



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Ref. GP/D/ReferNet-FPA/001/07

European Network of Reference and Expertise in
Vocational Education and Training (VET)

ReferNet

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ANNEX A – Specifications for Refernet 2008 workplan

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TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

“Co-beneficiaries”: proposed network partners/consortium members who participate in the co-financing of the action.

“Consortium”: network of key organisations involved in VET issues, led by a coordinating body (the *consortium leader*), whose main aim is to improve national cooperation in collecting information and thematic analyses.

“Consortium Leader”: national consortium leading body. The *Consortium Leader* is the organisation which submits the proposal and signs the framework partnership agreement and subsequently specific grant agreements with Cedefop, if successful.

“National representatives”: individuals and/or organisations/institutions proposed by Member States governments whose role, (if accepted by Cedefop) is: (a) to provide input to the discussion on the ReferNet multi-annual work programme; (b) to disseminate information as provided by Cedefop to the national network and to the public; (c) to support the grant procedure; (d) to cooperate with Cedefop in the analysis, research and documentation on VET; (e) to accompany the contributions from the national beneficiary of Cedefop’s grant (ReferNet national *Consortium Leader*); (f) to participate at ReferNet meetings (regional meeting, annual plenary meeting, and national meetings).

“Partnership”: a partnership is an arrangement for 'long term cooperation' established with certain beneficiaries called 'partners'. It is governed by a specific instrument called the "framework partnership agreement". Partners are potential beneficiaries of grants.

Partnerships are implemented by two legal instruments: framework partnership agreements and specific agreements.

- firstly, the **“framework partnership agreement”** sets out the conditions governing grants to partners for carrying out actions, on the basis of an work plan and jointly agreed general objectives. This does not constitute an obligation for Cedefop to award grants.
- secondly, the **“specific grant agreement”**, based upon the framework partnership agreement, governs each partnership action funded by a grant.

“Proposal”: to be admissible, the proposal must have identifiable, coherent and measurable activities. The proposal must cover the complete set of activities foreseen in the multi-annual work programme..

“ReferNet”: European Network of Reference and Expertise in the field of Vocational Education and Training. National consortia (see “Consortium” above) compose the European network.

“ReferNet Actions”: set of activities that are defined annually within the scope of a multi-annual work plan.

“Vocational education and training (VET)”: VET comprises all more or less organised or structured activities that aim to provide people with the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to perform a job or a set of jobs, whether or not they lead to a formal qualification. VET is independent of venue, age or other characteristics of participants and previous level of qualifications. VET may be job-specific or directed at a broader range of occupations. It may also include elements of general education. VET is perceived as a key element of lifelong learning.

VET takes a variety of forms in different countries and also within a given country. It can be organised as prevocational training to prepare young people for transition to a VET programme at upper secondary level. Initial VET normally leads to a certificate at upper secondary level. It can be school-based, enterprise-based, or a combination of both (as in the dual system). Completion of initial VET qualifies for access to a skilled job, and gives access to post-secondary, and sometimes higher education. VET at post-secondary level provides access to higher skilled jobs (e.g. master or technician) and can also open the way to higher education.

Continuing vocational training (CVT) takes multiple forms, ranging from short training courses to participation in advanced and longer programmes. CVT can be organised by companies or networks of companies, social partner organisations, and local, regional and state bodies. Participants include employees, unemployed people or those returning to the labour market.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is an agency of the European Union. Created in 1975, with a tripartite Governing Board, it provides services for the European Commission, the European Union Member States, the social partners and the associated countries of Iceland and Norway. The candidate countries are also associated with its activities.

As the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training (VET), Cedefop provides policy-makers, researchers and practitioners with information to promote a clearer understanding of developments and so enable them to take informed decisions on future action. Cedefop assists the European Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of VET.

The main tasks of Cedefop as defined in its founding Regulation ⁽¹⁾ are to:

- compile selected documentation and analysis of data;
- contribute to the development and coordination of research;
- exploit and disseminate useful information;
- encourage and support a concerted approach to vocational training development issues;
- provide a forum for a wide and diverse audience.

Cedefop's mandate to report, monitor and analyse VET policies at national and European levels, expressed in its Founding Regulations as well as in the Maastricht Communiqué ⁽²⁾ (2004), has been further reinforced in the Helsinki Communiqué (2006) ⁽³⁾, endorsed by the European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission: "Cedefop [...] with its network (e.g. ReferNet) is asked to support the implementation of the Copenhagen process and its priorities (Helsinki Communiqué, 2006)".

1.2. European Network of Reference and Expertise in VET (ReferNet)

The European Network of Reference and Expertise in VET (ReferNet) comprises a national consortium in each Member State, Iceland and Norway, made up of organisations representative of VET. Each consortium is led by a national consortium leader.

To facilitate these activities this call invites proposals from national consortia or key organisations involved in VET. For each Member State, Norway and Iceland one beneficiary shall be selected. The national consortium will cooperate with the national ReferNet representative and Cedefop in implementing and validating the activities.

