



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 02.05.2002
COM(2002) 214 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**Report on the implementation
of the Decision 1999/51/EC of the Council of 21 December 1998 on the promotion of
European pathways in work-linked training, including apprenticeship**

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

Report on the implementation of the Decision 1999/51/EC of the Council of 21 December 1998 on the promotion of European pathways in work-linked training, including apprenticeship

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction.....	4
1.1.	Purpose and structure of this report	4
1.2.	The Decision on the promotion of European pathways.....	4
1.3.	Evaluation	5
2.	The implementation framework.....	5
2.1.	Co-ordination and centralised activities	5
2.1.1.	Co-ordination	6
2.1.2.	Production of “Europass Training” documents.....	7
2.1.3.	Information.....	7
2.1.4.	Financial management	8
2.2.	The national implementation structures	8
2.2.1.	The national contact points and their tasks	8
2.2.2.	Different national approaches.....	9
3.	Implementation activities	10
3.1.	National policies and practices	10
3.1.1.	Identifying the European pathways.....	10
3.1.2.	Delivery procedures and practical handling.....	11
3.2.	Data on the European pathways and the use of the “Europass Training” documents	12
3.2.1.	Volume per country	12
3.2.2.	Flows between countries.....	13
3.2.3.	Duration of traineeships	14
3.2.4.	Gender and age of “Europass Training” holders	15
3.2.5.	Education level and type of institutions	15
3.2.6.	Sectoral participation and SME involvement	16

3.2.7.	Relations with other programmes and initiatives.....	16
3.3.	Information and promotion	17
3.4.	Evaluation	18
4.	Conclusions	19

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose and structure of this report

The purpose of this report is to inform the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of Decision 1999/51/EC, as requested by Article 9 of the Decision.

Section 1.2 briefly outlines the aims and the main concepts and provisions of the Decision. Section 2 describes how the implementation has been organised at European and national level, while Section 3 reports on the actual implementation on the ground. Section 4 summarises the main facts¹.

1.2. The Decision on the promotion of European pathways

On 21 December 1998 the Council adopted its Decision 1999/51/EC on the promotion of European pathways in work-linked training, including apprenticeship. The Decision was published in Official Journal L 17 of 22 January 1999, p. 45, and entered into force on 1 January 2000.

The Decision acknowledges the global objectives of promoting the mobility of persons in training (recital 1), improving employment prospects for young people and contributing to a more effective social and occupational integration into working life and the labour market (recitals 6 and 7), and improving the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training (recital 8).

To achieve the specific objective of encouraging periods of vocational training in other Member States and contribute to their quality (recitals 8-10), the Decision defines the European pathways (Articles 1 and 2), sets the quality principles for carrying them out (Article 3) and creates the “Europass Training” document (Articles 2 and 4).

A European pathway is a period of training which a person undergoing work-linked training, including apprenticeship, has followed in a Member State other than that in which his/her training is based. The “Europass Training” is a Community information document which certifies that the European pathway has been undertaken and describes its contents in the languages concerned.

European pathways may take place within Community funded programmes and initiatives, particularly the “Leonardo da Vinci” programme, and in any other framework. The use of the “Europass Training” document is voluntary: bodies which organise initiatives that can qualify as European pathways may choose not to use it.

Indications are given on support and implementation measures (Article 6), and a financial reference amount of ECU 7.3 million is specified for the period 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2004.

¹ This report is based on a study prepared by a consultant, BBJ Consult AG, in December 2001, and on information directly provided by the national implementation bodies.

The Decision refers only to Member States, both as countries of provenance and as host countries of European training pathways. However, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein have also become involved since the entry into force (on 1 August 2000) of EEA Joint Committee Decision No 36/2000, amending Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement, on co-operation in specific fields outside the four freedoms..

Article 9 calls for a report on the implementation of the Decision to be submitted to the European Parliament and the Council three years after the adoption of the Decision. The present report fulfils this requirement.

Article 9 also asks for an evaluation of the impact of the Decision, which might be followed by proposals. This requirement will be fulfilled by carrying out an intermediate evaluation in the second half of 2002, based on two years of implementation (cf. below).

1.3. Evaluation

As mentioned above, this implementation report is not intended as an evaluation in itself, although it will be useful for evaluation purposes, offering a first overview of the implementation.

An evaluation plan has been devised, including a two-day seminar on 3 and 4 June 2002, within the programme of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, and an intermediate evaluation (tender launched in January 2002, report expected for December 2002).

By Summer 2002, the “Europass Training” initiative will have been in operation long enough to allow sufficient information to be gathered in all countries on the implementation and its effects. In particular, a cohort of “Europass Training” holders will have been on the labour market for a full year in a number of countries. It will also be possible to examine the expediency of practical integration with other tools being developed in the field of recognition and validation of non-formal learning.

