

Eurociett/UNI europa Joint Declaration

Training for Temporary Agency Workers: Joint actions developed by sectoral social partners play a key role in facilitating skills upgrading

In 2008, Eurociett and UNI europa, the two EU sectoral social partners for the Temporary Agency Work (TAW) sector, carried out a joint project entitled “More training opportunities for more agency workers”. Funded by the European Commission, the main objective of the project was to assess the role temporary work agencies may play in facilitating transitions in the EU labour market by promoting vocational training opportunities provided to temporary agency workers. It also aimed to identify good practices which could be used to improve and increase opportunities for training in the Temporary Agency Work sector.

The main findings of the first ever EU wide research on training for temporary agency workers show that:

- Sectoral social dialogue and collective bargaining play a key role in facilitating access to training for agency workers: In six EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands and Spain), temporary work agencies and trade unions have established bi-partite training structures in order to offer the possibility for agency workers to improve their skills. As a result, €524 million have been invested in 2008 for more than 650,000 agency workers. However, in several other countries little or no action has been taken in this field. Social partners in these countries should be encouraged by best practices elsewhere to develop such systems.
- In all 16 surveyed countries¹, temporary agency workers have access to the national cross sectoral vocational training systems that are generally made available to all workers. In addition, in some countries surveyed agency workers have access to some specific training programmes developed by their own employer (namely the temporary work agency).
- The TAW industry is particularly well fitted to develop training schemes that meet the expectations of both workers and user companies. Temporary work agencies, as part of their portfolio within the industry, should be encouraged to develop such training schemes. It is indeed of the interest of the temporary work agencies to develop or upgrade agency workers’ skills and improve their employability in order to facilitate transition between assignments or jobs.
- Vocational training for agency workers is demand driven and organised in close cooperation with user companies with a short term and pragmatic approach catering especially well to lower skilled workers.
- Financing for vocational training is provided by a range of different sources including, user companies, temporary work agencies, public employment services, bi-partite training funds, European funds and in some cases the temporary agency workers themselves.

¹ Austria, Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and UK

By promoting the following best practices identified by the project and facilitating access to training for its workers, the TAW industry can most effectively tackle the challenges that labour markets are to face. These include:

- The promotion and strengthening of social dialogue and collective bargaining as vehicles for the extension of training provision, and for encouragement of the development of bi-partite training funds where relevant (cf. Eurociett/Uni europa joint declaration on flexicurity of February 2007 where both social partners aimed at “facilitating access to vocational training for agency workers”).
- A better match between labour supply and demand, using the industry’s precise knowledge of labour market needs in real time, enabling it to implement training schemes to meet skills shortages (cf. EU Commission’s communications “New Skills for New Jobs” and “A shared commitment for employment” and Cedefop Report “Skill Needs in Europe. Focus on 2020”).
- The implementation of life-long learning strategies is important in order to ensure that workers are sufficiently trained and skilled to the changing working environment and to increase their employability and job security.

However, in order to increase and improve the role played by TAW in terms of training provisions and to increase availability to training for all agency workers, particularly those who are low skilled, the following challenges should be addressed:

- Funding for training should be simplified for the sector, especially with regards to the European Social Fund and the funds managed by other sectoral training bodies.
- The setting up of processes of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) should also be favoured as a means to help agency workers to extend their skills and steps should be taken towards jointly identifying further requirement opportunities.
- Assessment of the long-term impact of training programmes for temporary agency workers in employment should be encouraged and improved in the future. UNI europa and Eurociett invite stakeholders to update their monitoring systems to ensure the quality of the training available is continually improved.

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