

**HIGH LEVEL
TASK FORCE ON
SKILLS AND MOBILITY**

FINAL REPORT

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Report of the High Level Task Force on Skills and Mobility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Task Force based its work on three main principles: Firstly, the freedom of movement within the European Single Market is a fundamental objective of the European Union, and barriers to it must be eliminated. Secondly, the development of a knowledge based society is a fundamental determinant of competitiveness and growth in a global economy, and therefore policies to foster skills endowment in Europe must be strengthened. Thirdly, the achievement of both the freedom of movement and the construction of a knowledge based society are key conditions of achieving the objective of full employment in Europe, set at the Lisbon European Council in the spring of 2000.

The Task Force considers that attaining higher occupational and geographic mobility, supported by better skills, and improved transparency and quality of information about skills and job opportunities will contribute greatly to the achievement of the above objectives.

Occupational Mobility must be significantly expanded to adapt to changing circumstances and drive economic and social change. This requires **relevant and adaptable skills**. However, major gaps exist in skills endowments in the European Union, and, moreover, educational attainment varies too much between the EU Member States and between their regions in terms of both levels and quality. Insufficient attention is paid by the education and training systems to the dynamic aspects of change. This includes the certification of acquired initial competences, and the validation of acquired skills and experience throughout working life.

Geographic mobility in the Union is too low. This is due to a number of factors, including cultural, and in particular linguistic barriers, regulatory barriers, insufficient or complex systems of recognition of skills and competences, and an ageing of the labour force. There is also an insufficient link between policies promoting balanced regional development and policies promoting geographic and occupational mobility.

A **transparent and integrated labour market information system** is crucial to enable citizens, enterprises, governments, social partners and other actors to make the right choices, and develop effective and coordinated policies and an enabling environment for the development of skills and opportunities for mobility. While there is abundant information about jobs, qualifications and living conditions in Europe, it is often dispersed, difficult to access and compare, and unreliable.

Having examined the above key challenges, the Task Force has agreed on the following main recommendations:

- Member States should establish a **guarantee** by the year 2006 that all citizens are provided with an opportunity to acquire the **basic skills**.
- Member States should provide for the early acquisition of language skills in pre-primary and primary schools, and for the strengthening of these language skills in secondary schools, so that by 2005 all pupils would get the opportunity to **master at least two EU languages in addition to their own** by the end of their compulsory education (at between 16–18 years of age); learning English as one of these languages would be an advantage.
- Member States should establish a target to raise the share of their population having attained **post secondary levels of educational attainment** to the levels of the three best performing Member States.

- Member States should, together with the Social Partners establish targets for the raising of participation in **lifelong learning** and in **training by enterprises**.
- Employers should develop clearer definitions of **occupations and skills required to fill emerging labour market needs**, and co-operate with training suppliers to this effect.
- Member States should, together with the Social Partners promote better **links between the educational/training institutions and the labour market**, and between formal and non-formal education and training. The Commission should, together with the Member States, promote the exchange of best practice at European level to this effect. This should include the introduction of **European Lifelong Learning Awards and labels** to enterprises which introduce competence development strategies.
- Member States and the Commission should develop **ICT skills definition** and make them transparent and available throughout the EU, and back them up with EU-wide standards. Member States should ensure that the demand for ICT and e-business skills, and the related curriculum developments, are matched against industry requirements.
- The Commission should take the initiative of establishing a **European framework for the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning**, the Commission and the Member States should speed up the introduction of a new regime for the **recognition of qualifications** in the regulated professions by 2005, and the Commission, the Member States and the Social Partners should launch a new approach to the mutual recognition of qualifications and work experience.
- Member States should, together with universities and training institutions, promote the participation of **foreign students in higher education**, and should set a benchmark so that one third of the educational requirements could be fulfilled by studying abroad in another country.
- The Commission should take the initiative to **strengthen the international exchange programmes** and the related financial instruments to facilitate the exchange of educational, training and work experience for youth and adults abroad.
- Member States and the Social Partners should work together to provide for greater **investment in less favoured regions** to develop human capital, ICTs and access to support from the European Social Fund and the other Structural funds.
- The Commission and the Member States should speed up the modernisation of the regulatory framework governing the transferability of pensions and social security rights. The introduction of **an EU-wide social security card** should be seriously examined.
- The Commission together with the Member States should proceed with the establishment of a **One-stop European Mobility Information Site** by 2002, and should review and **modernise the EURES system** by 2002, ensure its integration with the employment services of the Member States, and enhance its role as a key service provider for the European Labour Market. In this context, the classification of occupations should also be modernised.
- The Commission should launch a **Europe-wide mobility information campaign** on the key dimensions, opportunities and possibilities provided by the Internal Market and the European Labour Markets in 2002. The Social Partners should initiate specific information campaigns to help update and improve the image of some industrial sectors and aim to bring more skilled women into such sectors.

The Task Force calls on the Commission to take into account the above recommendations in the Action Plan for Skills and Mobility which it intends to submit to the Barcelona European Council in March 2002, and further as an input in the revision of the European Employment Strategy, foreseen in 2002.

