

# 2025 ReferNet Partnership Forum

Empowering VET  
through  
collaboration and  
change

**Background  
document**

**#ReferNet**

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## **ReferNet Partnership Forum, Prague, Czechia, 24-25 April 2025**

### **Background document**

#### **Purpose of the meeting**

The [National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic \(NPI CR\)](#), home of the [ReferNet Czechia](#) team welcomes ReferNet colleagues and partners to the 2025 partnership forum organised jointly with Cedefop.

In this forum, ReferNet members will have the opportunity to discuss issues related to vocational education and training (VET), skills and qualifications, improve their knowledge by sharing information on recent developments in national policies and systems while at the same time hear and learn about the VET system of Czechia. The first of this year's partnership forum will take place on 24 and 25 April in Prague, Czechia.

The purpose of this background document is to assist in contextualizing the thematic sessions and raise a number of questions that could lead the discussions to take place. Participants are invited to actively contribute to all the Thematic sessions:

- ReferNet Thematic session A – Reflecting on the “Union of Skills”
- ReferNet Thematic session B – VET Mobility as a tool to increase the attractiveness and excellence of VET.
- ReferNet Thematic session C – Communicating VET
- ReferNet Thematic session D – Update of IVET curricula, experience sharing

We would like to warmly thank the [National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic \(NPI CR\)](#) and the national [ReferNet Czechia team](#) for hosting the event.

Take part in the discussions [#ReferNet](#)



## **ReferNet Thematic session A – Reflecting on the “Union of Skills”**

### **Introduction and Rationale**

The European Commission’s Communication on the Union of Skills sets out the key objectives and actions to equip Europe’s people with the skills and competences needed for competitiveness, resilience, and social cohesion. It calls for systemic reforms, investment in human capital, and a new model of cooperation to address long-standing gaps in skills supply, transformation speed, and governance.

For Member States, this represents both a challenge and an opportunity: to align national strategies with the Union’s objectives, to reinforce efforts on lifelong learning, to support companies and individuals in up- and reskilling, and to enhance transparency and mobility of qualifications.

As ReferNet members, you are uniquely positioned to support this transformation. Cedefop and ReferNet together can amplify country-level insights and support implementation on the ground.

### **Key Objectives of the Session**

This session is a space to exchange perspectives, identify gaps and opportunities, and help shape how Member States—through ReferNet—can respond to and support the vision of the Union of Skills. Your reflections will contribute to building a stronger European skills architecture, rooted in national realities and driven by our shared ambition at ReferNet.

### **Guiding Questions for Discussion**

#### **1. National Relevance & Alignment**

- How does the Union of Skills resonate with your national priorities for VET and skills development?
- What concrete actions are being taken (or planned) in your country to align with the Union of Skills objectives—especially in areas like VET reform, adult learning, STEM and digital skills?
- What elements of the Communication present the greatest opportunity in your context?

#### **2. The Role of ReferNet & Cedefop**

- How can ReferNet support capacity building at national level and contribute to the Union of Skills priorities?
- What support and guidance can Cedefop provide to ReferNet partners?



## **ReferNet Thematic session B – VET Mobility as a tool to increase the attractiveness and excellence of VET.**

### **Context and Rationale**

Mobility has become a cornerstone of modern Vocational Education and Training (VET), not only as a means of enhancing skills acquisition, but also as a powerful driver of attractiveness and excellence. The Union of skills supports among others also boosting mobility to be more inclusive and accessible for all, with a particular focus on learners with fewer opportunities – including in VET. A bigger outreach will bring a greater scope for skills development and thereby will more decisively contribute to building a resilient, competitive, and cohesive Europe.

By enabling learners, teachers, and trainers to experience different learning environments, cultures, and professional contexts, mobility strengthens both personal development and employability. It supports the internationalisation of VET systems, fosters mutual learning among institutions, and raises the overall quality of training provision. Moreover, mobility initiatives contribute to the image of VET as a forward-looking, dynamic, and opportunity-rich path—particularly important in addressing skills shortages and attracting young people. As we look to the future, understanding the conditions that make mobility meaningful and impactful becomes essential. As we strive for excellence and inclusion in VET, mobility must remain not just an opportunity for a few, but a structured and accessible part of all learning journeys.

