



Thessaloniki, 21/07/2014
RES/PRO/CALU/RB(2014)1876

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Ref. GP/RPA/ReferNet-FPA/004/14

Cedefop's European Network for Vocational Education and
Training (VET)

ReferNet

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1.	Cedefop: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training ...	5
1.2.	ReferNet: Cedefop's European network for VET	6
2.	OBJECTIVES AND NATURE OF THE CALL.....	7
3.	SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES	8
3.1.	Reporting on national VET systems and policy developments	8
3.2.	Raising the visibility of VET and online dissemination	14
3.3.	Working arrangements.....	15
4.	FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT.....	16
4.1.	Eligibility criteria.....	16
4.2.	Exclusion criteria	17
4.3.	Selection criteria	17
4.4.	Award criteria	19
5.	SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENT FOR REFERNET WORK PLAN 2014	20
6.	FINANCIAL CONDITIONS.....	21
6.1.	General terms and conditions	21
6.2.	Specific terms and conditions for the 2014 work plan	21
6.3.	Payment procedures.....	22
6.4.	Ex-post control, audit and evaluation	22
6.5.	Double financing	23
6.6.	Eligible costs.....	23
7.	SUB-CONTRACTING.....	26
8.	PUBLICITY.....	26
9.	DATA PROTECTION	27
10.	PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS.....	27
10.1.	Publication	27

10.2. Application forms27

10.3. Submission of the application.....28

11. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE.....29

12. APPLICABLE REGULATION.....29

13. CONTACT30

DEFINITIONS

‘Applicant’: eligible organisation or grouping of co-beneficiaries which submits a proposal within the framework of this open call.

‘Co-beneficiary’: eligible organisation who works alongside the ReferNet national partner to implement the co-funded action, either in the form of a consortium or as sub-contractor.

‘Partnership’: arrangement for long term cooperation established with applicants to whom Cedefop has awarded a “framework partnership agreement”.

Partnerships are implemented by two legal instruments: framework partnership agreements and specific grant agreements:

- firstly, the **‘framework partnership agreement’** sets out the conditions governing grants to partners for carrying out jointly agreed work plans. This does not constitute an obligation for Cedefop to award annual grants; and
- secondly, the **‘specific grant agreement’**, based upon the framework partnership agreement, governs the implementation of the annual work plan.

‘ReferNet annual work plan’: set of activities that are defined annually within the scope of the framework partnership agreement. It describes the activities to be accomplished and outlines how they will be carried out. The work plan is prepared by Cedefop and agreed after consultation of the network.

‘ReferNet national partner’: one organisation in each country which signs a framework partnership agreement with Cedefop. On an annual basis, each ReferNet national partner may be the beneficiary of a grant by Cedefop to carry out activities indicated in a specific grant agreement.

‘ReferNet national representative’: individual nominated by the national government and approved by Cedefop to support ReferNet work at national level by:

- (a) cooperating with the ReferNet national partner;
- (b) validating, on behalf of the national government, reports prepared by the ReferNet national partner;
- (c) attending ReferNet meetings.

‘ReferNet national team coordinator’: individual designated by the ReferNet national partner to coordinate the team implementing the annual work plans. He/She supervises the performance of the agreements.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Cedefop: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Founded in 1975⁽¹⁾ and based in Greece since 1995, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is an agency of the European Union (EU). Acknowledged as an authoritative source of information and expertise on VET, skills and competences, its mission is to support European vocational education and training (VET) policy development and contribute to its implementation.

For 2012-15, Cedefop's strategic objective is to 'contribute to the design and implementation of policies for an attractive VET, facilitating excellence and social inclusion, and to strengthen European cooperation in developing, implementing and analysing European VET policy'. This strategic objective is supported by three priorities, namely:

- (a) supporting the modernisation of VET systems;
- (b) careers and transitions – continuing VET, adult and work-based learning; and
- (c) analysing skills and competence needs to inform VET provision.

These priorities are aligned to Europe's strategy for 2020 and its policy framework (see 3.1).

Cedefop supports the European Commission, EU Member States (and associated countries Iceland and Norway) and social partners in developing and implementing European VET policy by:

- (a) monitoring developments at European, national, sectorial or regional level and reporting on VET policies, reforms and systems;
- (b) carrying out applied research, comparative and statistical analyses, as well as producing scenarios and forecasting future trends;
- (c) offering policy-makers, social partners, researchers and practitioners a unique platform for exchanging experiences and promoting mutual learning; and
- (d) disseminating objective, reliable, timely and relevant information to policy-makers and raising awareness on VET and lifelong learning (LLL) issues.

(¹) Council Regulation of 10 February 1975 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) EEC No 337/75, *Official Journal of the European Union* L39, 13.2.1975, as last amended by Council Regulation EC No 2051/2004.

Cedefop carries out its role through the tasks set out in its founding regulation. It disseminates information through its website, publications, networks, study visits, conferences and seminars.

More information about Cedefop can be found on its website: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>

1.2. ReferNet: Cedefop's European network for VET

Refernet is Cedefop's European network for VET. It was set up in 2002 to meet the growing demand for comparative information about VET systems, developments and policies. Its mission is to support Cedefop by reporting on national VET systems and policy developments and raising the visibility of VET and Cedefop's products. It comprises members (one organisation in each country), known as ReferNet national partners, from the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. ReferNet national partners are key organisations involved in VET in the countries they represent.

Currently ReferNet supports Cedefop in monitoring, assessing and reporting on countries' progress, in implementing joint priorities for VET agreed under the 'Copenhagen process' ⁽²⁾, which aims at strengthening European cooperation in VET and VET's contribution to reaching the goals of Europe's strategy for 2020 ⁽³⁾.

