



The shift to learning outcomes; rhetoric or reality?’

Anastasia Pouliou

**Expert in qualifications and credentials - Future of VET
Cedefop**

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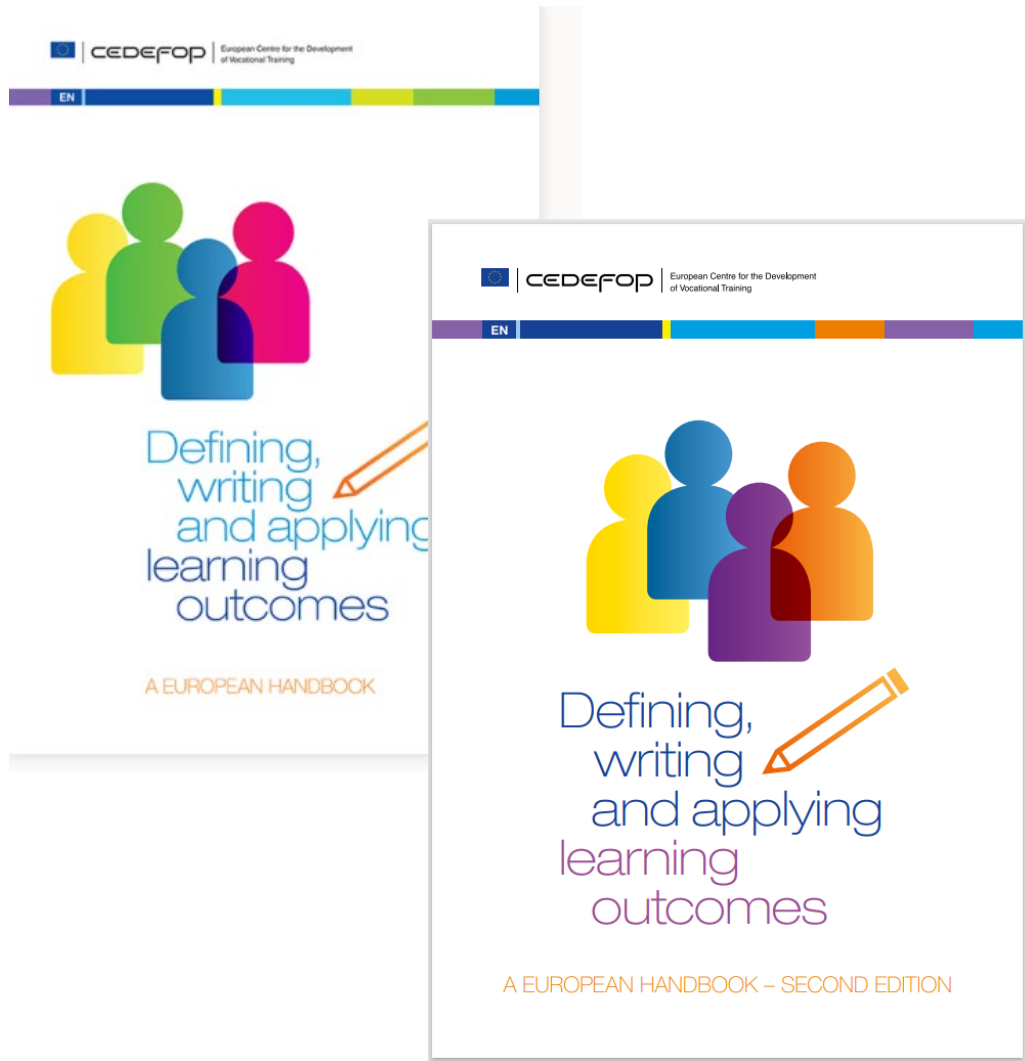
Take part in the discussion...
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Shaping VET

