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SWP 16/92 TRAINING ACROSS EUROPE: A SURVEY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED COMPANIES IN FIVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

This report covers the results of a survey of over 10,000 companies in 5 European countries and represents the responses of 1404 companies: 243 in Britain, 164 in France, 289 in Germany, 358 in Italy and 350 in Spain. Companies were asked about their attitudes to education and training and how they went about providing it for their employees. Detailed results are given in appendix 1.

The companies surveyed were selected as having fewer than 500 employees and would generally be described as small and medium sized companies (SMEs). A detailed breakdown by size and sector is given in appendix 2.

KEY RESULTS

The survey highlighted the following results:

- British SMEs spend, on average, 1.29% of their turnover on training - less than SMEs in any of the other countries surveyed. French SMEs spend most, on average, one third more than the British at 1.76% if turnover. However, French companies are required by law to make certain minimum expenditures on training.

- A significant proportion of SME training is undertaken internally, by company staff. This is particularly pronounced in Britain where 55% of training is reported to be undertaken in this way. This might go some way to explaining Britain's low spend on training. However, it has important policy implications because so far the British government through its Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) has done little to encourage and improve the quality of training through this route, an omission that might go some way towards explaining why the TECs have failed, so far, to penetrate this market.

- British SMEs control their training more carefully than SMEs in the other countries:

    - 76% undertake regular and systematic analysis of their employees' training needs

    - 69% produce a training plan outlining the skills that are to be developed and when.

    - 68% monitor the effectiveness of the training they undertake.

- Surprisingly, 68% of German SMEs report that they do not evaluate employees' training needs and 70% of Italian SMEs do not undertake any form of training evaluation.

- British SMEs also appear to monitor their workforce more closely with 69% reporting regular annual appraisal of employees. In other countries a significant proportion of SMEs reported "no fixed pattern".

- In Britain and Spain the overwhelmingly majority of SMEs are dissatisfied with the educational system and want the government to do more to improve standards. By contrast in Germany the overwhelming majority of SMEs are satisfied with the educational system. In France and Italy it is seen as largely irrelevant.

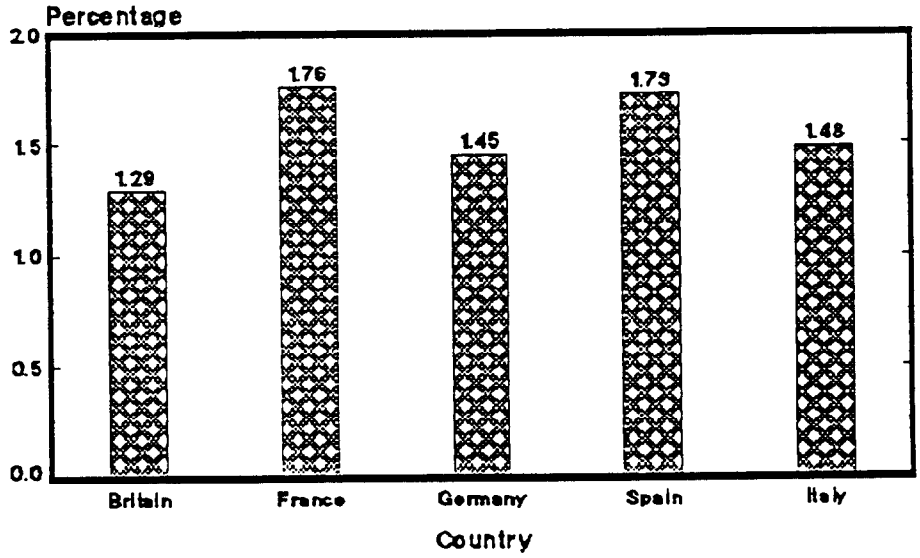
- SMEs in all countries other than Germany wanted the Government to do more to subsidise training.