ReferNet cooperates with Cedefop, by exchanging information and discussing VET issues in the context of the Copenhagen-Helsinki process to establish a European area of VET.

¹ Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 of the Council of 10 February 1975 setting up a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

² http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/news/ip/docs/maastricht_com_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/helsinkicom_en.pdf

At Member State level, each ReferNet National consortium is a ‘unique platform’ of key organisations involved in VET issues, where public organisations, social partners and VET researchers discuss and exchange information on European, national and regional issues and sectoral approaches.

At European level, which comprises three main categories of VET actors (public bodies, social partners and researchers), ReferNet’s activities contribute to the Copenhagen process. This may extend to implementing mutually agreed instruments such as the European qualifications framework (EQF), or priorities such as raising the visibility and profile of VET, facilitating a better understanding of VET and monitoring VET developments.

ReferNet supports Cedefop in carrying out its task “... *to compile selected documentation relating in particular to the present situation, the latest developments and research in the relevant fields, and to matters of vocational training structures...*”.

Activities fall into four (4) categories:

- (a) *Leadership of a national consortium*
- (b) *National VET policy and research reporting*
- (c) *Databases on research, reporting and documentation*
- (d) *Dissemination and promotion*

1.3. General information on VET

In 2000 the Lisbon European Council set the goal for the EU to become ***the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world***. Education and training, and thus VET is key to achieve this goal.

The European Council called for education and training systems in Europe to become ***a world reference for quality by 2010*** (Barcelona, 2002). They agreed on a common work programme - Education and Training 2010 which requires Members States to develop coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies.

Follow-up documents are available on the Education and Training 2010 website: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html

The most relevant to VET are:

- *Declaration of the European ministers of vocational education and training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training: “The Copenhagen Declaration”, November 2002.*
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/copenhagen/copenhagen_declaration_en.pdf
- *European benchmarks in education and training: follow-up to the Lisbon European Council, November 2002. (COM (2002) 629 final).* http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2002/com2002_0629en01.pdf
- *Education and Training 2010: the success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms: joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe.* March 2004.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf.

- *The Maastricht Communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (VET)*, December 2004.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/news/ip/docs/maastricht_com_en.pdf
- *Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training: 2005 Report*. Brussels, March 2005. (SEC (2005) 419).
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/progressreport05.pdf>
- *Towards a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning*, July 2005. (SEC(2005) 957).
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/consultation_eqf_en.pdf
- *Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe: 2006 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the “Education & Training 2010” work programme*, April 2006
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/c_079/c_07920060401en00010019.pdf
- *Decision 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning*, November 2006.
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_327/l_32720061124en00450068.pdf
- *Efficiency and equity in European education and training system*, September 2006. (COM(2006) 481 final).
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comm481_en.pdf
- *Communiqué of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, the European social partners and the European Commission, convened in Helsinki on 5 December 2006 to review the priorities and strategies of the Copenhagen Process, December 2006*.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/helsinkicom_en.pdf

The Copenhagen Declaration underlines VET active role in developing lifelong learning policies and supplying the highly skilled workforce necessary to reach the Lisbon goals and identifies four priorities for enhanced cooperation in VET across Europe. Known as the Copenhagen process, this initiative has helped VET actors in Europe to compare their policies, identify common priorities and agree on common principles, frameworks and measures to improve transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications, information and guidance services and the quality of VET, and thus support mobility of trainees and workers.

2. OBJECTIVES AND NATURE OF THE CALL

The overall objective of this call is to select and conclude a four year framework partnership agreement with one successful applicant ⁽¹⁾ in each of the eligible countries to set-up and lead a representative national consortium of key organisations in the field of VET to support Cedefop and carry out, with the consortia partners, activities agreed each year in an annual work plan.

Activities in each consortium's work plan will be selected from those listed in the 'scope of activities' (*see section 3*). Although the consortium leader must demonstrate that the consortium has the capacity to carry out all of the activities listed, it should be noted that not all of the activities listed need to be carried out by the consortia every year.

The framework partnership agreement will be implemented through specific grant agreements (concluded each year), which define the consortium's annual work plan. The grant will vary according to the country size and the action (set of activities) carried out and is awarded as a grant for an action.

In order to guarantee the timely implementation for 2008 the applicants shall submit not only the proposal for the 4-year framework partnership but also the grant application for 2008.

3. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

The multi-annual framework partnership agreement defines the content of the partnership and the scope of activities.

The partnership aims to provide benefits to all organisations involved, and Cedefop, consortium leaders and members. Working together provides a stronger voice for VET issues in Europe. Stronger cooperation across the EU will raise the visibility of VET and the work done by partners. ReferNet is a platform to exchange ideas, information and best practice and promotes understanding of the different VET challenges in the Members States.

All partners will benefit from a systematic and privileged access to the information, publications and data. Further, each can support the other in the dissemination of their reports and activities.

Applicants must demonstrate that they can perform the activities below:

3.1. Leadership of a national consortium

The successful applicant (the *Consortium Leader*) will lead a representative national consortium of key organisations in the field of VET and carry out, with them, activities detailed under section 3.2 to 3.5.

