



# SHAPING, VALUING AND INFORMING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY

Over the period 2017-20, Cedefop will continue to respond to changing needs

The labour market has never been static. It has always been moved by economic winds and technology. People in the labour force have continually adapted to its changing needs. Today the challenge is not change, but its speed. The telephone took 75 years to have 50 million users; after 20 years the mobile phone has 2 billion. The World Economic Forum estimates that two-thirds of children entering primary school today will work in jobs that do not yet exist. Without nurturing skills, people and enterprises are in danger of being left behind.

European vocational education and training (VET) policy has adapted to provide people and enterprises with the skills they need. Educational attainment is rising and fewer people leave school early. The European Union (EU) is on track to reach its targets of 40% of 30 to 40 year-olds completing tertiary level education and

reducing school dropout rates below 10% by 2020. Cooperation between the European Commission, Member States and social partners has underpinned this progress and Cedefop's expertise has strengthened this cooperation. But the EU remains some way off reaching its target of 15% of adults participating in lifelong learning. Skill mismatch has also increased. Youth unemployment remains high in many Member States, while there are not enough graduates from upper secondary and higher education in sciences, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects to meet demand.

So, European VET policy continues to adapt. In June 2016, using evidence and data provided by Cedefop, the European Commission launched its *New skills agenda* to help the 70 million Europeans who lack adequate reading and writing, numeracy and digital

## ABOUT CEDEFOP

Cedefop is the European Union's oldest agency. It strengthens European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET), supporting the European Commission, Member States and social partners in designing and implementing VET policies that promote economic excellence and social inclusion. During 2017-20 Cedefop is working to:

- shape VET, by supporting the modernisation of VET systems;
- value VET, by empowering people to obtain skills for work and life through VET;
- inform VET, by improving VET policies through labour market intelligence.

Cedefop monitors European VET policy developments, provides new knowledge and evidence to support VET policy-making and implementation, and acts as a knowledge broker exchanging ideas and stimulating debate on VET-related issues to support VET policy-making and implementation.

All of Cedefop's activities support the European VET policy agenda and include tasks that the Council of Ministers, the

European Commission, Member States and social partners have specifically asked the Agency to carry out.

These include reporting on VET policy developments in Member States, helping devise and implement European tools that support mobility: Europass and the European qualifications framework, validation of non-formal and informal learning, European skill supply and demand forecasts, and the Skills Panorama. Cedefop's information is gathered through research, policy analysis and networking; it is disseminated through its website, publications, social media and events.

Founded on 10 February 1975 and originally based in the then West Berlin, Cedefop moved to Thessaloniki, Greece in 1995. Cedefop's analyses of VET systems and policies are highly valued. It is also recognised as a leading centre of expertise on qualifications frameworks and skill forecasting and skills analysis. To ensure that work is complementary and not duplicated, Cedefop works closely with other European, national and international organisations. Cedefop's 1975 Founding Regulation is currently being revised.

skills – and who are the most vulnerable to change – by improving the quality and relevance of skill formation, making skills and qualifications more visible and comparable, and improving skills intelligence.

## Meeting new and changing needs

Policy developments bring new needs and Cedefop is adapting to meet them. Stakeholders want to know how labour market and VET developments interact. Various groups of Member States want support to implement aspects of European VET policy and opportunities to share experience.

Reflecting these needs, Cedefop's programming document 2017-20 outlines a medium-term plan on how to help the European Commission, Member States and social partners develop and implement policies to improve VET. Continuing to strengthen European cooperation in VET, Cedefop will monitor and analyse VET-related policy trends, provide new knowledge through analyses and research, and act as a knowledge broker trading ideas and experience, and encouraging partnerships, notably through its policy learning forums. During 2017-20, Cedefop will help shape, value and inform VET systems and policy, each aspect reinforcing the other, strengthening development and implementation through feedback and renewal.