DETAILED RESULTS

1. Expenditure on Training

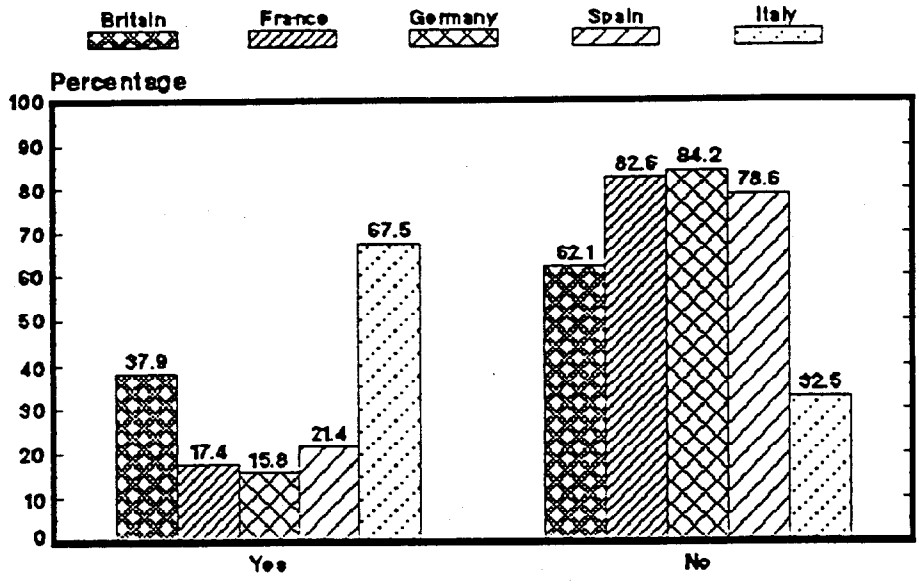
SMEs in France spent 1.76% of their turnover on training - more than SMEs in any other country. They spend one third more than their British counterparts who came bottom of the table, spending only 1.29% of turnover. In France companies are required by law to spend a certain percentage of their salaries and wages bill on training and this probably accounts for the high level of expenditure. Spanish SMEs spend nearly as much on training at 1.73% of turnover and without the legal compulsion. This probably reflects a genuine concern about skill levels and a determination to upgrade to the level of their European competitors.

AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF TURNOVER SPENT ON TRAINING



Most SMEs in all countries other than Italy reported that they did not cut back on training as a result of the current recession. In Italy, 68% of surveyed companies said that they had been forced to cut back.

HAVE YOU HAD TO CUT BACK ON TRAINING IN THE CURRENT RECESSION?



2. Control of Training

Companies were asked whether they:

- systematically analysed employees' training needs.
- produced a training plan outlining the skills that needed to be developed and when.
- monitored the effectiveness of training.

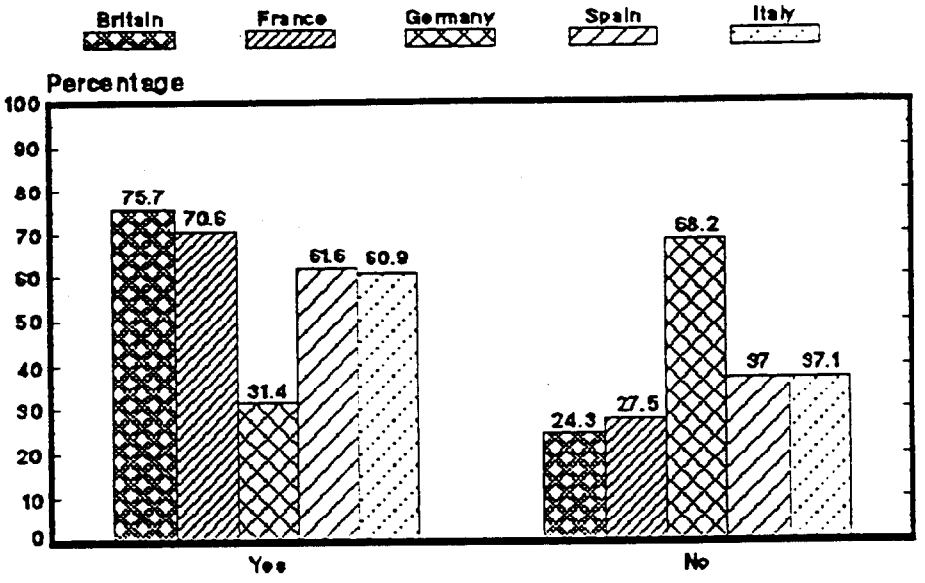
Overall, SMEs in Britain appear to control their training most closely:

- 76% undertake regular and systematic analysis of training needs
- 69% produce a training plan
- 68% monitor training effectiveness