The *Consortium Leader* will be responsible for ensuring the activities are performed satisfactorily.

In carrying out the activities, the *Consortium Leader* must liaise with the *National ReferNet Representative* ⁽²⁾.

¹ one organisation or one consortium

² individuals and/or organisations/institutions proposed by Member States represented by the Ministry/ies responsible for Vocational Education and Training.

Note: this does not preclude that the National ReferNet Representative can apply in the context of this call for proposal and, if successful, be awarded a framework partnership agreement to lead a representative national consortium of key organisations in the field of VET to support Cedefop and carry out, with the consortia partners, activities agreed each year in an annual work plan..

3.2. National VET policy and research reporting

3.2.1. Rationale

Cedefop's tasks include reporting on research and policy activities in EU Member States (plus Norway and Iceland). National reports contribute significantly to Cedefop's research and policy reports. The main aim of policy reporting is to be able to report upon, analyse and assess VET policy developments and trends across some or all Member States. Work on policy is underpinned by research findings to support evidence-based decision making at both national and EU levels in social, economic and labour market fields.

National consortia representing different VET actors and with access to a variety of nationally related information on policy and research are best placed to provide validated descriptive and analytical reports on VET research and policy. They can draw from information resources, policy initiatives and research projects and outcomes at central, regional, local and sectoral levels and can work with the different stakeholders to present objective and validated information to Cedefop. Cedefop defines its requirements through detailed templates so that national information can be presented and can be used for further studies on cross-national trends and developments in policy and research.

3.2.2. Background

Following the mandate provided by the Maastricht and Helsinki Communiqués (2004, 2006; see above), Cedefop (and ETF) with their networks (e.g. ReferNet) have to report regularly on the implementation of the Copenhagen process. Cedefop uses the information provided by ReferNet to prepare syntheses and comparative work on national policy developments and how they meet the EU policy agenda. These activities will contribute to the 2008 and 2010 reviews on the progress of EU countries towards the goals of the Copenhagen process. Such reports provided by ReferNet could include descriptive information on a certain part of the VET system, analyse particular policies and assess the use of EU policy instruments. For the intervening years (2009 and 2011), these reports will inform on research activities (ERO national research reports).

3.2.3. Indicative outcomes

- (1) national VET policy report to be used for Cedefop's policy synthesis and comparative work (in 2008 and 2010);
- (2) ERO national research report (ENRR) to be used for Cedefop's overview of research in Europe (in 2009 and 2011).

3.3. Databases on research, reporting and documentation

3.3.1. Rationale

Cedefop's founding regulation states, one of its tasks is to “*to compile selected documentation relating in particular to the present situation, the latest developments and research in the relevant fields, and to matters of vocational training structure*”.

Cedefop has several well-established databases of information on national VET systems, national VET research and documentation to fulfil this task. They provide information and support cross-national cooperation through sharing the results of research and providing relevant, complete and up-to-date information on VET. Support is also available on adapting national VET terminology to different country concepts through a thesaurus.

National consortia are best placed to contribute to these databases given their contacts with their nationally-relevant VET stakeholders and their access to information from a wide range of organisations (including official VET bodies, research organisations and libraries).

3.3.2. Background

Since 2002 ReferNet has been a key partner for Cedefop's database activities. For documentary activities, Cedefop has used a decentralised network since 1987. Cedefop uses continuous updates from ReferNet to analyse and compare the state-of-the-art of VET in Europe.

- Cedefop's national VET systems database (eKnowVET) provides basic, descriptive VET information and is a key reference tool for those seeking national and cross-national information on EU VET systems. For the EU Presidency countries, the information is re-worked and published in hard copy.
- Cedefop's bibliographic database (VET-Bib) provides the largest collection of VET literature in Europe. It provides bibliographic information with electronic links and email alerts directing users to new publications.
- Cedefop's on-line European Training Thesaurus contains the latest VET concepts and terms used at national level.

3.3.3. Indicative outcomes

- (1) Descriptions of national VET systems;
- (2) ERO database updates.
- (3) Contributions to [VET-Bib](#) - Cedefop's bibliographic database, the largest collection of VET literature in Europe – provide bibliographic information and electronic links, including alerts to new publications;
- (4) Dynamic online bibliographies and dossiers on selected topics and a digital library with full text access to European and national key documents;
- (5) Replies to user queries with detailed comparative analysis and state-of-the-art compilations;
- (6) An updated European Training Thesaurus (ETT) with the latest VET concepts and terms;

3.4. Dissemination and promotion

3.4.1. Rationale

One of Cedefop's core missions is the "*dissemination of all useful documentation and information*" (Cedefop's Founding Regulation). It employs many dissemination tools to achieve this goal including its hard-copy and web-based publications, and the databases described previously. In addition, Cedefop provides regular newsletters and online news services. Cedefop representatives also attend conferences, fairs and exhibitions and are often called upon to give presentations and papers to national and EU-level stakeholders.

