

**BRIEFING NOTE**

More effective VET and lifelong learning policies: awareness raising, analysis and advice

Cedefop's achievements in 2012 and plans for 2013

Reform of vocational education and training (VET) in Europe is complex, especially at a time of economic crisis. Cedefop raises awareness and provides analysis and advice to policy-makers at European level and in Member States to help them decide on policies and actions. Cedefop's work supports the European policy agenda for VET and lifelong learning.

Cedefop's medium-term priorities 2012-14 guide its work. They reflect the European Union's (EU's) priorities for VET and include tasks that the Council of Ministers, European Commission, Member States and social partners have specifically asked Cedefop to carry out.

Cedefop's impact depends largely on the value and trust stakeholders place on the authority, reliability and usefulness of its results. This depends on solid analysis and effective communication. Performance indicators show that stakeholders value Cedefop's work and demand for its expertise is rising (Box 1).

Policies for modernising VET systems

Cedefop has a mandate to report on progress by Member States in implementing agreed European VET policy priorities under the Copenhagen process.

In 2012, Cedefop reviewed progress on the 22 short-term deliverables, a series of intermediate objectives that contribute to European VET policy's strategic goals for 2020, set out in the Bruges communiqué. Cedefop's review covered all EU Member States, Iceland and Norway (Box 2). It showed that many countries have addressed, at least partly, some short-term deliverables, particularly concerning young people. Countries continue to work to reduce early school leaving, for example through modular VET courses, validating non-formal and informal learning and better guidance. Developing apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning is also a clear trend in many countries. However, VET is missing from many national innovation strategies and more needs to be invested in skills of VET teachers/trainers. In 2013, Cedefop will update its review and prepare

for publication the next full European VET policy report in 2014.

Box 1 Using Cedefop's expertise

- EU policy documents citing Cedefop's work increased from 100 in 2011 to 169 in 2012, indicating trust in Cedefop's policy advice.
- In addition to the demands on Cedefop by the European Commission, the Council and Parliament and the EESC, Cedefop is frequently approached by other prestigious international organisations to provide input and contribute, including the ILO, UNESCO, World Economic Forum, BMW foundation (Munich Economic Summit) and the Bertelsmann foundation.
- Media coverage of Cedefop's work increased to 525 articles in 2012, compared to 381 in 2011. Interest has continued spreading beyond Greece, in particular to Spain, but also Germany, Hungary, Italy, Austria, and the UK. Cedefop's statistical data, in particular its skill-supply-and-demand forecasts and its statistics-of-the-month series have attracted media interest.
- Demand for Cedefop's online and hard-copy research and analyses has also increased. Published in seven languages, 64 000 Cedefop briefing notes were downloaded in 2012, an increase of 30% over 2011. Of 860 000 downloads from Cedefop's web portal 631 000 were publications, up 33% compared to 2011.
- Cedefop's social media activities also grew rapidly; by the end of 2012, more than 2 700 people followed Cedefop's postings on Facebook and about 1 300 on Twitter.
- In 2012, Cedefop organised 150 conferences and events attended by 2508 participants. The quality of Cedefop's events remained on a high level with 96% of participants rating them as good or very good.
- In 2012, Cedefop organised two seminars jointly with the European Parliament; the first on skill mismatch and the second on the student loan guarantee as part of the new YES (youth, education and sport) programme for 2014-20.

Coordinating the Europe 2020 strategy through the European semester, the European Commission makes country-specific recommendations. Cedefop supports this process by providing evidence on the situation in Member States to monitor progress towards objectives and follow-up recommendations. Twice a year, Cedefop prepares overviews of VET developments in Member States, Norway and Iceland.

Cedefop cooperates closely with EU presidencies preparing VET events. In 2012, for Denmark's EU Presidency Cedefop provided a snapshot on VET-business cooperation in Europe and for the conference 'VET-business cooperation promoting new skills, innovation and growth for the future', Cedefop delivered a keynote speech. For the Cyprus EU Presidency, Cedefop provided an update on policies to promote permeability, namely the ease with which people can move between different subjects and parts of the education and training system ⁽¹⁾.

In the academic year 2011/12, Cedefop encouraged participation by social partners in 215 study visits. Some 2 458 participants from 33 countries attended, 96% of whom were very satisfied or satisfied with the visits.