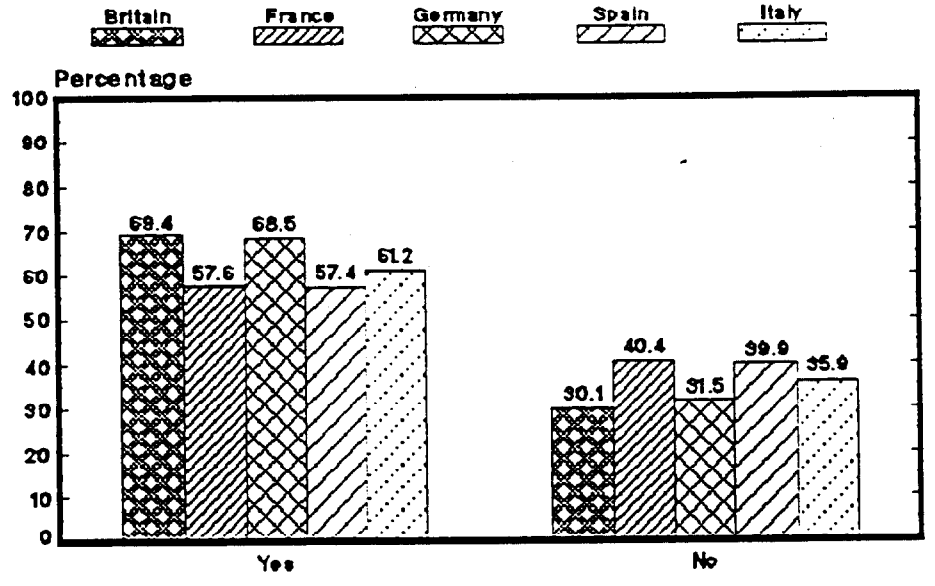
Perhaps because there is such a strong training infrastructure in place in Germany, most SMEs (68%) there do not systematically analyse their employees' training needs, presumably preferring to leave it to the employees and other organisations.

Worryingly, an overwhelming 70% of Italian companies said that they do not evaluate the training they undertake. This proportion is far higher than in any other country. These same Italian companies cut back their training as a result of the recession. It would seem that they did so without any evaluation of its worth to them.

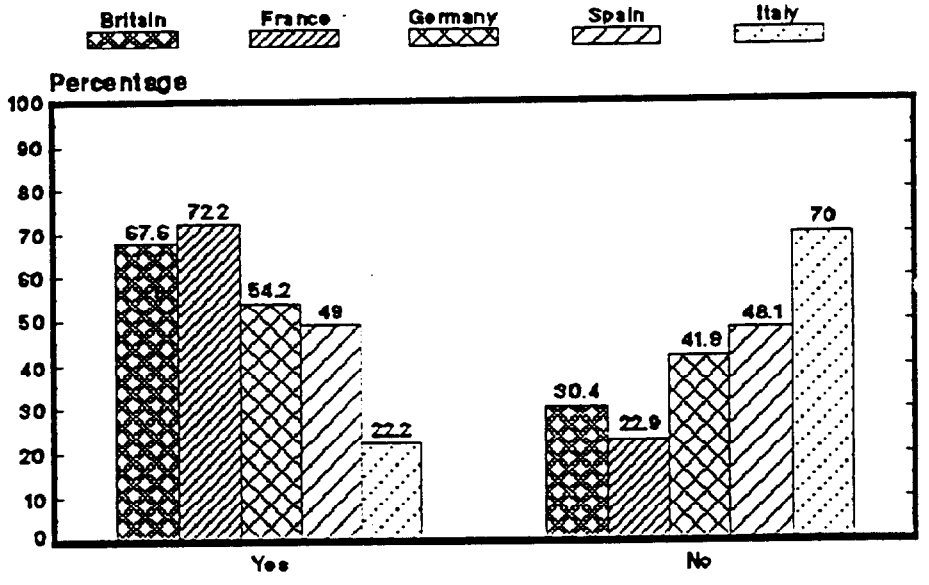
IS THERE REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEES' TRAINING NEEDS?



IS THERE A TRAINING PLAN OUTLINING SKILLS THAT NEED TO BE DEVELOPED AND WHEN?



