



## BRIEFING NOTE

# Old roots for new routes

### Cedefop's 40th anniversary theme aims to draw inspiration from the past to improve vocational education and training for the future

Around half of Europe's population acquires their first job-related skills through VET. Many more develop those skills and learn new ones through continuing training and other forms of learning at the workplace.

VET is central to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It is fundamental to delivering the European youth guarantee that all young people under 25 receive a good-quality offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education within four months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Successful greening of Europe's economy and job creation across sectors depends on VET providing people with the skills to use new technology and materials and adapt to new methods of working. But Europe's VET systems are struggling to meet 21st century expectations. Implementing change can be difficult, especially at a time of economic hardship.

'Old roots to new routes' is Cedefop's 40th anniversary theme for 2015. Renewed strength can come from looking at progress to date. Less than 20 years ago the extent of European cooperation in VET with its shared aims (under the Copenhagen process), including common European tools, (such as the European qualifications framework), and joint initiatives (such as the European alliance for apprenticeships) was unimaginable.

Cedefop has supported closely the European Commission, Member States and social partners in all their work to improve VET in Europe and continues to do so (Box 1). As work progresses, increasingly Cedefop is providing country-specific information, identifying particular trends and needs in Member States. In some areas, such as implementation of European tools and apprenticeships, Cedefop is providing direct support to Member States. The following outline of some of Cedefop's achievements in 2014 and highlights of its work programme for 2015 are evidence of progress made and the scale and ambition of the task ahead.

## Policies for modernising VET systems

Since 2004, Cedefop has reported on Member States' progress in implementing European VET policy priorities agreed by all 28 European Union (EU) Member States (plus Iceland and Norway) including social partners, under the Copenhagen process.

### Box 1. About Cedefop

Cedefop is the European Union's agency that helps design vocational education and training (VET) policies that promote excellence and social inclusion and strengthen European cooperation in VET. For 2012-16 Cedefop has three priorities:

- supporting modernisation of VET systems;
- careers and transitions, including issues such as continuing VET, adult and work-based learning;
- analysing skills and competence needs.

These priorities include tasks the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, Member States and social partners have specifically asked Cedefop to carry out. Cedefop information, gathered through research, policy analysis and networking, is disseminated through its website, publications, social media and events.

Founded on 10 February 1975 and originally based in the then West Berlin, Cedefop was set up to, 'assist the [European] Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational training and in-service training'. Cedefop moved to Thessaloniki, Greece in 1995.

Over the past 40 years, Cedefop has played an important role in strengthening European cooperation in developing VET policy. Cedefop's evaluation in 2013 found that its analyses of VET systems and policies are highly valued. Cedefop is also recognised as a leading centre of expertise on qualifications frameworks and skill forecasting. Cedefop works closely with other European, national and international organisations. Work is complementary and activities are not duplicated.

In September 2014, Cedefop and the European Commission hosted a conference *Building European VET*. It considered progress by Member States in implementing the Bruges communiqué objectives for 2011-14. It also discussed successes and obstacles to reform and how to overcome them.

In 2015, Cedefop will publish its monitoring report *Stronger VET for better lives*, which analyses progress made in more depth. For example, common instruments such as the European qualifications framework (EQF) and associated national qualifications frameworks are not only making qualifications better understood, but in several countries are seen as catalysts for change. This includes the shift to basing VET curricula on learning outcomes (what someone can do at the end of any learning process, formal or non-formal) rather than learning input (duration and place of study), which has opened up different ways to acquire skills. Analysis of qualifications at EQF level 5 shows they can provide access to employment and higher education, making them attractive to learners and employers. But there are gaps in providing this level of these types of post-secondary qualifications, which some Member States are investigating. Methods to validate informal and non-formal learning have improved. Interest in apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning has revived.

But challenges remain. Validation needs to be more systemic. VET's contribution to innovation, entrepreneurship and economic excellence needs wider recognition. Cooperation between enterprises, education and training, and social partners needs deepening. In 2015, Cedefop will work with the European Commission and Member States and social partners to prepare a new VET communiqué.

Recommendations of the Council and European Parliament that set up: the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2008; the European credit system for VET (ECVET) in 2009; and the European quality assurance framework for VET (EQAVET) in 2009; along with the Council and European Parliament's decision to establish Europass in 2004; and the Council recommendation on principles for validating informal and non-formal learning are practical evidence of the depth of European cooperation in VET over more than a decade. These common European tools and principles aim to make VET systems more flexible. They improve understanding of qualifications and make it easier for people to move between different types of learning (such as between general and vocational education) and across borders. They also make all types of learning visible on the labour

market, including skills acquired at work. Cedefop has worked with the European Commission, Member States and social partners to develop European tools and principles from the outset and is now supporting their implementation at national level.

