



European VET for the 21st century: the balancing of excellence and inclusion

Anastasia Pouliou

Expert in qualifications and credentials

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Decline or Expansion?

Where is European VET heading?

The negative story

VET is declining and losing out to general and academic education

Digitalization and job polarization renders VET skills less relevant

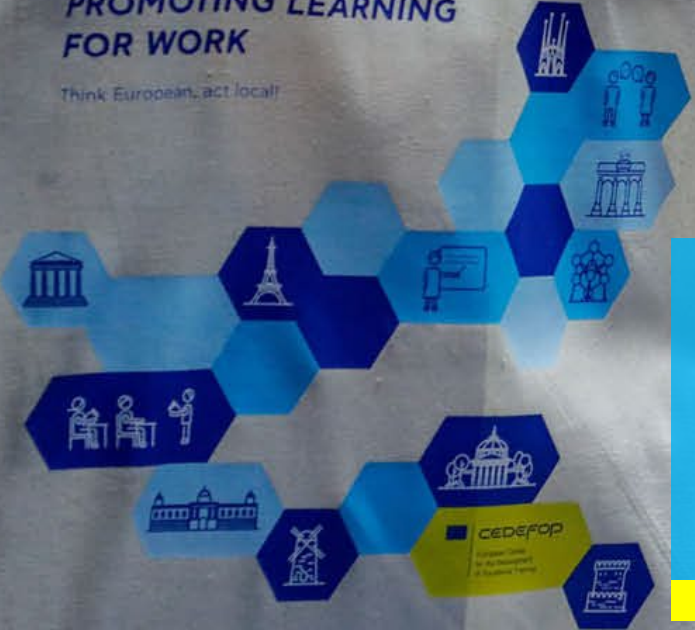
The positive story

VET is expanding to higher levels and forms the backbone of lifelong learning

The skills provided by VET are Essential for growth and welfare

PROMOTING LEARNING
FOR WORK

Think European, act local!



The Changing Nature and Role of VET (2016 - 2019) The Future of VET in Europe (2020 - 2022) Balancing of Excellence and Inclusion (2023-2026)

EU-27 + IS, NO, UK

Conceptual background: The balancing of excellence and inclusion

Context of the study

- **In EU:** need for specialised VET skills at the **highest possible levels of performance** – focus on **excellence**
- VET is viewed as a tool to include and **integrate learners at risk of exclusion** from the labour market and society – focus on **inclusion**



Can excellence and inclusion be two sides of the same coin?

- Excellence and inclusion have been a key part of the European policy context for VET and **different layers** to address them can be discerned:
- Focus on national level priorities;
- Focus on national VET objectives;
- Focus on policy documents, national curricula.

3 Main thematic areas

Map how national VET systems have addressed the objectives of excellence and inclusion.

Explore the conceptual foundation of these objectives and how they inform practical policies and reforms

Examine the expansion of VET at higher levels and how this influences the objectives of excellence and inclusion

The findings of the study will support policy makers and stakeholders in strengthening the overall relevance and quality of European vocational education and training in 21st century.

Research questions (WA1)

1. How have the objectives on excellence and inclusion been addressed in **national policy documents** over the last 25 years?
2. To what extent have priorities and objectives linked to excellence and inclusion **triggered and influenced reforms and practical policies**?
 - 2.1. Have they influenced **learning outcome expectations** (in standards and curricula)?
 - 2.2. Have they affected **resource allocation and distribution**?
 - 2.3. Have they influenced **individual learning opportunities**?
 - 2.4. Have they influenced **sectoral policies**?
3. To what extent do policies on excellence and inclusion **contradict** or **complement** each other?

