



## **REFERNET – THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR VET CHARTER**

### **PREAMBLE**

ReferNet is Cedefop's European network for VET. It was set up in 2002 to meet the growing demand for comparative information about VET systems, developments and policies. It has 29 members, representing the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The ReferNet grant beneficiaries are key institutions involved in VET in the countries they represent.

ReferNet's activities have evolved to concentrate on supporting Cedefop by reporting on national VET systems and policy developments in the context of the Copenhagen process and by raising the visibility of VET and of Cedefop's products.

Since 2006, it has been recognised that Cedefop is not in a position to finance the work of ReferNet in full and that the members of the network also benefit from membership. The first framework partnership agreement was signed with ReferNet grant beneficiaries for the years 2008 to 2011. It established the principle of co-financing for ReferNet activities, whereby the financial contributions of Cedefop to the ReferNet partners are based on a grant procedure <sup>(1)</sup>.

As cooperation between Cedefop and ReferNet also benefits from the support of national authorities, ReferNet national representatives were appointed to contribute to the network's activities at national level.

Evaluation of the network began as early as 2009 and was concluded in early 2011. In parallel, an audit of the grant procedure was conducted in 2010. One of the findings of these exercises is that there is a need for a charter to define more clearly the objectives, roles and responsibilities of the network members.

New policy reporting needs, in particular the follow-up of the short-term deliverables defined in the Bruges communiqué, require an extended, more ambitious and also more political input by ReferNet. It requires from Cedefop to deliver evidence on national level actions, developments and progress. It also calls for a stronger commitment and involvement of Member States' governments to support national ReferNet structures.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Rather than study contract procurement procedures as was previously the case.

Coordinated by Cedefop and in the framework of Cedefop's work programme, ReferNet will thus develop into a real partnership.

#### **ARTICLE 1: MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS**

- (1) ReferNet's mission is to support cooperation in VET between the EU (Cedefop) and the Member States and associated countries, but also among Member States, to facilitate the flow of information between the EU and the individual countries and so ensure mutual awareness of EU and national VET developments.
- (2) ReferNet produces reliable, good quality reports on VET systems and policy developments, validated by national representatives, thereby ensuring the availability of information on national developments and facilitating Cedefop's comparative analyses and synthetic reporting.
- (3) ReferNet grant beneficiaries increase the visibility of VET on national level and improve the dissemination of Cedefop's outcomes and support the dissemination of VET-related information by overcoming language and other national barriers.
- (4) ReferNet, focussing on VET-reporting, is a platform for the exchange of information, best practices and ideas and for promoting understanding of European cooperation in VET and awareness of the different VET challenges in the partner countries.
- (5) ReferNet grant beneficiaries are expected to benefit from the exchange of information by being involved in the process of European cooperation in VET and by collaborating with Cedefop and their national authorities. Working together provides a stronger evidence base and a stronger voice for VET issues in Europe.

*Explanatory note:* Ultimately cooperation in the network could have an impact on aligning research and policy development across partner countries. ReferNet partners, including Cedefop, are also expected to benefit from network cooperation, which may also open up possibilities for collaboration beyond the scope of activities as defined in the framework partnership agreements and annual work plans. The specific competence of ReferNet partners has developed – and will continue to develop – over time.

#### **ARTICLE 2: NATURE AND SCOPE OF REFERNET**

- (1) ReferNet comprises Cedefop and institutions representing all countries participating in Cedefop's work programme.
- (2) ReferNet is part of Cedefop's work programme and is therefore subject to decisions of Cedefop's Governing Board and the budgetary authorities. It is regularly evaluated to ensure that the resources allocated are used efficiently and economically, in keeping with the objectives set for the network and with the policy agenda and strategy of Cedefop.

*Explanatory note:* Governing Board members, more specifically Government representatives, are invited to support ReferNet by encouraging appropriate national organisations to participate in the call for proposals (grant procedure) and by securing the necessary funds to finance the portion of the cost not covered by Cedefop's grant.