In 2013, implementation of common European tools and principles will accelerate. Recommendations of the Council and European Parliament on the European qualifications framework (EQF), the European credit system for VET (ECVET) and the European quality assurance framework for VET (EQAVET) are completing the first implementation phase. Priority is to strengthen coherence among the instruments, in particular by ensuring that learning outcomes are applied consistently. Cedefop is working with the European Commission, Member States and social partners trying to ensure a long-term strategy on learning outcomes. Based on a survey of national practice, an analysis of the effects of learning outcomes on teaching and learning in initial VET, and experience of developing national qualifications frameworks, credit systems, curricula, assessment, quality assurance and validation, Cedefop will reflect on how learning outcomes are being applied across Europe in 2013. Results will be presented at a conference to debate the critical role learning outcomes play in education and training systems and learning pathways in the labour market.

⁽¹⁾ *Permeable education and training systems – Reducing barriers and increasing opportunities.*
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/20510.aspx>

Box 2 Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12

Cedefop's analysis of implementation of the 22 short-term deliverables in the Bruges communiqué shows that:

- many countries are developing apprenticeship and other forms of work-based learning;
- many countries are addressing early leaving from education and training, in particular by supporting transition into VET;
- incentives for learners to remain in or re-enter VET and for enterprises to provide (additional) training places or employment are widespread, but incentives for VET institutions to prevent drop-out seem less frequent;
- initiatives to use ICT for 'at risk' groups to access and support learning seem limited;
- including VET in national innovation strategies and using incentives to support partnerships for creativity and innovation in VET do not seem to be very common;
- staff exchange between VET and business and investing in the skills of VET teachers/trainers is not very common;
- EQF/NQF levels on certificates and qualifications may raise their visibility on the labour market and to citizens;
- links between validation of non-formal and informal learning and NQFs need strengthening. Validation, recognition, credit transfer and qualification frameworks often cover only parts of the education and training system rather than bridging them;
- forums to coordinate guidance policies and provision exist in most countries, but differences between services persist.

The EQF and associated national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) are seen in several countries as catalysts for changing their education and training systems. NQFs use learning outcomes as the main principle for deciding the level of qualifications and by linking (referencing) NQFs to the EQF, learners and employers can compare levels of qualifications awarded at home and by other countries. In 2012, for the fourth consecutive year, Cedefop mapped and analysed progress. It reported that 35 countries are developing 39 NQFs (some countries, for example Belgium and the UK have more than one) of which 21 have been formally adopted. Seven countries are entering the early operational phase and four have fully implemented their NQFs. Some 15 countries have referenced their frameworks to the EQF and the rest should do so during 2013. Cedefop's findings will feed into the European Commission's evaluation of the EQF which will report in 2013.

Cedefop has, since 2010, monitored implementation of ECVET, analysing, in particular, the necessary conditions for its success. Cedefop's 2012 report shows that, although Member States are increasingly committed to ECVET implementation, Europe is still far from a fully operational credit system in VET and most countries are giving priority to their NQFs. In 2013, Cedefop's monitoring will be the basis for considering links between ECVET and the European credit transfer system (used in higher education), and will be used in the European Commission's ECVET evaluation which will report in 2014.

Eight years after its launch in February 2005, 25.2 million people use Europass (a collection of documents available in 26 languages enabling people to present their qualifications and skills to employers across Europe in a standard format). The Europass website (<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>) managed by Cedefop had over 14.8 million visitors in 2012. More than 8.1 million Europass CVs were completed online in 2012, taking the total to over 24.7 million. In 2012, at the European Commission's request, Cedefop developed the Europass experience document to record non-formal and informal learning acquired by people at home or abroad and the European skills passport, which provides people with a portable dossier, and which was launched in December 2012. In 2013, both will be improved on the basis of users' feedback.

With the European Commission and Eurydice, Cedefop will continue to work on reducing early leaving from VET. A study with Eurydice is planned in 2013 on factors causing early school leaving and Cedefop will collect information on policies to tackle it.

Careers and transitions

Cedefop's work on adult learning contributes directly to implementing European VET priorities as defined in the Bruges communiqué and the Council resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning.

The European year of active ageing encouraged debate on how learning can promote longer and successful working lives, despite being overshadowed by the need for urgent action to battle youth unemployment and continuing economic crisis. In 2012, Cedefop published *Working and ageing*, which considers benefits of, and barriers to, investing in learning later in life. In 2013, Cedefop will publish results of its study on how work-based learning can reintegrate unemployed adults into the labour market.

While much is known about initial VET, we know comparatively little about how rapid labour market changes affect continuing VET. Cedefop will analyse this issue with several country and sector case studies in 2013 with a fuller study following in 2014-15.

The recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning aims to help adults increase visibility of their skills and competences. Cedefop will present its study on use of validation of non-formal and informal learning in enterprises in 2013 at a joint conference with the European Commission. Cedefop will also prepare a second edition of European guidelines on validation and update the European inventory on validation. Further, Cedefop will publish its study on use of validation of non-formal and informal learning in European enterprises.