Overview of actions, responsible bodies and deadlines for implementation

<i>Action</i>		<i>Responsible & deadlines</i>
Occupational Mobility & Skills development		
1	Acquiring key competencies	Member States – by 2006
2	Maths, science & technology skills	Member States - by 2006
3	Raising post-secondary education	Member States, Universities
4	More learning in other Member States	Member States, learning organisations
5	Lifelong learning	Employers, trades unions, public authorities
6	EU awards & labels	Commission, Member States
7	ICT skills definition	Member States, Commission
8	Monitoring ICT and e-business skills	Member States
9	Recognition of non-formal & formal learning	Commission, Member States, social partners
10	Information on qualifications	Member States
11	Obstacles for non-regulated professions	Social Partners - by 2003
12	Investment in less advanced regions	Member States, social partners, Commission
Geographic mobility		
13	Legal & administrative obstacles to free movement EU-wide social security card	Member States, Council, European Parliament, Commission - by 2004
14	Dual career couples; repatriation	Employers
15	Internal market for services	Commission, Member States
16	Professional recognition	EU, Member States – by 2005
17	Language skills	Member States - by 2005
18	Language skills of civil servants	Member States
19	Comparability of educational qualifications	Commission, Member States
20	Understanding, acceptance of qualifications & work experience	Commission, Member States, social partners
21	Qualifications in collective agreements	Social partners
22	Immigration policy	EU
Information and Transparency		
23	One-stop mobility information site	EU, Member States - by 2002
24	Portal on learning opportunities	Commission, Member States - by 2002
25	Mobility information campaign	EU - by 2002
26	Industrial sectors information campaigns	Social Partners

I. Introduction

Three key principles constitute the starting point of this report: 1) the need to ensure the realisation of the objective of freedom of movement, 2) the need to promote a knowledge based society in Europe, and 3) the need to establish full employment in accordance with the objectives set at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000.

The freedom of movement for persons is one of the founding principles of the European Union, going hand in hand with the promotion of economic and social progress, a high level of employment and achieving balanced and sustainable development. It is indissociable from the creation of an area without internal frontiers, and the strengthening of economic and social cohesion and active citizenship.

The promotion of a knowledge based society is a key condition for competitiveness and growth in a global economy. This was recognised by the Lisbon European Council which committed the Union to achieve *“the new strategic goal for the next decade of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”*.

Greater labour force mobility, both between jobs (occupational mobility) and within and between countries (geographic mobility), will contribute to meeting all of these objectives, by enabling the European economy, employment and labour force to adapt to changing circumstances more smoothly and efficiently, and to drive change in a competitive global economy. Equipping human resources with the skills needed to address multifaceted challenges is an integral part of the change process. A greater degree of mobility between Member States will also foster closer political integration in the EU. Yet, occupational and geographic mobility are not a panacea, nor do they come about by themselves. This is a two-way process: while mobility enhances labour market functioning and thereby contributes to growth and wealth creation, more and better jobs must be created and be available in order to make occupational and geographic mobility a reality. Therefore, a key condition for the success of policies promoting mobility is that the EU has monetary, and fiscal policies which promote stability, growth, confidence and economic cohesion. Full account must also be taken of the forthcoming enlargement of the Union which will have far-reaching consequences on the patterns of employment and mobility in a wider Europe.

The policies to increase mobility and improve skills must respond to the need and commitment to develop better quality jobs in Europe that combine higher productivity and pay with greater flexibility and security of working relations. In contributing to greater economic and social cohesion, they must take full account of the fact that the share of women and older workers in the labour force will need to increase very significantly to achieve the full employment targets of the Lisbon strategy.

This report from the High Level Task Force on Skills and Mobility addresses the contribution which increased occupational and geographic mobility can make to the multi-dimensional elements of the Lisbon objectives. It recommends a series of actions to be undertaken by the various authorities to bring this about.

Establishment of the Task Force

The setting up of the Task Force was announced in the Commission's Communication on New European Labour Markets¹, endorsed by the Spring Stockholm European Council, with the group being established in June 2001.

The principal goals and mandate of the Task Force were to:

- identify the main drivers and characteristics of the new European labour markets, with a particular focus on mobility and skills (particularly ICT skills and the skills necessary for participation in the new economy).
- identify the main barriers to the further development of the European labour markets, and the measures needed to create in Europe an attractive labour market place for the knowledge economy.
- report with a set of policy initiatives required to ensure these markets are open to all, with access for all by 2005 and recommendations for implementation at European and national levels.

The Task Force consisted of European business leaders, top labour market and education experts, highly experienced people in public policy and high level experts linked with the trade union organisations. (List in annex)

It met on six occasions in order to examine the issues requested, taking evidence from a number of organisations and experts. It also benefited from the submission of information and evidence in written form from a wide range of organisations and stakeholders.

II. Skills and Mobility in the New European Labour Markets

The Task Force identifies three fields where action could help correct imbalances in the demand and supply in the European labour markets, and proposes specific areas for action which it considers necessary to achieve greater mobility and skills development in Europe under the following headings:

- occupational mobility and skills development
- geographic mobility
- information and transparency of job opportunities

II.1. Occupational Mobility and Skills development

Over the last decade the single job for life has become the exception rather than the norm. The globalisation of markets and the technological revolution bring about drastic and rapid changes in the relative importance of individual sectors and occupations in the economy. This means that more and more people will have to adapt to a change of job or career – almost certainly involving different skills - during their working life. Yet 80% of today's skills will become obsolete in 10 years, while over that time 80% of the labour force will possess outdated skills without lifelong learning. The ability to fill vacant jobs currently, particularly those in activities experiencing skills shortages, is often constrained by low levels of occupational mobility, with the situation unlikely to improve in the future without remedial action. Europeans generally

¹ (COM(2001)116)

tend not to change jobs frequently: on average in 2000 only 16,4% had been with their employers less than 1 year² (comparable figures suggest around 30% in the USA)³.

An expansion of occupational mobility in Europe requires that the main challenges to such mobility be addressed.

II.1.a Education and training systems still respond inadequately to the labour market and to an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society

The improved **employability and adaptability** of workers is essential for the effective functioning of the European labour markets. However, systems for initial education are still often based on the premise that what is learned in initial education will be sufficient to last a lifetime, a notion which no longer corresponds to reality. Education and training systems have to adapt to ensure continuing improvements in the type and levels of qualifications provided and in giving people the basic prerequisites to take advantage of occupational mobility in an increasingly knowledge-based society. Innovation will be needed in school curricula, and formal systems of education and training will need transforming to make them much more open, flexible and responsive to the needs both of individuals and of the labour market.

