



# Cedefop 2008 and 2009

## Strengthening European cooperation in vocational education and training policy

'From Copenhagen to Maastricht, Helsinki and Bordeaux, a European VET area is being built, based on transparency and mutual trust,' announced the Bordeaux communiqué of 26 November 2008, issued by European Ministers for vocational education and training (VET), the European Commission and social partners. Much of the evidence that informed their decisions was provided by Cedefop, according to its mandate to monitor and analyse progress of Member States in implementing common European VET policy priorities. This mandate was renewed at Bordeaux.

### Alignment of European and national policy priorities for VET

Cedefop gave the keynote speech at the Bordeaux meeting. The discussion acknowledged Cedefop's analysis and reflected the main findings to be published in its **third European VET policy report**. Senior policy-makers will debate the report at an Agora conference in Thessaloniki, in March 2009, organised by Cedefop and the Czech EU Presidency.

In short, European and national VET policy priorities are aligning. Progress has been made, in particular, in developing European tools, principles and guidelines. However, work needs to continue and an effort in implementation is required.

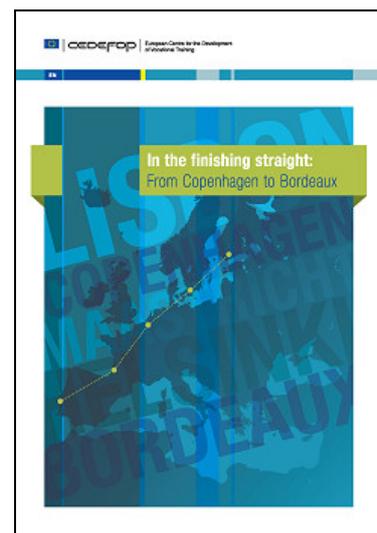
### Progress on European tools, principles and guidelines for lifelong learning

European tools improve understanding of qualifications and skills. They support transparency of qualifications and mobility across borders. Further, they support transfer between education and training at all levels within a country and have been a major outcome of the Copenhagen process.

Cedefop has been involved in developing European tools from day one. In close cooperation with the European Commission, Member States and social partners, Cedefop has made a substantial contribution to the conceptual development and

practical implementation of the tools at European, national and sectoral level. As well as supporting directly European policy cooperation, Cedefop's comparative studies and analysis have addressed important knowledge gaps and challenges linked to implementing the tools.

Figure 1: In the finishing straight



Cedefop's support has led to formal adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the Recommendation on the **European qualifications framework** in April 2008. To support implementation, Cedefop coordinates, jointly with the European Commission the EQF advisory group and gave substantial input to the EQF's official launch in June. In 2008, Cedefop worked closely with Member States to develop national qualifications frameworks. Important to implementing the EQF, these frameworks are crucial to lifelong learning policies and reducing barriers between education and training. In 2009, Cedefop will carry out several analyses on ways to encourage confidence in the EQF and how to include VET at the EQF's highest qualifications levels.

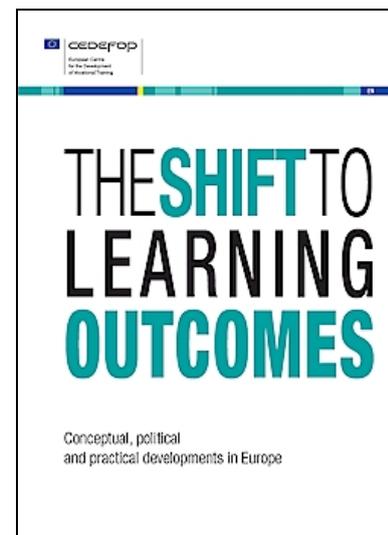
Cedefop's substantial support to developing ECVET and quality assurance in VET led to adoption by the European Commission of draft Recommendations on the **European quality assurance reference framework for VET (EQARF)** and the **European credit system for VET (ECVET)**. Both draft recommendations acknowledge explicitly Cedefop's contribution. Cedefop took part in the European Economic and Social Committee's study group on quality assurance and contributed substantially to the French EU Presidency conference on European mobility for young apprentices in November 2008. In 2009, Cedefop will advise on links between credit systems and European, national and sector qualifications frameworks. To support quality assurance, Cedefop will disseminate the findings of its pilot study on accreditation approaches of VET providers in Member States. Use of **Europass** continues to grow. Available in 26 languages there have been more than 13 million visits to the Europass Cedefop website, since its launch in 2005 and 3.9 million Europass CVs completed online. Cedefop will continue to update and promote Europass in 2009.