Success of the tools and principles depends on learning outcomes being applied consistently. In 2015, a new Cedefop study will say more about how learning outcomes are used and their impact in 33 countries. Also in 2015, Cedefop will prepare a handbook on writing and applying learning outcomes. The handbook will be the focus of a policy learning forum on learning outcomes that Cedefop will organise for Member States and social partners.

The European qualifications framework (EQF) enables all types of national qualifications to be compared with one another and those from other countries. Some 36 countries are expected to have linked their national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) to the EQF by 2015. A Cedefop publication in 2015 will show the important role of NQFs in national education and training policies and how they are improving understanding of qualifications for learners and employers across Europe.

Based on interviews in 10 European countries, 20 case studies and a survey of more than 400 European enterprises, in May 2014, Cedefop published *Use of validation by enterprises*, one of the first comprehensive reviews of validation of informal and non-formal learning outside the public sector. In 2015, Cedefop will update the European guidelines on validation.

Reliable quality assurance underpins transferability of VET qualifications across Europe. Cedefop studies published in 2014, for example *Quality assurance and building trust between VET and higher education*, will be debated in 2015. Cedefop and the European Commission will also draft guidelines for a common quality assurance framework for VET providers at national level by 2015.

The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) helps validate, recognise and accumulate work-related skills and knowledge acquired from another country or different situations, so they count towards vocational qualifications. Monitoring its implementation in 38 countries and regions Cedefop has found that support for ECVET is mixed. Following a Cedefop workshop in May 2014 on credit systems in VET and higher education, work will focus on easing transfers between different parts of the education and

training system and making full use of learning outcomes to credit learning with comparable points.

Record numbers of people use Europass, a portfolio of documents in a standard European format available in 27 languages for people to show all their knowledge, skills and competences however acquired. Some 102 million people have visited the website (<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>), since its launch in 2005, 21 million in 2014. Since 2005, 48 million CVs have been generated online, 13.5 million in 2014. In 2015, Cedefop will upgrade the website and promote links with public employment services.

Strengthening coherence between the tools and principles is a priority. In November 2014, Cedefop's conference *Stepping up the pace* examined existing and potential links between them. In 2015, this work will develop further, taking into account responses to the European Commission's consultation on a European area of skills and qualifications and findings from several Cedefop studies.

## Focusing on citizens: careers and transitions

High youth unemployment has revived interest in apprenticeships. Cedefop supported the European alliance for apprenticeships in several ways.

Cedefop's expertise supported policy discussion at a workshop organised by the Greek EU Presidency on apprenticeship's role in fulfilling the youth guarantee. In May 2014, Cedefop and the European Commission organised the *Steering partnerships for growth* conference to help countries find potential partners to cooperate in developing and expanding apprenticeship schemes. Cedefop will continue to analyse apprenticeship-type reforms in Member States and monitor progress in setting up (bilateral) apprenticeship alliances.

Cedefop's first policy learning event in September 2014 discussed country reviews of apprenticeships in Lithuania and Malta. Results will be published in 2015 and the reviews possibly extended to two or three more countries. In 2015, Cedefop will also publish its study on VET's role in reducing early leaving from education and training.

To follow up European VET priorities for 2011-14, Cedefop published a policy handbook to help Member States, social partners, enterprises and others to increase access to and participation in continuing VET. Its findings, showing a need to raise the profile

of benefits of continuing VET, were discussed during the Italian EU Presidency. In 2015, Cedefop will publish its stocktaking of work-based learning in continuing VET, which brings together findings from several Cedefop studies, including innovation and work-based learning for adults and the economic and social benefits of continuing VET.

In 2014, Cedefop launched a new database on financing adult learning providing information on design and performance of cost-sharing schemes implemented in 27 EU countries that aim to increase participation and private investment in adult learning. In 2015, based on its analysis of the adult education survey and the continuing vocational training survey, Cedefop will publish a clear picture of job-related learning and continuing training in Europe.

Cedefop's publication *Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions* presents 125 individual biographies from five EU countries. The stories show that guidance and counselling can make or break career changes.

## Analysing skills and competences

Cedefop's analyses of skill demand and supply, mismatches and imbalances support the new skills and jobs agenda of Europe 2020 strategy.

Cedefop sits on the global agenda council on employment of the World Economic Forum (WEF) with the OECD, ILO, IMF and other world-leading experts and academia. Cedefop contributed extensively to the WEF paper *Matching skills and labour market needs in the world economy* presented in January 2014 in Davos. Skill mismatch is a high policy priority. It represents a significant loss of investment in people and has damaging economic and social consequences. To improve understanding of skill mismatch in Europe, in 2014 Cedefop undertook the first pan-European skills survey of around 50 000 adult employees across all 28 Member States examining how individuals' qualifications and skills are matched (or not) with changing skill demands and complexities of their jobs. In 2015, Cedefop will disseminate survey results widely and discuss their policy implications at a high-level conference on policies to tackle skill mismatch.

