



TOWARDS NEW ROUTES

Cedefop's 40th anniversary in 2015 celebrated its past; 2016 will be a year of transition following changes in European vocational education and training policy

The Roman god Janus – after whom January is named – had two faces; one looking at the past, the other to the future. After a successful celebration of its 40th anniversary in 2015, for Cedefop 2016 will be a year of transition as it adjusts to a new European vocational education and training (VET) policy framework and prepares for other changes.

In June 2015, Cedefop celebrated its anniversary with a conference and exhibition in Thessaloniki, its home for the past 20 years, on the theme of 'Old routes for new routes'. The event aimed to inspire future work to modernise VET by highlighting the considerable achievements of European cooperation in VET to date. A second event, in November 2015, in Brussels, was organised jointly with Eurofound (also celebrating its 40th anniversary) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). It was a reminder of the

central role of the social partners and the EESC in creating both agencies. It also underlined the importance of the social dialogue in creating working and learning environments that can develop skills, increase productivity and stimulate innovation.

In June 2015, in Riga, the European Commission, European Union (EU) Member States and social partners agreed a new European VET policy framework ⁽¹⁾ for 2015-20. The new policy priorities are to promote work-based learning, improve VET quality, increase access to VET and qualifications, strengthen key competences and develop more and better professional development opportunities for VET teachers and trainers.

(1) http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf

FIGURE 1. COMMON EUROPEAN TOOLS AND PRINCIPLES



Proposed developments for 2016 include the European Commission's 'skills agenda' and, perhaps, a 'single integrated service' for information on qualifications and skills. It also remains to be seen how the influx of refugees and asylum seekers into the EU will affect VET. More than 80% of arrivals are younger than 35: ready access to education and training or the labour market is essential to their integration.

These developments require Cedefop to adapt its work and 2016 will mark the end of Cedefop's current medium-term priorities (Box). New priorities will be agreed as part of a four-year programming document for 2017-20. Under its common approach for regulatory agencies, the European Commission is expected to propose a revision of Cedefop's Founding Regulation in 2016. This will update Cedefop's mission, which dates from 1975, to reflect more closely its role linking VET and the labour market.

BOX ABOUT CEDEFOP

Cedefop is the European Union's agency that helps design vocational education and training (VET) policies to promote excellence and social inclusion. Cedefop also helps strengthen European cooperation in VET. For 2012-16 Cedefop has three priorities:

- supporting modernisation of VET systems;
- careers and transitions, including issues such as continuing VET, adult and work-based learning;
- analysing skills and competence needs.

All Cedefop activities support the European VET policy agenda and include tasks that the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, Member States and social partners have specifically asked the agency to carry out. For example, reporting on VET policy developments in Member States, helping devise and implement European tools that support mobility, such as Europass, the European qualifications framework, and European skill supply and demand forecasts. Cedefop's information, gathered through research, policy analysis and networking, is disseminated through its website, publications, social media and events.

Founded on 10 February 1975 and originally based in the then West Berlin, Cedefop moved to Thessaloniki in 1995. Cedefop's analyses of VET systems and policies are highly valued. Cedefop is internationally recognised as a leading centre of expertise on qualifications frameworks and skill forecasting. To ensure that work is complementary and not duplicated, Cedefop works closely with other European, national and international organisations.

Preparations for change also affect how Cedefop operates. Its anniversary year chronicled Cedefop's development from an organisation that described, informed and disseminated VET information to one that analyses, advises and shares VET policies and ideas.

A new organisational structure introduced in 2015 is enabling Cedefop to combine its research, analyses and policy advice functions to strengthen its role as knowledge broker. In 2016, Cedefop will produce more country-based evidence to support policy learning and implementation in Member States. In some areas, such as the European tools and the European alliance for apprenticeships, Cedefop already supports Member States directly.

Policies for modernising VET systems

Since 2004 Cedefop has reported on Member States' progress in implementing European VET policy priorities that they agreed with the European Commission and social partners under the Copenhagen process. In 2015, Cedefop published its **monitoring report *Stronger VET for better lives***, which analysed progress in implementing the priorities in the 2010 Bruges communiqué. Using information from ReferNet – Cedefop's European information network on VET – the report helped shape debate on the new VET policy priorities agreed at Riga in 2015. Cedefop will continue to monitor and analyse national VET policy developments. It will also publish information on VET and labour market developments in the 2016 EU Presidency countries, the Netherlands and Slovakia.

Proposed under *Youth on the move* ⁽²⁾, the **mobility scoreboard** helps Member States identify where to invest effort to ensure mobility for learning is successful. Following a feasibility study in 2015, Cedefop will present the first mobility scoreboard for initial VET in 2016. It will cover four key themes (information, administration, recognition and funding). During 2016-17, six more themes will be added, including motivation, preparation and quality.