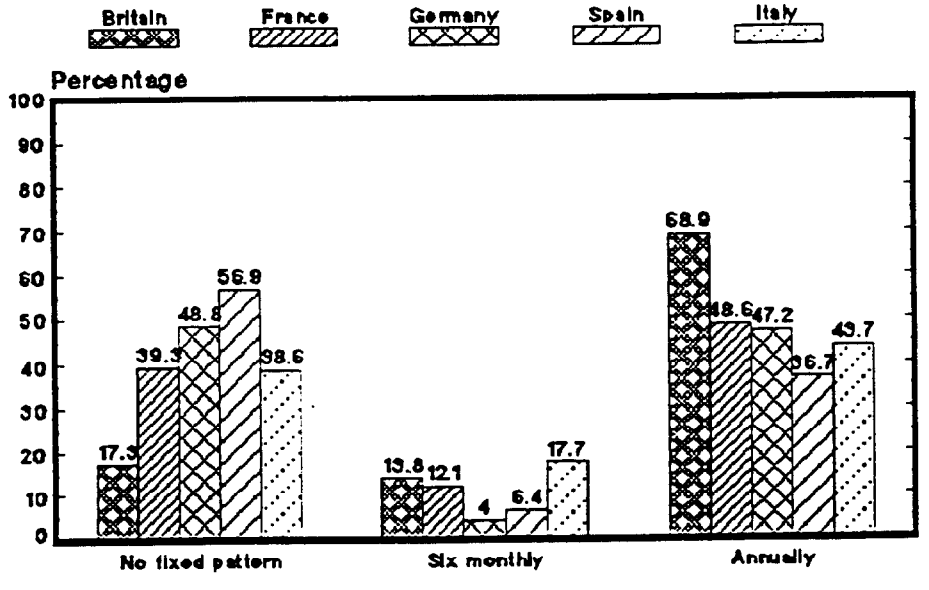
DO YOU MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING?



3. **Employee Appraisal**

Companies were asked how often their employees were appraised. 69% of British SMEs reported that appraisal was carried out annually. In other countries the picture was altogether more mixed, with a significant split between annual and "no fixed pattern" appraisal.

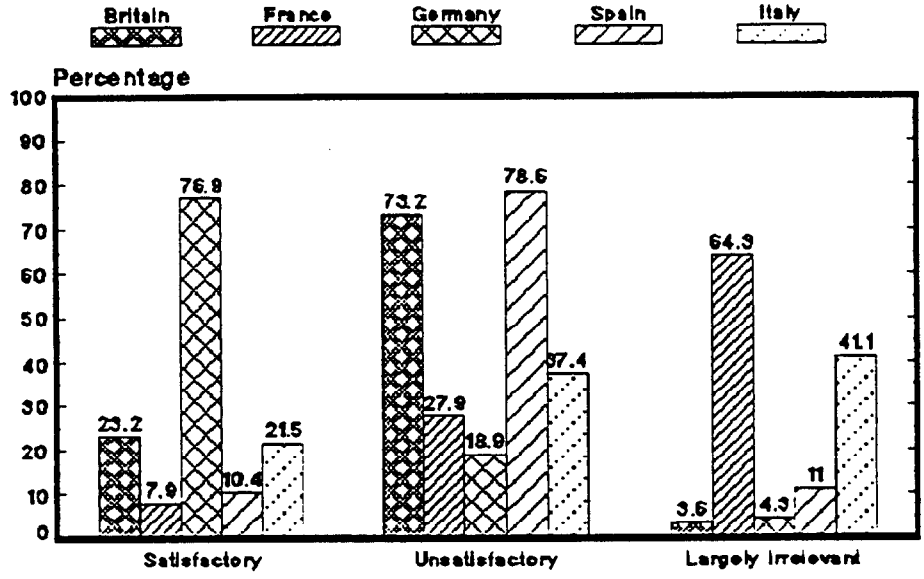
HOW OFTEN ARE EMPLOYEES APPRAISED?