Research questions (WA2)

1. How are the concepts of excellence and inclusion **understood at national level?**

2. Which **instruments** are used to promote excellence and inclusion at national level:

2.1 **Institutional initiatives** and reform;

2.2 **Pedagogical and content** (curricular) reform;

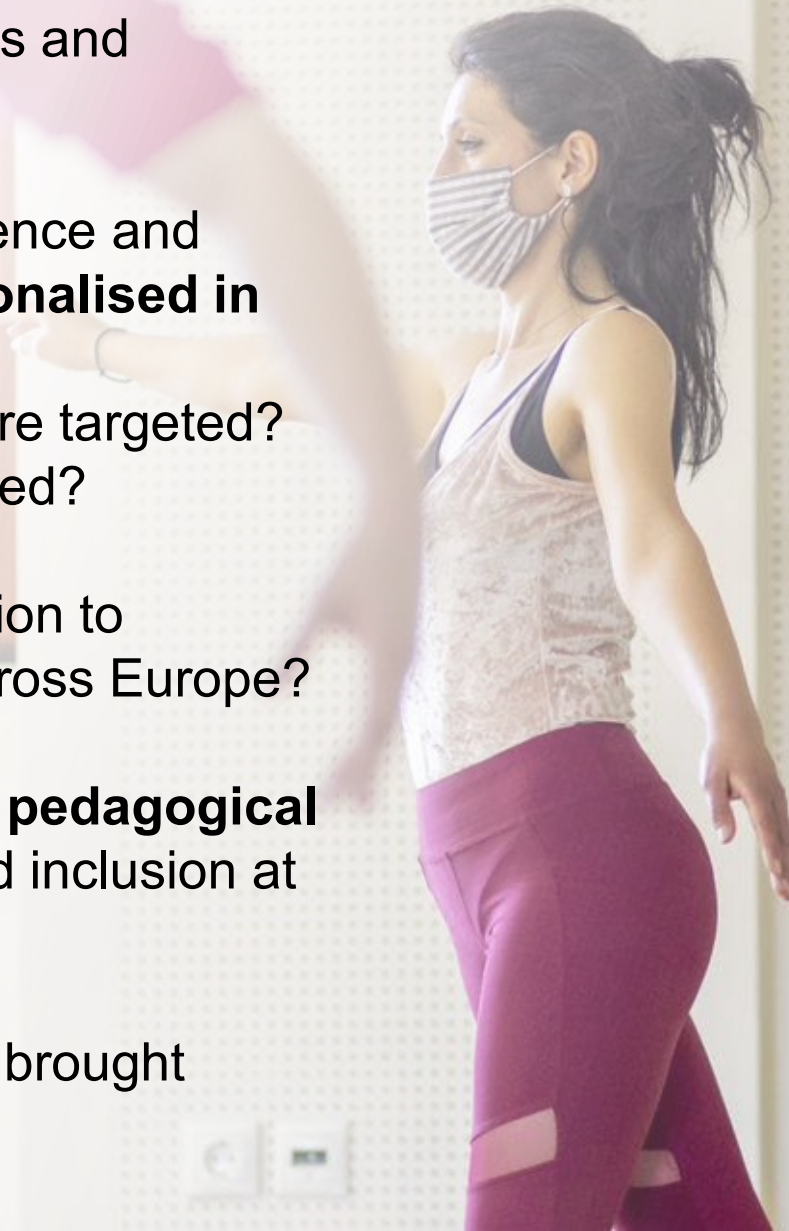
2.3 **Stakeholder involvement** and coordination (inside and outside the VET system).

3. How do the **conceptualisation** and comprehension of these concepts **vary across Europe?**

4. Which **future scenarios** for the **promotion** and **balancing** of excellence and inclusion could be developed?

Research questions (WA3)