Its 2012 publication *Loans for vocational education and training in Europe* showed the differences in design and objectives of financing schemes and how some increase general participation in learning, while others seek to promote equity. Also in 2012, *Training leave* looked at how to overcome barriers to training due to problems with time, while *Payback clauses in Europe – Supporting company investment in training* looked at how the employer-provided training can be stimulated by reducing the risk of trained employees being poached by another enterprise. A joint conference in December 2012 with the European Commission 'Adult Learning – Spotlight on investment' discussed how to develop adult learning through more efficient sharing of costs and greater awareness of the benefits of training.

Recent evidence points to the success of work-based learning, dual VET systems and apprenticeships in promoting labour market integration for young people. Increasing numbers of apprentices is a Bruges communiqué objective. Germany's initiative to set up the European alliance for apprenticeship was launched in December and Cedefop has been asked to play a role in its coordination. The alliance supports bilateral cooperation on how the principles behind dual VET systems can be introduced into various national systems and help young people to find a job. In 2013, Cedefop will examine financing models and private and public costs of work-based and dual VET in European countries to understand better the requirements to develop work-based models in VET.

Trainers are at the front line of initiatives to upgrade the skills of Europe's workforce, promote lifelong learning, improve employability and reform VET. Cedefop will continue to coordinate with the European

Commission the working group trainers in VET launched in February 2012. In 2013, Cedefop will analyse successful approaches to supporting the professional development of in-company trainers.

Supported by lifelong guidance, adults can make better decisions on education, training and work. In 2013, Cedefop will finalise its studies on guidance and age management strategies and integration of immigrants into the labour market.

Analysing skills and competences

Cedefop's analysis of skill demand and supply, mismatches and imbalances supports the new skills and jobs agenda. Cedefop has also been invited to join the Global Agenda Council on Employment of the World Economic Forum together with the OECD, ILO, IMF and other world-leading experts and academia to address the jobs crisis and skill mismatch.

Cedefop skill supply and demand forecasts provide a pan-European picture of skill trends. In 2012, Cedefop published its latest forecast for 2020, which takes account of the economic slowdown that followed the financial crisis. It underlines that, although numbers of job opportunities have fallen, major trends, such as more skill-intensive jobs at all levels, job creation in services and the rising qualification level of Europe's workforce, continue.

The EU Skills Panorama, launched in 2012 to improve access to European labour market intelligence, includes Cedefop's forecast data. In 2013, Cedefop will update its forecasts and extend the time horizon from 2020 to 2025. Forecast data for Croatia will be added in July 2013, when it joins the EU.

Following the successful design and pilot of an employer survey on skill needs, Cedefop will, in 2013, prepare a European-wide employer survey to be launched in early-2014. The survey will investigate the demand for skills and emerging skill gaps.

In 2013, Cedefop will publish its research on how skill mismatch affects individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, (such as older workers, unemployed people and ethnic minorities) and labour market transitions. The results will provide new evidence on sectoral and cross-country differences in skill imbalances. A high-level conference will take place in autumn 2013 to debate priorities for policies to reduce skill mismatch.

In 2012, Cedefop published *Green skills and environmental awareness in vocational education and training*. It examines trends in employment, skill needs and training for selected occupations likely to be affected by development of a low-carbon, resource-

efficient economy. In 2013, Cedefop will continue to work with UNEVOC, OECD, ILO, ETF and other international agencies in a body coordinating *Greening TVET and skills development*.

An efficient European agency

As tight budgetary framework conditions demand, Cedefop monitors carefully the use of resources. Cedefop uses activity-based budgeting and a performance measurement system with indicators on its impact, efficiency, effectiveness and relevance.

In 2013, the periodic external evaluation of Cedefop will be conducted by the European Commission. Cedefop will follow up its recommendations, as well as any findings and recommendations of the interinstitutional working group on EU agencies.

In 2012, Cedefop's budget execution was, again, above 97%. Audits have not only confirmed their regularity, but also found that Cedefop procedures and controls are working well.

Cedefop's size and the nature of its work, as well as considerable efforts over past years, leave little room for further significant efficiency gains. Despite a 2009 horizontal budget cut and zero-growth budgets in the last few years, Cedefop has been asked to take on new tasks. In 2013 and 2014, further requests include the Skills Panorama, an employer survey on skill needs, refinements on country-specific monitoring, and the European validation inventory. Existing tasks have also grown, notably policy reporting, support of the implementation of European tools and principles, and adult and work-based learning. Most of these are substantial and require medium-term resource commitments.



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