

**BRIEFING NOTE**

From concept to practice - implementing the European training agenda

Cedefop's achievements in 2011 and new priorities for 2012-14

Modernising Europe's vocational education and training (VET) systems is work in progress. The European VET agenda has moved from concept to implementation in Member States and demand for Cedefop's expertise is rising. Citations in more than 90 European Union (EU) policy documents and reports in 2011 bear witness to the relevance, timeliness and appreciation of Cedefop's work.

Cedefop's medium-term priorities for 2009-11 supported the European VET agenda and defined tasks, most of which the Council, European Commission, Member States and social partners specifically asked Cedefop to carry out.

In the last three years, Cedefop has been instrumental in identifying trends and possible responses to future challenges for European VET policy. In December 2010, Cedefop presented its fourth policy report to the European Commission, European ministers for VET and social partners on progress by Member States in implementing European VET policy priorities under the Copenhagen process. Cedefop's Europe-wide skill supply and demand forecasts stimulated debate and provided a basis for the 'New skills for new jobs' initiative. Cedefop worked with the European Commission and Member States to develop the European qualifications framework and to prepare the European Parliament and Council recommendation establishing the European credit system for VET. Cedefop's work has been fundamental to understanding implications of the shift to learning outcomes which describe qualifications in terms of what a learner should know, be able to do and understand, rather than, for example, the place or duration of a course.

To meet the information needs of the new policy framework put in place at the end of 2010, Cedefop has new priorities for 2012-14 (see Box). They continue the many tasks Cedefop has been asked to carry out. However, they bring a sharper focus on areas such as work-based learning and adult

education and include new and additional demands. This reflects Cedefop's reputation for high-quality analyses and the high expectations of its work.

Cedefop – medium term priorities 2012-14

Cedefop is the EU's agency to support European vocational education and training (VET) development. For 2012-14 Cedefop's strategic objective is to contribute to designing and implementing policies for an attractive VET, that promotes excellence and social inclusion, and to strengthening European cooperation in developing, implementing and analysing European VET policy. This strategic objective is supported by three priorities:

- supporting modernisation of VET systems, which focuses on developments in Member States' VET systems;
- careers and transitions, which looks at VET from the learners' standpoint including issues such as continuing VET, adult and work-based learning;
- analysing skills and competence needs to inform VET provision which looks at the impact of external factors on VET, skills and competences.

Cedefop supports the European Commission, Member States and social partners and works to strengthen European cooperation in VET, by using its expertise in research, policy analysis and networking. It disseminates information through its website, publications, study visits, conferences and seminars.

The priorities 2012-14 guide Cedefop's work and are the basis for the activities in its annual work programmes. They also ensure that all of Cedefop's work supports the European policy agenda for VET and lifelong learning.

Policies for modernising VET systems

Cedefop has monitored and analysed progress by Member States in implementing agreed European VET policy priorities under the Copenhagen process since 2002. In March 2011, Cedefop's Agora conference 'A bridge to the future', hosted by the European economic and social committee, discussed Cedefop's latest policy report, which reviews the development and achievements of European VET policy from 2002 to 2010. The conference noted the progress made but stressed the importance of maintaining momentum to continue VET reform.

Under the priority of supporting modernisation of VET systems Cedefop will continue to report on overall progress in its next comprehensive VET policy report, which is due in 2014. In 2012, Cedefop will take stock of progress by Member States in implementing the 'short-term deliverables' (a series of intermediate objectives) set out in the Bruges communiqué.

Making VET a more attractive learning option is a key theme of the Bruges communiqué. The Hungarian Presidency's conference 'Increasing attractiveness and excellence of VET through quality and efficiency' in May 2011 was based on Cedefop's findings on attracting more students into VET. The conference also discussed Cedefop's study on VET at higher qualification levels. It showed that many tertiary level qualifications are vocational in nature, with strong links to the labour market and close involvement of enterprises in all phases. In 2012 Cedefop will present the results of its Europe-wide study on what makes initial VET an attractive learning option and which policies encouraged young people to choose VET.

Study visits, which are part of the EU's lifelong learning programme, continue to promote policy developments through peer learning and exchanges of information. Cedefop coordinates, monitors and evaluates study visits and encourages social partners to participate. In the academic year 2010/11, 2 720 education and training specialists from 31 countries took part in 244 study visits. Feedback from participants about the visits is very positive.