Much progress remains to be achieved; obstacles to occupational mobility start often already at the level of some education and training systems. **Educational attainment levels** vary widely across the EU: while 60% of adults (25-64) in the EU as a whole have completed upper secondary education, the rate varies from 19% to 78% between Member States. A proportion as high as 18% of early school leavers (18-24 year-olds who have not attained at least upper secondary level education) does not progress beyond lower secondary education. At higher education levels the differences are also stark; an EU average of 20.5% of adults have higher education qualifications, with a range of over 31% to less than 10% between Member States⁴. To some extent this may reflect the level of skills currently in demand on the labour markets, but at the same time greater efforts are required by the lagging Member States to ensure that at a time when fewer young people will be coming on to the labour market, it is crucial that a maximum number should be educated to the highest degree possible.

Every person should have a solid **bedrock of knowledge** on which to build succeeding strata of skills throughout their working life and participate actively in society; in addition to the specific needs of certain key industrial sectors, therefore, basic skills (including literacy & numeracy, learning to learn, technological culture, cultural capital, social skills, specific subjects such as maths and sciences) are indispensable as a platform for enabling individuals to adapt to changing circumstances during their careers and throughout their lives. Acquiring competences in **information and communication technologies** is an integral part of this process, yet ICT courses are included in the primary education curriculum in only 8 Member States, while 12 include it in the curriculum of secondary education. Much progress remains to be made on incorporating the use and mastery of ICT skills in a wide range of school subjects and across the curriculum. It is vital that the acquisition of such skills, including a broad range of competencies and personal skills, should be strengthened in the public education system, as well as in universities and vocational training institutions. Ensuring that all young people acquire the basic skills required to operate in the knowledge-based society will help **lower the drop-out rate** from education, increase the likelihood of their undertaking further education

² Labour Force Survey

³ OECD Employment Outlook 1996

⁴ Labour Force Surveys

and training, and thus the availability of scarce young workers, as well as preventing withdrawal from the labour market later on in life. Indeed, all citizens who left school with ongoing needs in terms of literacy, numeracy and other basic skills should be encouraged to participate in compensatory learning. Achieving 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.

As such knowledge and skills are dynamic and evolve over time, they should be revised periodically, and any developments in the field of basic skills should take account of the likely impact on the competencies and skills of **teachers, trainers and other learning facilitators** who have been trained in an academic environment, and whose teaching approach may need revising. It is crucial to provide an adequate supply of suitably qualified entrants to the teaching profession, across all subjects and levels, and make teaching and training even more attractive as professions. E-learning has the potential to contribute considerably to these aims, in particular with the support of the on-going eLearning initiative⁵. More co-operation between the world of education and the world of work is necessary to help develop the skills of educational professionals.

Given the rapidly increasing levels of interaction in the EU and between Member States at economic and societal levels, it is imperative that more citizens, and particularly young people, are entitled to undertake part of their **studies or training in another Member State** in order to be prepared for occupational and geographic mobility. Currently around 1 million young people per year (out of a total population of 70 million in education and training) benefit from European mobility or youth exchange programmes. It is important for teachers, trainers and other learning facilitators to play a more active role in this process. Greater emphasis is needed on more young people progressing to and succeeding in **higher education** in order to raise the overall level of skills coming on to the labour market, and deepen the pool of more highly qualified people. Stronger links need to be established in general between the education systems and enterprises in order for the skill needs of the labour market to be effectively translated into relevant curriculum development. A particular emphasis is needed on the training of **researchers** and scientists, as the presence of researchers in the total EU workforce (5.3 per 1000 workforce) is considerably below Japan (9.3) and the US (8.1).

II.1.b Lack of effective lifelong learning systems for workers

Lifelong learning is a **key driver of change** to improve economic performance, productivity and job creation, affecting the ability of the EU to reduce unemployment and achieve higher levels of employment. The challenge faced by the EU is to realise the fundamental importance of investing in lifelong learning in order for the skills of those already in the labour market to be developed, and create the necessary learning environment for skills improvement to be a continuing process for the greater adaptability of the workforce. Competence development plans should be drawn up at enterprise level aimed at updating the skills and qualifications of staff to better achieve business objectives, as well as equipping people with the transferable skills required to take advantage of other opportunities on the labour market.

⁵ eLearning Initiative and Action Plan : COM (2000) 172 final and COM (2001) 318 final; Council resolution of 13 July 2001 on e-learning, OJ C204

As the Commission's recent proposals in this field make clear, massive progress still remains to be made⁶. Participation in education and training continues to be low; only 8% of 25-64 year-olds in the EU took part in education and training in 2000, with limited participation of older workers, a greater level of participation for women, with younger people being far more likely to take part.⁷ Member States in particular have a basic interest in developing and implementing coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning. E-learning is one way in which learning opportunities can be made more widely available. It should also be recognised that advances in lifelong learning concern not only workers in employment, but also underline the inherent gains to be obtained by raising the skill levels, including basic skills levels, of potential employees and motivating them, in particular the unemployed, women returnees, disabled workers, and migrants. The need for closer co-operation between Member States, industry and the social partners in this area was never more pressing.

Lifelong learning is essential to tackle the **skill shortages and mismatches** which are holding back economic development and therefore job growth. Since mid-1999 business surveys have increasingly reported production constraints due to shortages of labour⁸. Technological and industrial change are having a profound impact on the types of skills, both technical and social, which are considered relevant and valuable in a rapidly evolving labour market. New types of skills profiles are therefore having to be developed in order for enterprises to keep up with the growth of technologies, particularly **ICTs**. The impact of ICT on the type of skills required and the numbers of workers in possession of those skills will continue to be substantial, both within the ICT sector itself and in the broad range of ICT user sectors; in the ICT and E-Business sectors the estimated number of unfilled vacancies is expected to rise from 2,23 million in 2001 to 3,67 million in 2003⁹. A considerable expansion in the teaching of ICT and E-Business skills will be required if the full economic and employment potential of these sectors is to be realised. There is a constant need to analyse future skills needs and this should be made in close cooperation between public employment services and social partners, especially at sectoral and territorial level. **Enterprises** have a particularly crucial role to play here, and encouragement should be provided to partnerships and consortia which deliver these skills (e.g. along the principles used by the Career Space Consortium in the ICT-sector)¹⁰; cost effective, just in time and on the job training solutions should be encouraged, notably through the promotion of e-learning¹¹. The ICT skills needs of the **public sector** should also be a priority, as major providers of services to the public, and due to the importance for Government to lead by example and play a catalyst role.