**Lifelong guidance** was a priority for the French Presidency. Cedefop helped draft the Council Resolution of November 2008 that cites Cedefop's research work on Member States' progress on implementing the Council's 2004 Resolution on lifelong guidance. Significant content input was provided to the French Presidency's lifelong guidance conference in September. In 2009, Cedefop will study best practice and the qualifications and competences of career guidance counsellors. In 2008, Cedefop based on input from Member States, completed European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The guidelines give practical advice to the different national stakeholders involved in validation. In 2009, Cedefop will update the inventory on validation systems in Member States.

European tools are based on **learning outcomes**, which measure what a person can do at the end of any type of learning experience, rather than the place, duration and curriculum of any particular course. In 2008, Cedefop carried out the first overview of developments covering 32 countries. It showed that the growing influence of learning outcomes has significant implications for education and training policies and practices. In 2008, Cedefop analysed how occupational and education/training standards influence qualifications. In June 2009, Cedefop will hold a conference to discuss the long-term challenges

for European qualifications systems and frameworks. On **teachers and trainers in VET**, Cedefop and the European Commission will jointly host a conference in February 2009 on their role in VET reforms.

**Figure 2: The shift to learning outcomes**



### Continuing to modernise VET

Drawing on Cedefop's analysis, ministers at Bordeaux committed themselves to continue to modernise VET over the next two years. The communiqué and Council conclusions endorsed Cedefop's task to monitor and report progress by countries in implementing European VET policy priorities. Cedefop will contribute to the final review of VET's contribution to the 10-year Lisbon strategy in Bruges in 2010.

To bring research and policy together, in 2009 Cedefop will disseminate its **fourth report on European VET research - Modernising VET**. The report takes a medium-term perspective on the European VET policy priorities agreed in the Copenhagen process. It analyses how the pressures of an ageing workforce, people lacking the right skills, the need for enterprises to learn and innovate, and the aim to increase social cohesion are affecting VET.

To follow-up the May 2008 Council conclusions, Cedefop will monitor and assess **adult learning** trends and policy developments such as broadening access and participation of adults in education and training. In 2008, Cedefop was invited to participate in the European Economic and Social Committee's working group on older workers. In 2009, Cedefop will continue its analysis of the relationship between ageing, work performance and learning behaviour.

Peer learning and exchanges of information continued through the **study visits programme**, coordinated by Cedefop as part of the EU's lifelong learning programme. In the academic year 2008/09, 306 study visits with some 2 600 participants are planned. Ensuring the study visits programme's quality, including assessing the visits' impact, is Cedefop's focus in 2009. Cedefop also has a specific role to encourage social partners to participate in study visits.

### Identifying skill needs and investing in VET

The Council Resolution of November 2007, the spring European Council in 2008 and the Bordeaux communiqué all highlighted the importance of anticipating better skill needs and skill demand, and identifying potential skills gaps and shortages in the economy and enterprises. The first pan-European forecast of future skill needs until 2020, published by Cedefop in 2008, provided a major input to the debate

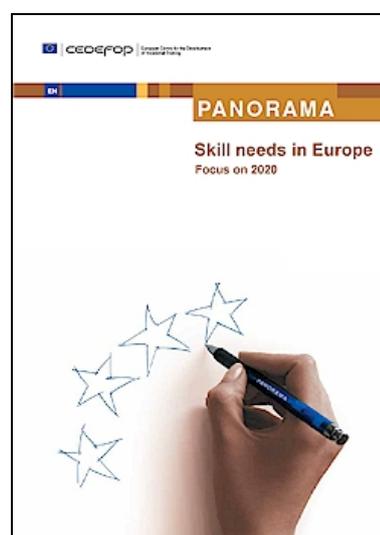
Skill requirements in all occupations are expected to increase. Many new jobs will be created for high and medium-level qualifications, including VET. In 2020, 50% of jobs will require medium-level qualifications and 30% high-level. Only 20% will require low skills compared to 33% in 1996. Further, due to the ageing of the workforce, the need to replace workers retiring or leaving the labour market - particularly with medium-level qualifications - will rise dramatically.

The European Commission's communication on new skills for new jobs of December 2008 was largely based on Cedefop's skill needs forecast. To establish **a regular, systematic assessment of medium- to long-term skills supply and demand** for EU labour markets is a major task for Cedefop in 2009. Further, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council is considering using Cedefop's skill needs forecast as a forward looking indicator to monitor the Employment Guidelines.