2. THE IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The implementation of the Decision is largely decentralised. This is a necessary feature of the “Europass Training” initiative, as the quality control on prospective European pathways can only be done at national level, or possibly at regional level with national co-ordination. At European level, general co-ordination and some centralised activities are carried out.

2.1. Co-ordination and centralised activities

The Commission is responsible for co-ordination, production of documents and central stock management, information at Community level, management of the budgetary line and overall evaluation.

These tasks are the responsibility of the Directorate General for Education and Culture, more specifically Directorate B (Vocational training).

2.1.1. *Co-ordination*

The main tools for co-ordination and exchange of information are periodic meetings with all national representatives on the Commission's premises, electronic and postal correspondence, and a very limited number of missions. A non-binding co-operation charter was agreed by national representatives.

The preparatory phase included two expert meetings, attended by representatives from national authorities of Member States, EEA countries and candidate countries, as well as representatives of the European social partners. These were in Brussels on 28 May and 11 November 1999.

When implementation began with the entry into force of the Decision on 1 January 2000, the Commission asked the Permanent Representations to give it details of the representatives of whichever bodies were officially designated by Member States to manage the implementation at national level. Meetings held in the operational phase were for these representatives only. Representatives of the European social partners were also invited to attend these meetings as observers.

Three such meetings were held in 2000 (12 May and 29 September), one in 2001 (6 June). A fourth meeting was scheduled for 22 February 2002.

The May 2000 meeting focused on reaching agreement on a co-operation charter (see below) and financial issues. The subsequent meetings were used to exchange information and discuss practical problems. The next one was due to look at intermediate evaluation and the new financial framework.

Between meetings, contacts between NCPs and the Commission – mostly by e-mail – were frequent, totalling several hundred per year. In the starting phase, they often concerned doubts about delivery criteria and procedures; later they tended to focus on the exchange of information for mostly managerial purposes, related to financial support and the stock of documents. documentation.

Missions were not frequent; Commission staff attended some of the national launch conferences or related events.

The Co-operation Charter

At the first and second meetings, the national representatives discussed and eventually agreed upon a co-operation charter (which had already been the subject of the meeting of experts in the preparatory phase). It is a non-binding document, established for operational purposes, the understanding being that Member States will apply it on a voluntary basis. It aims to facilitate co-operation by defining common quality criteria and setting out what action is expected at national and European level, as derived from Decision 1999/51/EC.

Referring to the appropriate articles of the Decision or to the relevant documents, the charter explicitly defines the geographical scope of the Decision, its object and target, and the common quality criteria. For example, it states that the mentor – whose importance is stressed – might be a person outside the host body (for instance, staff of an association, especially if the host organisation is a small enterprise). The charter

then defines some working arrangements concerning the operational aspects of implementation – for instance, that the Commission will supply “Europass Training” documents only to NCPs (or specialised agencies indicated by the NCPs).

2.1.2. Production of “Europass Training” documents

The “Europass Training” documents are produced centrally by the Commission.

Based on indications from Member States, the first print-run was 300 000 copies – all EU languages together; English, French and German accounted for more than half. In 2001 a reprint was ordered for a total of 100 000 copies – almost half in German – to ensure that stocks would meet the demand over the following years.

In accordance with the detailed directions in the Annex to the Decision, the “Europass Training” document is an A5 booklet of 16 pages: the twelve pages described by the Annex plus four pages containing the translation in the eleven official languages of the European Union.

The Commission manages the central stocks and supplies the “Europass Training” documents to NCPs at their request, and to them only, as agreed in the co-operation charter (cf. § 2.1.1 above).

2.1.3. Information

Information activities at European level included events, the production of two information documents, to be used during the launch phase, and running a Web page on the Europa server.

The European launch conference was held on 22-23 February 2000, in Costa da Caparica, under the programme of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union. Opened by the Portuguese Secretary of State for Employment and Training, it included several presentations and discussion panels, and was attended by two Commission officials.

The “Europass Training” initiative had already been presented in the form of a seminar within the “Training 2000” event (Brussels, 27-28 January 2000). The presentation was attended by about three hundred people, mainly promoters and representatives of national or local authorities.

The 16-page information booklet – targeting promoters and practitioners – describes the objectives and structure of the “Europass Training” document, and gives directions for its use. The 8-page flier is more of a promotional device, targeting trainees. Both are available in all EU languages and contain the addresses of the national contact points. In all, 225 000 copies (all languages) were printed. They were mainly circulated through the national implementation bodies, though in the first months some were supplied directly by the Commission to other bodies in the Member States. A second reprint has not been deemed necessary, as their purpose was mainly to help during the launch. Both promoters and trainees can now find better targeted and up-to-date information either in nationally produced booklets or on the Internet. The “Europass Training” Web page contains reproductions of both the booklet and the flier in the eleven languages.