Lifelong learning initiatives targeted specifically at **women** could have a significant impact on overcoming some of the skills shortages and increase their participation in the labour market, with careful thought given to adapting the provision of such initiatives to the particular circumstances of many women (part-time work, childcare & family responsibilities).

Addressing the skill and lifelong learning needs of **older workers** is essential as part of a strategy to enable such workers to remain in the active workforce. Older workers could make a valuable contribution to overcoming some of the skills shortages; the skills they have acquired

⁶ Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality - COM(2001) 678 final

⁷ Joint Employment Report 2001

⁸ Commission Joint Harmonised Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys

⁹ EITO 2001

¹⁰ Career Space (www.career-space.com), a consortium led by EICTA (European Information and Communication Technologies Association) and eleven major ICT companies in Europe.

¹¹ COM(2001) 136 final, 13.3.2001, « Helping SMEs to Go Digital ».

during their working life may be relevant and useful in a wide range of sectors and occupations. More incentives are needed to recruit, motivate and (re)train older workers as a means of overcoming the consequences of the demographic slowdown and enabling them to plug some of the skills gaps; they could also play a valuable role in supporting or mentoring younger workers. Apart from tackling some of the skills and labour shortages, delaying the departure of workers into retirement would also help tackle the shortfall in pensions contributions.

Similarly specific measures should be introduced to support the learning skills of **migrant** workers, given the significantly higher share of third country nationals who belong to the group of unskilled manual workers (35% as compared to 17 % for EU citizens) and their concentration in sectors where low-skilled workers are still needed (manufacturing, construction, hotels and restaurants). This particular skills gap directly influences the chances for many third country nationals of finding employment; they have a significantly lower employment rate than EU nationals (50.8% for third country nationals as compared to 63.6% for EU nationals). The learning skills of **disabled** workers could also be significantly enhanced through specific measures in order to enhance their adaptability, employability and earning potential.

II.1.c Barriers between formal and non-formal learning

Moving between jobs can be made more complicated by the difficulty in demonstrating on the open labour market the value of knowledge, skills and qualifications, particularly those acquired at work or in other non-formal settings. There are few tried and tested means of assessing and validating such skills; this constitutes an important barrier to occupational mobility. Co-operation to enhance the understanding, evaluation and validation of qualifications and competencies, with the participation of the social partners, is vital to the removal of such barriers, and the **assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning** is a crucial precondition for transferring and accumulating competencies acquired in different institutional, sectoral and national settings (work-based learning, work experience, credentials granted by enterprises and ICT vendors and accreditation of prior learning, informal learning).

It is therefore essential to lower the barriers between formal and non-formal learning settings. This could be of particular significance for older workers; recognising the competencies they have acquired through various forms of learning, in particular outside formal education and training, through work experience or otherwise, should increase their capacity for occupational mobility and thus help retain them in the labour force, or bring them back from early retirement.

II.1.d Bigger challenges in less advanced Member States and regions

There is an insufficient link between policies promoting a balanced regional development and policies promoting geographic and occupational mobility. Those who move do not always have a "real choice" between mobility and staying put, as there are insufficient job opportunities in the region of origin. Mobility of people, human resources development, job creation and the mobility of jobs in and to regions lagging behind must therefore be seen as interlinked and complementary. The growth of knowledge-intensive sectors (accounting for almost 2/3 of the total net employment creation between 1996 and 2000), has had a disproportionate impact on regions, being particularly concentrated in high employment rate, high employment growth

regions. Even in regions with low growth, the net positive balance in terms of employment creation is largely due to stronger job creation in these sectors; sustainable job creation in such regions is particularly crucial, and the fact that knowledge-intensive job creation is higher in regions with a higher skilled workforce suggests that the effort of some regions in developing their human capital potential through education and skills is reflected in their success.

At the same time low-skilled workers in Europe have a low propensity for occupational mobility, and the proportion of low-skilled workers tends to be highest in regions of high unemployment and low employment rates. The overall expansion of occupational mobility therefore requires the greatest efforts in the **less advanced regions** which generally suffer from the lowest rates of employment and the highest rates of unemployment and where the propensity to move between jobs is least pronounced. It should be noted that the labour turnover (measured in terms of job tenure of 1 year or less) was 9,6% in 2000 in one of the least developed Member State, while it reached 23,2% in one of the most developed Member States. The situation is usually exacerbated by generally low rates of educational attainment and less developed lifelong learning strategies, factors which hamper both occupational and geographic mobility. In this respect **e-learning solutions** and **distance working opportunities** could be of particular significance in the less advanced regions; the availability of broadband networks and high speed connections in such regions would be of considerable benefit.

II.2 Geographic mobility

Labour markets in the EU are characterised by low levels of geographic mobility; EU citizens have about half the mobility rate of US citizens. In the last 10 years, 38% of EU citizens changed residence. The great majority – 68% - moved within the same town or village and 36% moved to another town in the same region. While 21% moved to another region in the same Member State, only 4.4% moved to another Member State.¹² Mobility levels between Member States remain consistently below the higher levels of the 50's and 60's. Commuting, however, continues to grow. In fact commuting is the most frequent form of geographic mobility practiced by EU citizens; within the EURES system, cross-border vacancies for commuters account for around 90% of the vacancies exchanged internationally. Moreover, migration flows into EU Member States are estimated at a total net immigration of some 2 million a year, of which around 60% consists of immigration from third countries – equivalent to 0.3% of the total EU population. In the US, by contrast, the number of people who entered from abroad in 1999 was equivalent to around 0.5% of the population, while around 6.7 million people (2.5%) crossed state boundaries. It should be noted, however, that in the US only a small proportion of those moved for labour market reasons.

