

## **REPORT: ZSI-Symposium “Fit für das digitale Zeitalter” (“Get ready for working in the digital age”)**

The Center for Social Innovation<sup>1</sup> (ZSI) organised a conference on media competences - e-Learning - e-Skills<sup>2</sup> from a pedagogical and economical perspective. This event was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October, 2005 in Vienna and was supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture<sup>3</sup> (bmbwk) and the European Commission<sup>4</sup>.

Josef Hochgerner, scientific manager of the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) and Reinhold Hawle, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (bmbwk), opened the event. In his opening speech Reinhold Hawle especially pointed out the Virtual School and the democratisation of learning by the use of the Internet.

The invited key speakers, Tapio Varis, UNESCO Chair in Global e-Learning and Professor for Media Education at the University of Tampere, Finland and Franz Gramlinger from CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training<sup>5</sup>, Greece, provided an international outreach for this national conference.

Tapio Varis gave an overview on the Finnish experiences regarding media competence and e-Skills, which are also relevant in relation to the PISA-study. “We have developed from an information to a knowledge society. Media competence is an essential element of this evolving society. The challenge is to assure the optimal use of information and communication technologies for everybody”, so Tapio Varis. In his speech he outlined some basic questions of education, such as changes and challenges and life-long learning. Following Renee Hobbs<sup>6</sup>, he spoke about the seven great debates in the media literacy movement, which tackle issues such as the increasingly diverse community of educators, media professionals and other stakeholders because media literacy can take many different forms. Furthermore, he also discussed the “Oral Literacy Theorems”, concerning primary and secondary orality, relevant aspects of communication, knowledge and media and the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies in a changed media world, namely technology literacy, information literacy, contextual literacy, global literacy, media creativity, social competence and responsibility. Varis closely described these new competencies and the resulting consequences, which are also topic of his article: “New Literacies and e-Learning Competences”, published at [elearningeuropa.info](http://elearningeuropa.info), 2005<sup>7</sup> and thus gave an important input for the following discussions on how to address these competences in practical terms.

Franz Gramlinger pointed out why e-Skills are the required skills of the future and provided a definition that includes practitioner skills as well as user skills: (1) the ICT practitioner, who has the capabilities required for researching, developing, designing and managing, the producing, consulting, marketing and selling, the integrating, installing and administrating, the maintaining, supporting and service of ICT systems,

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.zsi.at>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.zsi.at/symposium>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at>

<sup>4</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cedefop.eu.int>

<sup>6</sup> <http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/readings/articles/hobbs/debates.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?page=doc&doc\\_id=595&doclng=1](http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?page=doc&doc_id=595&doclng=1)

(2) the ICT user, who has the capabilities required for effective application of ICT systems and devices as tools in support of the own work and (3) e-Business, which means the capabilities needed to exploit opportunities provided by ICT to ensure more efficient and effective performance of different types of organisations. Additionally, he gave an overview of the priorities of the European e-Skills Forum<sup>8</sup>, which shall create a better understanding about ICT professions and the related competences requested by employers in the European Union. Gramlinger emphasised specifically the importance and usefulness of the European e-Skills Meta-Framework and the CEN/ISS (European Committee for Standardisation<sup>9</sup>) workshop on eSkills, which together with experts have started to describe standards for e-Skills.

At the experts plenum discussion Peter Bruck (head of the Research Studios Austria<sup>10</sup>), Brigitte Hipfl (ÖFEB-Österreichische Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen<sup>11</sup>), Peter Littig (bvdw-Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft<sup>12</sup>, Germany), Friedrich Moshhammer (AMS-Public Employment Service Austria<sup>13</sup>) and Elke Reichel (Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten, ver.di-Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft<sup>14</sup>, Germany) discussed about the necessary skills and the current and future requirements of the employment market and the economy in general.

Peter Bruck reported about the tensions between Austria and the international perspective, gave an introduction to the terms user-learning vs. innovation-learning and underlined the importance of new pedagogical concepts like self-regulated learning and more self-responsibility of the learner.

Brigitte Hipfl pointed out the role of media and media literacy as toolbox for living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as the possibilities of new technologies as basis for our self-conception and togetherness, our democratic responsibility and the realisation of new educational goals. Networking between media education institutions and professionals is seen a key success factor.

Peter Littig outlined the consequences of e-Skills on the employability and the discussion about the specialists-demand, comprising difficulties with the new complex requirements, the modified age structure and demographic development, the decline of university beginners and alumni and the resulting problem to satisfy the demand. The "incompetence-compensation-competence", which means the competence to compensate the own incompetence concerning e-Skills, was named as an important competence now and in the future.

Friedrich Moshhammer underlined the complexity of e-Skills and the resulting difficulty with IT-qualification arrangements of the Public Employment Service Austria, which often do not lead to the expected employment quotes. Thus he comes to the conclusion that e-skills alone do not increase someone's employability and that social competences are very important in this context as well.

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cenorm.be/iss>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.researchstudio.at>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.oefeb.at>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.bvdw.org>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ams.or.at>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.verdi.de>

Elke Reichel accentuated that the demands on the employees have increased. The central question in this context therefore is how we can ensure that employers do not elude taking their educational responsibilities and foster personnel development. As one solution she recommended collective agreements and agreements outside of legislation for recording competences and skills in the IT-area, such as lists and skills databases with clear specifications.

