

SETTING SAIL FOR THE FUTURE

Helping to make vocational education and training fit for the future: Cedefop activities 2018-19

Cedefop: an agency committed to being proactive

Anticipating and being at the leading edge of developments is at the heart of Cedefop's *modus operandi*. While the EU's course beyond 2020 will be decided once a new Commission has taken the helm, one issue remains crucial: investing in people's skills. The EU's multifaceted challenges require immediate responses and comprehensive forward-looking policy approaches, with education and training strategies as part of the package.

This approach is reflected in the vision for vocational education and training (VET) 2030 by the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT). It also underpins the most recent European Commission growth survey and the proposed 2021-27 financial framework. As evident from its 2018 achievements and planned 2019 activities, Cedefop supports immediate VET-related policy action as well as future-oriented approaches. This includes pioneering work and collaboration with other agencies and institutions, pooling expertise to the benefit of our stakeholders. The following activities illustrate how Cedefop supports countries and contributes to current and future EU VET policy.

Enriching skills intelligence

Highly dynamic and competitive labour markets continuously shape skill requirements for future jobs. Sound labour market and skills intelligence is crucial to anticipating change and informing VET policy as well as learning and career choices.

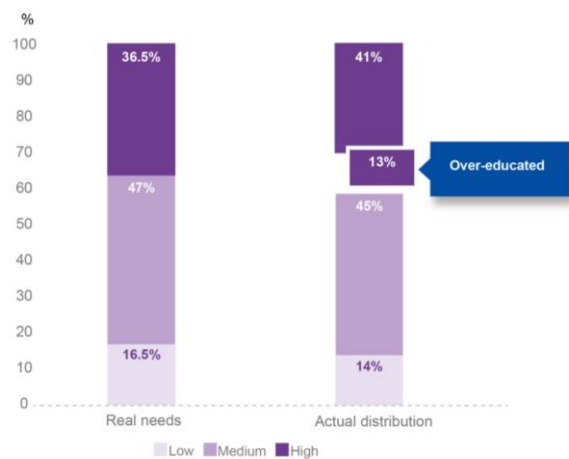
Cedefop's 2030 skills outlook

Entrusted with regular EU-wide skill supply and demand projections by the Council, Cedefop presented its most recent outlook up to 2030 in 2018 – 10 years after it had pioneered its first forecast. This is the only comparable outlook of labour market trends

across countries, sectors and occupations. Cedefop and Eurofound joined forces to complement these projections with information on how wage structure and job tasks are likely to change.

Although some may question the value of forecasting at times of rapid change, Cedefop's goal is 'not to predict the future, but to tell you what you need to know to take meaningful action in the present', to quote Paul Saffo. The aim is to help policy-makers avoid deciding on education and training investments in the dark. As the forecast [briefing note](#) and [joint Cedefop-Eurofound publication](#) demonstrate, this work also informs employment and social policies.

FIGURE 1: CEDEFOP'S 2030 SKILLS FORECAST: EMPLOYMENT BY QUALIFICATION



Source: Cedefop.

Pioneering big data for EU-wide real-time skills intelligence

Rapid changes require combining a long-term perspective with evidence on current skill demand. This is particularly relevant for upskilling and reskilling, as well as for mobility within and across sectors, regions and countries. Big data analysing online job vacancies are increasingly used to inform skill demand; yet, there are no freely accessible sources covering all Member States and languages.

Cedefop explored this untrodden and challenging path and developed a prototype of a real-time information system. The Agency will release its first data sets for the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy and the UK in spring 2019, along with detailed information on the methods used and research issues considered. Findings for all Member States will be published in 2020 and will be regularly updated.

This new system will complement our current set of tools for generating skills and labour market intelligence and the information we make available on Skills Panorama.

Supporting policy responses to current challenges

A large share of Cedefop's work was guided by the countries' joint 2015-20 deliverables for VET and the objectives of the related EU-level policy framework.

Understanding how to attract learners to VET

Making VET more attractive for young people and adults is at the core of many EU-level and national policy initiatives. Proposing measures that may help increase participation requires understanding of how citizens perceive VET.

Cedefop's opinion surveys serve this very purpose. The 2019 survey will investigate what people think of continuing VET and adult learning more generally, as well as their access to guidance services. Preliminary results will become available in the course of 2019.

Expanding the apprenticeship knowledge base

Apprenticeships have been high on the policy agenda given their potential for easing moving into jobs. In 2018 Cedefop continued its work supporting the European alliance for apprenticeships and countries' endeavours to set up, revise or expand apprenticeships.