Cedefop's relationship with ReferNet concerning its dissemination strategy is a two-way exchange. ReferNet can use Cedefop to disseminate work undertaken in organisations within the consortia and equally Cedefop can access ReferNet's national dissemination channels. The hub of this two-way exchange is the national ReferNet websites. An additional dimension is the dissemination relationship across the network.

3.4.2. Background

Cedefop undertakes several activities and means to disseminate news and brief information on VET developments to encourage exchanges of information and good practice. Cedefop promotes its products and services to its target audiences in various ways. These include mailing lists, announcements, newsletters and news services, websites, participation in exhibitions, conferences and seminars, contacts with the press, etc. The main dissemination means to which ReferNet will contribute are listed below.

- National websites aiming at disseminating information and raising visibility of Cedefop and ReferNet at national level in the national language.
- News services providing information on developments in VET in Europe. News information is published in print and electronic form in several EU languages. The focus of the news services is policy developments and activities in VET and the labour market, especially those with a European or international character and/or social partner involvement. Submissions accepted by Cedefop will be published in hard-copy and electronic form.
- Enquiry services. These include responding to enquiries and compiling information. The monthly 'New Acquisition List' raises awareness on new documents included in the Library.
- Preparing briefings, presentations and papers to provide information to key VET stakeholders at EU and international levels. Cedefop is often called upon to attend high-level policy meetings where it is asked to give information on cross-national policy developments. These meetings are an important place to present national information on new policy intentions, operation and outcomes.
- Providing Cedefop with information on national exhibitions, conferences seminars and exhibitions, distributing Cedefop's documentation at events where they exhibit.
- Sharing press contacts

Each of these dissemination means are useful to ReferNet members in publicising work within the consortia and policy developments within their country. They also enable Cedefop to provide a better quality service to its audience.

3.4.3. Indicative outcomes

- (1) Maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website in the national language.
- (2) Short articles, focusing on the topics listed above. Articles should be provided electronically in accordance with the procedures laid down by Cedefop. Visual material (graphs, logos, photos, etc.) that complements the articles is welcomed.
- (3) News services: creating national (e-)mailings to disseminate Cedefop projects and news (or that of other ReferNet members). They may include press releases and cuttings and calls for papers.
- (4) Regular updates of policy initiatives and developments to be used by Cedefop to draw attention to changes in policies, programmes and the VET system in *ad hoc* papers and presentations.
- (5) Replying to user queries; creating online bibliographies on selected topics; contributing information on latest VET publications for the New Acquisitions List.
- (6) Providing Cedefop with information on national exhibitions, conferences seminars and exhibitions. If requested, the *Consortium Leader* will provide Cedefop with a list of VET-related events to be held in the country in the next 12 months.
- (7) Contacts with the press: share with Cedefop its list of journals, periodicals and journalists that might be included in Cedefop's press database or distribution lists, ReferNet members may also make use of Cedefop's channels if appropriate.

For contributions to the above activities, decisions to include ReferNet information are at Cedefop's discretion.

3.5. Working Methods

The way in which tasks will be distributed within the consortium will be outlined by the *Consortium Leader* in its proposal, where he/she will present to Cedefop a detailed work plan, which will:

- explain how the consortium will perform the activities;
- describe the tasks foreseen for each consortium member within the consortium;
- describe the roles of and links between the various consortium members.

The *Consortium Leader* will be requested to explain the methodology for collecting and validating the data, information and reports.

3.5.1. Meetings

- (1) At Cedefop's request the *Consortium Leader* will attend a plenary and a technical meeting organised by Cedefop. Cedefop will cover the costs of travel and accommodation, in accordance with the rules in force, for two representatives per country at plenary meetings and one representative per country at technical meetings. Additional participants may attend at their own expense.

- (2) Some National *Consortium Leaders* may be invited to participate in meetings of a Joint Coordination Group on Policy Reporting ¹. Cedefop will cover the costs of travel and accommodation of *Consortium Leaders* invited, in accordance with the rules in force.
- (3) At national level, the *Consortium Leader* will organise an annual meeting of consortium members and national stakeholders to present to them Cedefop's priorities, work programme and report on activities. Where deemed appropriate after consideration, Cedefop will attend at the *Consortium Leader's* request. The national members of Cedefop's Governing Board as well as the national ReferNet Representative should be invited to the consortium meeting and be kept formally informed by the *Consortium Leader* of all developments within the consortium.
- (4) *Consortia Leaders* may take the initiative to organise cross-national meetings. Cedefop will contribute to the organisation by providing relevant information, documentation or other material at the request of the organiser. Where deemed appropriate, Cedefop will attend at the *Consortium Leader's* request.

3.5.2. *Language*

Information for the following activities **must be submitted in English** and may also additionally be provided in the country's official language:

- (1) National VET policy report
- (2) ERO national research report (ENRR)
- (3) Description of the VET system,
- (4) VET-Bib abstracts;
- (5) Short articles on specific VET related topics, recent developments and new initiatives in VET policy.