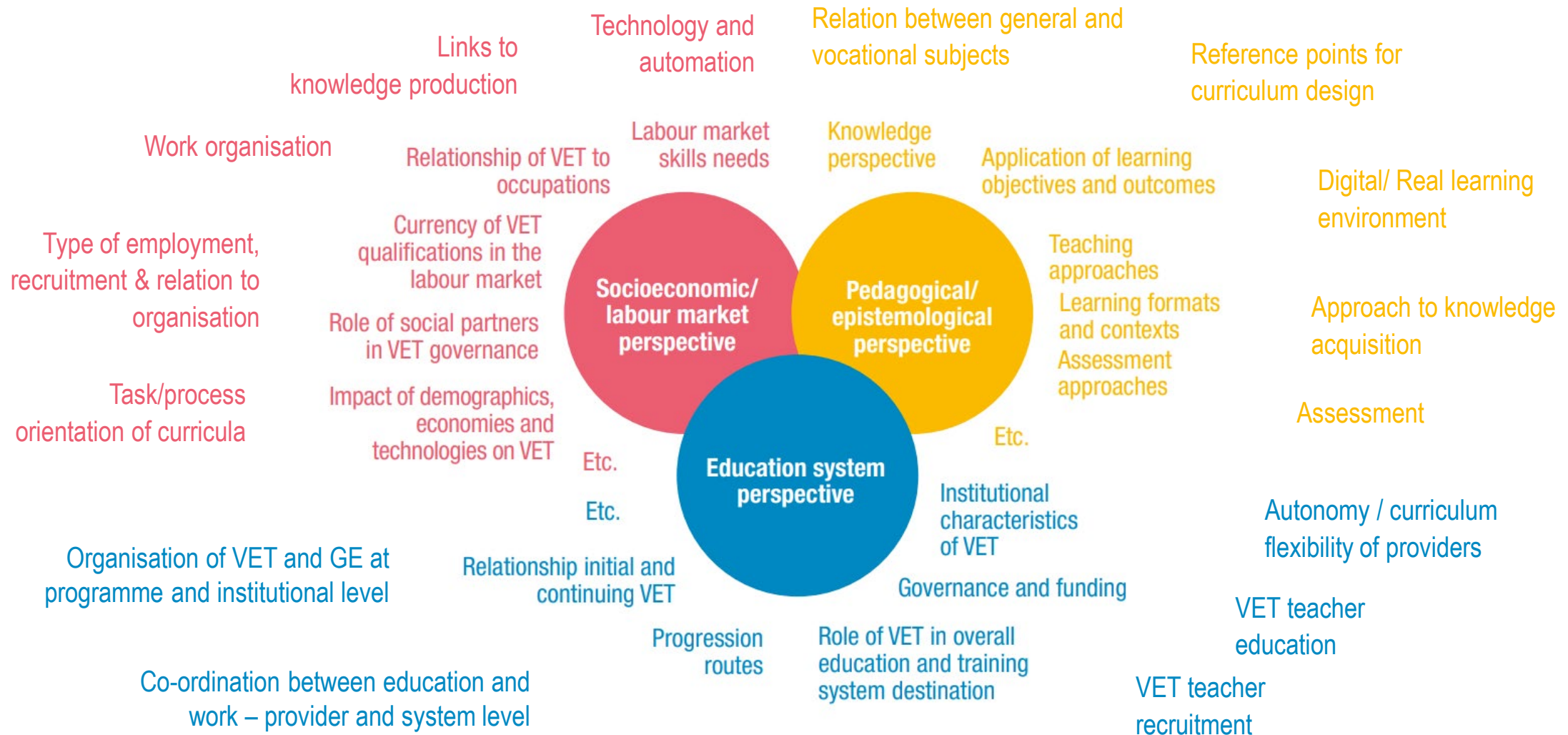
1. To what extent are **HVET institutions and systems** addressing the objectives and priorities of E and I?
2. How are the concepts of excellence and inclusion understood and **operationalised in HVET**?
 - 2.1. Which types of learners are targeted?
 - 2.2. Which pedagogies are used?
3. How do HVET systems, in relation to excellence and inclusion **differ** across Europe?
4. What are **the institutional and pedagogical factors** influencing excellence and inclusion at higher levels?
5. What type of **stakeholders** are brought together?



A summative, but **holistic** approach to excellence and inclusion

- ❖ Excellence found at all levels of education and training - 'inclusion' at a **specific educational level**, the provision is open, accessible and valuable for all potential learners.
- ❖ 'Excellence': finding the **unique quality within a specific education and training provision** - 'inclusion' means that **all potential learners can benefit from this unique quality** in the same way.
- ❖ 'Excellence' refers to the **positioning of an education and training sector in the whole skills formation system** - 'inclusion' refers to the specific sector of education and training so that **all learners can find their way through the systems and that pathways** are open to all.

The three-perspective analytical model - overlapping lenses



Concept exploration and inclusion in national VET objectives

The analytical framework of Cedefop's research:

- ❖ **Socioeconomic and labour market perspective;**
- ❖ **Epistemological perspective** learning and development of individuals including their learning environment;
- ❖ **Education system perspective** focuses on system and VET provider characteristics.

