

Organisers state:

We used the study visits programme to present our innovative methodology on the soft competences toolkit to experts of other Member States. As a result we developed [transfer of innovation] projects and now our toolkit is transferred to Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Turkey.

REGIONAL COUNSELLING INFORMATION CENTRE, CZECH REPUBLIC, A STUDY VISIT ORGANISED IN 2010

Results of our study visit fed into the national reform on external evaluation of schools and monitoring of school provision. We identified gaps in our former evaluation and monitoring activities and introduced new methods and tools (lesson observation, self-assessment, and risk-based analysis) inspired by examples of good practice from other countries.

PORTUGUESE INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION, STUDY VISITS ORGANISED IN 2009 AND 2010

It is difficult to see how we each could have had this experience without the study visit!



The study visits programme for education and vocational training specialists, part of the lifelong learning programme (2007-13), is an initiative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Cedefop coordinates the programme at the European level, whereas the national agencies implement the programme in the participating countries.

Overview of the survey

Year	Number of study visits	Participants		Organisers	
		Number of participants	Number of questionnaires received	Number of organisers	Number of questionnaires received
2008/09	246	2 532	983	no survey	
2009/10	230	2 360	995	222	110
2010/11	243	2 723	1 154	270	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>7 615</b>	<b>3 132</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>241</b>

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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# Study visits: unlocking the potential for better education and training in Europe

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## Some first-hand stories

Participants state:

Never have I believed that the experience acquired during a study visit could change my life or offer a new vision towards cooperation, partnerships and modern education. It was a brilliant experience that expanded my professional and cultural horizon. After the visit, I kept contact with participants in order to cooperate on European projects. We developed a socio-educational project, 'Let's break the silence' for preventing violence among young people. [...] I offered real support at local and regional levels as far as a school-parents-local authority partnership is concerned. [...] My activity was acknowledged in my town and I was elected local councillor and appointed headmistress at my school. I continue to promote and disseminate experience from England that helped me.

AN EDUCATION COORDINATOR FROM ROMANIA

My participation in the study visit on regional cooperation in adult education in Sweden brought a lot of new ideas, which were transferred to the German context, both at national and local levels. Three areas were important: bringing together different vocational training centres, partly even competitors, at management level; a common market approach to provide training and cooperation with industry. A steering group was established at national level for now 17 vocational training centres ("Bildungsinitiative Handwerk"). Different chambers of skilled crafts and trades joined in a national project with focus on creating methods for common development of training products with heterogeneous partners.

A MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE CHAMBER OF CRAFTS HAMBURG, GERMANY

On my return, I spoke to responsible policy-makers in our region about the ideas I was going to apply at my school. We received better support from regional authorities and the school's visibility improved. We have modified our education offer: apart from the government-funded courses, we started courses funded by companies to prepare future workers based on company needs. We also have created a professional guidance department and now our work is similar to an employment office as we try to find jobs for our graduates.

A DIRECTOR OF A VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CENTRE, SPAIN

## Multifaceted benefits

[Observing teaching practice in Romania] highlighted the benefit of reflecting on one's own system and [allowed] to see one's work in a new light'.

A HEAD TEACHER FROM AUSTRIA

The educational experience we focused on was something completely different from my country and it posed some challenging questions to most of the participants [...] The Austrian experience was quite different and inspiring in some ways'.

AN EDUCATION EXPERT FROM TURKEY

Meeting colleagues from different countries, visiting schools and getting to know so many projects and initiatives on entrepreneurship was very inspiring. The list of good practices was long; one of them inspired me in my work'.

AN OWNER OF A SMALL COMPANY FROM THE NETHERLANDS

The most important benefit is to get to know people from other countries and to hear their experiences, how their work is structured, how processes work, how they handle problems and how they evaluate their results'.

A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT FROM GERMANY

### Who benefits?

Between 2008 and 2011, 7 615 people from 33 countries received a grant from the EU to take part in 719 study visits organised in 29 countries. The visits were hosted by around 500 education and training institutions and organisations; 97% of participants and 96% of organisers reported that they were satisfied with their study visits.

But what did they do with their new knowledge and experience after the visit? Cedefop surveyed both participants and organisers to find out (\*).

### What is most beneficial?

The biggest benefit that participants reported was the opportunity to meet knowledgeable and motivated professionals from several countries for a few days of intensive discussions. Most felt they could not otherwise have gained access to such a wealth of knowledge about education and training in Europe.