Cedefop

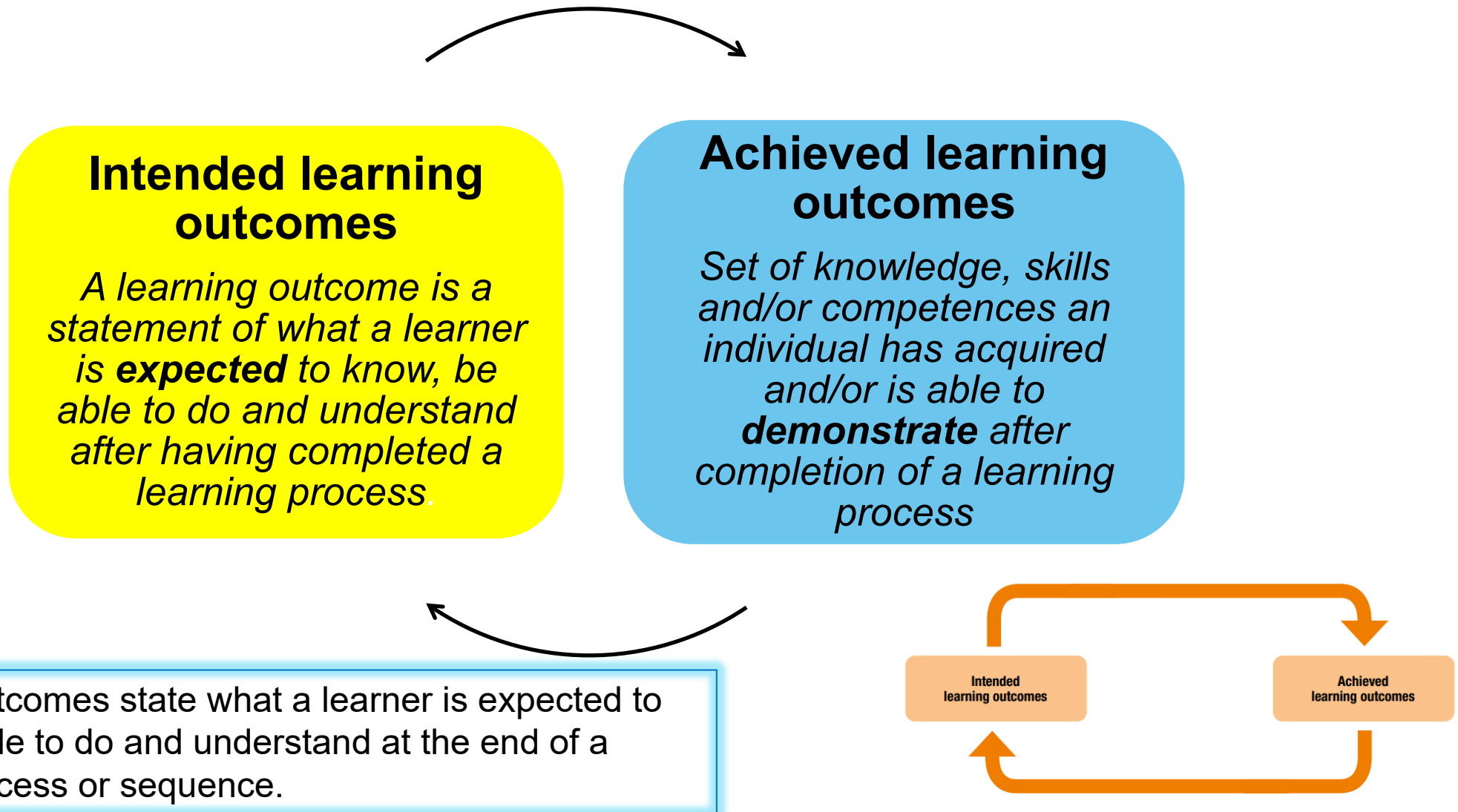
- looks into the future of VET
- monitors VET policy developments across the EU
- actively supports the development and use of European tools, such as the European qualifications framework