4. Governments' Role in Education and Training

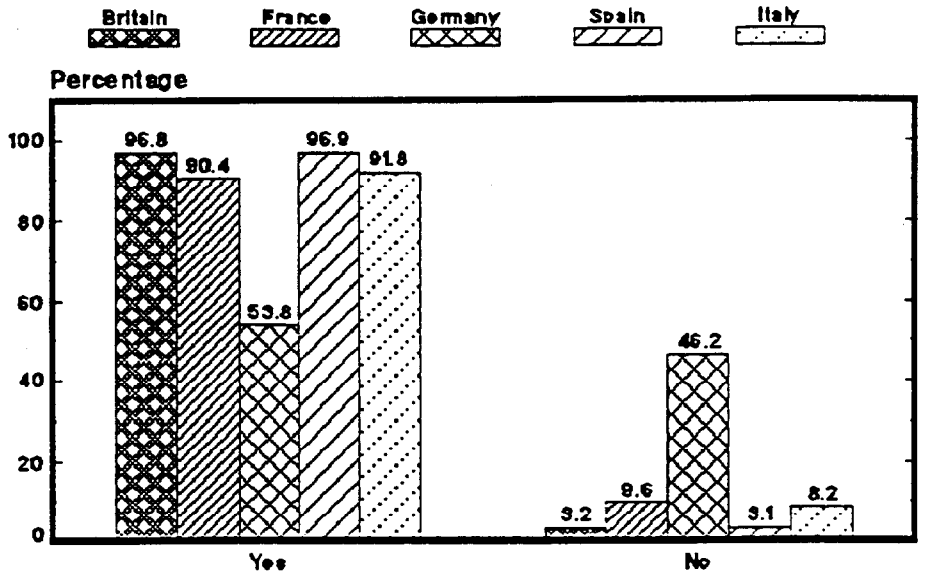
Companies were asked about their view of the country's educational system. Some interesting differences emerged. Only in Germany did most SMEs (77%) regard the education system as satisfactory. SMEs in Britain (73%) and Spain (79%) regarded it as unsatisfactory. In France (64%) and Italy (41%) it was seen as largely irrelevant.

FROM AN EMPLOYERS VIEW, HOW DO YOU REGARD THE COUNTRY'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?



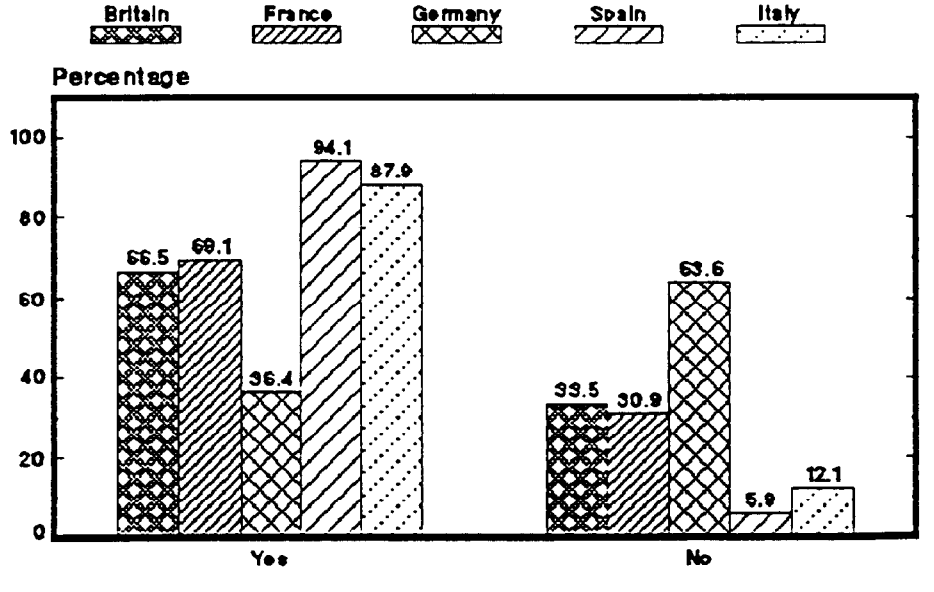
Over 90% of companies in Britain, France, Italy and Spain wanted the Government to do more to improve education. Only in Germany were companies evenly split with only 54% wanting improvements.

SHOULD GOVERNMENT DO MORE TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF EDUCATION?



Similarly most companies in Britain (67%), France (69%), Spain (94%) and Italy (88%) wanted the Government to do more to subsidise training. Only in Germany was this not the case, with 64% of companies not wanting the Government to do more. German companies appear generally very satisfied with the system of education and training that they have.

