

**European Economic and Social Committee
Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)**

"Towards an EU policy to rationalize Europe's heavy printing industry "

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Crisis and the way out

Trends in Europe

The trends as discussed in the working document papers of this meeting are very recognizable. Employment in the printing industry has been diminishing constantly during the past fifteen years. This is a reality for almost all countries of the EU15. For example employment in the Netherlands has been reduced by 42%. The main causes for this reduction are: a strong growth of productivity, a shift in design work (most clients deliver a ready to print document) and new media like the internet. The reduction of employment is mainly visible in larger companies. At companies with more than 100 employees, employment has diminished with 63%, while employment at smaller companies (less than 10 employees) has been reduced with 'only' 16%. These smaller companies seem to adapt easier to new business developments like cross media and new services because of their flexibility. The same reduction of employment is visible in the publishing sector. On the other hand employment grows strongly in the areas of advertising, multimedia, gaming and event management. This growth of employment in the creative industry is also reflected by the interest of youth in creative professions. Unlike the downfall of employment in print, which corresponds to the strong decline of interest in printing professions. Both developments in employment lead to tension in the industry. At the same time we see how the borders between different sectors blur, due to combinations of different media technologies.

New careers

The migration of employment in prepress areas offers new career opportunities for Desktop Publishers in sectors like publishing, multimedia, gaming and communication. Because of new technical developments in print, printers become more and more machine operators. Therefore their career opportunities increase, especially to other machine operating functions. On the other

hand graphical educated employees are able to move from other sectors back to the graphical industry when functions are hard to fulfill. This happened during the last years in periods of economical growth. Because of aging in the graphical industry it's reasonable to think that the demand for these well educated graphical people will grow again.

New employees

The perception of labor changes. To young people labor is more and more a consumer good. Labor becomes about status, social environment, alignment between work and private life and personal development. As a result of this change in the perception of labor, lifetime employment at a single company becomes rare. Variation in careers and more focus on learning experiences will become more prominent. We'll also see a growth in freelancers versus a reduction of employees in paid employment. This choice between freelancing and paid employment can be combined part-time freelance work and part-time paid employment and might shift during a career. These variations within job careers are better suited to the network structures within creative industries like multimedia and gaming. These network structures change easily and are often temporarily. Human Resources becomes of major importance within these structures. The challenge is to shape an organization in a way human resources function best.

Change in thinking

The change of printing industry towards becoming part of the creative industries is a development we see everywhere. Because of this change, technology becomes secondary to client services and quality of project collaboration. With a focus on services, we need to start thinking about the client. We have to become more creative in thinking in solutions, entrepreneurship and flexibility to the market. We need to start thinking 'out-of-the-box'. Within this transition business is developing more towards an European and even a global market.

Collaboration is successful!

European Printing Industry is changing and besides a strategic vision, these changes in employment also demand a social approach. A change causes on the one hand great shift in labor and on the other hand changes in knowledge, attitude and skills. To structure this shift in labor, and therefore reduce mass unemployment, Dutch labor unions and employees organizations started an employment centre. This centre helps unemployed graphical designers, printers and personnel from the publishing industry to find a new job through education and career orientation. Dutch labor unions and employees organizations in print industry, publishing and advertizing are also collaborating to synchronize the competences and skills learned in their educational systems. Their mission is to make education more all-round, so employees can switch careers easily between sectors. At the same time employees organizations and labor unions are accommodating their labor conditions, to make them suitable for the total creative industries. Because of this, it becomes more attractive to switch careers to different sectors.

Employees organizations and labor unions of different creative industries also created education and labor funds in which a fixed percentage of the labor wage is deposited. Based on these funds the smaller companies also get access to European grants for education and labor mobility. Furthermore there's an international collaboration called EGIN. EGIN is an established forum of cooperation in the areas of education, training and research among the social partners of the graphical/media labor market in ten countries: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The way out?

All different sectors in the creative industry have developed in their own unique way. Graphical industry for example survived through several challenges. For instance the transitions from typesetting to photocomposition to desk top publishing. Also the transitions from traditional printing to offset printing and digital printing are innovations which caused major changes in employment. However, a lot of companies and their employees managed to translate these changes in a positive way. The current changes and movements also create opportunities and will lead to a more connected creative industry. When we look at the possibilities created by these changes, we can offer career opportunities, employment and income for the future.

'Be carefull: What we learn from the past, is that we learn nothing from the past. There is no direct way out but the normal way through a next new situation.'