The 2017 and 2022 European handbooks – reinforced messages



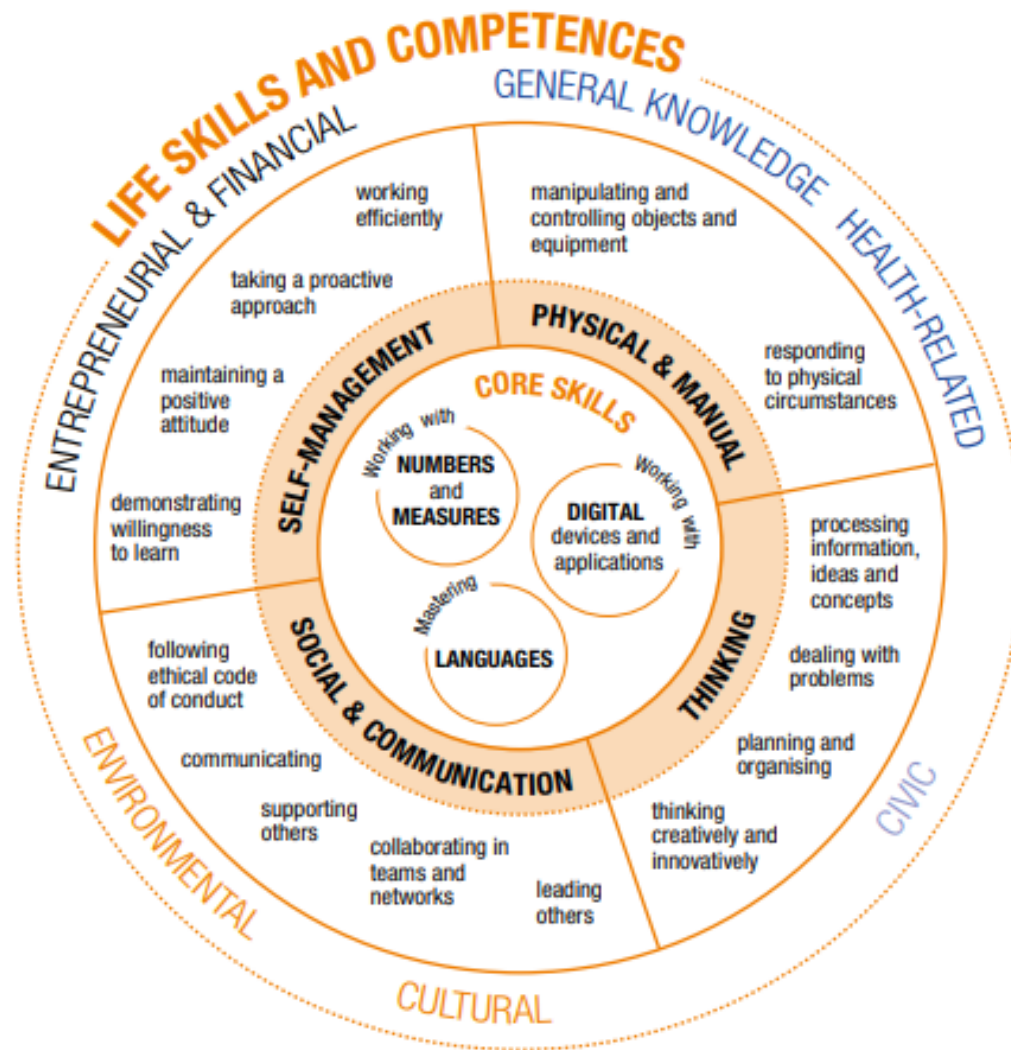
- ✓ The shift to learning outcomes has **gained speed**
- ✓ The learning outcomes approach is generally **accepted and adopted** across Europe – its application varies significantly
- ✓ The policy impact of learning outcomes makes it increasingly important to focus on **strengths as well as weaknesses**
- ✓ More than before a need to provide practical guidance based on **mutual learning and systematic research**