After working on their concept and design, Cedefop is now supporting implementation of common European tools and principles at national and sector levels. This is also part of Cedefop's priority of supporting modernisation of VET systems. European tools and common principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning are based on learning outcomes. They support the transfer of learning across institutions, making it easier to move between different parts of education and training systems (for example between general and vocational education) and across borders.

The European qualifications framework (EQF) makes it easier to compare qualifications from different countries. Member States are currently linking, or 'referencing', their qualifications to the EQF. Most Member States are doing so by adapting existing or developing new national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and most will complete the process in 2012.

Studies and analyses carried out by Cedefop between 2009 and 2011 show that NQFs are used increasingly

as instruments for reforming and modernising national education and training systems by making them more flexible and reducing barriers to access and progression. Cedefop's work supports Member States working on the scope, structure and design of their NQFs. In 2012, Cedefop will publish an extensive overview of NQF developments in 34 countries.

Similarly, Cedefop is monitoring implementation of the European credit system for VET (ECVET). In 2012, following the deadline in the ECVET recommendation, Cedefop will monitor the conditions necessary to implement ECVET successfully. To contribute to implementing the European quality assurance framework for VET (EQAVET), in November 2011 Cedefop published a study on ensuring quality through accreditation of VET providers in Member States. The study shows accreditation to be a key instrument for systematically strengthening common trust and improved learning provision.

Use of Europass (a collection of five documents available in 26 languages enabling people to present qualifications and skills to employers across Europe in a standard format) continues to rise impressively. More than 5.3 million Europass CVs were completed online in 2011, taking the total to over 16.1 million since its launch in February 2005. The Europass website (<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>), which Cedefop manages, was redesigned in 2011 to improve navigation and user-friendliness. The European Commission has requested Cedefop to develop an additional document to record non-formal and informal learning in 2012. Cedefop will also design a European skills passport that will provide citizens with a portable dossier of their skills and competences.

In November 2011, Cedefop's conference for the social partners on implementing the European tools and principles - hosted by the European Parliament - discussed how the tools and principles will interact, not only with one other, but also with other parts of the education and training system. Ensuring effective interaction and coherence between all of the common European tools and principles requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, especially the social partners, and will be central to Cedefop's work in 2012 and beyond.

Greater flexibility and choice for individuals means that lifelong guidance must underpin implementation of the tools and principles. Member States are aware of this and in 2011 Cedefop published a review of their progress in implementing the priorities set in the

Council resolutions of 2004 and 2008 on lifelong guidance.



Read the report:
Lifelong guidance across Europe: Reviewing policy progress and prospects
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/18625.aspx>

Careers and transitions

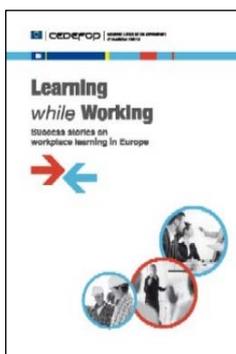
Today, people are likely to change jobs more often in their working life. The need to update existing skills or learn new ones may mean that people experience several more transitions between learning and work, especially as education and training systems become more flexible. Enabling people to manage these transitions and build successful careers through continuing VET and work-based learning is a Cedefop priority for 2012-14.

Cedefop's study, 'Learning while working' was presented at the Hungarian Presidency conference on the European Commission's action plan on adult learning in March 2011. It was also discussed by senior policy-makers at a meeting on work-based learning in September. To help shape the new European agenda for adult learning, in 2012, Cedefop will publish three studies. The first looks at how adult and work-based learning can help enterprises to promote innovation and increase competitiveness. The second gives key messages for policy-makers designing and implementing programmes to reintegrate unemployed adults into the labour market. The third will be on using validation for recruitment and career management in European enterprises. It will give insights into how competences and learning outcomes are identified, assessed and valued.

The ageing European workforce poses several challenges to VET. In 2011, Cedefop and the European Commission organised the conference, 'Learning later in life: uncovering the potential of investing in an ageing workforce'. Cedefop also published 'Working and ageing – guidance and counselling for mature learners'. In 2012, as part of the European year for active ageing and solidarity between generations, Cedefop will organise a conference on the relationship between ageing,

learning and working and how to improve the effectiveness of active ageing policies.

A Cedefop priority for 2009-11 was research on the economic and social benefits of VET. Cedefop has investigated extensively how VET improves individuals' employment opportunities, brings higher wages, improves job satisfaction and can even have positive effects on health or civic participation. It also explored how enterprises benefit through improved productivity, innovation capacity and employee commitment. Cedefop's research also looked at the benefits of VET for the economy and society, including faster growth and stronger social cohesion. The findings of this work will be debated in a conference Cedefop and the European Commission will organise in 2012 and will also be used for the Council conclusions on equity and excellence in VET in the second half of 2012.



Read the report:
Learning while working: success stories on workplace learning in Europe.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/17770.aspx>

Analysing skills and competences

Cedefop's work on analysing skills and competence supports the European Commission's new skills for new jobs initiative – a flagship of the Europe 2020 strategy. Although focused on Europe, Cedefop's work on skills has a broader international dimension. In 2011, Cedefop organised a seminar on skill anticipation and matching with the OECD, World Bank, ILO, Unesco and representatives from Canada, Australia, South Africa and the United States. The executive summary of the joint Cedefop and ILO report on 'Skills for Green Jobs: A global view' was published in June 2011.

In 2012, Cedefop will publish a new skill supply and demand forecast that takes full account of the effects of the financial crisis and subsequent economic recession. The forecast, which covers Europe, will give data by country, sector, occupations and qualifications and be available online, along with Cedefop's analyses of trends and their implications. It will forecast imbalances between supply and demand for skills in Europe.

The new forecast, along with other aspects of Cedefop's analyses of skills will be part of the European Commission's skills panorama, which will be launched in October 2012. At the launch Cedefop will also present its first European skills report. Cedefop will support development of the skills panorama which will provide a wealth of data on skills.

Also in 2012, Cedefop's methodology for collecting international data on emerging skill needs in enterprises will be piloted in nine European countries. Cedefop will analyse the results and make recommendations to the European Commission on carrying out an EU-wide survey.

Cedefop also supports the work of the European Commission on creating a new standardised terminology on skills, competences, occupations and qualifications (ESCO) which will support the matching of skills supply and demand.

Getting the message across to everyone

Dissemination of VET information is part of Cedefop's mission, as defined in its founding regulation. To reach a wide and diverse audience of policy-makers, researchers and practitioners, Cedefop uses various forms of communication, presenting its information in user-friendly hard-copy and electronic formats.

Interest in Cedefop's expertise and information has increased. In 2011, more than 496 000 Cedefop publications were downloaded from its web portal (www.cedefop.europa.eu), an increase of 25% compared to 2010. Downloads of Cedefop's briefing notes, which are published in several languages and aim to keep policy-makers informed about major European VET policy developments increased by more than 75%, to 49 000, in 2011. Visitors returning to Cedefop's website were also up by 16% in 2011. In 2011, Cedefop also launched its Facebook page, which now has more than 1 100 fans.

Cedefop always follows closely the work of European institutions and EU Presidency countries (Denmark and Cyprus in 2012), supporting their work wherever it can through background documents and presentations on VET developments. In 2011, Cedefop organised jointly two seminars with the European Parliament. The first, in June, also involved three other EU agencies in the organisation – Eurofound, the European Training Foundation, and the Health and Safety at Work Agency – and was on how to address youth employment. At the second event in November 2011, Commissioner Vassiliou and Members of the

European Parliament discussed the impact of European tools.

Cedefop is a major forum for debate and networking on VET policy and research and attract senior policy-makers, VET researchers and specialists to its conferences and seminars. Most came to the Cedefop's events for new ideas and 96% of participants rated the events to be good or very good.

An efficient European agency

Cedefop has set for itself the goal of being regarded, not only as an authoritative source of information on VET, but as a well-run organisation.

Cedefop monitors carefully the use of resources through activity-based budgeting. It has also used, since 2010, a performance measurement system (PMS) to enable Cedefop to manage and evaluate its impact, efficiency, effectiveness and relevance. Introduction of the PMS was welcomed by the European Parliament in 2010.

In 2011, Cedefop's budget execution was, again, above 97%. Based on recommendations from audits, evaluations and internal ex-post controls, Cedefop continues to improve its internal control systems.

In 2012, the periodic external evaluation of Cedefop will be conducted by the European Commission. Cedefop will follow up its recommendations and also any findings and recommendations of the inter-institutional working group on EU agencies.

Budgetary restrictions in 2012-14 will affect Cedefop's capacity to take on new tasks. Cedefop will do its best to continue to support the European training agenda, however, substantial new tasks, such as the skills panorama may require additional funds in 2013.



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