A few months before the entry into force, a “Europass Training” Web page was made available on the Europa server, on the website of the then DG XXII (which a few weeks later became DG Education and Culture). It provided information (in English, French and German) on the objectives and the main concepts of the initiatives. In Autumn 2000 an improved version was made available in all EU languages, offering a more detailed description, access to the text of the Decision, the booklet and the flier in the eleven languages, links to the NCPs and other useful links.

2.1.4. Financial management

Community financial support takes the form of a yearly grant to NCPs (one grant per country), awarded on the basis of a programme of implementation activities – conferences and seminars, other awareness and promotional activities, data collection and evaluation.

The Decision indicates a reference amount of € 7 300 000 for the period 2000-2004. A specific budget line – B3-1020 – has been established to manage this amount. The total amount allows for a yearly budget of about € 1 500 000, covering the costs at central level (production of documents, evaluation, etc.) and support for national activities. The average grant was € 50 000 in 2000 and € 60 000 in 2001. The real grant varies according mainly to the demographic size of the country; as an indication, in 2001 the grant for Germany was € 85 312, while Liechtenstein and the Netherlands asked for € 9 780 and € 44 965.50 respectively.

2.2. The national implementation structures

2.2.1. The national contact points and their tasks

Article 6 of the Decision calls for national authorities to “designate one or more bodies responsible for ensuring implementation at national level” and to set up the most appropriate implementation mechanism. In all Member States, the task of implementing the “Europass Training” initiative has been assigned to one or more existing bodies. These bodies are usually called “national contact points” (NCPs), adopting the name used on the European information booklet and flier.

National contact points have the following tasks:

- providing information on the “Europass Training” initiative and promoting the use of the “Europass Training” document;
- managing the stock of “Europass Training” documents in their country;
- receiving requests for “Europass Training” from bodies planning to send trainees abroad;
- after checking that the projects comply with the criteria laid down for European pathways, supplying the requested documents to training bodies;
- monitoring implementation at national level.

NCPs also provide assistance on how to apply for “Europass Training” documents, as well as directions on how to complete them. As many NCPs are also national agencies for “Leonardo da Vinci” or otherwise active as training or mobility agencies over and above the “Europass Training” initiative, contacts with potential promoters of

European pathways can be regular and NCP's might also provide practical assistance to promoters of mobility project in setting up the European pathways.

2.2.2. *Different national approaches*

While all countries identified a single body as the leading national contact point, some also designated one or more other bodies, sharing or decentralising at least some of the tasks.

All the smaller countries, Italy and the United Kingdom chose a single body to act as national contact point and actually perform most implementation tasks². In most cases they are organisations which have a much broader remit in the field of learning, and often also act as the national agency for “Leonardo da Vinci” and other transnational mobility programmes. In some cases, like in Spain and the United Kingdom, the implementation agency works in parallel with the competent government department, which may in fact perform some of the tasks, particularly representation at European level.

France designated a single body at national level (the national agency for “Socrates” and “Leonardo da Vinci”), but set up a network of regional contact points: two bodies per region, each dealing with vocational education and training provision within the remit, on the one hand, of the ministries for education and agriculture, on the other of the labour ministry. The three ministries have signed a national charter and jointly run the Europass Training mechanism. The different structures involved meet regularly, and steering committees have been set up at various levels.

Germany designated several bodies, one of which has a co-ordinating role (and is also responsible for some “Leonardo da Vinci” mobility actions). Three other bodies play an important role for specific target groups, and further bodies also contribute to the implementation, mainly through promotional activities but also actually distributing “Europass Training” documents. The Federal Ministry for Education and Research (*BMBF*) has a supervising role.

The institutional location of NCPs also varies from one country to another:

Table 1: Institutional typology of national contact points (December 2001).

Specialised agencies in transnational education and training mobility programmes ³	DK, D, E, F, I, P, N, S, UK
Umbrella organisations of training institutions	IS, NL
Education and training authorities	B (De), FIN, FL, GR
Employment and training services	B (Fr), B (NL), IRL
Ministries*	A, L

* Austria: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour, Luxembourg: Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sport.

² In Belgium three bodies were designated, one for each Community, as there is no federal authority for education and training.

³ While all of them are either Leonardo da Vinci agencies or at least responsible for the co-ordination of specific Leonardo da Vinci strands, some of them are large organisations with much wider tasks.

In several countries (for instance B-Nl, IRL), ad hoc steering committees have been set up at national and sometimes regional level (F). In other cases, this function has been taken on by an existing committee or board, competent for all activities of the body concerned (for instance DK). Representatives of the social partners are usually on these committees.