The (critical) learning outcomes feed-back-loop



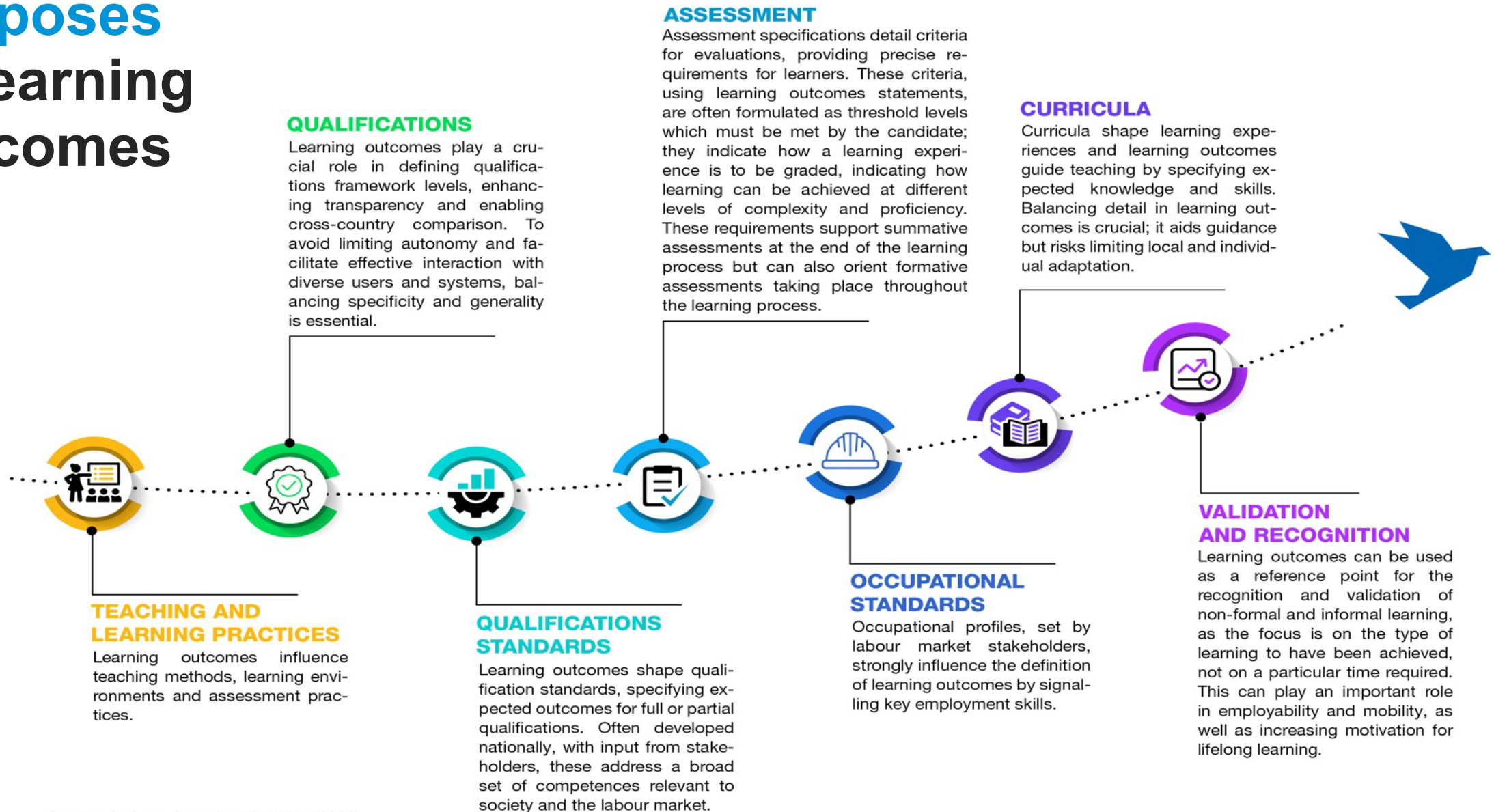
Source: Cedefop.

Terminological model on transversal skills and competences



Source: European Commission and Cedefop, 2021

Purposes of learning outcomes



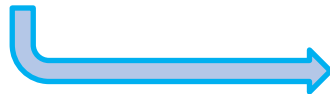
Source: Authors, based on [Cedefop \(2022\)](#).

Alignment between applications

Development and application of learning outcomes for different purposes **must be combined with alignment**
(Biggs and Tang, 2007)



Applications of learning outcomes in different contexts need to speak to and strengthen each other