The *national Consortium Leader* will ensure that the English version is of a high standard linguistically, and that the presentation follows the guidelines set out in the Cedefop Style Manual. In order to achieve the linguistic standards, translation and editing costs are eligible in the context of this call.

3.5.3. *Periodical assessments*

The *Consortium Leader* and the national consortium will be assessed periodically on the basis of:

- content analysis: covering the relevance of the information provided by the national consortium and its contribution to Cedefop's information services and publications;
- performance: covering the regularity and quantity of information provided, the time taken to respond to queries and the working relationship with other consortium members.

¹ This group will be established at Cedefop in 2007. Members of the group are Cedefop staff, representatives of Cedefop's Governing Board, of the Presidency countries and some consortium leaders

3.5.4. Final report on activities

Within two months of the end of the operational year, the *Consortium Leader* will present a report describing the results of the activities conducted. A detailed structure (template) will be provided by Cedefop.

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications which comply with the following eligibility criteria will be the subject of an in depth evaluation.

4.1 Eligible organisations

To be eligible, the applicant (national *Consortium Leader*) must satisfy the following requirements:

- be a public or a private organisation, with a legal status and legal personality (consequently, natural persons - i.e. individuals- may not submit applications) ;
- lead a national consortium whose composition represents the stakeholders diversity within the country;
- be able to carry out all activities within the scope of those detailed in section 3 of this document

4.2 Eligible countries

Applications from the following countries are eligible:

- **EU 27** (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom);
- Norway and Iceland;

Organisations established in countries other than the countries listed above are not eligible.

4.3 Eligible proposals

Submission deadline and all other formal eligibility criteria specified in section 13 ⁽¹⁾ of this document must be complied with.

Cedefop reserves the right to disregard proposals that are still incomplete by the deadline. It also reserves the right to request additional information necessary to take a final decision on the award of financial support.

¹ Procedure and requirements for the submission of proposals

5. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Applicants must certify using the “Declaration on honour” in the application form that they are not in one of the situations mentioned in the articles 93 and 94 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002), which are listed below:

Organisations that are in one of the following situations will be excluded from participation:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a definitive court judgement;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;
- (d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the project is to be performed;
- (e) they have been the subject of a definitive court judgement for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) following another grant award procedure or procurement procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations.

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance, if on the date of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by Cedefop as a condition of participation in the relevant call for proposals or fail to supply this information.

Administrative and financial penalties of an effective, proportionate and dissuasive nature may be imposed on applicants who are excluded under the above grounds, in accordance with the provisions of Articles 93 to 96 of the Financial Regulation and Articles 133 and 175 of the Implementing Regulation (Commission Regulation 2342/2002 of 23/12/02).

6. SELECTION CRITERIA

6.1 Technical and Professional Capacity

Applicants will be selected by evaluating the following criteria:

- competence and experience relevant to leading consortia;
- competence and experience within the vocational education and training field; –
- professional competencies, qualifications, and experience required to complete the proposed project, in particular experience and knowledge in relation to the activities prescribed under section 3 of this document (collection and analysis of information, research, documentation and databases, dissemination and promotion).

In order to permit an assessment of their technical and professional capacity, applicants must supply the following information:

- description of the experience with leading consortia, including
- proof of experience within the Vocational Education and Training field;
- proof of professional competencies, qualifications and experience, particularly with regard to collection and analysis of information, research, documentation and databases, dissemination and promotion.

The required information must be submitted using the official application form. The CVs of the persons responsible for delivering the services to Cedefop indicating their relevant professional experience have to be attached.¹

6.2 Financial capacity

Applicants must certify their status as well as their financial and operational capacity to carry out the project by completing and signing the financial identification form and the legal entities form (see official application form).

In order to permit an assessment of their financial capacity, the applicant must submit together with their application the profit and loss accounts and the balance sheet of the applicant for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed.

The verification of financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies, or to international organisations.

NB: If, on the basis of the submitted documents, Cedefop assesses that the financial capacity of the Consortium Leader has not been proved or is not sufficient, it can:

- reject the application;
- ask for further information;
- ask for the submission of a guarantee (see section 10.5);
- propose a grant agreement without a pre-financing payment.

¹ In order to foster competition national and/or regional authorities and social partners shall be able to participate in more than one consortium.

7. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be assessed against the following award criteria.

		Weight	
(a)	Structure of the consortium: (<i>ref. 2.1.1 of the official application form</i>) Range of stakeholders and representation of the interests of VET within the country in coherence with the requested tasks.		30
(b)	Technical merit: (<i>ref. 2.1.2 of the official application form</i>) - proposed work organisation including task distribution between consortium leader and members and workflow management	15	50
	- quality of the proposed approach, working methods and data sources;	15	
	- quality assurance measures including measures to ensure completion and planned delivery times;	10	
	- technical assistance: quality of the proposals to support Cedefop. This includes times and means to contact the organisation, ways in which Cedefop can monitor and trace the services, other support services.	10	
(c)	Risk analysis and contingency measures (<i>ref. 2.1.3 of the official application form</i>) Identification, assessment and management of risks in order to provide Cedefop with reasonable assurance as regards the achievement of the objectives.		20
TOTAL			100

External experts will be invited to participate in the evaluation procedure.

8. FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT AND SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENT
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With regard to the award criteria, Cedefop will conclude a four-year framework partnership agreement with one successful applicant ⁽¹⁾ in each of the eligible countries.

Applicants are also required to submit a proposed work plan and estimated budget for 2008 to fulfil the specifications outlined in Annex A. This work plan will be co-financed by a specific grant agreement (*see section 3 of the application form*).

The model standard framework partnership agreement and specific grant agreement can be found respectively in Annex B and C.

¹ or one successful consortium of applicants

9. TIMETABLE

Applications for the framework partnership agreement **AND** for 2008 work plan must be sent **at the latest on 14 September 2007** (*see section 13 below*).

The proposed 2008 work plan which may be awarded a specific grant agreement must start in January 2008 for a duration of 12 months.

The period of eligibility for expenditure resulting from implementation of a project will begin on or after the day of signature of the agreement by the last of the parties. In exceptional circumstances, and if the *Consortium Leader* is able to prove the need to commence this action before the signing of the agreement, expenditure may be considered as eligible before the signature of the grant agreement.

10. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

10.1 General terms and conditions

Acceptance of an application by Cedefop does not constitute an undertaking to award a financial contribution equal to the amount requested by the *Consortium Leader*. The awarding of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

Community grants aim at facilitating the implementation of a project which could not otherwise be implemented without the support of the European Union. The Community financial grant is based on the principle of co-financing.

The Community grant is only an additional financial contribution to the *Consortium Leader's* (and/or co-beneficiaries) own financial contribution and/or local, regional, national and/or private contributions obtained elsewhere for the project (*see section 4 of the application form*).

In all cases, the total Community contribution may not exceed 70% of the eligible costs. Therefore, a minimum of **30%** of the total estimated eligible expenditure of the project must come from sources other than the budget of the European Union. Proposals must include evidence that co-financing amounting to the remainder of the total cost of the project is available (secured).

The estimated budget available for the four year duration of the framework partnership agreements amounts to **EUR 4.000.000**, depending on the decisions of the Budget Authority.

10.2 Specific terms and conditions for the 2008 work plan

The total available budget for the 2008 work plan will be distributed on the basis of three country groups based on country population.

The allocated amount may not in any circumstances exceed the amounts indicated below.

	Maximum grant amount
<u>Country group 1:</u> Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Iceland	EUR 22.580
<u>Country group 2:</u> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden and Norway	EUR 32.590
<u>Country group 3:</u> France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom	EUR 42.585

Applications must include a detailed estimated budget in Euros for the proposed 2008 work plan (see Annex A). Applications from countries not established in the 'Euro zone' must use the conversion rates published in the Official Journal of the European Union, C series, at the date of publication of the present call for proposals.

The forecast budget must balance, i.e. total estimated expenditure must equal the total funding expected, from all sources (including Cedefop). The forecast budget must clearly state all the eligible costs (costs that could be subsidized by Cedefop budget).

Consortium Leaders must indicate the sources and amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the same financial year, for the same action, or for any other action and for routine activities.

Under no circumstances may the grant have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the *Consortium Leader* or co-beneficiaries. Profit is defined as a surplus of receipts over the costs of the action. The amount of the grant will be reduced by the amount of any surplus. The Bank account (and/or the sub bank account) indicated by the Consortium Leader must allow for the identification of the amounts paid by Cedefop. If the amounts paid by Cedefop as pre-financing give rise to interest or other equivalent profits, according to the national regulation of a country where the bank account is established, such interest or profit will be recovered by Cedefop.

10.3 Payment procedures

After approval by Cedefop, a financial agreement drawn up in euros and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be concluded between Cedefop and the beneficiary.

The originals of the financial agreement must be signed and returned to Cedefop immediately for signature. Cedefop will be the last party to sign.

The financial agreement will lay down the payment arrangements.

- a) A pre-financing payment equivalent to 60 % of the total Community contribution will be transferred to the Consortium Leader within 45 days following the signing of the agreement by the last of the two parties and where applicable the reception of all necessary guaranties. The pre-financing is aimed at providing cash flow to the Consortium Leader and co-beneficiaries.

- b) Cedefop will determine the level of the final payment to be paid to the Consortium Leader within 45 days of Cedefop approving the final report. Requests for final payments have to be accompanied by financial statements and underlying accounts certified by an auditor or in case of public bodies, a competent and independent public officer/Institution.
- c) Should the actual eligible total cost of the project be less than the total estimated cost, Cedefop will reduce its contribution proportionally. Specifically, Cedefop will make a pro rata reduction of the grant on the basis of the rate indicated in the agreement and the Consortium Leader will be obliged to reimburse amounts already paid in excess of the amount due.
- d) The final accounts must be balanced, dated, drawn up in euro, signed and certified by the authorised person as provided for in the Consortium Leader's articles of association. They must be presented using the same structure as the budget estimate (see Annex II of the application form) which will be appended to the grant agreement.
- e) A variation of more than 10% in the amount of a heading in the draft budget must be authorised by Cedefop in advance, in accordance with the provisions set out in the agreement.
- f) Under no circumstances will any increases to budget headings of more than 10% which have not been authorised by Cedefop in advance be taken into consideration for the final payment of the grant.
- g) Consortium Leaders undertake to carry out the activities as they are presented in the grant application. Any change to the project must be authorised by Cedefop in advance. The inclusion in the final accounts of costs not referred to in the agreement cannot be considered as eligible.