As indicated in the table below, in a minority of countries the implementation structure was largely defined and ready to start by the beginning of 2000, when the Decision entered into force. In several countries the bodies had been promptly designated, but a few further months were needed before they became operational. Only two countries experienced major delays in setting up their national mechanisms, but by the beginning of 2001 they had also become operational..

Table 2: Operational status achieved

Early 2000	A, D, DK, F, FIN, S, UK
Mid 2000	IRL, NL
Late 2000	B-De, B-Fr, B-Nl, FL, I
Early 2001	GR, ISL, L, N
Late 2001/Early 2002	E, P

3. IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

3.1. National policies and practices

NCPs have exclusive responsibility for dissemination within their respective countries. “Europass Training” documents can only be sent to mobility promoters for delivery to trainees after a check that their projects qualify as European pathway, which is clearly a task of the NCPs or of the network of internal contact and delivery points which they co-ordinate.

3.1.1. Identifying the European pathways

NCP’s in most countries reported that all documents were issued to persons who were participating in a European pathway, that complied with the criteria laid down in the Decision (Articles 2 and 3): work-linked training, as recognised or certified by the competent authorities; a partnership between sending and host bodies with an agreement on the content, objectives, duration, methods and practical aspects of the European pathway; assistance by a mentor. In a few cases the documents were withdrawn because some criteria were not satisfied or the pathway was not properly completed.

An important exception was Germany. As reported in a study carried out by the University of Cologne (cf § below), German NCP’s also issued “Europass Training” documents when not all quality criteria for European pathways were satisfied – for instance, when no mentor had been identified for the pathway. Actually, it seems that for some points a substantial number of pathways did not comply with all the criteria laid down in the Decision.

To guarantee mutual understanding and the consistent application of the quality criteria by the various stakeholders, national co-operation charters have sometimes been agreed (B-NL, F), in addition to the European co-operation charter. Some French regions also agreed on regional charters.

It seems a common concern in all countries that the “Europass Training” should not simply be used to attest any kind of mobility, but should rather be used to enhance quality in transnational mobility within vocational training.

Most countries have not restricted the scope, accepting any “work-linked” training (or education) initiative. However, in Denmark, “Europass Training” documents were only distributed to bodies recognised within the “dual” (work-linked) education and training system.

3.1.2. *Delivery procedures and practical handling*

In most countries, the following procedure was adopted: the sending organisation, whose project has been recognised as a European pathway, receives the “Europass Training” document from the NCP, completes the first page and hands it to the trainee before he or she leaves for his/her placement abroad. The host body completes the relevant sections at the end of the traineeship, and the trainee brings it back to the sending body, which takes care of any translation needed. Sometimes a small ceremony is organised, when the completed document is finally issued to its holder. Deviations from this procedure were sometimes necessary because of particular circumstances – postal delays, mistakes, etc.

One noteworthy exception is Germany (where about half of all “Europass Training” documents were distributed): the documents are sent from the sending body to its host partner, which completes the relevant parts and sends it back. The trainee only receives his/her document at the end of the whole pathway, usually at a special ceremony.

The format of the “Europass Training” document raises some practical problems, as little space is available for describing the traineeship, and handwriting or manual typing are the only ways of completing it. To enable promoters to use a computer, the Italian NCP produced small stickers.

The point is frequently made by implementation bodies and promoters that an electronic format would be more appropriate. This was also the subject of a written question by a Member of the European Parliament in summer 2000⁴.

Either for practical purposes or to enhance the status of the document, some countries chose to add some features to the “Europass Training” documents.

In particular, several countries assign a number to each “Europass Training” document (B-Fr, B-NL, GR, IRL, ISL, N, S, UK) or to each pathway (F, I). This offers some protection against loss or forgery and makes it easier to keep a check on

⁴ Written question E-2478/00 by Karl von Wogau (PPE-DE) to the Commission (24 July 2000); answer given by Commissioner Reding on behalf of the Commission (29 September 2000); OJ C 113 E, 18/04/2001 (p. 106).

what becomes of individual documents; the number is sometimes a compound code indicating the sector or type of sending institution (B-Fr, F). The date of birth of the holder is sometimes also added (ISL, N, S), and Swedish promoters can add a photograph. In the United Kingdom, “Europass Training” documents are enclosed in a plastic wallet.

The fact that a “Europass Training” document can record up to three pathways may make monitoring somewhat difficult. In many countries, the NCP only has some control over the first pathway. It then depends on the good will of the “Europass Training” holders if they let the national body know about any further pathways. The French system enables a check to be kept on subsequent pathways too; if the sending body is different, the trainee will get a new passport, while further pathways from the same body will be recorded in the same document. In some countries, particularly Germany, the NCP is responsible only for “Europass Training” documents and not the pathways. In other countries, like Italy, a new “Europass Training” document is issued for each pathway.