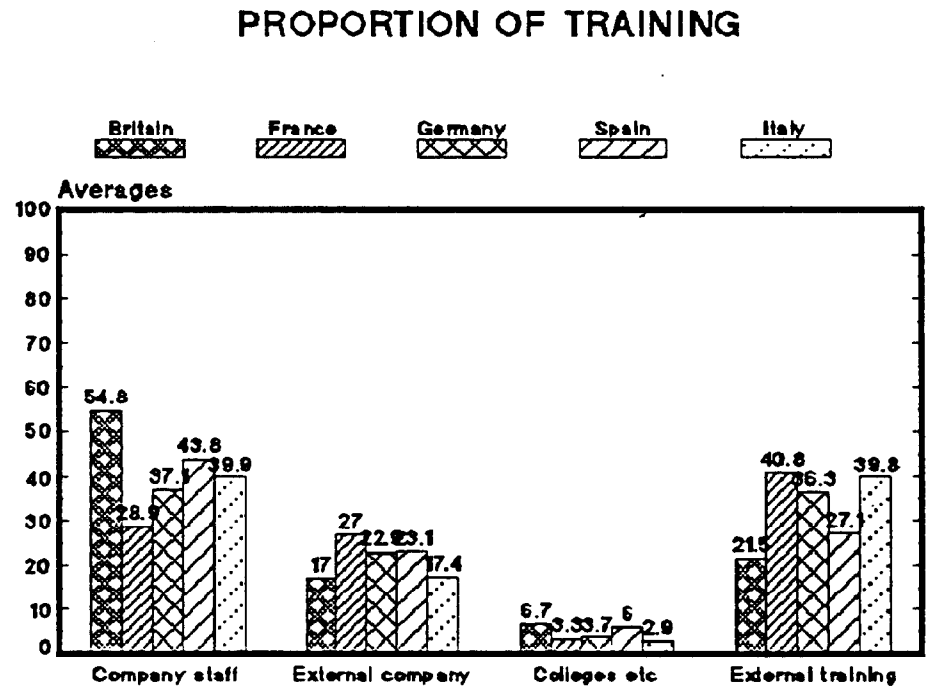
SHOULD GOVERNMENT DO MORE TO SUBSIDISE THE PROVISION OF TRAINING?



5. Sources of Training

Companies were asked about the sources of training they provided. Most training was provided internally using company staff as trainers. This was highest in Britain where, on average, 55% of training was provided in this way, and lowest in France, where 29% was provided. French (41%), Italian (40%) and Germany (36%) companies made greatest use of outside training organisations (not Colleges or Universities) reflecting the strong local training infrastructure in these countries. French SMEs also made most use (27%) of outside staff or organisations for their own internal training. Generally, Colleges and Universities provided only a very small proportion of training in all countries.

British companies stand out as different from those in other countries in sourcing the greatest proportion of their training internally. Other countries seem to use outsiders and other organisations to provided a greater proportion of their training. This might go some way towards explaining Britain's low spend on training, generally. However, it also has important policy implications. The British government through its Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) has done little to encourage and improve the quality of training through this route, an omission that might go some way towards explaining why TECs have failed, so far, to penetrate the market for SME training. This research provides a pointer as to how this deficiency can be remedied.