Cedefop's [comparative analysis of apprenticeship schemes](#) was published in summer 2018. The relevant data were published in a [comprehensive online database](#). The analysis covers mainstream and legally based apprenticeship schemes in the EU, Iceland and Norway.

A community of experts was set up to help update the database and enrich the cross-country knowledge base. The latter will also serve to explore new research avenues, such as examining mobility in apprenticeships. The findings of Cedefop's study on apprenticeships for adults will be released in 2019.

Cedefop also completed its apprenticeship review of several countries and held a policy-learning forum for

countries involved. The [report on Sweden](#) was published in 2018 while those on Cyprus, Croatia and the French Community of Belgium are due in 2019.

Promoting upskilling pathways

Making sure Europe's 60 million low-skilled adults are not left behind is a major concern. Equal access to lifelong quality skill development for all and high educational outcomes are essential for the EU economy and social fabric. A Council recommendation aims to help the low-skilled upgrade their qualifications.

Cedefop is organising a series of dedicated policy learning forums to support countries' work on upskilling pathways. The first was held jointly with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in 2018.

Box 1: UPSKILLING ADULTS: POLICY LEARNING FORUM OUTCOMES



Many countries have introduced measures to:

- identify the skills and competences low-skilled people actually have, validate and recognise them;
- offer training tailored to individuals' needs.

Main messages of the 2018 Cedefop-EESC forum:

- design strategies bringing services and opportunities together in a coherent and coordinated manner;
- involve social partners and civil society organisations in designing and implementing these strategies.

A second event will be held in February 2019, again with the EESC. Cedefop will support the discussions with a draft analytical framework and quantitative information on low-skilled adults in the different countries – preliminary results of its ongoing project exploring the potential of work-based learning in helping upskill adults.

Backing lifelong guidance and validation

Skill development strategies need to be underpinned by guidance and arrangements to value the skills people have gained outside formal learning.

A study launched in 2018 will shed light on how validation and guidance – two interdependent processes – can best be interlinked and coordinated. Its findings and the analysis of the 2018 European validation inventory, to which Cedefop will contribute, will inform the European Commission's report on

countries' follow-up to the respective Council recommendation.

Promoting the use of learning outcomes for different purposes

Learning outcomes are a reference point for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Increasingly, they form the basis of qualifications frameworks across the world. They make it easier to link different types and levels of education and training, and match them to labour market needs. The way they are defined and written needs to be adapted to their different purposes.

Cedefop's 2018 policy learning forum on learning outcomes focused on their potential as a tool for governing and reforming education and training, and as a common language for comparing qualifications internationally. Organised jointly with the European Commission and UNESCO, the forum gathered experts from all over the world. Its outcomes will feed into the next edition of Cedefop's handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes, planned for 2020.

A study also investigated the potential of learning outcomes in helping compare content and profiles of VET qualifications across borders. Its findings will be published and discussed at a conference in 2019.

Cedefop's European skills index: a new tool for informed policy-making

Countries' progress towards Europe's economic and social policy objectives is monitored with the help of various indicators. However, until recently there was no single measure to assess and compare how well national skills systems perform. This requires more than skill development data; it also means understanding how smoothly people move into the labour market, how their skills match demand and are being used. With its European skills index, Cedefop has filled this gap.

BOX 2: CEDEFOP'S NEW EUROPEAN SKILLS INDEX IN A NUTSHELL

- Serves as a monitoring tool and helps countries understand what drives their results and what needs improving;
- Promotes dialogue among actors from education and training, employment, economic and social policy;
- Aids benchmarking and supports policy learning across countries;
- Over time, will help assess progress within countries and compare with that of others.

The new index was launched in autumn 2018 at an event hosted by the EESC. In its audit, the Joint Research Centre confirmed the quality of the index,

underpinned by strong research into the multiple facets of Member States' skills systems.

Downloads of the [briefing note](#) presenting the index suggest high interest in this new tool. A more elaborate publication presenting the findings will follow in 2019. It will also enrich Cedefop's own analyses and support to stakeholders.

Taking the longer-term perspective: helping to make VET fit for 2030

In the final stage towards 2020, policy discourse on VET has focused on how to take VET and European cooperation forward in the coming decade. These reflections culminated in the ACVT's vision for VET, to which Cedefop contributed with its different strands of work.