Focussing on the the role of VET in society

VET operates in and serves a **wider context of work and society**

- ✓ The relationship to **occupations**
- ✓ How does VET **supply** meet labour market **demand**?
- ✓ The role of **social partners**
- ✓ The **status** of VET and the **currency** of VET qualifications
- ✓ The impact of **demographics and technology**
- ✓ The impact of **society shocks** – the fall of the Berlin wall, the 2008 Economic Crisis, Refugees, Covid.....



Socioeconomic
and
labour market
perspective

Focussing on content, teaching and learning

VET is rooted in a **distinct mode of knowledge production and use** and is associated with a particular way of teaching and learning

- ✓ Emphasize **practical knowledge** (know how – skills)
- ✓ Often **implicit** and **situational** knowledge
- ✓ Vocational knowledge is acquired through **participation and socialization**
- ✓ Do not exclude **combinations with other forms of knowledge** (theoretical, academic)
- ✓ Learning takes place through **practical** experience
- ✓ Implies **active** and **problem-oriented** learning



**Epistemological
and pedagogical
perspective**

Focussing on the delivery of VET – the institutions and systems

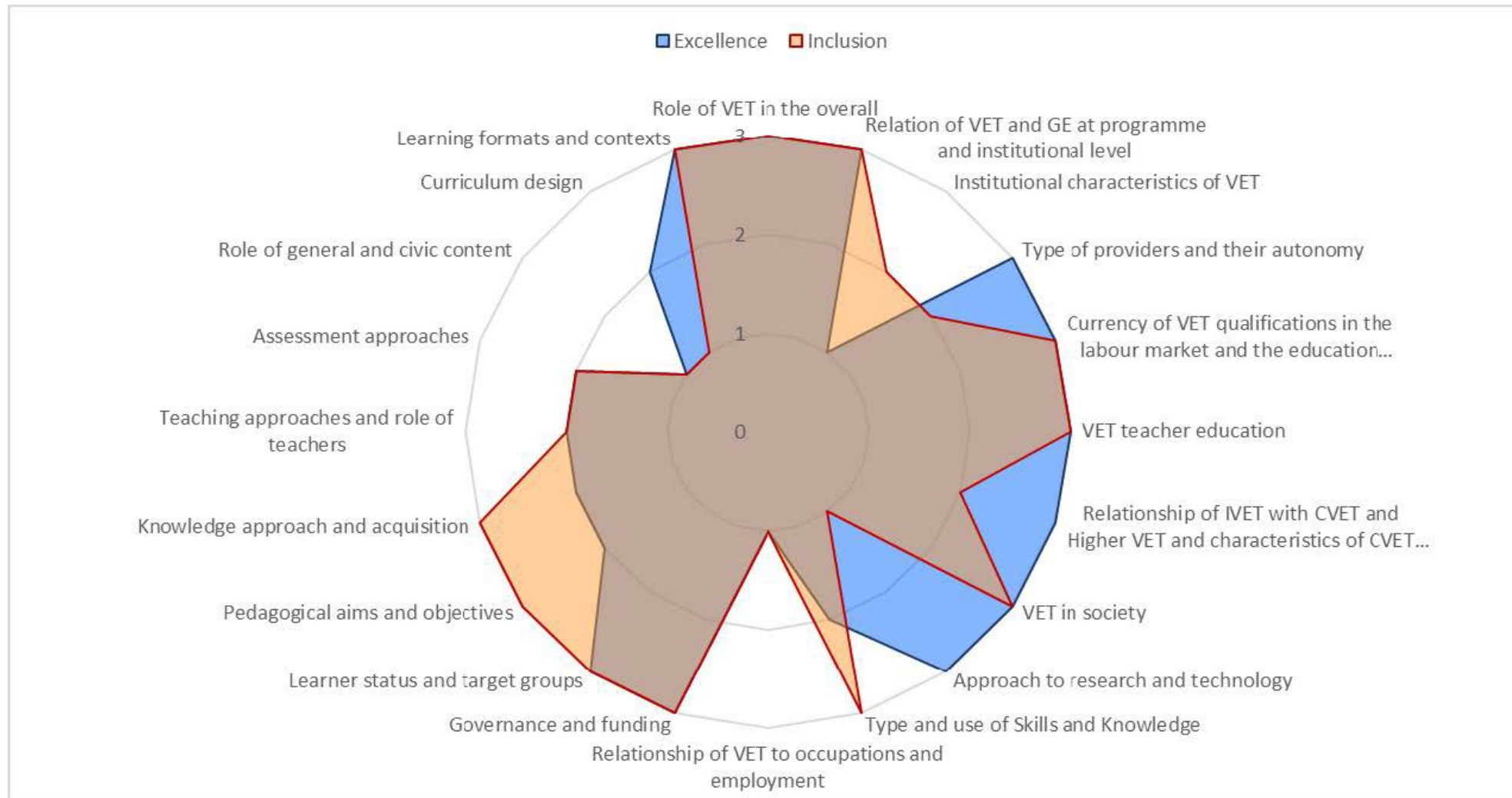
VET is delivered in **institutions and systems which have evolved over time** reflecting political choice but also embedded in traditions