3.2. Data on the European pathways and the use of the “Europass Training” documents

The core implementation activity is the provision of “Europass Training” documents to their final beneficiaries through the sending bodies, which in turn receive the documents from the NCPs. NCPs bear sole responsibility for dissemination within their respective countries. “Europass Training” documents can be sent to mobility promoters for issue to trainees only after checking that their projects qualify as a European pathway: this is clearly a task of the NCPs, which may choose to do so via a co-ordinated network of internal contact and delivery points.

The actual dissemination of “Europass Training” documents to training bodies started at different times in the various countries, so that both the number of “Europass Training” documents issued to people and the availability of data vary significantly. In some countries there was a delay in setting up the dissemination mechanisms, while in others it was decided to set up and test a powerful computerised mechanism before starting to issue the documents. Since December 2001, the dissemination mechanisms have been running smoothly in all countries.

By November 2001, about 19 300 “Europass Training” documents had been issued in the 18 countries (cf. the section below).

The statistical information available so far varies from one country to another, as each country adopted a different system for monitoring implementation, and in a number of countries the implementation period was quite short.

3.2.1. Volume per country

As mentioned above, the total number of “Europass Training” documents actually issued by November 2001 in the 18 countries was about 19 300. While a “Europass Training” document can describe up to three European pathways, at this stage of implementation a very limited proportion of trainees have completed and recorded more than one pathway, so that the number of documents issued is virtually the same as that of European pathways achieved.

Table 3: European pathways recorded by “Europass Training” documents, by November 2001.

A	980	F	2 698	L	100
B (De)	26	FIN	500	NL	275
B (Fr)	70	FL	11	N	42
B (NL)	236	GR	450	P	54
DK *	1 300	IS	13	S	409
D	9 614	IRL	54	UK	1 868
E	n.a.	I	602		
EUR-18			19 302		

* Number of documents requested by training bodies. In principle some of the related pathways might not be completed (interruption of the project, individual drop-out, etc.). Source: Report by external contractor, BBJ Consult AG.

While the table is on the whole consistent with the demographic details, the education and training systems, and the different rates of progress in implementing the “Europass Training” initiative, the German figure is quite striking: Germany alone accounted for almost half of the European pathways. On the one hand, this can be explained by the size of its “dual-system”: only 1% of the 600 000 apprenticeship contracts signed in Germany in 2000 included periods abroad, but even that means 6 000 pathways. On the other hand, the German figure also includes projects which did not comply with the agreed criteria, and would not be accepted as European pathways in most other countries (cf. 3.1.1. above).

Smaller countries like Austria and Denmark also indicated proportionally high figures (the Danish figure was still to be confirmed). Other large “providers” were France and the United Kingdom. All these countries feature a combination of a well developed apprenticeship system and a well established tradition of transnational mobility of trainees, which does not only draw on Community programmes.

The transnational mobility of apprentices has a younger tradition in Italy than in France – which largely accounts for the huge gap between these demographically similar countries. Virtually all Italian pathways were within Community programmes (mostly Leonardo da Vinci).

The lack of data for Spain is due to the delay in setting up the implementation mechanism in Spain.

3.2.2. *Flows between countries*

The information available is incomplete and does not always refer to the same time span. Where data are available, it should be noted, at this stage of implementation, that numbers for several countries are still limited, so a single mobility project targeting a given country could suggest trends that might prove erroneous in the longer run.

Table 4. Flows between countries.*

TO	A	B	D	DK	E	EL	F	FIN	FL	I	IRL	ISL	L	NL	N	P	S	UK		
FROM																			TOT	FROM
A																			n.a.	A
B (De)	5		16				2			1	1		1						26	B (De)
B (FL)			13		71		53	11		11	1			16	9	2	12	37	236	B (FL)
B (FR)			4		4		5				10			46					69	B (FR)
D	9	2		3	120	15	335	7		91	47		60	22	18		18	205	952	D
DK																			n.a.	DK
E																			n.a.	E
EL			14		8		8	1		17	2					2		8	60	EL
F	20	51	430	16	395	16		26	3	146	197	2	38	43	3	39	68	745	2238	F
FIN	15	5	70	9	66	31	42			30	15			20	10	3	37	113	461	FIN
FL										1	4							6	11	FL
I	19	12	116	1	184	7	186	28			61			13		21	14	321	983	I
IRL	8		21				1			15							8	1	54	IRL
ISL																			n.d.	ISL
L	3	4	30			1	57				1				1		4		101	L
NL	6	36	48	5	11	1	33			4	6					28	1	96	275	NL
N	2	3	11	2						2				7				15	42	N
P			6		13		8	2		22						3			54	P
S	5	1	65	9	47		33	14		48	28			27	19			113	409	S
UK																			n.a.	UK
TOT	92	114	844	45	919	71	763	89	3	388	373	2	99	194	60	98	162	1660	5976	
TO	A	B	D	DK	E	EL	F	FIN	FL	I	IRL	ISL	L	NL	N	P	S	UK	TOT	

* Data are not available for all countries; for some countries, the data refer to a period later than November 2001.