Governing Board members, more specifically Government representatives, support ReferNet by ensuring that the competent national authorities designate national representatives.

### **ARTICLE 3: MEMBERS OF REFERNET**

The members of ReferNet are:

- (1) Cedefop in its capacity as the organisation managing and coordinating the network,
- (2) the ReferNet national representatives nominated by their national governments,
- (3) the ReferNet grant beneficiaries of the grant procedure <sup>(2)</sup>.

*Explanatory note:* Since the network's creation, one of the activities of ReferNet grant beneficiaries has been to animate national networks of key institutions in VET. Following the results of the evaluation, it has been decided that the animation of a national network will not form part of the requirements for ReferNet grant beneficiaries <sup>(3)</sup>. Nevertheless, ReferNet activities will continue to require cooperation with a broad range of national VET stakeholders comprising research institutes, social partners' organisations as well as the Eurydice national unit, either by animating a national consortium or other appropriate working methods. As regards publications of national contributions please see item 6 of article 4.

### **ARTICLE 4: ROLE OF REFERNET NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES <sup>(4)</sup>**

- (1) ReferNet national representatives are nominated by the national governments and approved by Cedefop.
- (2) ReferNet national representatives are expected to cooperate with the grant beneficiary and support its work <sup>(5)</sup>.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Only public and private institutions can participate in the grant procedure (not natural persons).

<sup>(3)</sup> The evaluation revealed that in most cases deliverables were produced by the coordinating institution, with little or no involvement of the national network.

<sup>(4)</sup> In many cases the national representative and the ReferNet team coordinator of the grant beneficiary are the same person.

- (3) On behalf of the national governments, they validate reports by the grant beneficiary whenever such validation is deemed necessary. In particular, reports on national VET systems and policy developments need to be validated to ensure that the information provided is in accordance with national policies and strategies. <sup>(5)</sup>
- (4) ReferNet national representatives should attend the annual plenary meeting of ReferNet. The cost of attendance will be reimbursed by Cedefop.
- (5) ReferNet national representatives may also attend the regional and national <sup>(5)</sup> meetings of ReferNet. Attendance of these meetings will not be directly reimbursed.

*Explanatory note:* National representatives should be selected on the basis of their high level of expertise in national VET and lifelong learning issues. National representatives should also possess good knowledge and understanding of European VET policies processes, strategies and objectives and their impact on national systems and policies. Experience in comparative VET research is an additional asset. Furthermore, it is recommended that ReferNet national representatives are nominated in collaboration with social partners.

As regards publications, it is important to note that ReferNet national representatives have a validation role. To ensure that copyrights are appropriately disclosed, disclaimers shall indicate that the deliverable has been based on Cedefop's guidelines and that it is published under the responsibility of the ReferNet partner only or in case Cedefop comments have been delivered and implemented that it is also endorsed by Cedefop.

## **ARTICLE 5: ROLE OF THE GRANT BENEFICIARIES**

- (1) Grant beneficiaries are institutions which, following Cedefop's call for proposals, have been selected to sign a framework partnership agreement <sup>(6)</sup>. The grant procedure is governed by the financial rules of Cedefop.
- (2) The scope of activities of the beneficiaries of grants is determined in framework partnership agreements, while the annual work plan, deliverables and their timing are defined in specific grant agreements.
- (3) ReferNet grant beneficiaries will implement annual work plans in accordance with the specific grant agreements. They are responsible for providing deliverables and final implementation reports within the deadlines and to the standards agreed.
- (4) The ReferNet national grant beneficiary will designate a coordinator who will represent the grant beneficiary at the annual plenary meeting of ReferNet. The cost of attendance will be reimbursed by Cedefop <sup>(7)</sup>.

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<sup>(5)</sup> If applicable.

<sup>(6)</sup> Only one proposal per country is selected by Cedefop.