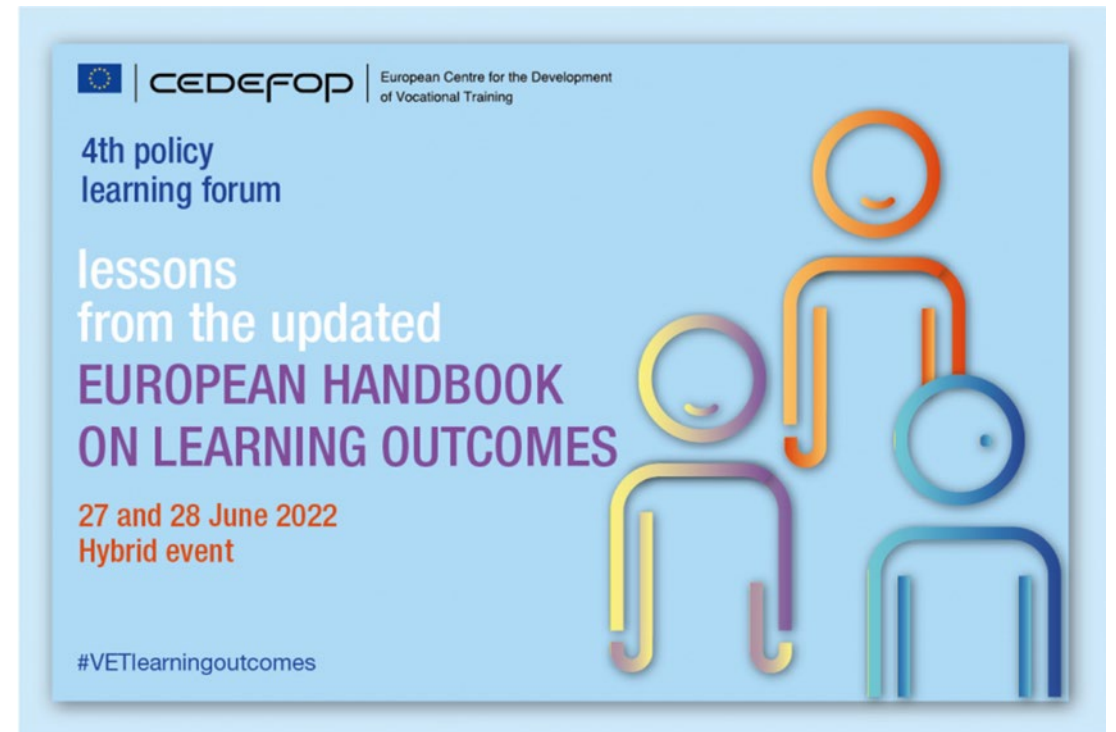
Communication between the different instruments



The shift to learning outcomes; rhetoric or reality?

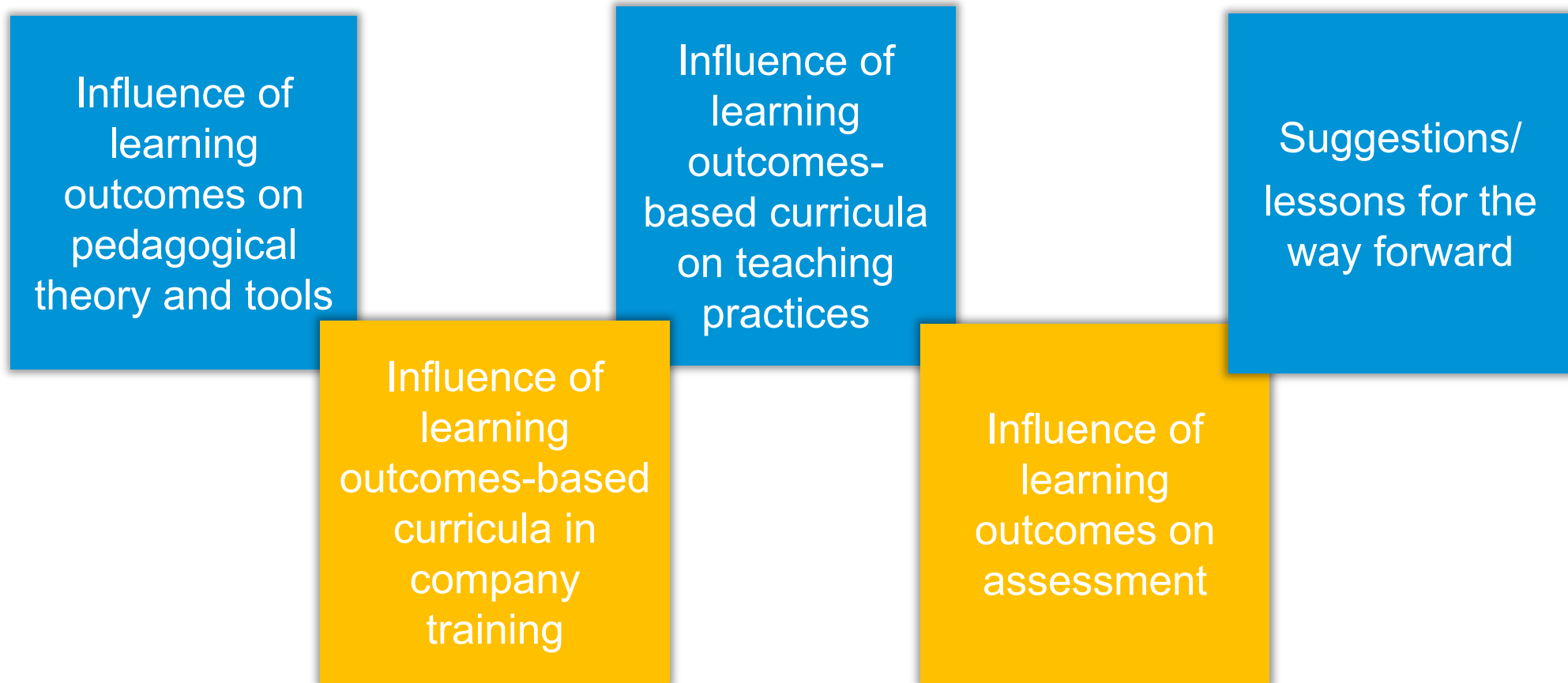
The study aims to map and analyse the transformation of **intended learning outcomes** into **achieved** learning outcomes.