All this is part of Cedefop's mandate – confirmed by the European Council – to continue working on future skill needs, skill supply and skill mismatches. Cedefop will also develop scenarios on the potential longer-term implications of the current economic crisis. In June 2009, Cedefop will host an Agora conference to discuss with stakeholders the results of its forecast and potential labour market skill mismatches.

Cedefop has started and will continue to examine changing skill and competence needs of enterprises and new skill needs in key sectors of the European economy. This includes, for example, the effects of climate change on future skill needs and 'green' jobs. Cedefop contributes to the European Commission's Progress project which examines the skills and competence needs of 16 European economic sectors.

Figure 3: Skill needs in Europe



The Bordeaux ministerial conference emphasised the importance of investing in VET in the current economic crisis. In 2008, Cedefop examined sectoral training funds and individual learning accounts which encourage investment in VET. In 2009, Cedefop will examine levels, trends and patterns of VET expenditure, focusing on cost-sharing policies and instruments, such as loans and tax incentives. In line with Council conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training, Cedefop has launched new **research on the economic and social benefits particularly of VET**.

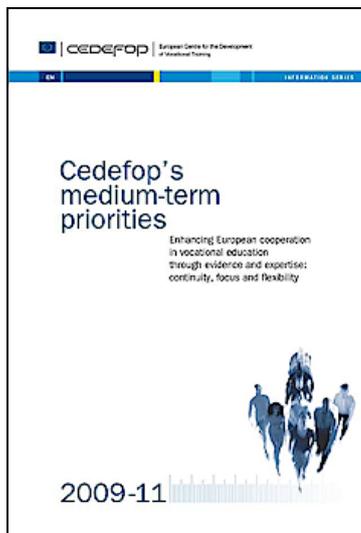
The Bordeaux communiqué and Council conclusions endorsed Cedefop's role in on-going international work to **improve VET statistics**. In 2009, Cedefop will report its findings of the third European continuing vocational training survey, which provides the most complete picture available of VET in enterprises.

### Aligning Cedefop priorities to information needs

The outcomes of Bordeaux clearly show that **Cedefop's priorities for 2009-11**, agreed by its Governing Board in June 2008, are consistent with policy-makers' needs. They underline Cedefop's relevance to developing European VET policy. For 2009-11 Cedefop's strategic objective is to 'contribute to excellence in VET and strengthen European cooperation in developing, implementing and evaluating European VET policy'. Its strategic objective is supported by four priorities:

- informing European VET policies;
- interpreting European trends in and challenges for skills, competences and learning;
- assessing VET's benefits;
- raising the profile of VET.

Figure 4: Medium-term priorities 2009-11



Cedefop's priorities focus on activities to strengthen European cooperation through new knowledge, better understanding and mutual learning. Using its expertise, research, policy analysis and networking, Cedefop disseminates its information through its website, publications, study visits, conferences and seminars to inform decision-makers in European institutions, Member States, and social partners.

Throughout 2008, Cedefop's work has been cited in European VET policy documents and its expertise

widely used at meetings of senior policy-makers and Slovenian and French Presidency conferences. Cedefop's websites had around 2 million visitors in 2008, each making multiple hits (25 million) and page views. More than 2 million files were downloaded. In 2009, Cedefop will launch its new web portal to improve access to information on VET. To summarise VET policy developments for senior policy-makers, Cedefop launched 'Briefing notes' in January 2008. Available in several languages, they have over 950 subscriptions, with an additional 9 000 downloads of the seven issues published to date.

In 2008, Cedefop strengthened its expertise through meticulous recruitment and improved efficiency by streamlining procedures and strengthening planning and reporting and by introducing an activity-based budget. For its priorities 2009-11, Cedefop has developed indicators to measure its performance and impact. The Court of Auditors report for 2007 gave Cedefop a clean bill of health and Cedefop worked hard to maintain its high standards in 2008.

### On to Bruges 2010

The Bordeaux communiqué and Council Conclusions of November 2008 entrust Cedefop with important tasks. Ministers concluded that the process launched in Copenhagen in 2002 has proved effective, and is essential to the economic and social dimensions of the Lisbon Strategy. It helped create a more positive and dynamic VET system in Europe. After Copenhagen in 2002, Maastricht 2004, Helsinki 2006 and Bordeaux in 2008, the next stop for European VET policy is Bruges in 2010. As always it will receive the maximum support from Cedefop in Thessaloniki.