All countries host European pathways. The fact that English is the most widely spoken second language certainly contributes to the popularity of both Ireland (first destination among smaller countries) and the United Kingdom (most popular destination in general). This has been confirmed by NCPs.

The existence of well established traditions of bilateral exchanges between neighbouring countries, like the Franco-German youth exchange scheme, clearly has some impact. Some data also seem to indicate an influence of social, cultural and linguistic closeness (I to E and F) and of economic exchanges (I and D). On the other hand, linguistic and geographic distance may create a strong interest (B-NL, D and S to E; the status of Spanish as an international language might also be a factor).

3.2.3. Duration of traineeships

While detailed quantitative data are not available for all countries, it seems safe to state that the duration of the traineeships abroad varies between 3 and 15 weeks, with a certain focus around two poles: shorter (3-4 weeks) and longer stays (9-12 weeks). This pattern is very clear for B-NL, GR and L (although the latter also reports a number of 6-week placements). In France 60% of the traineeships abroad are 4 to 12 months, the rest being shared equally between shorter and longer types. Ireland indicates an average duration of 8 weeks, while placements from Norway last 9 to 16 weeks, and those from Liechtenstein 12 to 24 weeks. In Sweden the most common duration is 3 weeks, but longer traineeships are also reported (3, 5 or 6 months or

even a year). Finland reports an average duration of about 6 weeks, but projects of up to 30 weeks have occurred.

3.2.4. *Gender and age of “Europass Training” holders*

The information available suggests that on the whole more women than men are involved in European pathways for which “Europass Training” documents were requested.

Smaller countries show a varied picture: while in the Belgian communities more men than women hold “Europass Training” documents (40 as against 31 in B-Fr and 120 as against 116 in B-Nl), Ireland (38 women and 16 men) and Sweden (204 women and 160 men) follow the trend, and the gap becomes particularly wide in Finland (329 women and 137 men). The data are particularly interesting for countries with large numbers of “Europass Training” holders: in both Germany and France 55% of the pathways concerned women. In France, women held 1 525 of the 2 697 “Europass Training” documents issued by November 2001 (male holders numbered 1 127). In Germany, women made 4 786 of the 8 635 requests for which this information is available (as against 3 849 requests made by men).

The age breakdown, available for very few countries, suggests a strong majority of young people around 20. In Flemish Belgium 75% of “Europass Training” holders are between 18 and 25; Norway distinguishes between a 16-19 and a 20-23 age group, which cover most of the “Europass Training” holders (the younger group is slightly bigger). In France, 62% of trainees in European pathways are between 19 and 21 years old, 14% are younger (16-18) and 20% older (22-25). The average age of Finnish “Europass Training” holders is 22 years.

3.2.5. *Education level and type of institutions*

Information on the level of the European pathways and the type of institution issuing them is not available for all countries, but it is possible to sketch an outline.

Keeping in mind the differences between the national systems, the situation in several countries (A, B-Nl, FIN, IRL, ISL, I, S) looks roughly similar: about 80% of people leaving for a European pathway are doing so within a scheme at secondary or upper secondary level, within training institutions or technical schools. In general, these countries also report pathways – 10 to 20% – at higher education level and – less than 10% – within lower level training programmes.

In France upper secondary and short post-secondary programmes account for almost 75% of the pathways, equally shared between the two typologies, with about 13% each for lower secondary and higher education. “Apprentices” in the French system can be of any level, including higher education.

Apprentices and students in upper secondary education share the “Europass Training” documents issued in Iceland. In Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway virtually all participants are in training schemes at secondary level – which in some cases include apprentices. The Greek “Europass Training” beneficiaries in general already hold certificates at upper secondary level and are studying at higher education institutions or at vocational bodies within post-secondary programmes. In the French

Community of Belgium and in Ireland most “Europass Training” documents were requested and used by higher education institutions.

The picture is rather different in Germany, as it is likely that most German pathways – accounting for about half of all European pathways – concern apprentices in initial training. A sample analysis reported in the study by the University of Cologne seems to confirm this.