- The research focuses on **initial vocational education and training**, in **schools** and **apprenticeships**,
- It seeks to map and better understand the **features** and **factors** influencing the transformation of intentions into **teaching, learning and assessment**.

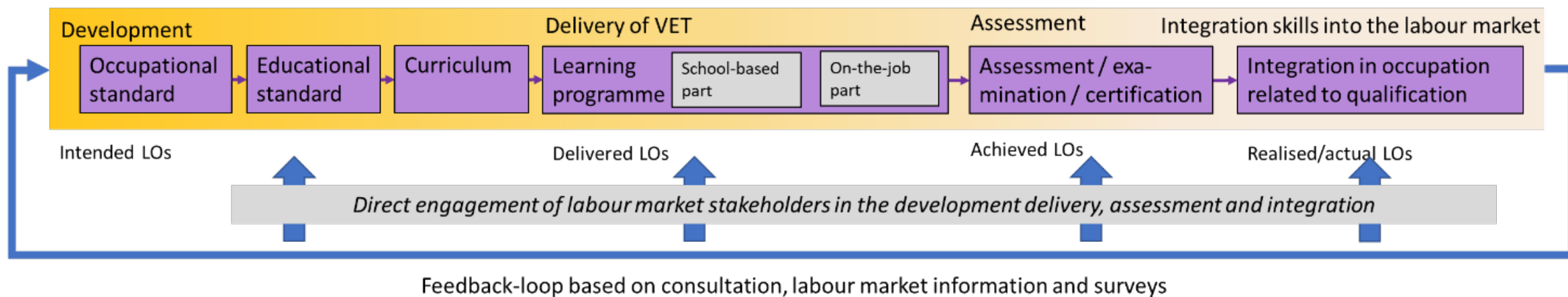


Cedefop project: The shift to learning outcomes (2023-25)

Five key objectives structured in five work assignments



An idealised model of the journey of learning outcomes in developing and renewing qualifications



Source: Cedefop (forthcoming)

Potential factors of influence

MICRO

- Awareness
- Perceived usefulness
- Ownership
- Professional identity
- Learner preparedness and motivation
- ...

MESO

- Guidance and support
- Availability of resources
- Teacher collaboration
- Impact of the learning context
- Collaboration between VET providers and labour market stakeholders
- Administrative workload
- ...

MACRO

- Definition of learning outcomes at national/regional level
- System and/or institution alignment
- Competing perspectives and interests
- Ideology and disciplinary dogma
- Pedagogical methodologies and techniques
- ...

