Access to continuing training in the Union. Report

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OBJECTIVE: to formulate a number of priorities for promoting continuing training and access to skills in the years ahead in Europe. SUBSTANCE: the main purpose of the report is to draw conclusions from the implementation of the recommendation of June 1993 on access to continuing training and to formulate objectives with a view to continuing Community measures in this field. At the end of the report, in order to give some impetus to the debate among the Community bodies concerned, the Commission states three major objectives, to which it links three pointers for further action in the years ahead. At a later date, and in the light of responses to its action guidelines, it will make proposals for their implementation. -action guideline no 1: the Commission notes that real but inadequate progress has been made, given the technological, environmental and socio-economic changes taking place. Moreover, this progress is uneven in terms of social categories and types of worker gaining access to training. The Commission proposes pressing ahead with current developments while seeking to reduce inequalities. It suggests establishing at Community level common conditions for facilitating access, also at sectoral level. These would be established through consultations with the two sides of industry at Community level, which could also be extended to deal with problems of access to skills; -action guideline no 2: the Commission notes that the various parties involved in continuing training (enterprises, public authorities, the two sides of industry) are finding it difficult to formulate a real strategy in this field. It therefore proposes providing the various parties, public and private, with a permanent frame of reference which will keep them abreast of the continuing training access situation, enabling them to size up the situation and define their goals better. To this end it proposes to perpetuate the process initiated by the follow-up to the recommendation, namely the drawing up of national reports on access to training. The aim is regularly to produce material which could be used as a basis for comparison and for formulating common criteria. The Commission would help to improve this reporting system by periodically conducting the continual vocational training study (CVTS) and Community survey programmes on qualitative aspects and the continuing-training needs of new sectors. The Observatory for Industrial Relations (Dublin Foundation) could also be asked to supplement the information available concerning the collective agreements of the Member States. The Commission suggests that these reports should be drawn up every three years in all Member States and that an aggregated Europe-wide report be published a year later. This would make it possible to 'benchmark' (carry out a comparative evaluation of) progress made in respect of access to continuing training, using an array of common indicators: participation rate, company policies, innovations, etc. The national and Community data would thus be made available to the parties concerned to help them determine new ways of promoting access as well as to utilize Community data thanks to a comparative evaluation scale for performance and sound national practices. -action guideline no 3: the Commission states that continuing training is witnessing numerous innovations, a trend which will be boosted by development of new training or skill-evaluation tools. Changes in work organization are also opening up novel forms of access to continuous training. However, the transfer of innovative practices is not fast enough. The Commission therefore proposes fostering the development of a European industry covering multimedia tools for use in continuing training and encouraging the development of innovative practices. It accordingly proposes: -to present in 1997 a plan for action on vocational training, 'Learning in the information society', -to extend the pilot projects for skill self-accreditation to occupational fields involving both technical and horizontal skills, -to give preference to transnational pilot projects centring on new access factors and to try out factors which could contribute to widening access, viz.: .projects linking development of access with adaptation/reduction of working hours, preferably involving industrial sectors, .projects linking new types of work organization with development of access, particularly through individualized training-and-work contracts, preferably involving innovative companies.