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The changing nature of qualifications has implications for both policy-makers and individuals

A recent series of Cedefop publications, to be presented at an upcoming conference on lifelong learning and employability (Thessaloniki 5-6 October) examines how qualifications are established, evaluated and renewed in today's economy.

Qualifications are diplomas, certificates and titles allowing holders access to professional activity and further education. Their purpose is to cover the needs of individuals for employment and of enterprises for skilled personnel. But to do so, they must accurately reflect the requirements of each profession as these change over time, and be clearly understood across the single labour market of the EU. The question is - do they?

To explore this issue in depth, Cedefop recently published three reports¹, which examine

- how the occupational and educational standards on which qualifications are based are established and renewed;
- how EU Member States organise certification and how this process is supported by quality assurance;
- which practical guidelines are used in various Member States to validate non-formal and informal learning – the new frontier in qualifications.

To further examine these and other issues, **on 5-6 October Cedefop will be welcoming some 150 participants to its Agora conference on Qualifications for Lifelong Learning and Employability.**

This conference will examine several aspects of how qualifications are changing: whether they reflect the changing demands and realities of the labour market; whether they respond to the needs of individual citizens; to what extent changes in qualifications affect all European countries; and what their implications are for future policy cooperation in education and training.

¹ The dynamics of qualifications: defining and renewing occupational and educational standards
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=556
The relationship between quality assurance and VET certification in EU Member States
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=555
European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=553

The conference discussions will be led by Cedefop experts, who have long taken a leading role in exploring and analysing the issue of qualifications. Participants include high-level policy-makers from the European Commission, governments, and social partner organisation, as well as researchers from EU universities and think tanks.

Registrations are open at the conference website, which also includes links to the related reports: <http://agora.cedefop.europa.eu/qualifications2009>

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About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training.

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