Similarly, in the EU, professional reasons account for a small proportion of the house moves (only 15%); when people move it is mainly for family and housing reasons. Moving house is often a costly affair, not only because of high property prices, but also because of taxes penalising people who move house.

The challenge of **dual labour markets** in Europe is a further constraint on geographic mobility. At any one time, imbalances arise in the location of jobs and the labour available locally to fill those jobs, giving rise to the coexistence of regions with skill shortages at the same time as others with high unemployment.

¹² Eurobarometer, February 2001

Geographic mobility of labour may not in itself solve the underlying imbalance, but may allow time for the skills of the local labour force to adapt to the new demands. Equally, some degree of adaptability may occur through the mobility of capital, bringing jobs to the workers, although this also takes longer. There is, however, also a danger that greater mobility may make disparities worse, as those with some skills may move out to other regions with demand for those skills.

The dynamics of demography in the EU do not help. The rate of growth of the working-age population is decreasing and is expected to become negative after 2011. As a result, there are fewer young people in the labour force, who tend to be more mobile, and a compensating increasing share of older workers who tend to be less mobile. Both in Europe and the US, which has a much greater degree of mobility than the EU, moving declines sharply after the age of 30-35.

Action to expand occupational mobility has a positive impact also on geographic mobility. In addition to such action, it is necessary to facilitate geographic mobility by addressing the challenges specific to it.

II.2.a Legal and administrative barriers to geographic mobility

Within Member States, the barriers to moving are principally related to the cost of moving relative to the availability and characteristics of jobs elsewhere. In the larger Member States there may also be factors related to cultural roots and family considerations. The economic benefits need to be sufficient to overcome the natural reticence to move.

Moving between Member States can involve considerable barriers of a legal and administrative nature, and much of the regulatory framework governing the conditions of mobility within the EU (such as Regulation 1612/68) is more than thirty years old. During that time many anomalies have developed or remained. Eligibility for social security **benefits** can involve administrative delay and the levels of payment vary. The interaction between the **taxation** systems of the Member States causes complicated legal and administrative problems. There is no guarantee that **supplementary pensions** will be transferable. **Healthcare** systems vary widely between countries and may involve extra administrative procedures in integrating to the new system. Moving to another country may create additional problems in relation to **career development**, particularly in the case of dual career couples, and in a number of industries local protectionist legal barriers still exist for different non-regulated professions. Difficulties and delays are encountered in granting professional recognition.

Barriers affecting the mobility of workers and the self-employed also exist in relation to the cross-border provision of services and the freedom of establishment. Removing these obstacles will make it easier for service providers to operate in other Member States. This, in itself, will provide a boost to the mobility of those providing these services.

In addition there are psychological and cultural barriers to mobility: difficulties to recreate a circle of friends, difficulties in understanding a new environment, integration difficulties for the family, etc.

II.2.b Inadequate progress in language skills

A variety of languages and dialects are spoken throughout the EU. Living and working in another Member State implies at least a working knowledge of that language in order to integrate; only half of the EU population speaks any other EU language than their own. Yet the EU remains deficient in the learning of foreign languages in schools. While the foreign language most taught in schools is English (41% of primary pupils and 93% of secondary pupils learn it), only 33% learn French and 15% German in secondary schools, with other languages being taught to an even lesser degree.¹³ Both the lack of language skills and the slowness of their distribution put a further constraint on the already low tendency to move.

It is therefore essential to strengthen the stock of language skills in order to support intra-EU mobility. The introduction or development of inter-cultural-oriented education in the school system is also important as a means of supporting changes in Europe towards multi-cultural societies, and to prepare young people for studying and working in other countries.

II.2.c Scope for more co-operation between education systems and recognition of qualifications

Education systems vary widely throughout the EU. This has two effects. The first is the problem of comparison between, evaluation and recognition of, qualifications from one country to another. Greater **simplicity, transparency and flexibility** in the recognition of qualifications and improved transparency with regard to non-regulated professions should provide clearer conditions under which people can make the decision to move. The second is the problem of the education of children, particularly if the move is likely to be a short one, with the issue of **reintegration into the original (or another) school system** upon return to it. Greater cooperation between education systems, including more exchanges of students, would help to remove this barrier.

II.2.d Lack of a common immigration policy

In many Member States, immigration is now the only source of population growth; as a result of growing shortages of labour at both skilled and unskilled levels, a number of Member States have already begun to actively recruit third country nationals from outside the Union. Given that on average, migrants tend to be younger, and more mobile than residents, immigration of third country nationals could make a significant contribution to promoting geographic mobility and enabling the EU labour markets to adapt more rapidly. Given the strongly divergent views in the Member States on the admission and integration of third country nationals, the Commission's Communication on a Community Immigration Policy¹⁴ is welcome, and should form the basis of positive action towards establishing a common immigration policy.

II.3. Information and Transparency of job opportunities

The potential of occupational and geographic mobility is often restricted due to deficiencies in the delivery of information. Easy access by individuals, companies and labour market professionals to accurate, high quality information about job offers and applications in other sectors, regions or Member States is essential, for instance by re-enforcing the services offered

¹³ Eurydice

¹⁴ COM(2000)757

through the EURES network. Demand for such information has grown considerably in recent years, with a more than fivefold increase in the total stock of job vacancies in the EURES database between November 1997 and September 2001 (with a particularly strong growth in the frontier zones). The increasing importance of the Internet for European job seeking is demonstrated by a more than threefold increase in the number of hits on the EURES jobsearch website in the first 9 months of 2001 (reaching over 1million hits in September 2001). The development of the Internet portal on learning opportunities will complement these services. The ability to satisfy the continued growth in demand for such information is restricted by the limited resources available. The challenge here is not the availability of information as such, but the presence of an **efficient and structured framework** for accessing the information. Such a framework need not be centralised, but the effectiveness of the delivery of the information will be dependent on the effectiveness of the network through which it is provided. This implies that all those involved in the provision of such information should improve co-operation to ensure its accuracy and consistency.