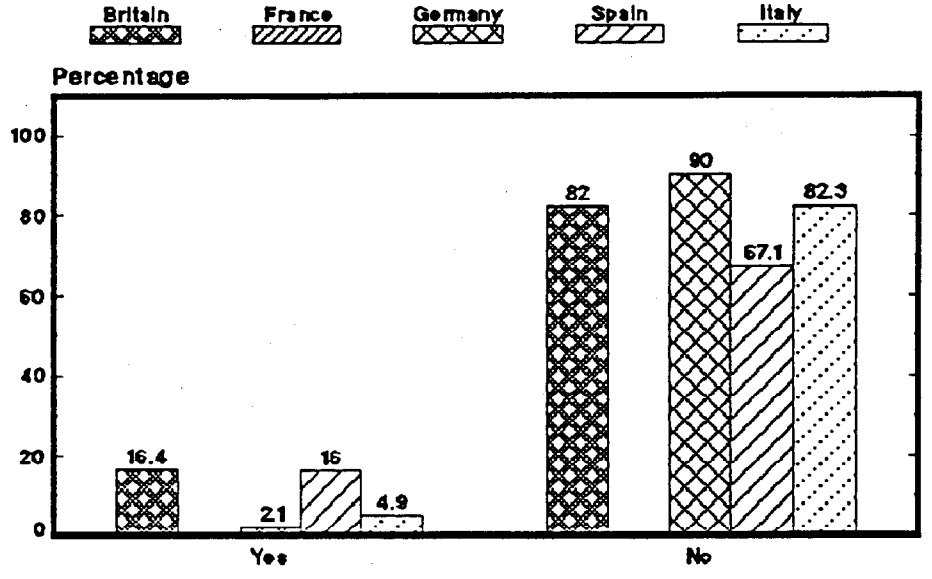


6. Women Returners

Companies were asked whether they provided courses for women returners. This questions was not asked in France as it was not

considered relevant there. The overwhelming majority of companies did not do so. It would seem that women returners are either a low priority, perhaps reflecting the increasing levels of unemployment across Europe, or are not seen as having special needs.

DO YOU PROVIDE COURSES TO UPDATE THE SKILLS OF WOMEN RETURNERS?



APPENDIX 1

Training

	Britain	France	Germany	Spain	Italy
	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Percentage of turnover spent on training	1.29%	1.76%	1.45%	1.73%	1.48%

	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
Have you had to cut back on training in the current recession?	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	74	37.9	25	17.4	44	15.8	72	21.4	222	67.5
No	121	62.1	119	82.6	235	84.2	264	78.6	107	32.5

	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
Regular and systematic analysis of employees' training needs	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	159	75.7	108	70.6	88	31.4	213	61.6	215	60.9
No	51	24.3	42	27.5	191	68.2	128	37.0	131	37.1
Don't know	0	0.0	3	2.0	1	0.4	5	1.4	7	2.0

	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
Training plan outlining skills that need to be developed and when	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	145	69.4	87	57.6	191	68.5	197	57.4	213	61.2
No	63	30.1	61	40.4	88	31.5	137	39.9	125	35.9
Don't know	1	0.5	3	2.0	0	0.0	9	2.6	10	2.9

Training

	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
Should government do more to subsidise the provision of training?	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	117	66.5	85	69.1	95	36.4	305	94.1	276	87.9
No	59	33.5	38	30.9	166	63.6	19	5.9	38	12.1

	Britain	France	Germany	Spain	Italy
	Average	**Average**	**Average**	**Average**	**Average**
Proportion of training internal using company staff as trainers	54.8%	28.9%	37.1%	43.8%	39.9%
Proportion of training internal but using outside staff or organisations as trainers	17.0%	27.0%	22.9%	23.1%	17.4%
Proportion of training from colleges or universities	6.7%	3.3%	3.7%	6.0%	2.9%
Proportion of training from outside training organisations	21.5%	40.8%	36.3%	27.1%	39.8%

	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
Do you provide courses to update the skills of women returners?	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	30	16.4	-	-	6	2.1	49	16.0	17	4.9
No	150	82.0	-	-	253	90.0	206	67.1	284	82.3
Don't know	3	1.6	-	-	22	7.8	52	16.9	44	12.8

Training

Do you monitor the effectiveness of training?	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	140	67.6	104	72.2	150	54.2	166	49.0	76	22.2
No	63	30.4	33	22.9	116	41.9	163	48.1	240	70.0
Don't know	4	1.9	7	4.9	11	4.0	10	2.9	27	7.9

How often are employees appraised?	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No fixed pattern	34	17.3	55	39.3	122	48.8	186	56.9	122	38.6
Six monthly	27	13.8	17	12.1	10	4.0	21	6.4	56	17.7
Annually	135	68.9	68	48.6	118	47.2	120	36.7	138	43.7
Bi-annually	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Never	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

From an employers view, do you regard this country's educational system as:	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Satisfactory	45	23.2	11	7.9	216	76.9	36	10.4	76	21.5
Unsatisfactory	142	73.2	39	27.9	53	18.9	271	78.6	132	37.4
Largely irrelevant	7	3.6	90	64.3	12	4.3	38	11.0	145	41.1

Should government do more to improve the standard of education?	Britain		France		Germany		Spain		Italy	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	182	96.8	123	90.4	149	53.8	314	96.9	290	91.8
No	6	3.2	13	9.6	128	46.2	10	3.1	26	8.2

