



## CONCEPT NOTE

### Empowering individuals for better mobility

#### Transparency and recognition of VET qualifications

15th CEDEFOP BRUSSELS SEMINAR

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#### **Transparency, transferability and comparability of qualifications: past achievements and way ahead**

Learning takes place in all areas of life. Focusing on and increasing the transparency of what individuals know, understand, and are able to do is a key step to achieving transferability and recognition of learning in various settings and contexts. These, in turn, support individuals' mobility for both learning and employment purposes.

Individuals should be able to combine and accumulate learning experience across institutions, sectors, even countries, and to (re-)enter education, training and learning throughout their life, depending on their needs and circumstances. This is possible if education and training systems follow a learner-centred approach, focusing on the individual, and supporting flexible learning pathways.

**European and national initiatives aim to remove a set of barriers** limiting the ability of individuals to pursue mobility. These barriers include: (a) learning outcomes acquired outside formal education and training institutions, which are less visible and only trusted to a limited extent; (b) complexity and diversity of education, training and learning systems; (c) lack of trust or weak interconnections between education and training systems and subsystems, limiting the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes across institutional, sectoral or national borders.

**The past two decades saw the introduction of numerous European and national initiatives and instruments aimed at increasing the flexibility** of European education, training and learning systems, in support of lifelong and life-wide learning. Policies promoting a shift towards more open and flexible systems seem to be anchored in the following principles:

- (a) using learning outcomes for designing education and training and for valuing learning taking place outside formal learning contexts;
- (b) increasing the transparency of qualifications and systems. This is at the core of a range of initiatives, including European and national qualifications frameworks and Europass;
- (c) allowing for and ensuring transferability of learning outcomes. Transferability is also addressed through various initiatives promoting cross-border recognition of qualifications for employment and academic purposes.

**In 2022 Cedefop initiated a 3-year study aiming to analyse European and national policy initiatives promoting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes.** The primary objective was to gain

insights into the extent to which these initiatives have promoted institutional and system changes that helped support lifelong and life-wide learning for individual citizens.

The study takes a comprehensive perspective (cross-institutional, cross-sectoral and cross-national), and looks at developments over the past two decades (2000-2020). Going beyond the analysis of individual initiatives, it aims to provide an overarching and comprehensive picture of policy initiatives at European and national levels, and the way these are interconnected. This combination of a comprehensive and long-term view should offer a better basis for identifying successful and less successful approaches. Using the individual as a reference point makes it possible to identify whether a shift has taken place from a provider and system perspective to an individual and user perspective.

During the seminar, Cedefop will present the results of the initial phase of its study. The focus was on mapping European policy initiatives supporting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes, and gaining insights into their synergies and contributions. The second part of the study – currently in progress – following a mapping of policy initiatives in eight countries, delves deeper into understanding their impact on individual citizens. More specifically, it examines whether barriers for individuals entering, re-entering and accumulating learning across institutions, sectors and countries between 2000 and 2020 have been removed, reduced or if they still persist. Leveraging the insights gathered, the project aims to identify key and future trends in order to develop a set of policy scenarios envisioning alternative paths to 2040.

**The seminar will also address transparency of systems and qualifications, and areas requiring further attention to support the comparison and recognition of qualifications, while leveraging past achievements.** Although focusing solely on learning outcomes may not be enough to understand and compare qualifications fully, focusing on input factors alone (such as the institution issuing the qualification or duration of learning) can limit recognition of learning, constraining both learning and employment mobility.

Cedefop has undertaken projects and studies to explore the comparability of qualifications and the use of learning outcomes in comparing qualifications, revealing their similarities and differences. However, comparability – and consequently transfer and recognition of learning – remains a challenge. Main issues that will be discussed include key achievements and challenges in making vocational qualifications more transparent, comparable and recognisable across sectors and countries, and the additional steps required to improve individual mobility.