Supporting geographic mobility across the EU will mean responding to the burgeoning range of issues on which information and advice is and will be sought. Additional facilities should be developed involving public services, private employment operators, and fuller use made of the media and other means (for example, Internet, Interactive TV, mobile telephony, call centres).

Information in a standardised, up-to-date and easily visible and accessible form is needed - for all relevant employment services as well as for individuals - on the **bottlenecks** in the regional labour market in order to identify where demand and supply for labour is strongest and weakest. This information is needed in sufficient detail regarding the occupations concerned, and the level and type of qualifications required.

Furthermore, improving the **knowledge** about particular types of work is necessary to redress the problem of skills shortages in some occupations and sectors of the economy. Such shortages can in part be attributed to the disinclination of young people to consider careers in those sectors, for example in the metalworking industries, due to outdated images of the work involved¹⁵. Improving the image of such work would help attract young people, and particularly women, into the workforce in those sectors.

¹⁵ "Skills shortages in the Engineering Industries" position paper by WEM and ORGALIME, August 2001

III. Action

The challenges outlined give rise to a series of policy consequences and areas for recommended action.

III.1. Expanding occupational mobility and skills development

Expanding occupational mobility will require measures to ensure that educational systems become more open and flexible, and responsive to labour market needs and potential, to introduce and consolidate effective lifelong learning strategies for workers, to lower barriers between formal and non-formal qualifications, and to enhance efforts in lagging Member States and regions.

Benchmarks need to be introduced for existing policies, initiatives and existing funding mechanisms in order to promote best governmental practices and undertake appropriate action to reduce rapidly the skill gaps, improve ICT and e-business skills levels, and facilitate the exchange of such skills with other Member States. The specific areas for action required are as follows:

III.1.a Ensure that education systems become more responsive to the labour market and to an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society

Actions are needed to improve the effectiveness of the education systems to support occupational mobility and its contribution to the better functioning of the European labour markets.

- 1 Member States should ensure that **all** citizens acquire **basic skills**, including literacy and numeracy, information technology (particularly ICT skills through tools such as the European Computer Driving Licence), and social competencies, such as teamwork, problem solving and learning to learn. Member States should ensure that these skills are acquired by age 16, and achieve this objective by 2006.
- 2 Member States should improve the skills and numbers of young people in **mathematics, science and technology** and recruit more women teachers to these fields to combat teacher shortages and attract more girls to relevant courses. Member States should achieve a 25% improvement on current numbers of young people and numbers of women teachers recruited to these disciplines by 2006. Better training should be provided for **learning facilitators** at all levels, especially those in careers guidance, to attract students (especially girls) into science, engineering and ICT relevant courses.
- 3 Member States should establish a target to raise the share of their population having attained **post secondary levels of educational attainment**, to achieve the levels of the three best performing Member States. They should encourage universities and other higher education institutions to develop closer links with industry, the wider labour market, and other areas, such as vocational education and training.
- 4 Member States should provide for more opportunities for **students and trainees** to undertake part of their learning in another Member State. School managers, teachers and educators should be informed and trained about the possibilities of the programmes

available and encouraged to offer these to young people. All higher education curricula should include opportunities for all students and trainees to spend one third of their higher education in another Member State. All EU universities and equivalent learning institutions should have connections and relations with at least one other similar institution in another Member State. Member States should introduce or develop further **intercultural oriented education** in the school system as a preparation for intra-EU mobility.

III.1.b Introduce and consolidate effective lifelong learning strategies for workers

If lifelong learning for all is to be achieved, a wide range of measures and incentives will be required. Creating a better-skilled and adaptable workforce able to take up opportunities for occupational mobility means raising the overall amount and quality of training being provided and followed; this cannot be achieved without substantially increasing overall levels of public and private investment in learning, and introducing mechanisms to secure better returns on this investment. More specific actions will be needed to develop broader ICT and business skills, tackle the particular needs of women, and improve the access to skills of many who currently have difficulty in entering or remaining in the labour market.

- 5 Employers, trades unions and public authorities should in co-operation identify the future needs of **continuing training** and ensure that the amount and quality of continuing training in enterprises is increased, with the role of each stakeholder (public authorities, social partners, individuals) being clearly identified. This co-operation should enable public/private partnership arrangements to be set up in order to ensure support and adequate funding. This could involve incentive measures aimed at employers (for example tax breaks, social security rebates, or rewarding best practice) and at individuals, or persuasive measures (such as training levies for enterprises which do not invest sufficiently in continuing training). The partners should agree **targets** for raising participation in lifelong learning, ensuring access for all (including the least qualified) to continuing training throughout their working lives, and encourage enterprises to evolve into **learning organisations**, maximise access to "state of the art" knowledge, and develop more open systems of in-company training. This should include specific strategies for the training, retention and recruitment of **older workers**, building on the skills they have acquired during their working life. In particular, this should involve measures aimed at giving older workers the opportunity to achieve information society literacy. Member States should set targets to improve access to lifelong learning and to the labour market for **women** and for **disadvantaged or minority groups**, e.g. for the disabled, for ethnic minorities, immigrants, etc.
- 6 The EU should promote **European lifelong learning awards and labels** to recognise businesses which introduce competence development strategies. Member States should be responsible for the validation of such awards, involving employees and their representatives in the process, and provide financial support to SME's in order to introduce such a system.
- 7 The EU should develop **ICT skills definitions** (based on tools such as the European Computer Driving Licence) to make them transparent and available within and between Member States, to be backed up by EU-wide standards and validation and accreditation and recognition schemes for ICT and e-business skills, with Member States being expected to comply with such standards.

