

Main conclusions from the meeting on "Technical Cooperation in the Development of Vocational Training in Latin America and the Caribbean".

ABOUT THE MEETING:

1. Place and date: The technical meeting was organised by the Ministry of Education, through the National Institute of Technical Education (INET) and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security of the Republic of Argentina, with technical support from ILO/Cinterfor. It was held in Buenos Aires on 15 and 16 May, 2008.

2. Survey of Training Institutions: As part of the preparation for the meeting, ILO/Cinterfor conducted a survey into the recent evolution and prospects for technical cooperation in the region. Thirteen training institutions responded, and their answers served as the basis for a working paper for the meeting: "Recent evolution and prospects for technical cooperation in vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean".

3. Meeting of the Working Group for International Co-operation in Skills Development (WG). On Thursday 15th, in the afternoon, there was a joint session with the WG during which the working paper was analysed and experiences from various training institutions (SENA, SENAI, INTECAP) and two technical cooperation agencies (COSUDE and JICA) were presented. This activity made the participants aware of what the two cooperation agencies' priorities are, and facilitated information sharing among the training institutions taking part in the event.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS:

4. Horizontal cooperation: a tool widely used in the region. It emerged that horizontal cooperation is a tool that is widely used in technical cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The survey showed that more than 16 training institutions are receiving technical cooperation from other vocational training institutions. The cooperation provided by the ILO stands out not only for the creation and spread of the vocational training institutions model but also because of ILO/Cinterfor's current activities and those that it facilitates jointly with the Turin Centre. Another key point that came to light was the need to cooperate through strengthening regional and sub-regional networks and the diffusion of knowledge useful in the vocational training field.

5. Technical cooperation for productivity and competitiveness. There is clearly general agreement that vocational training is directly linked to the conditions for productivity in enterprises and in the economy as a whole. Raising productivity through human resources training is a route to improving employment conditions and raising income. In the last 10 years, some 35% of bilateral and multilateral technical cooperation has been in various aspects of didactic technology, 44% has been in social areas and the fight against poverty, and 21% in institutional management.

The training institutions stressed the need to inculcate a culture of competitiveness in their activities to develop labour skills. It also emerged that the technical cooperation programmes in the field of didactic technology tend to be linked to key sectors in countries' economies. Many training institutions have connections with projects that are geared to the priorities set out in national development plans and in sectoral development goals, and these will undoubtedly contribute to generating better jobs and progressing towards the objectives of decent work plans.

6. Vocational training for the development of SMEs

Another aspect that emerged is that in the next few years the training institutions will give priority to strengthening SMEs and generating sustainable enterprises and clean technologies. This is in harmony with the ILO's framework of policies and strategies and with the guidelines the Director General recently issued for preparing the 2010-2011 budget.

The institutions made it clear that what is required are cooperation projects that cater to the training needs of enterprises and facilitate relevant responses at all levels, especially for micro, small and medium enterprises. In these enterprises, practices that contribute to improving learning in the workplace and raising productivity will be fostered so as to bring about an improvement in employment. But this does not mean that training for these firms should involve less complexity or lower technological levels. Very often these enterprises are inserted into conglomerates and productive chains that demand highly skilled workers. Training and skills development in micro and SMEs will help them move gradually out of the informal economy and facilitate their formalisation.

7. Areas where cooperation will be in demand.

The meeting achieved its objective of identifying the areas of international technical cooperation that the training institutions consider most important in the years ahead. The outstanding areas are as follows:

- Access to training for SMEs
- The environment
- Renewable energies, clean production and the environment
- Improving skills in the rural sector
- Quality assurance in training institutions
- ICTs and info-communications. E-learning
- Agro-business and foodstuffs
- Tourism. Training human capital to administer school hotels
- Training for vulnerable groups (the informal sector)
- Management systems for decision making (management indicators)
- Standardisation, the certification of evaluators in the region (methodology)

In addition to the above, another outcome of the survey concerns the information about technical cooperation demands and offers contained in the working paper for the meeting. ILO/Cinterfor will publish these demands and offers on its web page so institutions will be able to use this information to improve their horizontal cooperation linkages.

8. Evaluation of the event by the participants

ILO/Cinterfor also issued an evaluation form about the technical meetings that were held. Institutions were requested to give the meeting a general impression rating as “very productive”, “productive” or “unproductive”. There were also questions on the evaluation form about whether the objectives were achieved, and about the agenda and the presenters.

It is noteworthy that the general impression rating of the meeting tended to be “very productive” (75%) and “productive” (25%). As to the subjects dealt with, some 75% of the participants rated them as “very relevant” and the remaining 25% as “relevant”. And lastly, on the question of whether the meeting achieved its objectives, 85% answered “yes, they were achieved” and the other 15% answered “partially achieved”.