- ✓ **Institutional** characteristics and design – school or work-place
- ✓ **Governance** - centralized or decentralized
- ✓ **Funding** – public and/or private
- ✓ **Links to overall education and training system** – distinct or pluralistic
- ✓ **Permeability of systems** – dead ends or open pathways
- ✓ Interaction between **initial and continuing training** – of youngsters or **lifelong learning at all ages**



Education
system
perspective

Excellence and inclusion covered by the dimensions of the three-perspective model



Source: Cedefop

Expanding VET at higher levels

- ❖ Focus on the **characteristics** of higher VET (HVET)
- ❖ and how (as well as whether and in which form) they underpin **excellence**
- ❖ but also how (as well as whether and in which forms) it deals with **inclusion** and addresses **broader groups of learners and students**



How to unlock the potential of VET as key enabler for inclusion?



VET in Europe 1995-2035

A vision of VET spanning 40 years, looking into the past and the future



Volume 1: Definitions and conceptions of VET

Volume 2: VET developments 1995-2015

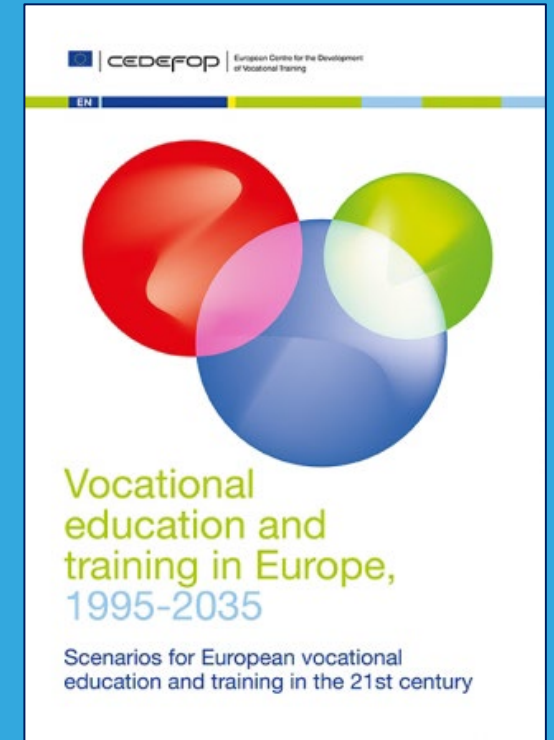
Volume 3: External factors influencing VET

Volume 4: Enrolment patterns in IVET

Volume 5: Education and labour market outcomes of VET

Volume 6: VET at higher education levels

Volume 7: VET from a lifelong learning perspective



Vocational education and training in Europe, 1995-2035: scenarios for European vocational education and training in the 21st century.
Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop reference series; No 114. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/794471>

The future of VET in Europe

Publications



<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/future-vet/publications>



Thank you

For further information:

anastasia.pouliou@cedefop.europa.eu

Project page

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/future-vet>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/themes/future-trends-vet>

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