## Shaping VET

Shaping VET is about renewing and modernising systems and institutions, and supporting development and use of European tools. Cedefop's regular reports on VET policy developments are used by policy-makers to review and agree common European VET priorities. Using Cedefop analyses, the European Commission, Member States and social partners agreed in June 2015 in Riga, European VET policy priorities for 2015-20. In 2017, Cedefop will provide an interim analysis of progress by Member States on improving work-based learning (particularly apprenticeships), reinforcing key competences, strengthening VET quality assurance, improving access to VET and qualifications, and promoting VET teachers' and trainers' professional development. Understanding VET systems in their national contexts is essential for policy analysis. Cedefop's ReferNet network provides information on national developments and policy progress that Cedefop uses for many activities. These include policy reporting and descriptions, Spotlights flyers and short videos of VET systems for EU Presidency countries ([Slovakia](#) and [the Netherlands](#) in 2016; Malta and Estonia in 2017).

Under the Europe 2020 strategy flagship initiative *Youth on the move*, and now the *New skills agenda*, Cedefop, working with the European Commission, published during VET week in December 2016 an online mobility scoreboard. This will help Member States identify where to invest effort to ensure mobility for initial VET is successful. In 2017, the scoreboard will be updated and extended.

Preceding the Europe 2020 strategy but now also linked to *Youth on the move* and the *New skills agenda*, Cedefop has played a major role in developing several common European tools and principles that are part of modernising VET systems. The European qualifications framework (EQF) and its related national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) compare all types of national qualifications with one another and those from other countries. Some 39 countries are cooperating on the EQF and 43 NQFs have been established. In 2016, several Cedefop policy learning forums discussed EQF issues, including recognition of migrants' skills. In 2017, the European Commission is expected to propose a revision of the 2008 EQF recommendation. In 2017, Cedefop will continue to help develop and implement the European credit system for VET and the European quality assurance framework for VET; both are based on recommendations of the European Parliament and Council agreed in 2009.

In 2016, Cedefop published its study on using [learning outcomes](#) (what someone knows and is able to do at the end of any learning process, be it formal, non-formal or informal) in 33 countries. It highlighted their diversity in and complexities in use but also how they are acting as catalysts for reform. In 2017, Cedefop will publish a handbook on writing and applying learning outcomes based on policy learning forum discussions held in 2015 and 2016.

Use of Europass, a document portfolio showing someone's skills in a standard format available in 27 languages, continues to rise. Cedefop manages the [Europass website](#), visited by more than 153 million people since its launch in 2005, 27 million in 2016. Since 2005, 85 million CVs have been generated online, 19 million in 2016. Under the *New skills agenda*, the European Commission has proposed a revision of Europass. Cedefop's role in this will be discussed in 2017.

To understand how and why VET needs to adapt in the future, in 2016 Cedefop's research into the changing role of VET examined how it is influenced by external factors such as technology and how concepts of VET

are changing. In 2017, Cedefop will develop scenarios for VET's future for debate at a major conference.

## Valuing VET

Valuing VET is about employability; enabling citizens to achieve competences and skills required for work and life. Following field work in 2016, findings from Cedefop's opinion survey on VET will, in 2017, provide insights into VET's awareness, attractiveness, satisfaction and perceived effectiveness.

Drawing from its publication and workshop in 2016 on [labour market information in lifelong guidance](#), in 2017, Cedefop will publish toolkits for practitioners and users that will explore how validation is integrated into lifelong guidance. In 2016, Cedefop and the OECD organised an expert forum on integrating refugees and migrants into the labour market; conclusions will be available in 2017.

Cedefop continues to promote apprenticeship in the EU, advocating work-based learning and encouraging international partnerships under the European alliance for apprenticeships. At their request, it also reviews apprenticeship arrangements in Member States. In 2017, Cedefop will publish reviews for Greece, Italy and Slovenia and work with Croatia and Cyprus. A policy learning forum on work-based learning and apprenticeships will enable the nine countries involved in the reviews to share experiences with other Member States and social partners. Cedefop will also continue to work with the European Commission, reviewing statistical data on work-based learning in initial VET. In 2016, Cedefop's study on [apprenticeship governance and financing](#) in Spain, Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Sweden identified how to implement high-quality apprenticeships. In 2017, research will examine apprenticeships for adults further. Combining research and policy learning, Cedefop will collect examples of using work-based learning to develop basic skills.

In 2016, Cedefop published a [two-volume study](#) on how VET can help reduce early leaving from education and training. A policy learning forum will follow up the study for Member States to test the tools and instruments developed to support policies to reduce early leaving. In 2017, Cedefop will produce an online toolkit for policy-making in this area.