### **Key Objectives of the Session**

- Reflect on how mobility enhances both the image and the quality of VET.
- Explore ways to broaden access to mobility for all learners and staff.
- Share national experiences, challenges, and good practices.
- Identify strategic actions for the future of mobility in VET.

### **Points for Discussion**

#### **1. Inclusiveness and Access**

- How can mobility be made more accessible to learners from all backgrounds and sectors?
- What support measures (financial, pedagogical, logistical) are effective in increasing participation?

#### **2. Impact on Attractiveness and Excellence**

- In what ways does mobility influence the public perception of VET and its attractiveness?



- How does it contribute to developing excellence among learners, teachers, and institutions?
- How can mobility be better linked to quality assurance and the recognition of learning outcomes?
- What are the benefits both for the sending institution and learners?
- What are the obstacles that schools are facing when designing and implementing their mobility projects



## **ReferNet Thematic session C – Communicating VET**

### **Context & Rationale**

This session is focused on exploring the possibility for the development of a horizontal ReferNet communication strategy covering both internal and also external communication. Our work aims to strengthen the visibility and outreach of the ReferNet network and its partners by enhancing and coordinating communication efforts. Drawing on key insights from the draft ReferNet communication strategy and the reflections shared during the 22nd Annual Plenary Meeting, the session will foster an open discussion on how to more effectively promote the work of the network at the European and national levels.

We will explore how communication actions under Deliverable 4: Communication/Visibility, which has so far lacked a circular, can be aligned and intensified. Partners will be encouraged to share ideas on adopting a common approach towards shared visibility objectives, while at the same time, maintaining the flexibility to tailor these outreach efforts to their local contexts.

Topics of discussion will include among others improving national ReferNet websites and making better use of social media,

The session will be interactive with space for brainstorming and peer exchange. The feedback will shape the final version of the communication plan, ensuring consistency across the network and establishing a basis for regular monitoring, evaluation, and improvement.



## **ReferNet Thematic session D – Update of IVET curricula, experience sharing**

### **Context & Rationale**

In an era marked by rapid technological change, evolving labour market needs, and societal transformation, the continuous update of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) curricula is not just a necessity—it is a strategic imperative. Ensuring that VET programmes remain relevant, future-oriented, and aligned with both national priorities and European goals requires dynamic collaboration between policy-makers, social partners, education providers, and learners.

In the Czech Republic, changes in the curriculum of basic education are currently underway, followed by updates in VET curricula and a reduction in the number of fields of education (from current 281 to 188) to make the system more transparent for learners and also more permeable. Some programmes are transformed or merged into programmes with the common vocational basis (e.g. cook and waiter). This also enables young people to postpone decision about specialisation to a later age.

Some fields of education are inactive, some qualifications are not requested by the labour market anymore and learners are not interested to enter these fields). The aim is to create content that better meets the needs of the labour market and the 21st century and is also attractive to applicants. Recently, several European countries have also updated their curricula, e.g. Poland, Croatia and several Baltic countries.

### **Key Objectives of the Session**

- Reflect on national experiences in updating IVET curricula.
- Share good practices and lessons learned.
- Identify common challenges and potential solutions.
- Promote peer learning across the ReferNet community.

### **Points for Discussion**

#### **1. Curriculum Responsiveness**

- What mechanisms or tools are in place to keep curricula aligned with emerging skills needs?
- How often are updates carried out, and who initiates them?

#### **2. Stakeholder Cooperation**

- How are employers, sectoral bodies, teachers/trainers, and learners involved in the process?



- Are there institutionalised platforms or partnerships to facilitate this dialogue?

### **3. Content Innovation**

- How are digital and green skills embedded in IVET curricula?
- What is the role of transversal skills (communication, problem-solving, etc.)?

### **4. Implementation & Governance**

- What challenges exist in putting updated curricula into practice across providers?
- Are there quality assurance mechanisms that monitor curriculum relevance and effectiveness?

### **5. Transferable Practices**

- Which innovative approaches have had a measurable impact?
- Are there examples of curriculum reforms that could be adapted by other countries?