

Is the vocational education and training system prepared for the future of work?

4th Cedefop Brussels-based Seminar
8 December 2017, 9.30-13.00, Brussels, Belgium

General information

Organiser	Cedefop
In cooperation with	The Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU
Venue	Permanent Representation of Estonia to the EU Rue Guimard 11/13, 1040 Brussels
Participants' profile	Brussels-based stakeholders from the Permanent Representations of Member States to the EU, European Commission, the European Parliament, European business and sector associations, trade union and employee organisations.
Working language	English

Event rationale

Cedefop, together with the Estonian presidency of the Council of the EU, have the pleasure to invite you to the 4th Cedefop's Brussels seminar. These seminars, organised in cooperation with the rotating EU-Presidencies, build on the research carried out by Cedefop and address issues relevant to European debates on education, training and employment.

The December 2017 seminar will address the interaction between the vocational education and training system and a rapidly changing world of work: to what extent are developments in vocational education and training (VET) able to respond to changing labour markets and work environments? Is VET prepared for the future of work?

The role of vocational education and training in skills developments

Vocational education and training plays a key role in addressing the skills demands of European labour markets and societies. Close to 50% of all European students attending upper secondary education (EQF levels 3 and 4) take part in vocational education and training, amounting to more than 10 million students annually. In 2016 close to 50% of all European employees held a qualification at medium level, predominantly a vocational one. Cedefop's skills forecasts predict that medium level vocational qualifications overall seem to retain their relative position in the labour market. This stability contrasts the decreasing proportion of lower level qualifications and the increasing proportion of qualifications at higher level. There are different views on the future of VET:

- Reflecting tendencies towards automation and job-polarisation there are concerns that demand for medium-level skills will start to drop. While there is still a significant demand for replacing jobs at medium skills-levels in most sectors of the economy, the extent to which future jobs will require these skills are seen as uncertain.

- Reflecting demographic developments and an ageing European population, it is possible to envisage an increased demand for medium-level skills related (for example) to health, social and personal services. Skilled jobs in these areas are less likely to be replaced by machines and will also in the future require middle-level, vocational qualifications and skills.

The interaction between VET and the world of work

European VET-systems, confronted with the double challenge of digital and demographic developments, face significant challenges in the years to come. In a recent study - comparing the content and profile VET qualifications in 10 European countries - Cedefop concludes that countries to very different degrees are prepared to tackle these challenges. While most countries have put in place mechanisms for dialogue between education and labour market stakeholders, these vary in quality and comprehensiveness. There is clear risk that European VET-systems to different degrees are preparing for a changing world of work.

The seminar

The 4th Brussels-based seminar will present Cedefop research-activities related to the future of VET and the future of work. Cedefop experts, supported by external experts, will raise questions regarding the interaction between VET and the labour market.

- Which changing skills needs do we observe?
- How can the existing VET-system respond to these changing needs?

The seminar will be concluded by a short panel discussion.

AGENDA

Friday, 8 December 2017

Moderators: Jens Bjornavold and Mara Brugia (Cedefop)

09:30-10:00 *Arrival and registration of participants*

10:00-10:15 **Welcome and setting the scene**

- Ülle Kurvits, Chair of the Education Committee, Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- Mara Brugia, Deputy Director, Cedefop

10:15-11:30 **The future of work – the future of VET?**

- *Future work and implications for skills* - Konstantinos Pouliakas, Expert, Cedefop
- *How is the VET system responding to change?* - Jens Bjornavold, Expert, Cedefop
- *Which are the emerging skills needs?* - Mirek Pospisil, LinkedIn

11:30-11:50 *Tea/coffee break*

11:50-12:50 ***The future of VET - how to respond to a changing world of work***

A discussion followed by Q&A and discussion involving the whole audience

- Maive Rute, Deputy Director General of Joint Research Centre
- Dana Bachmann, Head of Unit, DG EMPL, European Commission
- Tatjana Kiilo, Deputy Head, Analysis Department, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research
- Stephanie Mayer, Policy Officer, Austrian Federal Ministry of Education

12:50-13:00 **Concluding words**

- Ülle Kurvits and Mara Brugia

13:00-14:00 **Lunch**

Cedefop research relevant to the seminar

European skills and job survey - Changing work environments:

Cedefop's 'European skills and job survey' (2014-15) shows that 43% of all employees across the 28 EU MS have seen the technologies they use (ICT, machines etc.) change in the past five years. 47% experienced changes in their working methods or practises. Even in the most stable sector - accommodation, catering and food services - 27% had experienced technological change at work in the period. In gas, electricity and mining as well as in ICT, the rate was over 50%. This remarkable rate of change, by some characterised as disruption, indicates that the skills base of occupations and sectors is rapidly changing, introducing new requirements and demands. These requirements and demands are not going in one single direction; while some jobs become obsolete and are prone to substitution, we also see the creation of new jobs and, not least, the gradual transformation of most jobs ⁽¹⁾.

Changing vocational education and training:

Cedefop's ongoing study 'The changing nature and role of VET' (2016-2018) ⁽²⁾ indicates that the character of European VET is changing. Influenced by external factors like technology, demography and economic cycles, we observe a transformation of the sector where traditional ways are being challenged. While traditional apprenticeship training still plays an important role in European VET, a variety of education and training formats are being introduced and mixed. Vocationally oriented education and training is furthermore expanding both to lower and higher levels, indicating that the labour market relevance of education and training is given priority. We also observe a 'blurring' of the borderline between initial and continuing education and training, underlining the increasing need for lifelong learning.

Changing work environments – skills formation and matching in online platform work:

A notable consequence of the structural economic transformation spurred by widespread digitalisation is the rising incidence of new forms of gainful employment and work. New forms of 'platform employment' or 'crowd work' in the so-called 'gig economy' have attracted much attention by researchers and policymakers alike. While such forms of work increase opportunities for labour market participation and higher incomes, research increasingly identifies risks (social isolation, long work hours, discrimination and predatory intermediaries) associated with them. Cedefop's ongoing research attempts to improve understanding on how various drivers facilitating greater reliance on crowd work may influence the wider talent management strategies of EU organisations and meet their future skill needs. It also seeks to improve understanding of policies to facilitate crowd workers' learning practices, the better use and the further development of their skills in platform economy settings.

Reviewing and renewing VET-qualifications; experiences from 26 countries:

In a joint project, Cedefop, ETF and UNESCO, compared the content and profile of four vocational qualifications (bricklayer, health care assistant, hotel receptionist and ICT service technician) in 26 countries worldwide. The comparison was also made possible by the ongoing development of the European classification of skills, competences, occupations and qualifications (ESCO) providing a reference point for comparison of national qualification profiles. The work pointed to significant differences in the way countries address changing labour market skills needs. The study demonstrated that the mechanisms for review and renewal of qualifications are varying as regards quality and comprehensiveness. The global study built on a previous study by Cedefop of 10 VET qualifications in 10 European countries.

⁽¹⁾ Cedefop (2017), *People, machines, robots and skills*, Briefing Note, July 2017
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9121>

⁽²⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/changing-nature-and-role-vocational-education-and-training-vet-europe>