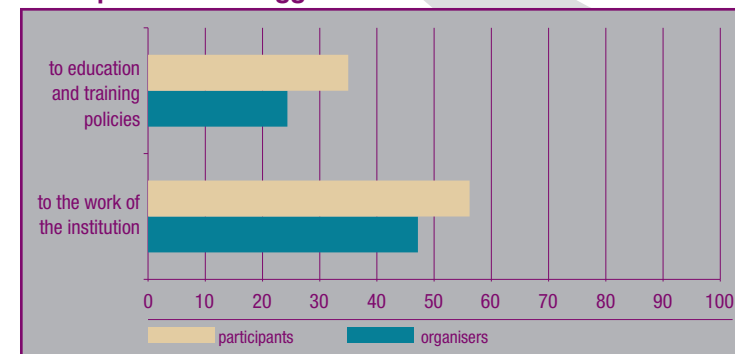
**Directors of schools and head teachers** most valued the opportunity to establish contacts, cooperation projects and partnerships for their schools, and to set up exchanges for their students and teachers. They also valued being able to discuss issues of school leadership, and community outreach with peers from other countries.

Similarly, **head teachers and teacher trainers** benefited from learning from their peers how other countries deal with common issues.

**Representatives of local, regional and national authorities** reported learning much at system level: how schools, vocational education and training and adult learning systems work together in other countries. Taking part in visits or related activities allowed them to explore policy options in greater detail with their European peers, and discuss solutions to common problems.

**Employers - owners of small and medium-sized enterprises** – reported that they brought back ideas on how to improve learning and training in their companies.

### Participants made suggestions



(\* The percentage describing participants' views is average for three years, 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11. Data on organisers are analysed as a sum of two years (2009/10, 2010/11).

## Changing education and training

I learned so much that my vision of education has changed completely; I am now a different person and a different teacher'.

A PEDAGOGICAL ADVISOR FROM SPAIN

To be effective, mobility of teachers should result in improved teaching practice and benefits for students'.

AN EDUCATION INSPECTOR FROM FRANCE

Things that seem 'impossible' to one country are perfectly implemented in another'.

A TRAINING EXPERT FROM GREECE

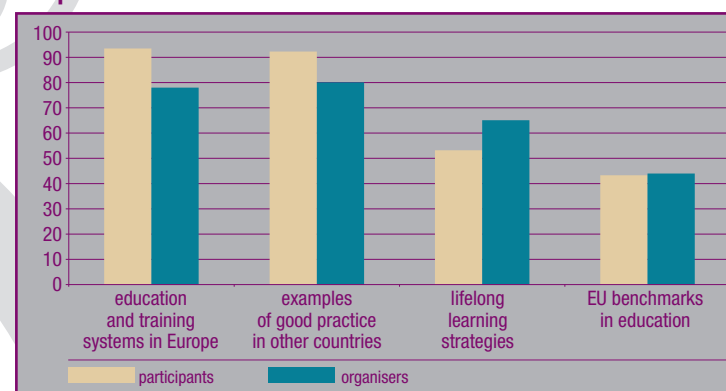
### How does change come about?

The visits make participants more aware of priorities of European policy and the principles and tools that govern education and training across Europe.

For example, 53% of participants and 65% of organisers reported becoming more aware of lifelong learning strategies in the EU and in Member States, while 28% of participants reported better knowledge of European tools, such as the European qualifications framework (EQF) and Europass.

Most participants and organisers learned about good practices for supporting new teachers, continuing professional development of teachers, making vocational training more attractive, and better cooperation between education and training and the world of work.

### Respondents became better aware of:

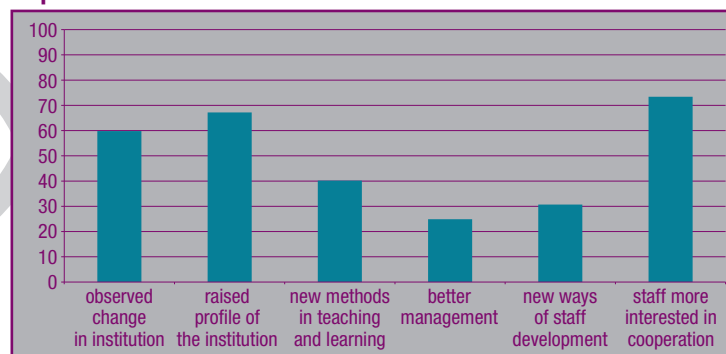


After the study visit, 98% of participants shared their learning experiences with their management, colleagues and other professionals.