*Explanatory note:* ReferNet grant beneficiaries are institutions working in the field of VET and lifelong learning. They must demonstrate competence in VET issues and experience of conducting policy analysis, and/or relevant research and/or evaluation of programmes and policies in VET or related fields at national level. The ReferNet grant beneficiary should be an institution with a capacity to network with national and international organisations. They should have a very good knowledge of VET and lifelong learning and experience of collecting information and data as well as monitoring, analysing and reporting on developments in national VET systems, arrangements and policies.

## **ARTICLE 6: SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES, FUNDING AND MODES OF COOPERATION**

- (1) The scope of Refernet's activities should be aligned with and within the scope of European policies of cooperation in VET and with Cedefop's work programme as adopted by Cedefop's Governing Board.
- (2) Annual work plans will, be discussed and agreed with ReferNet members to accommodate views and major concerns, provided that the requirements referred to in point (1) are respected.
- (3) Cedefop co-finances the activities of the grant beneficiaries up to 70 % of the cost, within pre-determined budgetary ceilings, and it pays directly for the annual plenary and core group meetings.
- (4) ReferNet grant beneficiaries co-fund at least 30 % of ReferNet activities or secure co-funding from a third party.
- (5) ReferNet will meet at least once a year (annual plenary meeting).
- (6) ReferNet will discuss and decide on the details of its work organisation and communication structures <sup>(8)</sup>.

## **ARTICLE 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- (1) Templates and questionnaires developed for the national contributions will take into account the results of the discussions in the network and facilitate comparable, good quality contributions.
- (2) Cedefop will provide feedback on deliverables to ReferNet grant beneficiaries focusing on quality, adequacy and relevance. Such feedback could take the

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<sup>(7)</sup> In each plenary meeting, Cedefop will reimburse the attendance of two participants per country. Thus, when the ReferNet national representative is the same person as the ReferNet team coordinator representing the grant beneficiary, he or she may propose a second person from the ReferNet national team.

<sup>(8)</sup> National partners are currently organised into three regional groups (Centre, North and South) and are represented by a core group. The core group is composed of two representatives from each regional group.

form of a global qualitative assessment of all deliverables or, whenever suitable, specific feedback on selected deliverables. Grant beneficiaries will take account of the feedback provided and revise deliverables as necessary.

- (3) Cedefop will establish reasonable deadlines for deliverables. ReferNet grant beneficiaries undertake to respect the agreed deadlines.
- (4) In case grant beneficiaries do not comply with agreed on standards or miss agreed on deadlines sanctions may apply. <sup>(9)</sup>
- (5) ReferNet grant beneficiaries will implement adequate procedures to collect information and data and to validate reports with national VET stakeholders and national representatives, as appropriate and as required. Those procedures will also ensure the quality of the deliverables in terms of comprehensiveness, reliability of content (analysis, description), and language.

#### **ARTICLE 8: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION**

- (1) Grant beneficiaries own the intellectual property rights to their contributions and may decide to publish national ReferNet contributions to Cedefop (deliverables) as stand alone publications. Since they are produced in the context of ReferNet's activities, Cedefop should be informed of such publication.
- (2) Grant beneficiaries should consult Cedefop to be in line with guidelines for design of ReferNet publications and the use of the appropriate reference in copyright provisions (disclaimer). Published material should clearly specify the status of the document (draft / final). Draft versions may be published online but should be replaced as soon as possible by a final version.
- (3) Whenever Cedefop uses ReferNet inputs, it will be acknowledged as appropriate.
- (4) Whenever ReferNet grant beneficiaries publish work relating to a ReferNet project, they will acknowledge and cite Cedefop and the ReferNet project. ReferNet publications will bear the national ReferNet's logo.
- (5) The usual rules for citations will apply when partners, including Cedefop, use inputs from other partners in their publications.

#### **ARTICLE 9: AMENDMENTS AND ENTRY INTO FORCE**

- (1) Once adopted, this Charter may be amended in agreement with the Governing Board.

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<sup>(9)</sup> Such sanctions shall be defined in the specific agreements between Cedefop and the grant beneficiaries

- (2) This Charter will come into force upon its adoption by the Governing Board.

11 August 2011

Hermann Nehls  
Chair of the Governing Board