10.4 Ex-post Control, Audit and Evaluation

Projects may be subject to ex-post controls, audits, ex ante and ex post evaluations. The responsible person representing the Consortium Leader will confirm, with his or her signature, that the grant has been used correctly and will provide proof if requested. Cedefop, the European Commission, the Court of Auditors of the European Communities or any other bodies authorised by them to do so on their behalf may check the use made of the grant at any time during the term of the agreement and during a period of five years following expiry of the agreement.

Furthermore there are audit requirements for the requests for final payments (*see section 10.3 b*).

10.5 Guarantee

Cedefop may require the Consortium Leader to lodge a guarantee in advance in order to limit the financial risks connected with the payment of pre-financing.

It shall have the effect of making the bank or financial institution, third party, or the other beneficiaries stand as irrevocable collateral security, or first-call guarantor of the Consortium Leader's obligations.

The guarantee shall be drawn up and issued in Euro. It shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member States.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party, or by the joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the Consortium Leader in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

10.6 Double financing

The beneficiary is not entitled to receive more than one grant from Cedefop, from the Commission or any other Community agency for the activities covered by the selected project.

10.7 Eligible Costs

The only costs eligible in the context of this call are those which are:

- a) directly linked to the project concerned, i.e. generated directly by the project and indispensable for its implementation. These costs must be included in the final accounts referred to in the agreement and have to be necessary and reasonable for the implementation of the project. The project must comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular in terms of value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- b) generated during the lifetime of the project as defined in the agreement;
- c) actually incurred by the Consortium Leader and co-beneficiaries and recorded in their accounts in conformity with the applicable accounting principles, and which are declared in accordance with the requirements of the applicable tax and social legislation;
- d) identifiable and verifiable with original supporting documents.

Eligible costs must be included in the Budget Estimate (see Annex IV A and IV B of the application form).

The internal auditing and accountancy procedures of the Consortium Leader shall make it possible to verify that the stated project costs and receipts correspond to the accounting statements and the supporting documents.

10.7.1 Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the activities/project are those costs which, with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be attributed to it directly.

In particular, the following direct costs (incurred by the Consortium Leader and/or co-beneficiaries) are eligible provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph (11.7):

- (a) costs of staff working directly on the activities, corresponding to their actual salaries plus social charges;
- (b) traveling and subsistence expenses for staff provided that they are in line with the usual practices of the Consortium Leader or co-beneficiary, and do not exceed the *per diem* scales approved by Cedefop;
- (c) other direct costs associated with the project:
 - the costs of running training activities, conferences, and seminars (organisation costs, room and equipment hire, traveling and subsistence costs for participants and speakers, interpreting costs, fees for external speakers, reproduction costs);
 - information dissemination costs: production costs (hardcopy and/or electronic publications, books, CDROMs, videos, Internet, etc.), translation and editing, dissemination and distribution costs;
 - costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action;

- costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the agreement, including the costs of financial guaranties and audits.

10.7.2 *Eligible indirect costs*

A flat-rate amount, not exceeding 7% of the eligible direct costs of the action, representing the Consortium Leader and co-beneficiaries' general administrative costs can be regarded as chargeable to the project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Indirect costs are not eligible where the Consortium Leader or co-beneficiary already receives an operating grant from Cedefop.

10.7.3 *Ineligible costs*

The following costs are not eligible:

- (a) return on capital;
- (b) debt and debt service charges;
- (c) provisions for losses, or potential future liabilities;
- (d) interest owed;
- (e) doubtful debts;
- (f) exchange losses;
- (g) VAT, unless the Consortium Leader or co-beneficiary can show that they are unable to recover it;
- (h) costs declared by the Consortium Leader or co-beneficiary and covered by another action or work programme receiving a Community grant;
- (i) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- (j) substitution costs for replacing persons involved in the project;
- (k) expenses for travel to or from countries other than those participating in the programme, unless explicit prior authorisation is granted by Cedefop;
- (l) contributions in kind.

10.8 Legal entities

By way of derogation from Article 114 of the Financial Regulations, cross-industry trade unions participating in the European social dialogue are eligible under this call for proposals even if they do not have a legal personality. Nevertheless, the legal entities form annexed to the application form should be completed by all organisations responding to this call for proposals. Consequently, the legal entities form should be submitted together with a copy of the resolution, law, decree, or decision establishing the entity in question, or, failing that, any other official document attesting to the establishment of the entity.

