II

(Acts whose publication is not obligatory)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 30 June 1993

on access to continuing vocational training

(93/404/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 128 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission [1],

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament [2],

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee [3],

Whereas the first principle established by Council Decision 63/266/EEC of 2 April 1963 laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy [4] states that every person should receive adequate training, with particular reference to the need to promote basic and advanced vocational training and, where appropriate, retraining suitable for the various stages of working life, and the need to offer to every person, by means of permanent facilities for vocational advancement, the opportunity to gain promotion or to receive instruction for a new and higher level of activity;

Whereas, under the terms of Decision 63/266/EEC, it is the responsibility of the Member States and the competent institutions of the Community to apply such general principles within the framework of the Treaty;

Whereas the development of human resources by means of vocational training is one of the essential elements in increasing the competitiveness of the European economy; whereas, as affirmed by the European Council meeting in Hanover on 27 and 28 June 1988, the achievement of the Single Market must be accompanied by increased access to continuing training;

Whereas technological developments, their impact on employees' skills and the growth of unemployment make it necessary to develop access to continuing vocational training;

Whereas point 15 of the Community Charter of the fundamental social rights of workers, adopted by the Heads of State and Government of 11 Member States at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 9 December 1989, states in particular that:

> 'Every worker of the European Community must be able to have access to vocational training and to benefit therefrom throughout his working life. In the conditions governing access to such training there may be no discrimination on grounds of nationality.
>
> The competent public authorities, undertakings or the two sides of industry, each within their own sphere of competence, should set up continuing and permanent training systems enabling every person to undergo retraining, more especially through leave for training purposes, to improve his skills or to acquire new skills, particularly in the light of technical developments.';

[1] OJ No C 23, 27. 1. 1993, p. 8.
[2] OJ No C 150, 31. 5. 1993.
[3] OJ No C 129, 10. 5. 1993, p. 57.
[4] OJ No 63, 20. 4. 1963, p. 1338/63.

Whereas vocational training remains of constant concern to both employers and workers in the context of the dialogue between the two sides of industry [1];

Whereas the Economic and Social Committee adopted a report on 22 October 1992 on vocational training as a means of promoting vocational qualifications and a strategic instrument for the economic and social development of the European Community;

Whereas on 21 April 1993 the European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report on vocational training policy in the European Community for the 1990s, in which the subject of access to continuing training is considered;

Whereas transnational cooperation measures have been undertaken at Community level [2];

Whereas demographic trends will significantly reduce the number of young people entering the Community labour market, which, together with changes in the working environment, must lead to an updating and greater adaptation of skills among the working population;

Whereas it has been noted throughout the Community that the problems faced by women in gaining access to employment are largely attributable to their limited access to vocational training; whereas particular attention must be devoted to ensuring that women have effective access to continuing vocational training; whereas the increase in the number of working women should also be taken into account [3];

Whereas cooperation in the field of continuing vocational training should also be based on existing provisions in force in the Member States, while respecting the diversity of national legal systems and practices, the powers under national law of the parties concerned and contractual autonomy; whereas the initiatives taken at national level by the Member States and the two sides of industry are many and varied; whereas it appears, as regards the Community Charter of the fundamental social rights of workers, and taking into account the international dimension of the action, that they should be supported at Community level; whereas, finally, it is essential to encourage a synergy of resources and promote partnerships between the public and private sectors;

Whereas the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training has been consulted; whereas it has recognized the strategic importance of the question of continuing vocational training in undertakings, for the Member States and for the Community, and the necessity for the Community to be seen to play an active role in this area,

I. RECOMMENDS that Member States, taking into account the resources available and the respective responsibilities of the competent public authorities, undertakings and the two sides of industry, while respecting the diversity of national legal systems and/or practices, gear their vocational training policies to ensuring that every worker of the Community must be able to have access to continuing vocational training without any form of discrimination and to benefit therefrom throughout his or her working life;

II. RECOMMENDS that, in order to provide easy access for as many employees as possible, Member States:

1. raise awareness among undertakings about the links between workers' skills and the competitiveness of undertakings to encourage them to give priority to improving the quality and skills of their employees and to establish

[1] See following texts:
- joint opinion of 6 March 1987 on training and motivation, information and consultation,
- joint opinion of 13 February 1990 on the creation of a European occupational and geographical mobility area and improving the operation of the labour market in Europe,
- joint opinion of 19 June 1990 on basic education and initial, vocational and adult training,
- joint opinion of 21 September 1991 on ways of facilitating the broadest possible effective access to training opportunities,
- agreement of 31 October 1991 between the two sides of industry at European level,
- European Framework Agreement of 6 September 1990 between the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP) on training in public enterprises.

[2] See following texts:
- Council Decision 90/267/EEC of 29 May 1990 establishing an action programme for the development of continuing vocational training in the European Community (Force) (OJ No L 156, 21. 6. 1990, p. 1),
- Council Decision 89/657/EEC of 18 December 1989 establishing an action programme to promote innovation in the field of vocational training resulting from technological change in the European Community (Eurotecnet) (OJ No L 393, 30. 12. 1989, p. 29), both as amended by Decision 92/170/EEC (OJ No L 75, 21. 3. 1992, p. 51),
- Council Decision 89/27/EEC of 16 December 1988 adopting the second phase of the programme on cooperation between universities and industry regarding training in the field of technology (Comett II) (OJ No L 13, 17. 1. 1989, p. 28),
- Council Decision 91/387/EEC of 22 July 1991 amending Decision 87/569/EEC concerning an action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life (Petra) (OJ No L 214, 2. 8. 1991, p. 69),
- Council Regulation (EEC) No 4255/88 of 19 December 1988 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the European Social Fund (OJ No L 374, 31. 12. 1988, p. 21).