3.2.6. Sectoral participation and SME involvement

Data on sectors concerned by the European pathways are very fragmentary. For countries which do have data, the hotel, restaurants and tourism trade is often the most popular sector (36% FIN, 27% N, 30% L). Many pathways also concern other services (for instance I: 25% in generic services; FIN: 21% in social services and health care), but virtually all sectors are covered by at least some pathways.

The involvement of SMEs other than education and training bodies does not seem to be widespread so far. In several cases, no specific action has been taken as yet to promote SME participation, as NCPs have been concentrating their resources on getting the mechanism started.

Many apprentices work in SMEs, and it is well known that for small companies sending an apprentice abroad, even for a short period, is not an easy choice. On the one hand, SMEs that recognise the benefit of sending their apprentices abroad perceive the “Europass Training” document as raising the status of the apprenticeship and as a means of motivating apprentices. That this positive attitude is gaining ground was expressed by the French NCP and reported in the German evaluation study by the University of Cologne.

On the other hand, some companies – no matter what size – see no advantage in having their apprentices spend a period abroad; it is somewhat unlikely that the “Europass Training” scheme as such will bring about any change in their attitude, even as it becomes better known. That SMEs do not perceive any particular benefit in the “Europass Training” so far has been indicated, for instance, by the German NCP.

The participation of SMEs as host bodies is in general higher. Greece reports that SMEs are as numerous as training institutions, and a regional French contact point indicates that the majority of the host bodies are SMEs.

3.2.7. Relations with other programmes and initiatives

While quantitative figures are not often available, the link with the “Leonardo da Vinci” programme is confirmed by all NCPs, though the relative weight varies: for instance, in Italy and Norway almost all European pathways were “Leonardo da Vinci” mobility projects, while in Sweden about half of the sending bodies sought funding within other programmes; and “Leonardo da Vinci” contributes to a little more than a third of all Finnish pathways and a quarter of all French pathways.

The role of other Community funded initiatives and programmes has so far been very limited: 5% of the French European pathways and 2% of the Finnish received support

under “Socrates”. Some “Youth” projects were concerned in Italy, and a few French European pathways found support under “Equal”.

Apart from the apparent match between “Leonardo da Vinci” mobility projects and the European pathway concept, the links tend to be somewhat institutional. On the one hand, the “Leonardo da Vinci” Decision does make an explicit reference to the European pathways Decision⁵. On the other hand, many NCPs are also national agencies for “Leonardo da Vinci” (cf. § 2.2 above).

In Italy, approximately 89% of the mobility projects approved under the Leonardo programme in 2001 have applied for “Europass Training” too. In Denmark, all Leonardo mobility projects approved in 2001, strands 1 and 2, have automatically been sent the same number of Europass documents as there are beneficiaries.

Programmes outside the Community framework also played a role in several countries. They include:

- the long established Franco-German Youth Exchange scheme, as already mentioned;
- the “Training Bridge” programme, which promotes British-German co-operation in the field of work-based training (launched in December 1998);
- the Danish PiU-programme, which enables young Danes in initial vocational training to get practical training abroad;
- the Scandinavian programme “Nordplus Junior”.

3.3. Information and promotion

In many countries, information activities about the “Europass Training” initiative began before the scheme came into force, with a launch conference held in the last months of 1999 (DK, D, F, FIN, NL, L, S, UK). Instead of a launch conference, Austria organised an information campaign, and in 2000 and 2001 many countries organised a series of regional events besides or instead of the national conference. Some countries (I, N) preferred to hold a national launch event when the mechanism was well established and in operation. These conferences were usually attended by training providers, mobility project promoters, representatives of social partners and national and local authorities.

Specific events, resources and campaigns were not the only vehicles for informing and promoting the “Europass Training” initiative. Events related to education and training at national or local level frequently included a stand or a presentation of the “Europass Training” initiative. This was clearly facilitated by the fact that the NCP function is often based within, or closely linked to, broader education and training bodies (cf. § 2.2.2 above).

⁵ Cf. Council Decision 1999/382/EC of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme ‘Leonardo da Vinci’, OJ L 146 of 11.6.1999, p.33. The mention is in Annex 1, Section II, § 1, p.40.

Besides disseminating the booklet and fliers produced by the Commission, all countries devised information material of their own, usually meant for the general public, but sometimes intended for specific target groups. Some countries also prepared resources for promoters and potential beneficiaries. For instance, Austria produced a CD-Rom, Italy published a comprehensive paper handbook and a CD-card, Norway produced a specific video and a multimedia presentation.

Many Member States developed national “Europass Training” websites, providing not only general information, but also practical directions on how to get and use the document, and sometimes offering an interactive interface with the information system used to manage the initiative. The French system, which allows for online application by promoters, was also adopted by the Italian and Norwegian NCPs. The latter integrated it into the system which it uses as a national agency for Leonardo da Vinci. Some websites include a help mailbox, available to anyone who can access the Internet.