European VET is undergoing fundamental change. In 2015, Cedefop launched a study to understand the forces behind, and the nature of, these changes. In 2016, the first findings on how VET should be defined and the external factors (for example demography) influencing its development will be widely discussed and disseminated. Following the initial findings of the 2015 study and conference, in 2016, Cedefop will continue to provide insights about how globalisation is changing VET qualifications. It will also continue to support work on international sectoral qualifications.

For more than a decade Cedefop has worked with the European Commission, Member States and social partners to develop **common European tools and principles** (Figure 1). Together European tools improve

⁽²⁾ *Youth on the move – Promoting the learning mobility of young people*. Council recommendation, 2011.

understanding of qualifications and make it easier for people to move between different types of learning (such as general and vocational education) and across borders. Having helped devise these European tools and principles, Cedefop is now supporting national implementation.

The major influence of the **European qualifications framework** (EQF) and its associated national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) on national education and training policies was discussed in Cedefop's 2015 publication *Analysis and overview of national qualifications framework developments in European countries*. Increasingly, countries see NQFs as a tool to reform not only qualifications, but also education and training more widely. In 2016, Cedefop will continue to analyse NQF developments and provide online country updates.

The 2012 Council recommendation sets a deadline of 2018 for countries to put in place arrangements for **validating informal and non-formal learning**. Cedefop will organise a major conference in 2016 to discuss what remains to be done to meet the deadline, and the links between validation and the European and national qualifications frameworks. Several Cedefop studies on various aspects of validation will be published in 2016, along with country updates and a synthesis report, to support the debate. The conference will specifically address how validation, guidance and other VET-related policies can support the **labour market integration of migrants** and refugees in Europe.

Numbers of people using **Europass** continue to rise. More than 126 million people have visited the website (<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>), since its launch in 2005, 24 million in 2015. Since 2005, 65 million CVs have been generated online, 18 million in 2015. In 2016, Cedefop will upgrade the website to improve services. If the European Commission decides to revise the 2004 Europass decision and 2008 EQF recommendation, Cedefop will support the process.

In 2015, Cedefop and the European Commission produced a handbook on **quality assurance** for national VET providers. It was followed by the 'Learning providers and the quality of learning delivery' seminar in December, which examined the needs and priorities of learning providers in delivering flexibility and quality.

Success of European tools and principles depends on consistent use of **learning outcomes** (what someone who learns can do at the end of any learning process, formal or non-formal) rather than learning inputs (duration and place of study). Cedefop's policy learning forum on writing and applying learning outcomes in 2015 was another example of increasing support for national stakeholders implementing European tools in Member States; another forum on learning outcomes will take place in 2016. Cedefop will also publish in 2016 its

study on use of learning outcomes in education and training in 33 countries.

Focusing on citizens: careers and transitions

High youth unemployment has revived interest in apprenticeships: Cedefop supports the **European alliance for apprenticeships** in several ways. In December 2015, the conference 'Engaging small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in apprenticeship' presented examples of SMEs that have taken the lead in setting up apprenticeship programmes. It also encouraged creation of bilateral and multilateral partnerships to persuade SMEs to provide more apprenticeships. Cedefop also finalised reviews of apprenticeship in Lithuania and Malta, and is now reviewing them in Greece, Italy and Slovenia. In 2016, Cedefop will map apprenticeships in Member States; it will also publish its study on governance and financing of apprenticeships and organise a second policy learning forum on work-based learning and apprenticeships in the EU.

In 2016, Cedefop will also publish its study on the economic and social costs of **low-skilled adults**. To provide insights into awareness, attractiveness and effectiveness of VET, the findings from Cedefop's new **opinion survey on VET** will be available in 2016. A Cedefop policy learning forum in 2016 will share evidence on effective policies and practices for the continuing professional development of **VET teachers and trainers**, including work-based learning and apprenticeships.

Analysing skills and competences

Cedefop's work on skills supports the new skills and jobs agenda of the Europe 2020 strategy. **Skill mismatch** is high policy priority. In 2015, Cedefop published the results of its European skills and jobs survey in *Skills, qualifications and jobs in the EU: the making of a perfect match?* This highlighted the need to extend work-based learning, the importance of continuing VET to keep up with changing job tasks, and how job quality is essential to develop skills. Policy implications of the findings were discussed at a high-level conference in December 2015. The debate will continue throughout 2016.

In December 2015, with the European Commission, Cedefop launched the revised **EU Skills Panorama** (EUSP) a dynamic, interactive web platform giving access to data on trends in skills and jobs across Europe. Work will continue in 2016 to adapt the site for use by guidance professionals as well as policy-makers. The European Commission, with Cedefop's support, is examining the possibility of a 'single integrated service', to link the EUSP and other

information sources such as EURES (which supports European job search) and Europass.