- 8 Member States should encourage public/private partnerships, both for enterprises and the public sector, to better monitor the demand for **ICT and e-business skills** and to help define and prioritise the skills to be matched notably against industry requirements, to generate detailed skills profiles (e.g. along the principles used by the Career Space Consortium in the ICT-sector)¹⁶, and related curricula and training facilities, and to promote e-learning¹⁷.

III.1.c Lower the barriers between formal and non-formal learning and introduce Europe-wide validation of qualifications

Making it possible to validate the skills acquired in non-formal settings throughout the EU will help overcome an important obstacle to occupational mobility by enabling employers and other labour market actors and individuals themselves to have a more comprehensive and comprehensible view of individuals' knowledge, competences and achievements. A Europe-wide exchange of experience should be established **for recognition of qualifications** in relation to the valuing of competences acquired outside formal education and training as well as of work experience. This process should be co-ordinated at EU level with formal education systems a having central role in setting up schemes. The social partners should participate where appropriate by contributing to the definition, assessment and recognition of the skills concerned, and the certification of specially professional qualifications (for example, for the accounting profession) should be vested in the relevant professional bodies where they exist. This should be based on national experiences and lead to an EU platform. In such a process it should be made easier for qualifications and certificates (as well as attestations of work experience) to be obtained on a modular basis, giving greater flexibility and incentive to people to acquire additional qualifications and to upgrade those already earned.

- 9 The EU should establish a European framework for the **assessment and recognition of qualifications** in relation to the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning, including work experience and training provided by industry.
- 10 Member States should ensure that open access is provided to information on the **contents and equivalence of qualifications**, additional learning and professional experience across the EU, including a database, and national reference centres to provide information and guidance regarding qualifications¹⁸.
- 11 The social partners at all relevant levels should help by identifying the practical obstacles related to recognition in the field of **non-regulated professions** and proposing by 2003 at the latest how these obstacles could be removed in accordance with a strict timetable.

¹⁶Career Space (www.career-space.com), a consortium led by EICTA (European Information and Communication Technologies Association) and eleven major ICT companies in Europe.

¹⁷ Building notably on the activities of the « ICT Skills Monitoring Group » set up with representatives of all Member States in September 2001 and working in close co-operation with industry.

¹⁸ In this context, the Commission is developing 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 Communication from the Commission 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' COM (2001) 678 final.

III.1.d Redouble efforts in less-advanced Member States and regions

Occupational mobility would be greatly assisted through improving the relevance and quality of skills in less-advanced Member States and regions, with a particular focus on information or knowledge economy skills, as a means of attracting investment, increasing the number and range of job opportunities, maximising the skills available and helping the labour markets to adapt better to changing circumstances.

- 12 Member States and the social partners should work together to provide for greater investment in **less-advanced regions** to develop human capital, ICTs and access to support from the European Social Fund and the other Structural Funds, including for the installation of high speed ICT networks.

III.2 Facilitating geographic mobility

Developing geographic mobility will require measures to overcome any remaining barriers of a legal and administrative nature, greatly improve the level and extent of language teaching and learning, extend and develop methods of ensuring that qualifications are effectively recognised between Member States, and developing an EU-wide immigration policy. The specific areas for action required are as follows:

III.2.a Remove remaining administrative and legal barriers

Actions should be designed to protect and develop the rights of mobile workers and facilitate intra-EU migration by ensuring the correct application of Community law on free movement of workers (for example in respect of non-discriminatory access to employment and social advantages, such as transport and housing, education for migrant workers' children), as well as to the free provision of services and freedom of establishment. In addition, encouraging the conversion of fixed-term contracts into permanent ones would make a positive contribution to regional mobility, as workers offered fixed-term contracts are often less inclined to take up a job which does not last long enough to repay the initial relocation costs.

- 13 The EU should intensify efforts to remove legal, administrative and other barriers to geographical mobility. They should ensure the correct application of the provisions of **Regulation 1612/68** relating to free movement, the updating of those provisions and the updating of **Directive 360/68/EEC**¹⁹. **Regulation 1408/71** on social security coordination should be extended to all statutory branches of social security and to all persons covered, and its implementation simplified.

The introduction of an **EU-wide social security card** must be seriously examined as a means of facilitating access to these rights.

An EU-level **review body** should be established to monitor the removal of barriers to ensure that they are all eliminated by 2004 at the latest.

- 14 Employers, and in particular employers in seconding companies, should address the issue of **dual career couples**. They should bear responsibility for the repatriation and

¹⁹ concerning the abolition of restrictions on movement and residence within the Community for workers of Member States and their families

integration of their expatriates on their return. The issue of third country nationals who are legally residing and working in an EU Member State has to be considered in this context.

- 15 The EU 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 establishment.
- 16 The EU and Member States should attach priority to increasing the speed and ease of **professional recognition** (for regulated professions) including conditions supporting more automatic recognition, and introduce a more uniform, transparent and flexible regime for the recognition of qualifications in the regulated professions by 2005.

III.2.b Develop language skills

Living and working in another country is greatly facilitated by a working knowledge of the local language, as well as removing a significant barrier to the mobility decision.

- 17 Member States should provide for the early acquisition of **language** skills in pre-primary and primary schools and its strengthening in secondary schools. In particular they should be encouraged to introduce the teaching of the first foreign language to all pupils from age 8 at the latest.

Moreover, all pupils should have the opportunity to **learn at least two European languages** in addition to their mother tongue. By the end of compulsory education (which varies between 16 and 18), pupils should have mastered at least two of these languages. It would be an advantage if one of these languages was English.

All schools will be expected to develop the requisite **language teaching capacity** by 2005.

- 18 The appointment of Member State **civil servants** should be conditional on their knowledge of at least another EU language in addition to their own.