Signals of the use of learning outcomes approaches in VET

LEARNING OUTCOMES-BASED CURRICULA



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- Governance of VET and stakeholder involvement in developing qualifications and delivering VET
- Place of learning
- Role of a teacher and trainer (and other staff)
- Role of a learner
- Curriculum integration and content of VET
- Learning modality
- Structure of VET curriculum/ programme
- Role of assessment
- Inclusion
- Wellbeing of learners
- Matching demand and supply
- ...

**Explicit vs Implicit
use of LO
approaches**

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Research questions

Work assignments 1 to 5

Work assignment 1:

Influence of LO on pedagogical theory and tools

- How is the LO (competence) approach **addressed** in the theories underpinning teacher education?
- To what extent and how is the LO approach - influencing **the teaching methodologies and tools** - presented to future teachers?
- What is the **impact** to the **actual implementation** of teaching, learning and assessment in everyday practice?
- To what extent are LO, in the relevant **theories** and methodologies, seen as
 - accepted and/or part of dominant dogma
 - controversial and/or challenged
 - unknown and/or ignored

Work assignment 2:

Influence of learning outcomes-based curricula on teaching practices

- How – and to what extent - are teaching practices, in the cases covered by the study, being **influenced** by the learning outcomes approach?
- Is the application of learning outcomes a responsibility of the **individual teacher** or a responsibility of the **institution**?
- How are different teaching (and learning) environments, including **online** and **hybrid**, influencing the application of learning outcomes?
- What is the **resource-implication** of the shift to learning outcomes?
- How are different ways of **formulating learning outcomes** influencing the tensions influencing teaching practices?
- To what extent are **students aware** of the learning outcomes-based requirements?



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Work assignment 3:

The impact of learning outcomes-based curricula on work and practice-based IVET

- How are LO based curricula **informing, influencing** and/or **steering** work-based learning?
- To what extent and how are company trainers **using** the LO based curricula to plan and execute their job as trainers?
- To what extent are **apprentices** aware of the LO based requirements and how does this influence their progression?

Work assignment 4:

Influence of learning outcomes on assessment

- What is the relationship between **curriculum statements/intentions** (intended learning outcomes), **assessment processes** and **assessment**?
- To what extent is the teaching and learning process **informed** by assessment criteria?
- What is the role of LO in **formative and summative assessment**?
- Which is the influence of **online and hybrid** teaching and learning processes on assessment practices?
- How are **complex LO**, notably transversal skills and competences, addressed and assessed?



Work assignment 5: The way forward

- Which **conceptual, structural and political factors** hinder and/or facilitate the transformation of learning outcomes into actual learning achievement?
- How do the above factors **influence learners, teachers, trainers, assessors** as well as **policy makers**?
- Which practical **recommendations** can improve the transformation of intended to achieved learning outcomes?



Perspectives and practice of teacher training providers



Selected countries show **differences** in how learning outcomes approaches are integrated in the theoretical foundation of VET teacher training programmes



Overall, when it comes to the practical embedding of learning outcomes in teacher training programmes, the **implicit** approach (BG, FI, FR, MT, PL, PT, SL) prevails over the **explicit** approach (IE, LT, NL).



In most countries, VET teachers and trainers are introduced to how LO are defined in occupational, educational standards, qualifications and/or national curricula as part of their **professional training**. In some countries, though, this is less explicit.