Cedefop will publish its 2017 study on economic and social costs of low-skilled adults, investigating who are low-skilled adults and the costs for individuals, economies and societies. In 2017, to support the *New skills agenda* and Council recommendation on upskilling

pathways, Cedefop will investigate VET and adult learning policies for low-skilled adults in selected groups of countries. Also in 2017, Cedefop will hold its first policy learning forum on low-skilled adults, as part of a developing learning process that will continue in 2018 and 2019; Member States will share experiences of policies helping low-skilled adults.

In 2016, with several booklets on different aspects of validation (including its use in the care and youth sector) Cedefop published an online database combining the European guidelines and inventory on validation. Cedefop's highly successful conference in 2016 considered the main challenges to making validation a reality across Europe by 2018, as requested by the 2012 Council recommendation.

## Informing VET

Informing VET is about providing labour market and skills intelligence to support policy development. Cedefop published its latest skill supply and demand forecasts in 2016, accompanied by analysis of [European sectoral trends over the next decade](#) to coincide with the launch of the *New skills agenda*. The forecasts show the sizeable influence that demography, access to education, technology and climate change will have on jobs, occupations and qualifications across the EU between now and 2025. In 2017, to increase its evidence on trends in skill supply and demand, Cedefop will expand its analysis of online vacancies using automated web tools. It will also continue working with the European Commission, Eurostat and the OECD to improve availability and analysis of VET data and statistics, to monitor progress with the European VET priorities agreed at Riga and the Europe 2020 strategy.

Cedefop will work with Eurofound on the next European company survey to include an examination of company skill strategies. The findings will complement those of Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey, which found that a significant proportion of workers felt their skills were underused and underdeveloped by their employers.

Aligned with the *New skills agenda*, Cedefop is working with Member States who ask for its help to improve skill anticipation and governance. In 2017, Cedefop will continue to collect and analyse local, regional, company and national case studies on effective matching and use of skills to support policy learning activities. Cedefop will also finalise its work on skill development and use in organisations, presenting, from different sectors, case studies of companies chosen for their sustained economic success.

To guide decisions on skills and jobs in Europe, Cedefop operates, with the European Commission, the Skills Panorama. This web portal provides data and information on the impact of labour market trends on skill needs across Europe. In 2016, Cedefop placed labour market and skills intelligence from various sources including international and national studies on the Skills Panorama portal.

### An effective European agency

Cedefop's information and communication are integral to its activities and aligned with the European VET policy agenda. Cedefop's magazine *Skillset and match*, published three times a year, showcases Cedefop's work and European VET developments for a wide audience. In 2016, Cedefop's EU Presidency seminars on skill mismatch and on qualifications and competitiveness attracted policy-makers from permanent representations and European social partners; more are planned in 2017. In the same year, Cedefop will start work on a yearbook for publication in 2018.

Cedefop monitors carefully its resources and uses activity-based budgeting. Its performance indicators show that stakeholders value Cedefop's work, with demand for its expertise rising (see Graph). In 2016, Cedefop's budget execution was above 99%. Audits confirm that Cedefop's procedures are legal and regular and its internal control system works well. Despite budget restrictions, Cedefop's tasks have grown, notably policy reporting, the mobility scoreboard, support to the European alliance for apprenticeships, the EU Skills Panorama and analysis of real-time labour market data. The *New skills agenda*, a major European VET initiative, will require considerable support in helping low-skilled adults, promoting work-based learning and delivering labour market and skills intelligence. Given its considerable expertise in managing Europass and the Skills Panorama on behalf of the Commission since 2005 and 2014 respectively, Cedefop may be called upon to play a key role in managing the new Europass portal from 2018.

Cedefop's 1975 Regulation is being revised to reflect the considerable changes in its activities that make its classification as an agency at cruising speed seem incongruous. Cedefop's new Regulation will confirm the high political priority of its work at the interface of VET and the labour market.

The past decade or so has seen a comprehensive European VET policy framework develop, which has been adapted as new needs have arisen and its focus has shifted from policy development to implementation.



These changes have required Cedefop to adapt and take on new and different tasks to underpin the European cooperation in VET that has made progress possible. Cedefop will continue to evolve, to provide the best possible support to policy-makers, including social partners, at European and increasingly national level, to strengthen VET to improve citizens' lives and promote a learning culture in enterprises.