As a direct outcome of the visit, 57% of participants proposed changes to improve work of their institutions. In most cases (85%) these changes were implemented.

Proposed changes concerned new approaches to curricula, support to teachers, cooperation with the community and the labour market, involving parents, students and staff mobility, better use of ICT for learning, inclusive education, leadership and management in their institutions.

### Impact on host institutions



It was very interesting to learn how the same issue is dealt with in different parts of Europe and some solutions were actually very interesting to try to implement in my country. On the other hand, I could realise that my country is also doing many positive things that I could share with others'.

A CITY COUNCILLOR FROM PORTUGAL

Meeting policy-makers and those responsible for implementing policy provided a broad and authentic experience of how the German model of dual vocational training operates in practice'.

A DEVELOPMENT OFFICER FROM IRELAND

Almost 60% of organisers confirmed that after the study visit something changed in their organisations. Hosting a study visit led to introducing new methods and ways of teaching and learning, improving management and providing better professional development for staff.

### What do policies gain?

Study visit participants bring examples of good policies and practice to the attention of their local, regional or national policy- and decision-makers.

About 58% of participants and more than half of organisers shared their experiences with policy- and decision-makers at local level; 35% of participants and 46% of organisers did so at regional level. About 17% of participants and more than one third of organisers brought their experiences to national level (33.2%).

In countries with decentralised systems the effect on education and training can be significant. About a third of participants and about 16% of organisers said they made suggestions about existing policies, and most concerned local and regional education and training policies.

Policy suggestions ranged across the entire spectrum of education and training, from increasing school autonomy and cooperation with social partners and the world of work through developing creativity, ICT and soft skills, language learning and adult education.

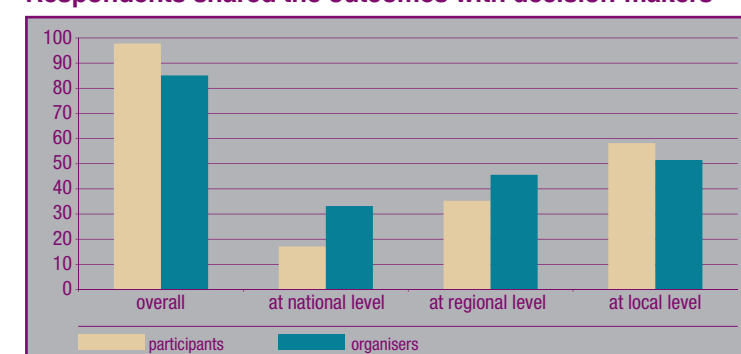
### Who brings about change?

All categories of study visit participants are chosen for their ability to affect education and training policy and practice. They are (average participation rates):

- directors of education and training institutions (16.4%);
- head teachers and teacher trainers (25.6%);
- representatives of local, regional and national authorities (10.6%);
- representatives of trade unions and employers' associations (5.5%).

Together they represent an immense potential for change: more than half of all participants come from organisations with more than 50 employees, among them about 30% represent organisations with 51-250 employees and about 20% represent organisations with more than 500 employees.

### Respondents shared the outcomes with decision-makers



## Increasing European cooperation

Most beneficial was meeting potential partners and securing a partnership that then resulted in a successful Leonardo mobility project'.

A PROJECT COORDINATOR FROM UK

My school has enlarged its network of European schools, social partners and stakeholders to cooperate with, and as a result, the Ministry of Education in Malta joined us in a European project'.

A TEACHER TRAINER FROM MALTA

Participants and organisers become more aware of European cooperation in education and training (72% of participants and 77% of organisers) and get more involved in international cooperation (46% of participants). Many organisers (73%) found that after hosting a visit, staff of their institutions became more interested in international exchange and cooperation, which would potentially lead to more active involvement of their institutions in cooperation.

### The study visit is over. What next?

Contacts that participants and organisers establish during a visit continue well beyond and develop into partnerships.

About 51% of participants and 60% of organisers use their new contacts to establish cooperation between institutions and more than 30% of both cooperate to develop a cooperation project proposal. More than 85% of participants and organisers continue to keep in touch and exchange professional information with their groups.

The best proof of relevance and value of study visits is that, after participating, both hosts and guests become champions of the programme.

Most study visit organisers (88%) are willing to host another visit in the future. Participants of study visits propose that their organisations host a study visit, while former organisers go to other countries as participants to learn more about their topics of interest.

### Respondents increased European cooperation