Working with other international organisations Cedefop has built a reputation as a centre of expertise on the interaction between skills, VET, and the labour market. In 2015, Cedefop updated its pan-European **skill supply and demand forecasts** and produced forecasts for each Member State, which showed that European averages mask major differences between countries. In 2016, Cedefop will produce a new forecast for 2030 and, with the European Commission and the OECD, develop skill policy scenarios.

Throughout 2016, Cedefop will support capacity building in Member States to **anticipate and match skills**. Evidence shows that skill mismatch can persist where information about emerging skill needs is lacking, or where links are weak between VET and local/regional economic development. Consequently, in 2016, Cedefop will publish its work on EU countries' skill governance systems. Cedefop will also publish online a skills index summarising how countries are performing in developing and using skills. A policy learning forum will share experiences on how to align VET provision and labour market needs. To identify critical jobs and skills for the EU economy and respond to concerns about **skill shortages**, in 2016, Cedefop will publish its study identifying shortages that pose risks to the economy.

An effective European agency

Cedefop's information and communication are integral to its activities and closely aligned with the European VET policy agenda. Cedefop's magazine *Skillset and match*, published three times a year will continue to showcase its work and European VET developments for a wide audience.

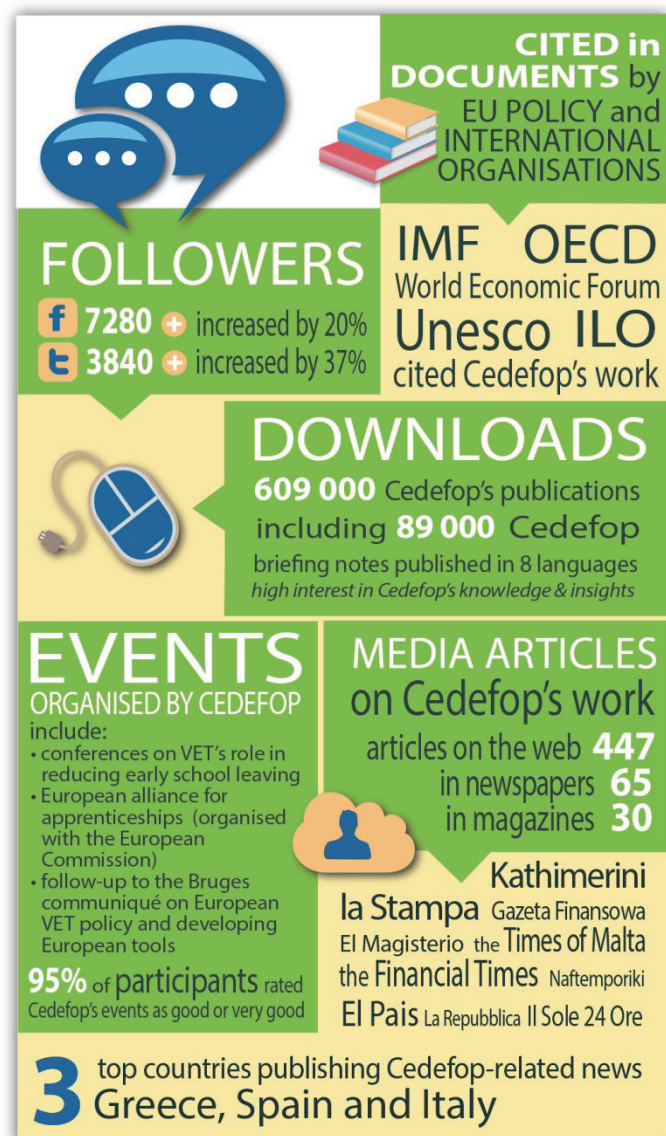
Cedefop monitors carefully its resources and uses activity-based budgeting. Its performance indicators show that stakeholders value its work and demand for its expertise is rising (Figure 2). In 2015, Cedefop's budget execution was, again, above 99%. Audits confirm that Cedefop's procedures are regular and its internal control systems work well.

Despite budget restrictions since 2009, due to demand, tasks have grown, especially policy reporting, support for European tools and the analyses of national as well as European skill forecasts. Cedefop has also been asked to take on new tasks, such as the EU Skills Panorama, the European validation inventory and the VET mobility scoreboard, as well as to support implementation in Member States.

With more than 40 years of experience, Cedefop is continuing to help policy-makers, including social partners, at European and, increasingly, national

level, to adapt VET systems to new demands and support citizens for whom VET offers the first route to employment.

FIGURE 2. USING CEDEFOP'S EXPERTISE IN 2015



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