11. SUBCONTRACTING AND CALL FOR TENDER

Where the implementation of subsidised actions requires subcontracting or the launching of a call for tenders, the Consortium Leader or co-beneficiary should award this contract to the tender offering the best value for money, respecting the principles of transparency and equal treatment of potential contractors and ensuring there is no conflict of interests.

12. PUBLICITY

Each year (1st semester) a list of the grants awarded during the previous budgetary exercise must be published on the Internet Web site of Cedefop. The information can also be published with the help of any other means including the Official Journal of the European Union.

With the agreement of the Consortium Leader (unless publication of the information may threaten the safety of the beneficiary or harm his or her interests), Cedefop will publish the following information:

- the name and address of each beneficiary;
- the subject of the grant;
- the amount allocated and rate of financing.

Consortium Leaders are under a contractual obligation to ensure, by all appropriate means and in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EU grant agreement, that the funding awarded to the project by the European Union is publicised during the life of the project, and acknowledged in any publications and permanent or ongoing publicity material subsequent to this (name and logo of Cedefop/the European Union). Evidence of this publicity must be included in the final reports.

Failure to comply with this obligation may result in the grant award being reduced.

13. PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

13.1 Publication

The text of the call for proposals, annexes, and for information purposes a copy of the standard agreement, can be obtained from Cedefop website at the following address: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>.

A concise version of the call for proposals is also published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

13.2 Application forms

Applications must be drawn up in one of the official EU languages.

Please note that only typed applications will be considered, using the official application form annexed to the present call, duly filled in, signed by the legal representative of the organisation and sent to Cedefop according to the defined schedule will be examined.

The application form and annexes can be downloaded from the following URL: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu> or by request at the following e-mail address: c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu. Applicants must submit the proposal for the 4-year framework partnership and the detailed proposal for 2008.

The grant proposal for 2008 must present a balanced budget and comply with all the financial conditions detailed under section 10 of this document.

The application must be sent in three copies (the original, being identified as such, plus two copies).

13.3 Submission of the application

Deadline for submission of applications: 14 September 2007. Applications submitted after this date will not be considered.

Applications can be submitted in one of the following ways:

- By registered post to the following address, for which purposes the relevant date is to be the date of dispatch by post, as evidenced by the postmark; or the registered delivery receipt issued by the Postal Services,

CEDEFOP
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
Procurement Service
 attn. Mr. George Paraskevaïdis
P.O. Box 22427, GR- 55102 Thessaloniki

- By hand-delivery or courier service. For security reasons applications by hand delivery or by a courier service can only be delivered to the central post service of Cedefop

CEDEFOP
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
Procurement Service
 attn. Mr. George Paraskevaïdis
Europe 123, GR- 57001 Thessaloniki (Pylea)

with the indication Ref. GP/D/ReferNet-FPA/001/07 on the envelope. In case of hand delivery the submission date is the date of receipt. In case of delivery by a courier service the submission date is the date of receipt by the courier service.

Applications submitted by fax or e-mail will **not** be examined.

No modification of the application will be authorised after the submission of the application form and its annexes. However, Cedefop reserves the right to request additional information necessary to take a final decision on the award of financial support.

14. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

a) Reception of application

Applicants will be informed of the receipt of their proposal upon request by e-mail at the following address: c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu.

b) Eligibility of application

Only applications complying with the eligibility criteria will be taken into account for the award of a possible grant. If an application is deemed ineligible, a letter indicating the reasons of the ineligibility will be sent to the applicant.

c) Selection of project

Applicants will be informed of Cedefop's decision concerning their grant application as soon as possible. No information will be released until Cedefop's decision on project selection has been taken.

All the selected applications will be subject to a financial analysis. In this framework Cedefop may ask the applicant for supplementary information or eventually guarantees. The verification of financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies, or to international organisations.

All unsuccessful applications will be informed in writing.

It is foreseen that Consortium Leaders of successful applications shall receive a written communication based on the results of the selection procedure in November 2007.

d) Grant agreement

It is foreseen that successful applicants shall receive a framework partnership agreement and eventually a specific grant agreement for signature as from 30 November 2007.

15. APPLICABLE REGULATION

The award of Community grants is governed by the legal basis to the Programme and the Financial Regulations, and must respect the procedures laid down therein:

- Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 of the Council of 10 February 1975 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
- OJ L 248, 16.9.2002 (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities)
- OJ L 357, 31.12.2002 (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities)
- OJ L 390/2006 of 30 December 2006 (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 1995/2006 of 13 December 2006 amending Regulation N° 1605/2002 on the Financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities)
- OJ L 111, 28.04.2007 (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 478/2007 of 23 April 2007 amending Regulation No 2342/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities)

16. CONTACT

Cedefop department responsible for implementing and managing this call for proposals is the Procurement Service.

Additional information can be obtained from:

CEDEFOP
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
Procurement Service
 attn. Mr. George Paraskevidis
Europe 123, GR- 57001 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
 or by fax: +30-2310-490 028
 or by e-mail at the following address: c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu