

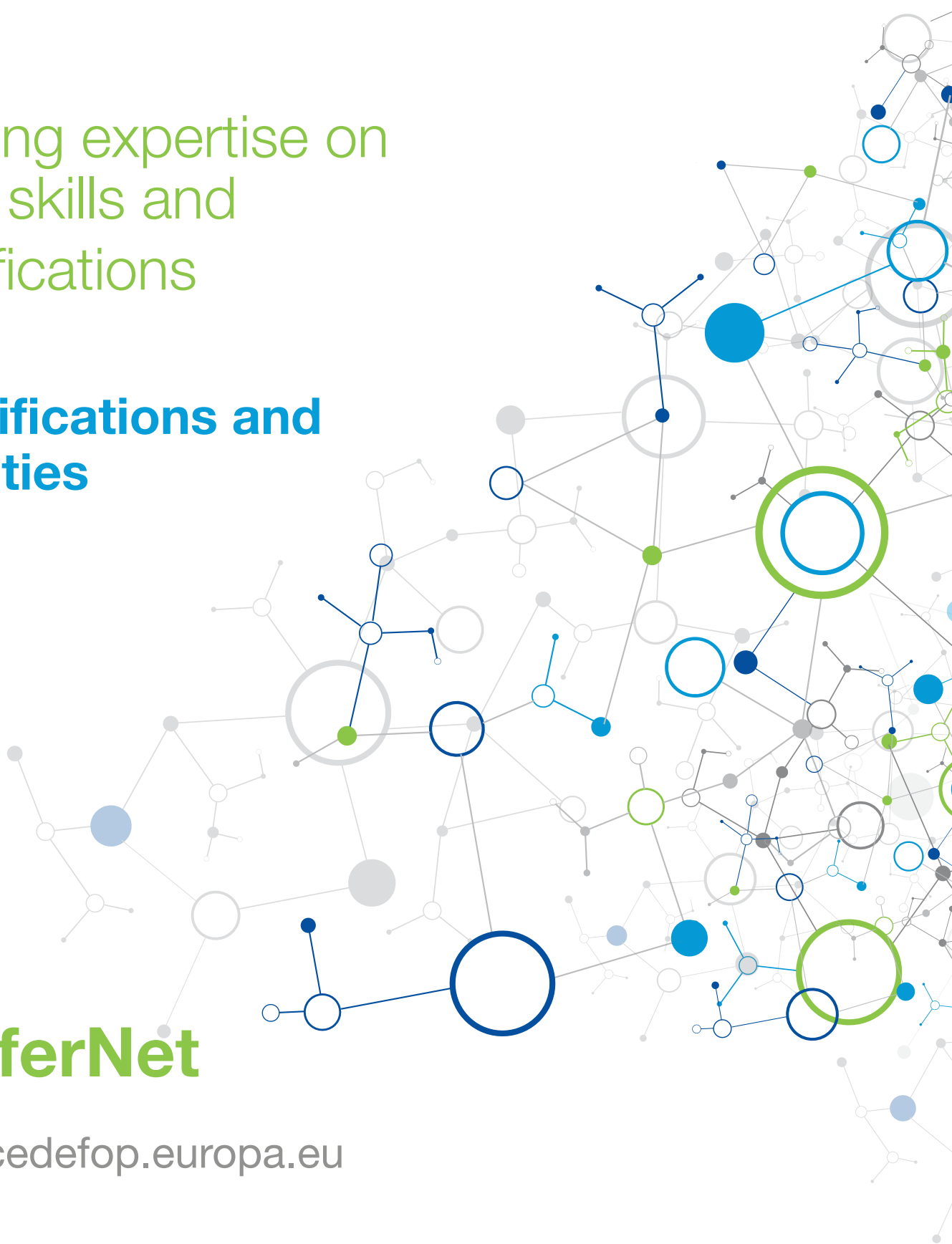
# 2026 ReferNet annual workplan

Sharing expertise on  
VET, skills and  
qualifications

**Specifications and  
activities**

**#ReferNet**

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# **ReferNet 2026 workplan**

Specifications for the 2026 ReferNet workplan

# Foreword

The ReferNet Workplan for 2026 marks another important step in strengthening our community of expertise and reinforcing the value of the network as Cedefop's key instrument for collecting and sharing information on vocational education and training (VET), skills and qualifications across Europe.

This year's workplan reflects not only the priorities of Cedefop, but also the ideas and contributions of the partners themselves. For the first time, we received proposals directly from ReferNet members alongside those of Cedefop experts, a clear indication of the strong engagement, ownership and added value of the network.

The 2026 workplan retains its familiar structure, while also introducing new elements designed to further enhance the network's relevance and impact. These include more detailed workload estimates to support realistic resource planning, the piloting a new work organization through a non-mandatory thematic activity on *Responsible AI in VET* (presented at Annex 1) aiming to invite ReferNet experts interested on the topic to work together in forming a thematic multinational team research team outside of their home country national settings, and several new short thematic studies on topical issues. In addition, we continue to refine the balance between communication, visibility and core research activities, ensuring that resources are directed where they can generate the greatest impact.

The result is a workplan that is ambitious yet realistic, flexible yet structured. It reflects our collective commitment to quality, timeliness and relevance, while leaving space for experimentation and innovation. Above all, it is the shared product of close collaboration between Cedefop and the ReferNet partners, whose dedication and expertise remain the foundation of our shared success.

I would like to thank all partners and colleagues who contributed to shaping this document, and I look forward to working together with all of you in the months ahead to bring the 2026 workplan to life.

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Cedefop

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## CHAPTER 1. Policy Background

The first ever [Council recommendation on vocational education and training \(VET\) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#) (hereafter, the VET Recommendation), along with the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), launched the current policy cycle in 2020, which is renewed with the forthcoming Herning Declaration (September 2025).

The VET Recommendation invites Member States in accordance with national and Union legislation, available resources, national priorities and circumstances, including the socio- economic situation and the characteristics of national VET systems, to implement reform in the following six areas:

- a. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges;
- b. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET;
- c. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand;
- d. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills;
- e. VET promotes equality of opportunities;
- f. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.
- g. As well as achieving by 2026 the following quantitative objectives:
- h. the share of employed graduates from VET is at least 82%;
- i. 60% of recent graduates from VET benefit from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training;
- j. 8% of learners in VET benefit from a learning mobility abroad.

Combined with other strategic documents policies – such as the [European Social Pillar Action Plan](#), the [EU Skills Agenda](#) and the [Pact for Skills](#) – the VET Recommendation and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#) have reinvigorated the Copenhagen Process and encouraged countries to set ambitious [national plans](#) to implement common VET priorities up to 2030.

In 2025, the [Union of Skills](#) was launched putting emphasis on:

- a. building skills for quality jobs and lives through a strong educational foundation, with an inclusive lifelong learning approach;
- b. upskilling and reskilling an agile workforce mastering the digital and clean transition, notably those with lower and middle skills;
- c. circulating skills with the free movement of people across the EU, unlocking the single market's full potential;
- d. and attracting, developing and retaining talent in Europe.

The forthcoming Herning Declaration (expected in September 2025) and the EU VET Strategy, part of the [Union of Skills](#) (expected in 2026), will give a new

impetus for making European VET more attractive, innovative and inclusive while boosting competitiveness. Most current priority areas will remain central to national VET and lifelong learning agendas, while embracing the ambitious goals of the [Union of Skills](#) and other policy initiatives.

Cedefop has been monitoring and analysing the implementation of the European priorities in VET and lifelong learning across EU-27+, with ReferNet policy reporting being the main source of information. The findings 2020-24 reveal tangible progress in implementing national implementation plans, with many measures moving from design to implementation and showing advancement in aligning VET with labour market demands, tailoring individual learning pathways to attract more learners to VET, and expanding lifelong learning opportunities. Maintaining the progress made while aligning with new EU and national priorities and initiatives is essential <sup>(1)</sup>.

In 2025, celebrating its 50 years anniversary, Cedefop launched a [strategic vision, Shaping Learning and Skills for Europe: A Time for Commitment](#) <sup>(2)</sup>, that identifies five pillars of work for the coming years: accessibility, inclusion, quality, innovation, and attractiveness, as levers for systemic change. It advocates for a shift from traditional VET policy to a broader and integrated VET and Skills development (VET-S) approach and calls for the EU to invest in inclusive and future-ready learning systems and meet the demands of an evolving labour market, the twin green and digital transitions, and growing social inequality.

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(1) Cedefop, & ETF. (2025). [Towards EU priorities: 2021-25 progress: insights from monitoring and analysis](#). Publications Office of the European Union. Policy brief.

(2) Cedefop. (2025). [Shaping learning and skills for Europe: a time for commitment](#). Publications Office of the European Union.



## CHAPTER 2. Purpose of the 2026 ReferNet Action

The above policy processes not only require regular monitoring and thematic stock-taking but increasingly also systematic country-specific information and analysis. Such analysis informs the European Commission's work and discussions of Directors General (DGVN) and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT), as well as other Cedefop work.

VET varies considerably among Member States. Analysis and understanding of policy developments and achievements within and across countries requires thorough information on how VET and labour market work. This requires timely and accurate information on VET role, purpose, outcomes, governance and structure. Considered in its specific socio- economic and labour market context and tradition, this information helps understand countries' starting points and the progress they have made as regards VET.

ReferNet is Cedefop's European network for information on VET. Since 2008, Cedefop's cooperation with ReferNet has been taking place through four-year FPAs (Framework Partnership Agreement). Under the new FPA (2024-27) ReferNet will be the main source of information on national VET systems and developments contributing annually to Cedefop monitoring of policy developments in line with the EU priorities in VET. Its role has been strengthened in the integrated approach to policy monitoring and reporting of the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration as agreed by the ACVT Committee in its meeting of 8-9 June 2021, calling for a close cooperation of ReferNet with the Directors General for Vocational Training in the Member States.

Through their national networks of VET stakeholders, ReferNet partners are well-placed to collect first-hand information on VET systems and policy developments, skills and qualifications, to pool knowledge and experience from policy-making, implementation, evaluation and research at the national, regional, local and sectoral levels and report on the implementation of their NIPs. The partners will submit a set of deliverables which feed into several Cedefop projects and online databases.

ReferNet is also expected to help raising the visibility of Cedefop, its products and more generally VET issues at national level. The national ReferNet partners act as multipliers and dissemination channels in the countries, targeting various audiences.

National ReferNet partners' online presence, through national ReferNet websites and a professional presence on social media, can help improving visibility and dissemination of Cedefop's work. ReferNet websites also support exchanges of information with Cedefop and other national ReferNet websites.

In addition, as members of the European network of expertise in VET, ReferNet partners are expected to exchange information and discuss between them topics of common interest in VET, skills and qualifications.

Therefore, in 2024-27, Cedefop will require national ReferNet partners to:

- a. report on VET, skills and qualifications policies and the way VET-related objectives are being addressed in their countries in line with the priorities defined in the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration;
- b. provide up-to-date information on VET and skills systems;
- c. deliver thematic and other support to complement the information on VET, skills and qualifications and/or address topical information needs; and
- d. carry out visibility activities, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet site.

## CHAPTER 3. 2026 Deliverables estimated workload

Table 1. 2026 Deliverables estimated workload

Deliverables/Activities		Average Estimated Person Days	Start	End	Period in days	Deliverable
<b>Deliverable Type 1: Reporting on VET and VET-related policy</b>						
Deliverable 1a	Policy reporting	20	September 2026	20/10/2026	60	Update on VET-REF
Deliverable 1b	National news on VET	6	January 2026	15/12/2026	342	3 news items (1 page each)
<b>Deliverable type 2: Reporting on national VET &amp; Skills systems</b>						
Deliverable 2a	VET in Europe database – updating information about VET systems	5	January 2026	28/02/2026	52	Update on the VET in Europe database
Deliverable 2b	VET in [Presidency country] – Short description ( <i>Ireland and Lithuania only</i> )	10	tbc	tbc	tbc	Short description (60 pages)
Deliverable 2c	Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country] ( <i>Ireland and Lithuania only</i> )	2	tbc	tbc	tbc	Spotlight on VET (4 pages)
<b>Deliverable type 3: Ad hoc thematic and other support</b>						
Deliverable 3a	Data collection for the revamped IVET Mobility Scoreboard	10	April 2026	30/06/2026	90	Update on the IVET Mobility Scoreboard
Deliverable 3b	Financing adult learning/CVET – augmenting and disseminating reports prepared in 2025	7	April 2026	30/06/2026	90	Report of 2-4 pages and translation in local language
Deliverable 3c	Survey on the development and use of digital credentials and digital tools	14	January 2026	30/06/2026	174	Completed questionnaire

Deliverable 3d	Teachers and Trainers in a changing world. Boosting their continuing professional development	3	June 2026	15/10/2026	136	Update of an existing (2022) country report (aprox. 20 pages)
<b>Deliverable type 4: Communication/Visibility actions</b>						
Deliverable 4a	Maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website	n/a	Continuous activity	Continuous activity	n/a	n/a
Deliverable 4b	Communication / visibility actions including social media activities and participation in events	n/a	Continuous activity	Continuous activity	n/a	n/a

All deliverables type 1-3 shall be checked and validated by the National Representative for ReferNet before delivery to Cedefop, unless otherwise stated in the relevant circular of the activity. Peer review among ReferNet partners is strongly encouraged and, when indicated in the work plan, shall be mandatory for certain deliverables.

All deliverables shall be provided in English. They shall be checked by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with the relevant terminology used at EU level before submission.

(a) Rules for citations, bibliographies and lists of references:

- (i) MS Word file
- (ii) Uses in-text citations as well as bibliographies and/or lists of references
- (iii) Uses Cedefop's publications template
- (iv) Follows Cedefop's referencing guide and style manual

(b) References file

- (i) Includes all references mentioned in MS Word file
- (ii) Format: uses preferably EndNote format (.enl). If it is not possible, RIS format (.ris) is accepted.

### 3.1 ReferNet Implementation Reporting

National ReferNet partners will be assessed periodically on the basis of:

- (a) content analysis: concerning relevance and quality of the deliverables, and
- (b) compliance: concerning respect of deadlines.

Both national ReferNet coordinator and representative will receive in July 2026 a mid-term report on the state of implementation of the current work plan.

National ReferNet partners will be requested to report on their visibility actions through an online questionnaire at the end of the action.

The national ReferNet partners will submit to Cedefop a Final implementation report comprising of:

- (a) an Activity report and
- (b) a Financial report supporting the Grant balance payment request for the action.

Cedefop will provide a template for these reports. The submission needs to take place within four (4) months of the end of the operational year.

## 3.2 Deliverable type 1: Reporting on VET and VET-related policy

### 3.2.1 Deliverable 1a: Policy Reporting

#### *Background/Aim*

ReferNet annual reporting on the progress of policy developments remains Cedefop's principal source of information for the integrated monitoring of the implementation of the objectives and actions of the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück and Herning declarations as described in the countries' NIPs <sup>(3)</sup>. In 2026, Cedefop will review and update its monitoring framework in line with the renewed priorities for VET.

In 2024-27, ReferNet will be asked to report on the progress of the ongoing VET policies and initiatives that are already included in the VET REF and provide information on the new policies and initiatives in line with the updated priorities.

This input in its final form will be made available in the [Timeline of VET policies in Europe](#) <sup>(4)</sup> and will inform Cedefop's monitoring and analysis on the achievement of the objectives and actions of the EU priorities in VET. 2020-24 progress analysis has been summarised in the policy brief, [Towards EU priorities in VET. 2021-25 progress: insights from monitoring and analysis](#) <sup>(5)</sup>. Findings will be used to inform discussions of the Directors General for VET (DGVET) and the Advisory Committee for VET (ACVT) at their biannual meetings. Where relevant, they will also be used for other Cedefop work.

#### *Methods*

ReferNet partners will continue to review and provide information through the policy reporting tool (VET REF). Cedefop will provide them with guidelines and ensure necessary support.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Herning Declaration is to be endorsed in September 2026. The update on the NIPs is expected following the EU VET Strategy as part of the Union of Skills.

<sup>(4)</sup> Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). [Timeline of VET policies in Europe \(2024 update\)](#) [Online tool].

<sup>(5)</sup> Cedefop & ETF. (2025). [Towards EU priorities: 2021-25 progress: insights from monitoring and analysis](#). Publications Office of the European Union. Policy brief.

Reporting should draw on a wide range of sources, including NIPs, policy papers, legislation, evaluation reports, research and policy analysis as well as case studies. This also requires broad cooperation with various national stakeholders, mobilising their expertise, and preparing and validating the responses; ReferNet are advised to establish cooperation with/seek feedback from DGVTs of their countries. Cedefop will organise webinars and customised online meetings, including bilateral meetings with the country managers, to get a better understanding of latest national developments in VET and align policy reporting to the countries' national implementation plans.

Information shall be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet before delivery to Cedefop.

Information shall be provided in English. It shall be checked by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with the relevant terminology used at the EU level before submission.

Cedefop will review information in the policy reporting tool (VET REF) and ask ReferNet partners for clarifications and complementary information where necessary.

### *Steps/Deadlines*

The process will be deployed from June 2026 on (guidelines available in June 2026) with a deadline to deliver the requested information by 20 October 2026.

In September and October, Cedefop will organise bilateral meetings with all countries to discuss progress of the measures described in the national implementation plans and identify national policy developments on which countries will need to focus their reporting. Dates of the bilateral meetings will be agreed between the Cedefop country manager and the national ReferNet coordinator.

Cedefop will provide assistance and feedback throughout the process and ask for clarification/complementary information when analysing the input during the period from November 2026 to January 2027.

### 3.2.2 Deliverable 1b: National news on VET

#### *Background/Aim*

ReferNet partners provide National news on VET to inform primarily European, but also international, audiences about recent VET developments in their country. These include topics that are clearly linked to VET, such as labour market trends impacting VET provision, employment policies related to training, guidance and counselling, and validation.

News items should focus on themes aligned with the European policy framework for VET. These should describe developments that relate to the latest European priorities as highlighted in the [Herning Declaration](#), [VET Recommendation](#), [Osnabrück Declaration](#), European Skills Agenda, EU Presidency priorities, country-specific recommendations, and also in the countries' [National Implementation Plans](#). Cedefop provides ReferNet with a list of possible topics through its Circular.

The National news on VET will be mainly disseminated via Cedefop's website and newsletter. They may also be used in other Cedefop work, such as policy briefs, thematic studies, country fiches/chapters, and discussions at DGVET and ACVT meetings or other events. Additionally, they can inspire proposals for country examples to be presented at EU-level events.

#### *Methods*

ReferNet partners submit news items electronically as Word documents, approximately 500 words long, following effective online content and style guidelines. Visual materials (e.g. graphs, logos, photos) are welcome if in editable format and copyright compliant. Cedefop provides content and style guidelines.

News items shall be written in English and reviewed by a native English speaker or a professional language editor familiar EU-level terminology before submission.

ReferNet is responsible for ensuring that information is original, recent, relevant, reliable, and complete. The National Representative for ReferNet must check and validate the information before submission to Cedefop.

Cedefop reserves the right to publish the news items on its website. News items not meeting the basic criteria outlined in the relevant Circular will be rejected and partners will be asked to submit another news item instead.



Cedefop will review submissions and may request clarifications or revisions. If clarification requests are not addressed within a reasonable time frame, the submitted news item will be rejected.

### *Steps/Deadlines*

Updated guidelines are issued by Cedefop every February. ReferNet partners should submit news items as soon as national/regional VET developments take place, with at least three news items per year.

Indicative deadlines: March, June and October 2026.

### 3.3 Deliverable type 2: Reporting on national VET systems

#### 3.3.1 Deliverable 2a: VET in Europe database – updating information about VET systems

##### *Background/Aim*

The VET in Europe database is an online tool presenting all EU VET systems, organised by theme, with VET system charts and detailed information on programme types. It allows users to compare VET systems and download system descriptions – either full or short (spotlights).

##### *Method*

- Cedefop will provide ReferNet partners with the 2023 data (identical to the online data). ReferNet partners will be asked to follow instructions and update the information about their VET system(s) with the cut-off date January 2026.
- After receiving the data (updated text and system charts), Cedefop may contact ReferNet partners to clarify the information provided.
- After the data and charts are finalised, they will be transferred to the database by Cedefop. ReferNet partners will be asked to make the final check of the online data for any inconsistencies or errors.

##### *Steps/Deadlines*

- Cedefop will provide guidelines by end of November 2025.
- ReferNet will submit the updated data to Cedefop by end of February 2026.

Cedefop will provide assistance and feedback throughout the process and may request clarification or additional information while analysing the input between March and May.

### 3.3.2 Deliverable 2b: VET in [Presidency country] – Short description

#### *Background/Aim*

To raise VET visibility in the countries holding the EU Presidency, Cedefop and ReferNet partners cooperate to produce publications on descriptions of national VET systems based on the most recent information about VET systems, including that of the [VET in Europe database](#). The reports will be published in English and in the official language(s) of the Presidency.

As this publication should be available for the Presidency, it is prepared during the preceding semester. In 2026, based on the Council Decision (EU) 2016/1316 of 26 July 2016, the work will focus on:

- (a) VET in Ireland: Short Description, in the first semester 2026
- (b) VET in Lithuania: Short Description, in the second semester 2026

These publications will be distributed together with Spotlights on VET (see Deliverable 2b) during Presidency conferences and events, for instance DGVT meetings.

#### *Methods*

Cedefop and ReferNet partners of the future Presidency country will discuss the structure of the Short description. Cedefop will prepare a first draft in English in line with the agreed structure based on data from the VET in Europe database complemented by other Cedefop, European and international VET literature, to present the information within around 60 pages. ReferNet will complement the draft and provide updated information for the report in consultation with Cedefop. Making the Short Description an informative and attractive publication for international stakeholders will improve the visibility of the country's VET system and inform the Presidency conferences and events.

Cedefop will review, edit and publish the Short description, add other parts (foreword, abstract) as electronic publication on its website. Following the finalization of the document in English, ReferNet partners should also produce a translation of the publication into their official language(s) of the Presidency country. Printing may be done on demand and in line with Cedefop publication policy.

Preparing the Short description entails a close cooperation between the ReferNet partner and Cedefop. This may include joint working sessions at the ReferNet partner's seat at Cedefop or by online bilateral meetings with ReferNet partners and national experts.

### *Steps/Deadlines*

Detailed work plan and submission date to be agreed bilaterally with Cedefop experts. The publication needs to be prepared in the preceding semester and should be ready for the DGVt meeting organised by the Presidency country.

### 3.3.3 Deliverable 2c: Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country]

#### *Background/Aim*

*Spotlight on VET* summarises key features, challenges and developments within the national VET systems. They include a chart which depicts how VET relates to other education and training sectors. The main aim of *Spotlight on VET* is to present a country's VET system in a 'nutshell', i.e. within a few pages and in clear and simple language. It addresses readers who need a brief, easy-to-read introduction to VET in a specific country, and the broader public.

In 2026, work will focus on the *Spotlight on VET* in Ireland and Lithuania. These publications will be distributed together with the Short Descriptions (see Deliverable 2a) during Presidency conferences and events, for instance DGVT meetings.

#### *Methods*

Cedefop will prepare updated information based on the first draft of the *VET in [Presidency country] – Short description*.

*Spotlight on VET* highlights key features, developments, challenges and policy responses of the national VET system, in line with the Cedefop's concept note for drafting Spotlights on VET.

Updated information should be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet.

Cedefop will layout and publish the Presidency Spotlights on VET as electronic publications on its website. Upon request, Cedefop may provide high resolution files/printing guidelines, should ReferNet partners wish to disseminate hard copies of the Spotlight on VET for the Presidency events and for internal to the network dissemination. Following the finalization of the document in English, ReferNet partners should also produce a translation of the publication into their official language(s) of the Presidency country. The ReferNet partner will be responsible for proof-reading the translation of the Spotlight in its final layout and agree with the final text. Printing may be done on demand and in line with Cedefop publication policy.

#### *Steps/Deadlines*

Detailed work plan and submission date should be agreed with the Cedefop expert in charge. The publication needs to be prepared in the preceding semester and should be ready at the beginning of the Presidency.

## 3.4 Deliverable type 3: Ad hoc and other support

### 3.4.1 Deliverable 3a: Data collection for the revamped IVET Mobility Scoreboard

#### *Background/Aim*

Following the adoption of the [Council Recommendation \*Europe on the Move\*](#) (EoM) in 2024, the European Commission and Cedefop have launched a process to revamp the Mobility Scoreboard (MSB) to reflect new policy priorities, broaden the monitoring scope, and align with evolving mobility formats—including blended, inclusive, and inward mobility.

The MSB is being developed to boost learning mobility across Europe, building on recent advancements, especially on initiatives supported by Erasmus+ programme funding. The primary objective is to survey the conditions for learning mobility in ‘thematic areas’ identified in the EoM Recommendation, and to monitor the progress and support for learning mobility in the Member States. Thus, the revamped MSB will continue to serve as useful tool to the policy-makers, identifying possible obstacles to the mobility of VET learners and weaknesses in mobility related policies and practices. In conjunction with other Commission initiatives, the MSB is intended to contribute to the design of new policy initiatives aimed to facilitate learning mobility.

As part of the MSB revision, a focus group of ReferNet partners discussed in 2025 issues related to the revision of the MSB, including the descriptions and definitions of the indicators. At the 2025 ReferNet Plenary meeting, the findings of the focus group were presented and discussed. Based on the agreed indicators, the draft methodology was developed, followed by the preparation of a structured questionnaire to support data collection for each indicator.

#### *The aim of this deliverable is to:*

- Collect country-level feedback from ReferNet partners through the proposed revised MSB indicators.
- Use the collected data to populate the revamped Mobility Scoreboard tool.

#### *Methods*

ReferNet is set to contribute country level data to the MSB in 2026. Initially, members of the focus group will review and provide feedback on the proposed questionnaire and contribute to the fine tuning of the indicators. Once the content is agreed upon, the questionnaire will be pilot tested among the focus group members.

The questionnaire will consist of both thematic and transversal indicators, designed to assess each country's progress in implementing IVET mobility in line with objectives, as outlined in the EoM Recommendation. Each indicator will be broken down into several criteria that describe the optimal state for the respective area.

ReferNet members will be responsible for providing data via the structured questionnaire. National representatives will validate the country-level data. All information must be submitted in English and should be reviewed by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with EU terminology before submission.

Cedefop will upload the validated data into the internal Mobility Scoreboard tool. It will review the inputs and request clarifications or additional information from ReferNet partners where necessary.

The focus of this exercise is primarily to identify sources (documents, research, expertise etc.) relevant to the topics will be proposed. However, initial reflections and observations are also welcomed.

### *Steps/Deadlines*

The data collection process will be deployed in May 2026 (guidelines available in April 2026) with a deadline to deliver the requested information by 30 June 2026.

Cedefop will provide assistance and feedback throughout the process and ask for clarification/complementary information when analysing the input during the period from July to December.

1. April 2026: Launch of the process. The questionnaire and detailed guidelines will be made available to ReferNet members.
2. May 2026: An online information session will be organised to present and discuss the questionnaire. ReferNet members will have the opportunity to ask questions and request clarifications.
3. 30 June 2026: Deadline for ReferNet members to submit completed questionnaires.

### *Estimated resources (person-days)*

10 person days and additional 10 days for focus group participants.

*Expected deliverables:* Completed questionnaire.



### 3.4.2 Deliverable 3b: Financing adult learning/CVET – augmenting and disseminating reports prepared in 2025

#### *Background/Aim*

The general aim of this request for Referent is to augment, prepare for dissemination and promote the reports on financing adult learning/CVET as prepared by ReferNet in 2025. This work will feed into the planning of future activities in the domain of financing adult learning/CVET by Cedefop, including possible cross-country webinar(s) as well as qualitative and quantitative monitoring of adult learning financing in the future.

#### *Objectives*

The specific objectives of the Refernet contribution are:

- 1) Augmentation of national reports on financing adult learning/CVET on national adult learning budget(s)
- 2) Translation of national reports on financing adult learning/CVET into respective national language
- 3) Organisation of national events/webinars to promote national reports and potentially other outcomes of Cedefop work on financing adult learning (optional).

#### *Detailed Description*

Regarding **objective 1**, it is requested to produce short report on financial information on the public budget on adult learning/CVET. In particular, this could include identifying, for reference years 2024, 2025 and 2026 (tbc), concrete activity/budget line(s) in the relevant operational and/or financial reports and/or annual planning documents of the main national authority (-ities), holding primary responsibility for financing adult learning (e.g. ministries of education and/or ministries of labour). The identification of such national authority (-ities), could be informed by data on the governance structure of adult learning systems as provided in the 2025 reports.

Regarding **objective 2**, it is proposed that Cedefop will provide ReferNet partners with automatic translations of the 2025 country reports on financing adult learning. It would then be requested that ReferNet partners reviews the translations and corrects where necessary to ensure accuracy and language flow.

Regarding **objective 3**, it is proposed to co-organise with Cedefop national level events/webinars (suggested to be held in national language) to present the

findings from the data collection and analysis of public financing of adult learning/CVET based on Refernet input as well as potentially other Cedefop research activities in the field of financing adult learning. Cedefop could contribute to such events with a cross-country presentation, identification of international speakers for specific topic(s) in focus as well as support in dissemination activities if applicable.

#### *Timeline*

For objective 1: Q1 2026 (indicative)

For objective 2: Q3 2026 (indicative)

For objective 3: throughout the year

#### *Estimated Resources*

For objective 1: 4 working days (indicative report length 2-4 pages)

For objective 2: 3 working days (depending on the length of the original report)

For objective 3: variable, subject to format and duration of the event.

### 3.4.3 Deliverable 3c: Survey on the development and use of digital tools enhancing the transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

#### *Background and Objectives*

The recent Cedefop project on the transparency and transferability of learning outcomes provided an overview of major European and national initiatives that enhance the transparency of qualifications and systems, as well as the portability of learning across various subsystems and countries, taking into account policy developments from 2000 to 2020 (6F6). These policies can be interpreted as efforts to promote the development of flexible systems that enable individuals to accumulate and transfer learning, thereby facilitating both entry and re-entry into education and training. The study points to the fact that digital technologies can open up the opportunities for easier cross-country as well as cross-system cooperation to improve transparency, comparability, and portability of different types of learning. Digital developments have the potential to streamline and integrate efforts and outcomes related to various policy initiatives such as those related to qualifications frameworks, credit systems, quality assurance, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and the recognition of qualifications.

This strand of Cedefop's work, of which the referent activity is a part, aims to explore how digitalisation is, or can be, leveraged to enhance the transparency and portability of learning outcomes for learning and employment purposes. Digital technologies are reshaping the way qualifications, (micro) credentials and learning achievements are described, verified, shared and used. Initiatives such as the launch of a new Europass portal, the European Digital Credentials, the European Digital Identity Wallet, and the use of the European Learning Model as well as national level projects demonstrate the momentum toward richer, machine-readable information related to credentials and enhanced interoperability, paving the way for more connected systems and seamless portability of skills data. Different tools and portals are being developed for example to connect and use information related to learning. This includes the development of qualification databases often part of broader website and portals which also include information on learning opportunities and occupations, or the development of digital wallets where digital credentials can be stored.

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(<sup>6</sup>) Cedefop. (2024). *Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey: Analysis of developments at European and national level*. Cedefop research paper. Publications Office of the European Union.  
<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/3413866>

The ad hoc ReferNet activity will serve to:

- Explore whether there are ongoing or planned national developments on digital tools and platforms - including in relation to digital credential - that can promote the visibility, transparency and transferability of learning outcomes and what their purposes and uses are.
- Identify challenges, enablers, as well as risks and opportunities when designing and implementing such digital tools and platforms, including aspects related to data interoperability, and the extent to which they connect to European policy developments.
- Capture good practices and emerging trends, including the role of AI.

The activity will serve to gather baseline data on the use and development of digital tools and digital platforms, including digital credentials, which is an area of growing relevance at EU and national level. The findings will inform ongoing policy discussions, including those related to the Skills portability initiative and contribute to the design of a Cedefop project (starting in 2027) on the role of digitalisation to enhance visibility, transparency and portability of credentials and their learning outcomes. They could also help identify innovative practices for possible in-depth exploration.

### *Methodology*

Discussions on the activity will take place with the relevant partners to ensure a common understanding of the activity's objectives and scope. A survey will be designed and shared with the partners for discussion. The survey will include closed-ended questions (including e.g. multiple choice and Likert scale item) to capture information on current developments. In addition, open ended questions will serve to gather qualitative insights on the current state of play, challenges encountered and success factors, future plans and innovative practices.

The survey will remain open for responses for approximately 6 to 8 weeks during the first quarter of 2026. To ensure consistency in responses, a guidance document and a glossary will accompany the survey. Completing the survey, may require liaising with other organisations and experts to gather complementary data and ensure completeness of the information collected.

In the second or third quarter of 2026, a validation workshop will be organized with ReferNet partners. This event will serve to discuss preliminary findings, verify interpretations, and collaboratively identify aspects that may need further investigation.

### *Timeline and Key Milestones*

Table 2. **Timeline and Key Milestones**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Q1-2026</b>	Webinar	Webinar for induction to the activity
<b>Q1-2026</b>	Launch of the activity	Discussion and dissemination of the survey and official launch of the survey (6-8 weeks)
<b>Q2-Q3 2026</b>	Data cleaning & possible follow up	Cedefop reviews survey data and requests clarifications if needed.
<b>Q3-Q4 2026</b>	Validation workshop	Workshop with ReferNet partners to validate findings, discuss interpretations, and identify aspects that may need further investigation.

*Estimated Resources (Person-Days)*

- Preparation and discussion of the draft survey: 1 person-day
- Data collection (including desk research, consultation, etc) over a 6-8 week period to reply the survey: 10-15 person-day
- Participation in any follow-up interviews or requests for clarification: 1 person-day
- Preparation and participation in validation workshop: 2 person day

*Expected Deliverables*

The key deliverable is the completion of a survey, addressing both the closed and open-ended questions, aiming to minimise limited or incomplete completeness. Refernet representatives are expected to participate to webinars discussing the activity and draft survey (first quarter 2026) as well as preliminary findings. Together, the deliverable will form the foundation for a comparative analysis from Cedefop which will feed into a research project on digital credentials and digital tools.

### 3.4.4 Deliverable 3d: Teachers and Trainers in a changing world. Boosting their continuing professional development

#### *Background and objectives*

In 2022 Cedefop published the 29 thematic perspective reports [Teachers and trainers in a changing world](#) (EU Member States plus Iceland and Norway) prepared by ReferNet and aimed at addressing information gaps, and map systematic national approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers in both school and work-based settings.

The country reports provided national definitions of key terms; they offered a clear picture of the teaching professionals working in initial VET, and of how their professional development is organised and supported. They highlighted policy and practice developments from 2015 to 2022, focusing particularly on digital and green skills, as well as on skills promoting inclusion in initial VET. Conclusions pointed to the persisting challenges VET teachers and trainers face in performing their complex role and explore how policy priorities are shaped in each country to address these. Based on these reports Cedefop also published a synthesis paper that was widely disseminated and appreciated. This was the first time at Cedefop, based on ReferNet national inputs such as detailed synthesis report was published giving great visibility to their inputs. We wish in 2026 to update these reports with information concerning 2022 to 2026.

#### *Methodology*

ReferNet will receive the 2022 reports and update them according to instructions.

#### *Timeline and key milestones*

These reports will be an important background information to contextualise the findings of the [European Vocational Teacher Survey - EVTS](#) expected at the end of 2026. We will use the country reports to understand, contextualise and enrich all EVTS findings so as together with Cedefop, we may draw and suggest valid and relevant conclusions and recommendations for each country.

#### *Estimated resources (person-days)*

2-3 days provided it is about updating existing reports. *Expected deliverables:* 29 country reports.

### 3.1 Deliverable type 4: Communication/Visibility Actions

#### 3.1.1 Deliverable 4a: Maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website

##### *Background/Aim*

Cedefop intends to increase the visibility of Cedefop/ReferNet outputs by making potential users aware of the quality, reliability and relevance of the information and analysis they provide.

The visibility strategy, currently based on recommendations developed in 2012 by the ReferNet working group on visibility and agreed by Cedefop and ReferNet partners, also includes recommendations for ReferNet national websites following the ReferNet workshop on visibility (February 2017). As a follow-up to the recommendations of the 2017 ex-post evaluation of the ReferNet FPA 2012-2015, a Discussion Forum has been established on the new ReferNet platform for all ReferNet partners, contributing to increase the exchange of information among members and the visibility of national best practices.

##### *Methods*

A **national ReferNet website** in the national language plus English, if the national ReferNet partner wishes to do so, will be regularly maintained and updated to raise visibility of VET and Cedefop's activities in the member states. The national ReferNet website can be autonomously hosted on its own domain or a dedicated section in the ReferNet national partner's website. It is considered an essential tool allowing for a broad national audience to become aware of and use Cedefop publications through the creation of links to Cedefop webportal.

In 2017, Cedefop has provided technical SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) audit reports with recommendations for national websites on search visibility, domain authority, keyword rank, desktop and mobile page speed, mobile usability and external links to optimise their visibility online. Partners are expected to implement the recommendations gradually. Reporting of the web statistics will allow Cedefop and the partners to evaluate the impact of the various efforts.

National ReferNet websites can be accessed from the network's page here: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/networks/refernet/3314.aspx>

### 3.1.2 Deliverable 4b: Communication / visibility actions including social media activities and participation in events

#### *Background/Aim*

Partners will act as multipliers and dissemination channels for VET-related information and the cooperation between Cedefop and ReferNet at the national level, targeting various audiences.

Cedefop intends to increase the visibility of Cedefop/ReferNet outputs by making potential users aware of the quality, reliability and relevance of the information and analysis they provide.

#### *Methods*

The visibility strategy is currently based on recommendations developed in 2012 by the ReferNet working group on visibility and agreed by Cedefop and ReferNet partners. National ReferNet partners should be ready to develop an annual national strategy on visibility and dissemination activities in line with Cedefop's communication strategy and annual objectives, and include in their annual work plans other deliverables, such as translations of Cedefop products into national language, organisation of meetings with VET stakeholders on Cedefop activities, cooperation with other European or global networks, etc, all with the aim to raise the visibility of Cedefop, its products and more generally VET issues at the national level. Translations into national languages are strongly encouraged as an efficient dissemination and visibility tool. The communication experts of every ReferNet team should play an important role on drafting the national strategy but also on its implementation during the course of the year.

It is also recommended to use the full potential of other types of online presence, for example professional participation in **social media** (eg facebook, LinkedIn, instagram, X, etc), tagging Cedefop events, blogging online, discussions in VET forums, to reach a wider audience. National ReferNet social media accounts are encouraged to follow/like Cedefop's social media accounts, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and retweet/share/view Cedefop's posts to enhance visibility, including by translating them in the national language. ReferNet partners should use hashtag [#ReferNet](#) to connect with users and engage conversations with partners. Cross-promotion of all partners' activities will also be encouraged.

To reach a wider audience at the national level, ReferNet partners are encouraged to translate and disseminate Cedefop publications in their national



language(s). Cedefop may also ask partners to carry out the language adaptation of a specific Cedefop publication or audiovisual content.

To increase mutual benefits to all national partners and Cedefop, ReferNet members are encouraged to use the Discussion Forum on the ReferNet platform for general discussions, surveys, requests for information, etc. making in this way national best practices and debates more visible to all.

Visibility actions will also include the dissemination and/or production of papers, flyers, newsletters, web banners, videos, etc. and the organisation of – and participation in – public events involving relevant stakeholders.

### *Steps/Deadlines*

Continuous activity. Cedefop will annually review the national websites and report on their status and progress. A survey on all visibility actions carried out at the national level, including details on the audience targeted, the channels used, possibly the outcomes of the action, will be filled in by the ReferNet partner at the end of the 2026 action.

## 4.1 2026 ReferNet Partnership Fora

### 4.1.1 The ReferNet 2026 Partnership Forum in Bonn, Germany

The [Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training - \(Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung\), \(BIBB\)](#) of Germany, home of the [ReferNet Germany team](#) will welcome ReferNet partners to the 2026 partnership forum in the city of Bonn to be organised jointly with Cedefop. The actual date is yet to be confirmed.

### 4.1.2 The ReferNet 2026 Partnership Forum in Budapest, Hungary

The [Innovative Training Support Centre \(IKK\)](#), home of the [ReferNet Hungary team](#) will welcome ReferNet partners to the 2026 partnership forum to be organised jointly with Cedefop in Budapest, Hungary. The actual date is yet to be confirmed.

## 4.2 The 2026 ReferNet Annual Plenary Meeting

### 4.2.1 24th ReferNet 2026 Annual Plenary meeting, Thessaloniki, Greece

The 24<sup>th</sup> ReferNet annual plenary meeting will welcome the partners under the 2024-27 framework partnership agreement, as well as national representatives of the network and representatives from the European Commission (EU). The event will take place in autumn 2026 as a two-days event. The actual date and venue of the event are yet to be confirmed.

## 4.3 2026 ReferNet Webinars

### 4.3.1 Operational webinars

A series of webinars will be held throughout the year, featuring presentations on various activities, dedicated Q&A sessions. An indicative list of the operational webinars and/or workshops is given in the table below. The dates of the events are expected to be confirmed in the beginning of the year.

Table 3. **2026 operational webinars**

No.	Webinar
1	Webinar: Policy Reporting
2	Webinar: National news on VET
3	Webinar: VET in [Presidency country] – Short description
4	Webinar: Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country]
5	Webinar: Teachers and Trainers in a changing world. Boosting their continuing professional development
6	Webinar: Data collection for the revamped IVET Mobility Scoreboard
7	Webinar: Financing adult learning/CVET – augmenting and disseminating reports prepared in 2025.
8	Webinar: Survey on the development and use of digital credentials and digital tools
9	Webinar: Financial and activity reporting
10	Webinar: Presentation of the 2027 ReferNet workplan

### 4.3.2 Knowledge sharing seminars

In addition to the above operational webinars, a number of knowledge sharing seminars are expected to take place as part of our knowledge sharing seminar series that aim to present state-of-the art development and offer training opportunities to our network's members with the aim to further develop the function of our network as a platform for knowledge exchange and learning.

## Annex 1 - Non-Mandatory Refernet Proposed Activity: Responsible AI in VET: Ethical Use, Bias and Inclusion in Vocational Education and Training

### *Background and objectives*

As artificial intelligence (AI) tools become increasingly integrated into education and the labour market, vocational education and training (VET) systems face growing pressure to both adopt and critically assess these technologies. While AI has the potential to improve teaching, guidance, and administrative efficiency, it also raises important concerns related to fairness, transparency, and digital exclusion - particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds or with low digital skills.

This activity explores how AI is currently used or piloted in VET systems across Europe and investigates the ethical, pedagogical, and social implications of AI deployment. It aims to identify practices, gaps, and guidelines that promote the responsible and inclusive use of AI in VET and higher VET (HNET).

### *Key questions include*

- In what ways is AI used in VET (e.g. adaptive learning, career guidance, student assessment)?
- What risks of bias or exclusion are present, and how are they mitigated?
- How are VET teachers, trainers and institutions prepared to use AI responsibly?
- Are there national or institutional guidelines for ethical use of AI in education?
- How can AI use in VET promote, rather than hinder, inclusion?

### *Methodology*

- Desk research on AI policy frameworks and use in VET systems
- Identification of real-life use cases in VET (e.g. learning platforms, predictive tools)
- Analysis of ethical implications and safeguards (e.g. human oversight, algorithm transparency)
- Synthesis of lessons learned and development of guiding principles

### *Timeline and key milestones*

- May 2026: Publication of circular and kick-off

- Late May 2026: Webinar with ReferNet partners to present scope and methodology
- June –September 2026: Desk research and stakeholder interviews
- Early October 2026: Submission of draft deliverables
- Late October 2026: Finalisation and delivery of report.

Estimated resources: 15 person-days

*Expected deliverables*

- Final report: “Responsible AI in VET: Ethics, Bias and Inclusion”
- Overview of use cases and identified risks/possibilities

*Contact persons*

Margareth Haukås, ReferNet Norway  
Konstantinos Pouliakas, Cedefop

## Annex 2 - Budget available for the implementation of the ReferNet 2026 work plan

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2026 in all eligible countries is approximately EUR 940 000.

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2026 is distributed as follows:

Table 4. **2026 ReferNet budget allocation per country group**

Country groups	Maximum grant amount
<b>Country group 1:</b> Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, and Iceland	<b>EUR 23.615</b>
<b>Country group 2:</b> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and Norway	<b>EUR 33.625</b>
<b>Country group 3:</b> France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain	<b>EUR 43.620</b>

## Annex 3 - 2026 workplan deadlines

Start date of the annual work plan: January 2026

End date of the annual work plan: December 2026

Duration of the annual work plan: 12 months

Table 5. **2026 ReferNet workplan proposed deadlines**

Activity	Deadline/Frequency
<b>1. Reporting on VET and VET-related policy</b>	
1a. Policy reporting	20/10/2026
1b. National news on VET	March, June, and October 2026, or more frequently on own initiative
<b>2. Reporting on VET systems</b>	
VET in Europe database – updating information about VET systems	28/02/2026
VET in [Presidency country] – Short description	To be agreed with Cedefop experts (Ireland and Lithuania)
Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country]	To be agreed with Cedefop experts (Ireland and Lithuania)
<b>3. Ad hoc thematic and other support</b>	
Data collection for the revamped IVET Mobility Scoreboard	31/07/2026
Financing adult learning/CVET – augmenting and disseminating reports prepared in 2025	30/06/2026
Survey on the development and use of digital credentials and digital tools	30/06/2026
Teachers and Trainers in a changing world. Boosting their continuing professional development	15/10/2026
<b>4. Communication &amp; visibility actions</b>	
4a. Maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website	Continuous activity
4b. Communication & visibility actions including social media activities and participation in events	Continuous activity







## ReferNet 2026 Workplan

- ◎ The 2026 ReferNet Workplan sets out the priorities and activities agreed between Cedefop and its ReferNet partners to support the Agency's mandate in the fields of vocational education and training (VET), skills and qualifications.
- ◎ This year's plan combines continuity with innovation. While retaining the established structure of ReferNet activities, it introduces detailed workload estimates to facilitate planning and resource allocation, a pilot thematic activity on Responsible artificial intelligence in VET, and a number of short thematic studies addressing current policy priorities.
- ◎ For the first time, proposals submitted directly by ReferNet partners have been incorporated, reflecting the network's growing ownership and active engagement.
- ◎ Cedefop looks forward to working closely with its ReferNet partners to ensure the successful implementation of this workplan, thereby strengthening the network's contribution to European cooperation on VET and lifelong learning.

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