (European Information and Communication Technologies Association) and eleven major ICT companies in Europe. See: www.career-space.com
- ²⁸ As announced in the conclusion of the Commission’s Communication « The impact of the e-Economy on European Enterprisesenterprises: Economic economic Analysis analysis and Policy policy Implications implications ». COM(2001) 711 final. 29.11.2001. See: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/e-economy.htm>. co-
- ²⁹ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
- ³⁰ The information network on education in Europe
- ³¹ See first action point under ‘Valuing non-formal and informal learning; exchange of experience’ in section 3.1 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication.
- ³² See the action points under ‘New instruments at European level to support valuing all forms of learning’ in section 3.1 of the Commission’s Lifelong Learning Communication.
- ³³ COM(2001)257 of 23.5.2001
- ³⁴ COM(2001) 214 of 19.4.2001, Official Journal C 165/4 of 8.6.2001.
- ³⁵ ECOFIN Council Conclusions of 16 October 2001, press release Luxembourg (16-10-2001) - Press: 363 - Nr: 12827/01.
- ³⁶ COM(2000)888 of 29.12.2000
- ³⁷ See objective 3.3 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems.

³⁸ See objective 3.4 of the report on future objectives of education and training systems.

³⁹ Action Plan for Mobility (OJ 2000/C 371/03 of 23.12.2000)

⁴⁰ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (2001/613/EC) of 10.07.2001.

⁴¹ See the first and 4th action points under 'Valuing formal diplomas and certificates' in section 3.1 of the Commission's Lifelong Learning Communication.

⁴² "Any clause of a collective or individual agreement or of any other collective regulation concerning eligibility for employment, employment, remuneration and other conditions of work or dismissal shall be null and void in so far as it lays down or authorises discriminatory conditions in respect of workers who are nationals of the other Member States".

⁴³ Draft Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self-employed economic activities - Art 11

⁴⁴ Council of Ministers 3.12.2001

⁴⁵ The Commission will develop by the end of 2002 a guide to and glossary of the Community instruments related to transparency of diplomas and certificates to make it easier to find and make use of them. See second action point under "Valuing formal diplomas and certificates", section 3.1 of of the Commission's Lifelong Learning Communication.

⁴⁶ See Communication from the Commission 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' COM (2001) 678 final.

⁴⁷ The objectives work provides, in particular, the framework for collecting information about and comparisons between the output and impact of education and training systems and analysing its significance.