APPENDIX 2

BRITAIN

	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
	Up to 50	51-100	101-200	200+	TOTAL
Sector	n	n	n	n	N
Agro & Food	4	2	2	5	**13**
Energy	0	0	1	1	**2**
Intermediate Goods	3	3	6	11	**23**
Capital Goods	4	2	1	16	**23**
Consumer Goods	2	0	4	9	**15**
Retail & Wholesale	14	4	12	11	**41**
Building & Civil Eng.	3	5	5	13	**26**
Transport & Communication	1	0	5	6	**12**
Services	10	7	15	31	**63**
Finanicial Services	0	0	1	8	**9**
TOTAL (N)	**41**	**23**	**52**	**111**	***227***
(16 missing cases)					

FRANCE

	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
	Up to 50	51-100	101-200	200+	TOTAL
Sector	n	n	n	n	N
Agro & Food	13	2	1	2	**18**
Energy	0	0	0	0	**0**
Intermediate Goods	1	1	4	3	**9**
Capital Goods	6	3	4	8	**21**
Consumer Goods	5	2	5	4	**16**
Retail & Wholesale	16	17	8	4	**45**
Building & Civil Eng.	0	2	5	2	**9**
Transport & Communication	1	0	2	0	**3**
Services	1	0	0	0	**1**
Finanicial Services	7	4	8	12	**31**
TOTAL (N)	**50**	**31**	**37**	**35**	***153***
(9 missing cases)					

GERMANY

	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
	Up to 50	51-100	101-200	200+	TOTAL
Sector	n	n	n	n	N
Agro & Food	0	2	6	0	8
Energy	0	1	1	4	6
Intermediate Goods	0	2	17	30	49
Capital Goods	1	3	37	53	94
Consumer Goods	0	2	23	24	49
Retail & Wholesale	5	3	7	4	19
Building & Civil Eng.	1	0	1	9	11
Transport & Communication	0	0	0	2	2
Services	1	3	7	14	25
Finanicial Services	0	0	1	1	2
TOTAL (N)	8	16	100	141	*265*
(21 missing cases)					

SPAIN

	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
	Up to 50	51-100	101-200	200+	TOTAL
Sector	n	n	n	n	N
Agro & Food	13	7	10	8	38
Energy	2	0	0	0	2
Intermediate Goods	7	17	20	19	63
Capital Goods	9	6	7	2	24
Consumer Goods	10	10	11	12	43
Retail & Wholesale	28	20	6	7	61
Building & Civil Eng.	10	2	3	7	22
Transport & Communication	1	3	4	6	14
Services	23	13	11	4	51
Finanicial Services	0	0	1	1	2
TOTAL (N)	103	78	73	66	*320*
(30 missing cases)					

ITALY

	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
	Up to 50	51-100	101-200	200+	TOTAL
Sector	n	n	n	n	N
Agro & Food	20	7	5	5	**37**
Energy	0	1	2	1	**4**
Intermediate Goods	14	21	22	4	**61**
Capital Goods	5	6	5	4	**20**
Consumer Goods	17	25	20	12	**74**
Retail & Wholesale	45	22	5	2	**74**
Building & Civil Eng.	5	13	8	5	**31**
Transport & Communication	1	3	1	2	**7**
Services	5	5	6	5	**21**
Finanicial Services	0	0	1	0	**1**
TOTAL (N) (27 missing cases)	**112**	103	**75**	**40**	***330***

Demographics

	Britain	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	TOTAL		
Sector	n	n	n	n	n	N	Non response	*TOTAL* (Sector)
Agro & Food	13	18	8	38	37	**114**	0	*114*
Energy	2	0	6	2	4	**14**	0	*14*
Intermediate Goods	23	9	50	63	62	**207**	2	*209*
Capital Goods	24	21	95	24	21	**185**	1	*186*
Consumer Goods	15	16	49	44	75	**199**	0	*199*
Retail & Wholesale	41	45	19	61	75	**241**	0	*241*
Building & Civil Eng.	26	9	11	22	31	**99**	2	*101*
Transport & Communication	12	3	2	14	7	**38**	0	*38*
Services	63	1	26	51	21	**162**	0	*162*
Finanicial Services	9	31	2	2	1	**45**	0	*45*
N	**228**	**153**	**268**	**321**	**334**	**1304**		
Non response	15	9	18	29	23			
TOTAL (Country)	*243*	*162*	*286*	*350*	*357*			

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