III.2.c Promote cooperation between education systems and recognition of qualifications

Action should focus on the comparison of qualifications through enhanced cooperation between education systems and educational establishments

- 19 The EU and Member States should expand co-operation between education systems and establishments (using existing instruments and programmes such as the European Social Fund, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth) in order to improve **comparison between educational qualifications** and facilitate movements of students between systems in different countries.
- 20 The EU and Member States, together with the social partners and relevant professional associations, should initiate a process of co-operation aimed at developing a new approach to the **understanding, evaluation and recognition of qualifications and work**

experience. Such an approach might be based on voluntary minimum standards in education and training, thereby creating a stronger basis for transparency and trust.

- 21 Social partners should ensure in the context of collective bargaining that references to **qualifications in collective agreements** are not limited to local, regional or national qualifications.

III.2.d Develop an EU-wide immigration policy

As well as ensuring an even-handed treatment of migrant workers, an EU-wide immigration policy would contribute to a strengthening of geographical mobility in Europe.

- 22 In order to enhance the contribution that immigration can make to the functioning of the European labour markets, improve the access of third country nationals to the acquisition of skills as well as their opportunities and equal treatment in the context of occupational and geographic mobility, the European Union should develop a **common immigration policy** by 2004. The development of this policy should take into account the Commission's recent Communications which establish the basis for positive action. In particular, third country nationals with residence permits should have the same rights to the recognition of qualifications as EU citizens²⁰. Progress in this regard on the legal base²¹ is to be welcomed and should be followed up rapidly with agreement on a Directive.

III.3 Enhancing Information and Transparency of job opportunities

In order for effective access to be provided for citizens and the labour market actors to knowledge about skills, occupational and geographic mobility, adequate information systems are required. National systems and networks for the exchange of information within Member States need to be strengthened, involving a range of different agencies, and specific efforts need to be undertaken to raise the image of certain sectors. Co-ordinated information via a One-stop site should be provided on job vacancies and applications, CVs, labour market demand and supply, wages, learning opportunities, guidance and counselling, the contents and equivalence of qualifications, living and working conditions, pensions, tax questions, etc. Existing EU systems such as EURES, Dialogue with Citizens, and others need to be developed further and exploited to the full. Member States should ensure that information is available on request, strengthen the national systems and networks for the exchange of information, and ensure that the relevant information on labour mobility requested by employers and employees is freely accessible.

- 23 The EU should launch a **One-stop European Mobility Information Site** by 2002 to provide comprehensive, easily accessible and free information to citizens on key aspects of jobs, mobility and learning opportunities in Europe (including a jobs and learning database), individual interests and rights, and other information. In this context it should modernise and re-enforce the operation of the **EURES** system by 2002 and integrate into the national systems. It should also launch the revision of the **classification of occupations** by 2002 in order to achieve easily comparable occupations.

²⁰ 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

²¹ Council of Ministers 03/12 2001

- 24 In the context of the on-going establishment by the Commission of an Internet portal on **learning opportunities**, Member States should ensure by 2002 the availability of relevant national online databases which can be interconnected through the portal.
- 25 The EU should launch a Europe-wide mobility **information campaign** in 2002 targeted at employers and workers on the key dimensions, opportunities and possibilities provided by the Internal Market and the European labour markets.
- 26 Social partners should initiate **information campaigns** to help update and improve the image of some industrial sectors and aim to bring more skilled women into such sectors.

IV. Conclusions

In order for the European labour markets to be open to all and accessible for all by 2005, a series of measures should be taken by the Member States, employers, the social partners and the EU authorities. The policy initiatives outlined in this report are intended to make a contribution to the overall objective of opening up the European labour markets and improving skills. The Commission should take into account the above recommendations in the Action Plan for Skills and Mobility which it intends to submit to the Barcelona European Council in March 2002, and further as an input in the revision of the European Employment Strategy, foreseen in 2002.

Annexes:

1-Task Force membership

2-List of submissions/presentations made available to the Task Force

**HIGH LEVEL TASK FORCE ON SKILLS AND MOBILITY
LIST OF MEMBERS**

Chairman:

- ***Dr Ulrich Schumacher (DE)***, CEO of Infineon Technologies (SIEMENS group)

Experts in Labour Market and Education:

- ***Dr Ritzen (NL)***, Vice-President of the World Bank responsible for Human Development; Former Minister of Education in the Netherlands
- ***Mr Juan Chozas (ES)***, Secretary General for Employment
- ***Ms Lore Hostasch (AU)*** Former Minister of Labour
- ***Mr Tito Boeri (IT)*** Professor of labour market economics, Bocconi University

Experts from Industry:

- ***Mr Giles Clarke (UK)***, EU 500 entrepreneur (Majestic Wine, Pet City, Chairman of Fosters Rooms Ltd.)
- ***Mr Jan E Kvarnström (SV)***, Chairman, Castellum AB, former CEO Esselte and Securum
- ***Ms Rose-Marie Van Lerberghe (FR)***, Director General Altedia Group (Communications and human resources)

Experts with Trades Union experience:

- ***Mr John Monks (UK)***, General Secretary of TUC
- ***Mrs Mona Hemmer (FIN)*** Former Vice President of EUROCADRES, former head of International affairs for AKAVA, the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED BY THE TASK FORCE ON SKILLS AND MOBILITY

ANNEX 2

NAME OF THE DOCUMENT	ORGANISATION	AUTHOR	DATE	INTERNET ADDRESS
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Human resources, benefits of education and training and skill mismatch in Europe: Implications for the design of vocational education and training	CEDEFOP	Manfred Tessaring	-	www.cedefop.eu.int/
Methodologies and systems for identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning; questions and challenges	CEDEFOP	Jens Bjornavold	-	www.cedefop.eu.int/
Towards an educational reinterpretation of the concept of 'new basic skills'	CEDEFOP	Pekka Kämäräinen	-	www.cedefop.eu.int/

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