In the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to collaborate by exchanging ideas in two parallel workshops: "Media literacy in the pedagogical practice" and "e-Skills for the future professions". The outcomes of the two parallel workshops were exchanged afterwards in the plenum.

In workshop 1 "Media Literacy in the pedagogical practice", Elke Dall, Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) gave an overview of the main results from the "European Centre for Media Literacy"<sup>15</sup> (ecml). It included the definition of media literacy as a relative term rather than an absolute one, the multiple degrees of literacy and the three dimensions technical competencies, critical reception practices and content production. Furthermore, it implied the goals of media education, which for instance clarify that a media literate person should be able to collect, select, analyse, structure, interpret and present information and messages from different media formats, use media receptively and actively, be competent in orientating oneself in the media landscape, have basic knowledge of the history of media development and identify the impacts of media on society.

Afterwards, parallel working groups discussed about the challenges and problems in the media pedagogical practice, such as the lack of a defined single school subject, organizational and technical infrastructure problems, unclear and huge efforts, lack of know-how of teachers, definition of goals, priority setting on e-skills or social skills, continuous postprocessing, lack of satisfying tools for generating e-content, etc. Then the teams searched for solutions and ideas on how to improve the recent situation, such as more time and resources, pedagogical support, regional competence centres, learning platforms, education and training, examples from other countries, guidelines from a central institution, etc. and listed some available supporting facilities. Giving one concrete example of such a supporting facility, Thomas Maier, manager of the teacher web of the European Schoolnet<sup>16</sup> introduced the project "Context eLearning with broadband technologies"<sup>17</sup> (CELEBRATE), that focuses on the question of how flexible forms of digital contents or learning objects can improve teaching and learning, the development of an inter-operative technical infrastructure for the exchange and search of learning objects, the school-access to a repository of standard compatible learning objects and business-models for the commercialisation of learning objects. He also reported about the findings of the project, which are as example the importance of standards, improved use of ICT, increased motivation of pupils, development of new teaching ideas, huge efforts, problems with continuous support, instruction, low reuseability, modification, adaptation and languages, etc. The findings also include information about the profiles of the participating schools and the effects in the different countries.

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://ecml-eu.org>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.eun.org>

<sup>17</sup> <http://celebrate.eun.org>

In workshop 2 “e-Skills for the future professions”, Barbara Kieslinger, head of the unit “Technology and Knowledge” of the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), introduced the main focus of the workshop: the general conditions of e-Skills and ambitions to overcome the “standardisation divide” in Europe. Gerald Thiel, DEKRA-Akademie<sup>18</sup>, Germany, gave a more detailed overview about the current developments in Europe, following up on Gramlingers introduction. He spoke about the strategic goal (“Lisbon-goal”) to make the EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010”<sup>19</sup> and the instruments for it: The “Bologna process”<sup>20</sup>, which aims to create an European Higher Education Area, the “Copenhagen process”<sup>21</sup>, which focuses on vocational training aspects and the efforts to develop European standards. The results of these efforts are the European Credit Transfer System in Vocational Training (ECVET), which allows the transfer of learning results within and between different vocational training systems and between formal and non-formal vocational training, the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which intends to create an European framework that will enable qualification systems at the national and sectoral levels. One such sectoral approach is covered by the e-Skills-Forum<sup>22</sup>, which was founded in 2003 and aims at the initiation of an open dialog between government representatives, ICT-industry, educational institutes and social partners to negotiate e-Skills gaps and recognition of e-Skills mismatches.

Afterwards, a plenum discussion took place, tackling the questions, how far the mentioned activities contribute to solve the issues of national employment markets and which chances, risks and difficulties exist, such as the definition of future professions and learning outcomes, the question of actuality of educational systems, the question of certificates vs. competences without certificates, the question of teamwork in the IT-branch, the problem of “updating”, the problem of standardisation/finding standard terms, the problem with formal and non-formal vocational training in the IT-sector, etc. Further, the group started to identify which initiatives take place in Austria to support this process, which are the barriers for the mobility of learners (mobility demands e.g. appropriate financing) and how far this mobility should reach in order to come up with suggestions for the improvement of mobility.

At an operational level the Leonardo project “Embedding ICT/Multimedia Standardisation Initiatives into European Vocational Training Development Strategies”<sup>23</sup> (in short Embedding Standards) was introduced. It contributes to the European standardisation processes in the ICT and multimedia sector, by delivering better acceptance and possibilities of anchorage of European standards in national environments and tests the applicability of the EQF and ECVET in real-world settings. The event closed with a discussion on how this project can be supported by “Zones of Mutual Trust”, which persons in Austria are key players for setting up these zones, which aspects should be underlined explaining such a project, which issues, potential barriers and favourable terms are relevant.

---

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dekra-akademie.de>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcaturi=tcm:29-117510-16&type=LinksDossier&textlg=EN>

<sup>20</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html)

<sup>21</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/vocational\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/vocational_en.html)

<sup>22</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.embedding-standards.com/>