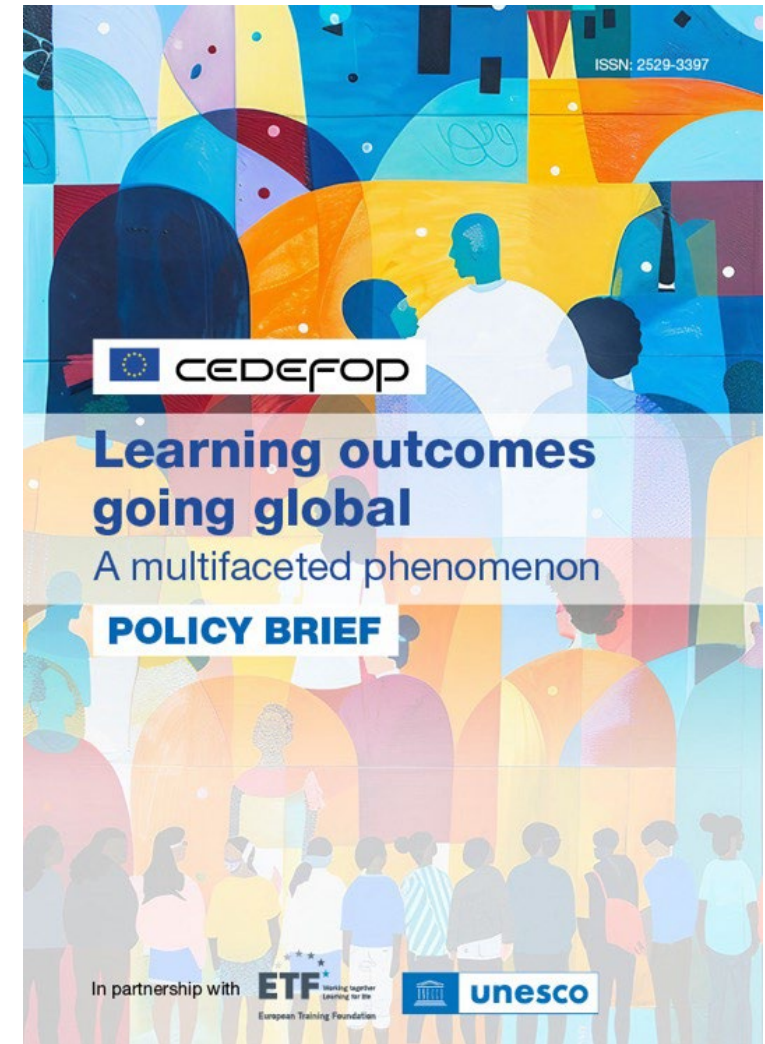
Critical comments refer to an unsatisfactory form of **implementation** of the approach, which requires further **consideration, awareness raising and training**.

The background is a conceptual image with a blue color palette. It shows silhouettes of people standing on a glowing, interconnected network of lines that form a world map. The scene is filled with soft, out-of-focus light spots, creating a sense of a global digital or social network.

Policy brief on learning outcomes

New policy brief on learning outcomes

- Learning outcomes are a **multifaceted phenomenon**, expanding across systems and borders.
- Countries **around the globe** use learning outcomes when defining, reviewing, and refining the content and profile of their education, training and skills provisions and strategies practices but **challenges** remain.
- Builds on **Cedefop's**, **ETF's** and **UNESCO's** research on the topic.



Users and uses of learning outcomes



Stakeholders & policy-makers Economic & social policy & strategy Implementation Quality assurance Review & evaluation

Source: Cedefop (2016).

Indicative examples selected from Europe and beyond

- A broad **political agreement** among stakeholders on the need for and usefulness of, learning outcomes.
- Learning outcomes ➤ a **common basis** for almost all national and regional qualifications frameworks worldwide.
- However, only in recent years can we see the **emergence of empirical evidence**.
- Learning outcomes-based qualifications frameworks ➤ key instruments facilitating **reform and governance**.
- Is there an **actual impact** on teaching, learning processes and **learner mobility** within European countries and beyond?
- Stakeholders ➤ should be involved in development and review so that learning outcomes are a **‘living thing’**.

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Source: Cedefop, 2024

Final considerations



- Learning outcomes → opportunity to have a **more learner-centred approach and systems**.
- The learning process can **rarely be fully predicted and described**. Learning outcomes must remain **open** to the **explorative** and to what has yet to be experienced and articulated.
- **Unreflected** use can lead to unintended simplifications → “dumping down” complex learning.
- **“Balancing act”** (broad/narrow; detailed/vague; prescriptive/openness) → awareness of inherent tensions.
- Important to reflect on enabling factors but also limitations → no single right or wrong → **need to share experiences (with practitioners)**.

Thank you

For further information:

anastasia.pouliou@cedefop.europa.eu

www.linkedin.com/in/anastasia-pouliou-03309117/

<https://twitter.com/natasapouliou>

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