3.4. Evaluation

National evaluation exercises have already been carried out by a few countries, viz. Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

The Finnish research was conducted on an ongoing basis, collecting reporting forms from students and co-ordinators. In general, both training bodies and trainees welcomed “Europass Training”, though they thought the document itself could be made more user-friendly. In particular, students in upper secondary vocational education usually considered the “Europass Training” document to be a good record of a training period abroad. About one student out of four thought the “Europass Training” document would be very useful for him or her in the future, and half of all students judged it probably useful. Most students were satisfied or very satisfied with their European pathways experience (4% of them were not satisfied).

The German study, carried out by the Craft Sector Research Institute of the University of Cologne, covered all the German contact points, about 300 promoters of transnational mobility projects and a number of “Europass Training” holders, and provided information on the practical use, the benefits and the perceived status of Europass Training. As mentioned above, the study found out that German NCP’s tend to issue “Europass Training” documents also when not all quality criteria for European pathways are satisfied (cf. §§ 3.1.1 and 3.2.1 above). Among the other findings: no problem of acceptance by companies; trainees would prefer to be entitled to ask directly for the “Europass Training”; NCP’s and training bodies considered the “Europass Training” as a relatively useful tool, raising the status of pathways and potentially helping on the labour market; the view of final users was very varied; the format was not friendly. The conclusions were that the “Europass Training” could become a good tool to record experiences abroad, but it had to be made friendlier and better known.

The Dutch study was conducted by CINOP at a very early stage of implementation; it got answers from staff from ten training bodies and from some “Europass Training” holders. It addressed policy, procedures, organisation, information, host bodies, and effects. Several trainees and training bodies held the view that the “Europass Training” could not have a significant impact on the labour market, as it was not

known enough. The study offered suggestions: provide an electronic “Europass Training”; make the resource and the implementation structure better known; promote the value of the “Europass Training” as a record of the European outlook of its holders.

The Swedish research, carried out directly by the national contact point among project promoters and a sample of “Europass Training” holders, focused on the perception and acceptance of the “Europass Training”. The common European structure was widely appreciated. Some organisations thought that the document had motivated their pupils to go abroad: holding a document to show to future employers raised the status of the placement. Most organisations found that the “Europass Training” document could help its holders to get a job, as it testified to experience which was usually sought after in the labour market, but this would be even better if the “Europass Training” document made provision for a better skills description.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Two years on from the entry into force of Decision 1999/51/EC, the state of implementation can be summarised as follows:

- the implementation mechanism has been established and is now running smoothly; in particular:
 - all Member States have designated one or more existing bodies – called “national contact points” (NCPs) – as being responsible for implementing the “Europass Training” initiative;
 - the Commission has fostered co-ordination and exchanges of information through meetings of NCP representatives; a non-binding co-operation charter has been agreed by the Commission and NCPs;
- the actual dissemination has started in all countries (with one exception, where it will begin early in 2002); until November 2001:
 - about 19 300 “Europass Training” documents have been issued;
- in general, the documents were issued to record European pathways that complied with the criteria set out in the Decision, though this was not always the case, namely in Germany;
- in particular, the available data indicate that:
 - all countries have hosted or are hosting European pathways. English-speaking countries are the most favoured destinations;
 - duration of the traineeships abroad varied between 3 and 15 weeks;
 - on the whole, a slight majority of “Europass Training” holders were women (about 55%);

- a strong majority of “Europass Training” holders are about 20 years old (17 to 23);
 - about three quarters of “Europass Training” holders are in education or training at secondary or upper secondary level; lower and higher levels of education each account for 10-15% of the cases;
 - hotel, restaurants and tourism is often the most popular sector, although all sectors are covered by one or more pathways;
 - SMEs (other than education and training bodies) are not usually involved as sending bodies, though they often host European pathways;
 - a good number of European pathways come under the “Leonardo da Vinci” programme, though its weight varies considerably from one country to another (30 to 100%). Other Community funded programmes (“Socrates”, “Youth”, “Equal”) have a marginal role, while in some countries bilateral or national initiatives account for up to 50% of the European pathways;
- information and promotion issues have been addressed by launch conferences, the dissemination of information booklets and fliers produced at both European and national level, participation at relevant events, information campaigns, Internet sites etc;
 - Internet sites are run at both European and national level; in some countries they form part and parcel of a management information system;
 - representatives of the European social partners attend the co-ordination meetings; at national level, representatives of the social partners often serve on steering committees or equivalent bodies;
 - some countries have carried out national evaluation studies; at European level, an evaluation plan has been prepared, including a seminar (3-4 June 2002) and an interim evaluation study (due for December 2002).