[3] Commission of the European Communities: *Employment in Europe* (1992).

training plans and programmes appropriate to their size and business objectives, making their managers aware of requirements in this respect and informing them accordingly.

These plans and programmes may be established by taking into account available human and financial resources, the organization of work, future skill requirements, the need to anticipate industrial and technological change and the transnational dimension of continuing vocational training;

2. make provision for specific incentives and technical support measures for small and medium-sized undertakings.

These could include, for example, assistance with regard to advice on training and assistance with regard to analysis of training needs;

3. encourage undertakings to give impetus to the continuing vocational training necessary for their development, taking account of the particular situation of the employees of the undertakings, particularly in order to promote, where appropriate, the measures described below;

4. make provision for specific incentives and technical support measures which are appropriate, necessary and adequate for undertakings facing industrial change, in order to encourage vocational training and retraining for their employees;

5. develop continuing vocational training in order to make it an important feature of regional and local development, taking into account the specific needs of employees and undertakings;

support the establishment of partnerships, particularly at regional or local level, to analyse the requirements of undertakings and employees and to provide up-to-date information on training opportunities in order to match supply and demand as closely as possible;

6. impress on employers that they should inform their employees as soon as possible and, if necessary, at the time of their recruitment, about the undertaking's policy and activities in the field of continuing vocational training and staff development and about the terms of access to continuing vocational training, including the possibility of being assigned non-active status for the purpose of continuing vocational training;

7. support initiatives which enable workers who so desire to assess their continuing vocational training needs.

This assessment should be carried out within or outside the undertaking and/or in partnership with specialized institutions.

The use of the results must be confidential;

8. encourage the information and consultation of employees' representatives or, in the absence of such representatives, the employees themselves on the development and implementation of the training plans and programmes of the undertaking concerned;

9. make employees and undertakings more aware of the importance of continuing vocational training leading to qualifications relevant to the employment market.

To this end, it should be ensured that training is not directed specifically towards the post in question alone but that it provides the means of anticipating and mastering developments in production systems and the organization of work in order to strengthen the competitiveness of undertakings and improve employees' job prospects;

10. encourage the development of the most suitable teaching and learning methods in continuing vocational training which will facilitate access to continuing vocational training for employees, e.g. methods of self-training on the job, distance learning, media-assisted learning, etc;

11. help less-qualified employees, whatever their status, to benefit from continuing vocational training measures enabling them to achieve a basic level of qualification and giving them the basis for mastery of new technologies.

Particular attention should be paid to providing access to continuing training for employees or groups of employees who have not benefited from training for a certain length of time or who have limited opportunities for employment and job prospects;

12. encourage access for, and effective participation by, women in continuing vocational training.

This may in particular help to open up new professional fields to women and encourage the resumption of a professional activity after a break in such activity;

13. promote access to continuing vocational training for young people with a vocational qualification or work experience, whatever their level of skills, and encourage their participation therein, in order to enable them to realise their full potential and acquire skills for the present and the future;

14. encourage access to, and participation in, continuing vocational training by the unemployed.

    Particular attention should be paid to the long-term unemployed with inadequate and/or unsuitable qualifications, in order to improve their occupational integration or reintegration.

    The continuing vocational training of the unemployed which involves action by undertakings is particularly suited to promoting reintegration into the labour market;

15. encourage, in policies on access to continuing vocational training, a transnational dimension, in particular to assist the free movement of workers;

III. 1. INVITES the Commission to reinforce cooperation with Member States and the two sides of industry, in particular within the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, in order to support the implementation of point II;

2. INVITES the Commission to this end, in concert with the Member States and by utilizing the existing Community action programmes and initiatives in the field of training including, where appropriate, the European Social Fund, and specialized bodies within the Community such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), to:

   (a) disseminate and add to the body of comparative information on continuing vocational training systems, including existing provisions and methods for integrating young job-seekers and the long-term unemployed into the labour market;

   (b) facilitate suitable exchanges of experience in and methods for significant innovations in continuing training;

   (c) support transfers of know-how between Member States, which are important for implementing point II, by means of transnational partnerships and networks, especially for the benefit of regions, sectors, types of undertaking and groups of employees for whom access to continuing training is least developed;

3. Also INVITES the Commission to support moves by both sides of industry at Community level, within the dialogue between them, to discuss access to continuing training in greater depth; such dialogue could, if the two sides consider it desirable, lead to relations based on agreement;

IV. 1. INVITES Member States to provide the Commission, three years after the date of adoption of this recommendation, with a report setting out the measures taken under the terms of points I and II;

2. INVITES the Commission:

   (a) on the basis of the reports from the Member States and the results of the dialogue between the two sides of industry, to draw up an assessment report on progress made on the basis of the recommendation in points I and II in the sphere of access to continuing vocational training in the Community;

   (b) to submit this assessment report, not later than one year after the date referred to in point IV.1, to the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training;

3. INVITES the Commission to submit this report to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee and to send it to the two sides of industry at Community level.

Done at Luxembourg, 30 June 1993.

For the Council

The President

S. BERGSTEIN