In spring 2014, working with the European Commission, Cedefop launched an improved EU skills panorama (EUSP) website. Some 22 highlights were available in 2014, on, for example, apprenticeships, renewable energy and construction. In 2015, work will

continue to make the EUSP a dynamic, interactive web platform giving access to data on trends in skills and jobs across Europe.

Cedefop's skill supply and demand forecasts provide a pan-European picture of skill trends. Working with other international organisations Cedefop has built a reputation as a centre of expertise on the interaction between skills, training and the labour market. In 2015, Cedefop will update its European forecasts and analyse trends in each Member State. It will also develop policy scenarios to consider how to address Europe's problem of a shrinking labour force.

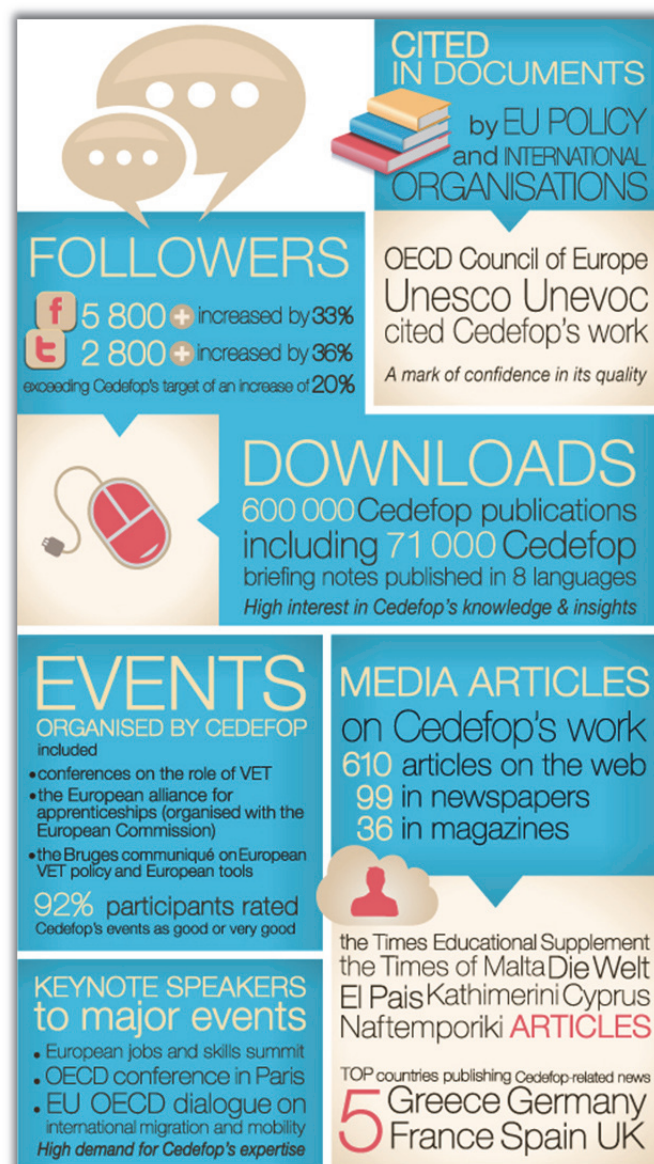
Cedefop will continue to discuss skill challenges posed by developing the green economy in the interinstitutional working group on greening technical VET, which includes the OECD, ILO and Unesco.

### An efficient European agency

Cedefop monitors carefully its and uses activity-based budgeting. Its performance indicators show that stakeholders value Cedefop's work. Demand for Cedefop's expertise is rising (see graph). In 2014, Cedefop's budget execution was, again, above 99.3%. Audits confirm that Cedefop's procedures are regular and its controls are working well.

In line with its roadmap for EU agencies, the European Commission proposes to revise Cedefop's 1975 Founding Regulation. Changes should reflect the considerable increase over the past 40 years in Cedefop's scope. To give just more recent examples, despite budget restrictions since 2009, due to demand, existing tasks have grown, notably policy reporting, support for European tools and skill forecasts and analyses. Cedefop has also been asked to take on new tasks, such as the EU skills panorama and the European validation inventory. In 2015, Cedefop will conduct a feasibility study on developing a VET mobility scoreboard. With DG Employment (Cedefop's new lead directorate-general) and the OECD, Cedefop will also be part of a steering group on a new project on costs and benefits of apprenticeships, which Cedefop will take over in 2016. Cedefop's evaluation in 2013 also proposed that fostering policy learning should also be part of Cedefop's future work. All these tasks require medium-term resource commitments.

With 40 years of experience, Cedefop is continuing to help European policy-makers adapt VET to new demands in education and employment.



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