Cedefop's outlook for VET: reviewing the past to map out routes to the future

To support forward-looking decision-making, Cedefop investigated how VET's features should develop to meet tomorrow's requirements. An extensive study of how VET systems developed from 1995 to 2015 has helped to outline possible future directions they may take, depending on current decision and policy choices. The study took account of researcher, VET expert and stakeholder views.

BOX 3: POTENTIAL PATHS FOR VET POST-2020: CEDEFOP SCENARIOS

Distinctive VET – A modernised version of today's VET

- clearly defined education and training subsector;
- organised around occupations/professions;
- apprenticeships are the gold standard up to level 8.

Pluralist VET – Vocationally oriented learning

- distinguished by its close labour market links;
- organised around qualifications, diverse target groups;
- strongly individualised VET pathways operate side by side; wider variety of providers.

Special purpose/marginalised VET

- skills training for labour market inclusion;
- for low-qualified adults and early school leavers;
- short courses with some on-the-job training, particular emphasis on labour market entry.

These scenarios are not meant to predict the future but aim to support reflection on the role countries want VET to play.

Findings of the study on the changing role and nature of VET informed reflections on post-2020 VET throughout 2018 at meetings of Directors-General, the ACVT, and the Austrian Presidency conference. Cedefop's scenarios for VET's future were discussed at its November conference, which was the

centre-piece of the European vocational skills week, attended by over 400 participants.

A final synthesis report will be published in 2019, complementing the thematic analyses of the past two years. It will focus on VET's role in lifelong learning and its expansion at EQF levels 5 to 8. Cedefop will also look more closely into seemingly contradictory trends, such as the 'hollowing out' of traditional VET skills and new skill demands in the growing services sector. This work will tie in with, and build on, other Cedefop activities, notably the work on skills intelligence, apprenticeships and qualifications. Alongside Cedefop's work on skills and its policy monitoring of countries' work on their joint priorities for VET, it will continue feeding the ongoing policy discourse on VET post-2020.

Communicating outcomes: more interactive and user-friendly tools

Cedefop's web portal plays a fundamental role in communicating the Agency's achievements to a wider public. In 2018 new web resources and data visualisation opportunities were developed to increase usability and outreach. Developments in 2019 will focus on improving these further.



Closer cooperation with our partner DG led to joint social media activities. Cedefop's 2018 Photo Award became an integral part of DG Employment's revised European vocational skills week award concept. This collaborative approach will continue in 2019.

Cedefop: an efficiently run agency committed to high standards

Cedefop continues its efforts to increase administration efficiency by simplifying and automating procedures and achieve synergies with other agencies by sharing expertise and services. Its highly qualified staff will be further supported with continuing professional development and a working environment conducive to dialogue, innovation and learning. We will continue striving to meet the highest standards of ethics, integrity and compliance with regulations and auditor recommendations. The exceptionally high budget execution of 100% in 2018

demonstrates the Agency's successful effort towards optimal use of resources entrusted.

Box 4: FACTS AND FIGURES ON TAKE-UP OF CEDEFOP'S EXPERTISE IN 2018

Cedefop in figures

- Cited in **200** EU policy documents and reports by the Council, the European Commission, the European Parliament, EU social partners;
- Cited in **100** papers by international organisations such as the OECD, the ILO and UNESCO;
- **174** contributions to senior stakeholder meetings that support policy implementation and **76** to other conferences and major events;
- **606** citations in academic literature 2017-18;
- **345 000** downloads of Cedefop publications;
- Press coverage in Member States: the 2030 skills forecast and skills mismatch information; the European skills index and Cedefop's contributions to the European vocational skills week;
- Europass: over **26.5 million** visits and over **22 million** CVs generated online;
- Cedefop website: **584 000** visits and **1 347 000** page views;
- EU Skills Panorama: **82.2%** increase in new users in comparison to 2017;
- Occupation rate of the establishment plan: **96%**;
- Budget implementation rate: **100%**.

With its 2018-19 activities aimed at informing, shaping and valuing VET, Cedefop has not only contributed to the follow-up of countries' joint priorities for VET but also to achieving the objectives of the wider policy framework set out by the 2016 Skills agenda. This relates in particular to the recommendations on upskilling pathways, the quality framework for apprenticeships and the European pillar of social rights. Cedefop's revised Founding Regulation, which will come into force in 2019, reflects these developments and the actual scope of the activities carried out by the Agency, which go beyond VET and include skills and qualifications.