ReferNet supports Cedefop by

- (a) reporting on national VET systems and policy developments; and
- (b) raising the visibility of VET and online dissemination.

ReferNet is a platform to exchange information, best practice, ideas and promote understanding of the different VET challenges in the partner countries. Working together provides a stronger evidence base and a stronger voice for VET issues in Europe. Closer cooperation across the EU will also raise the visibility of VET and the work of ReferNet national partners. All ReferNet national partners will benefit from systematic and privileged access to information, publications and data.

ReferNet national partners are supported by 'ReferNet national representatives' nominated by their governments (see Definitions above). On behalf of the national government ReferNet national representative validates reports by the grant beneficiary, whenever such validation is deemed necessary. In particular, reports on national VET systems and policy developments need to be validated to ensure that the information provided is in accordance with national policies and strategies ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽²⁾ To access all 'Copenhagen Process' related documents see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm.

⁽³⁾ European Commission (2011), *Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm [cited 24.6.2013] and *Europe 2020: a new European strategy for jobs and growth: European Council Presidency Conclusions 25-26 March 2010*, Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st00/st00007.en10.pdf> [cited 24.6.2013].

⁽⁴⁾ In Annex IV, the (draft) ReferNet Charter presents in more details the roles and responsibilities of various actors in ReferNet.

Cedefop recommends ReferNet national partners to set up a national consortium of key VET institutions, social partners and VET researchers and mobilise expertise of consortium members to carry out activities. The consortium may also contribute to disseminating widely information on VET and Cedefop's products.

Further information on ReferNet can be found at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/networks/refernet/index.aspx>

2. OBJECTIVES AND NATURE OF THE CALL

Two open grant procedures for the conclusion of four-year Framework Partnership Agreements and Specific agreements for ReferNet actions 2012 and 2013 have been concluded in 2011 for 27 countries. An open grant procedure for the conclusion of a Framework Partnership Agreement (43 months) has been concluded early 2012 for Spain. An open grant procedure for the conclusion of a Framework Partnership Agreement (3 years) has been concluded mid-2012 for Ireland. An open grant procedure for the signature of a FPA (two years) has been concluded end 2013 for Croatia and Denmark.

With the objective of completing the current European network for VET – ReferNet –, this call aims at:

- selecting one applicant from **Greece** – following termination of the previous agreement on 19 April 2014 – and one applicant from **Romania** – following termination of the previous agreement on 31 December 2013 – with which Cedefop will conclude a twelve-month framework partnership agreement ⁽⁵⁾; and
- concluding, with the successful applicants, specific grant agreements for a work plan to be carried out in 2015 (1st July – 31 December 2015).

Framework partnership agreements are implemented through specific grant agreements. The framework partnership agreement defines the legal and financial framework and the scope of activities (see Section 3). Specific grant agreements define the partner's annual work plan. The grant varies according to the country population and is awarded for carrying out an annual work plan. The applicant must demonstrate its capacity to carry out all the activities foreseen over the twelve-month period and ensure adequate co-financing for the implementation of the annual work plan.

Applicants are therefore required to submit:

- (a) a proposal for a twelve-month framework partnership agreement for the year 2015; and
- (b) a grant application for work to be carried out under a specific agreement for 2015 (1st January – 31 December 2015).

⁽⁵⁾ The successful applicant could be a single organisation or a grouping of co-beneficiaries.

3. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

Applicants must demonstrate that they can perform the activities below.

3.1. Reporting on national VET systems and policy developments

3.1.1. Policy background

‘Europe 2020’⁽⁶⁾ considers investment in education and training a prerequisite for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. VET has a role to play in achieving (nearly) all of the headline targets, in particular the benchmarks to reduce early school-leaving to less than 10 % and to increase the share of 30-34 year-olds with a higher education degree or equivalent to 40 %.

The *Education and Training 2020 framework* (ET 2020)⁽⁷⁾ supports Europe 2020.

Based on the overall objectives of ET 2020, the Bruges communiqué and the related Council conclusions⁽⁸⁾ combine a long-term view on European cooperation in VET until 2020 with short-term deliverables (national measures and actions and support at EU-level) for the period 2011-14. Firm evidence, thorough analysis and policy learning opportunities support European cooperation in VET.

To ensure consistent implementation of Europe 2020 in the different policy areas, the Council of the European Union endorsed an economic governance process, the ‘European semester’⁽⁹⁾, which helps identify the main challenges and provide strategic advice on policies. This advice goes beyond economy, finance and employment to include specific recommendations on education and training for young people and adults⁽¹⁰⁾. In 2013, the European Council reiterated the need to raise the performance of education and training

⁽⁶⁾ European Commission (2011), *Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* [website], Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm [cited 2.4.2011] and *Europe 2020: a new European strategy for jobs and growth: European Council Presidency Conclusion 25-26 March 2010*, Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st00/st00007.en10.pdf> [cited 24.6.2013].

⁽⁷⁾ Council of the European Union (2009), Council conclusions of 12 May on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’), *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2-9. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:en:PDF> [cited 24.6.2013].

⁽⁸⁾ Council of the European Union (2010), Conclusions on Priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 324, 1.12.2011, p.5-15., Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:324:0005:0015:EN:PDF> [cited 24.6.2013].

⁽⁹⁾ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/14;>
http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/chart_en.pdf;
http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm
 [cited 24.6.2013].

⁽¹⁰⁾ See footnote 9.

systems, improve citizens' overall skill levels and bring the worlds of education and work more closely together ⁽¹¹⁾.

To support Member States in addressing the current challenges, European Commission initiatives and Council documents, which complement one another, focus on the interdependence between employment, economic, social, education and development policies ⁽¹²⁾: the communication on *Rethinking education and training* ⁽¹³⁾, with a specific staff working document on VET, the employment package *Towards a job-rich recovery* ⁽¹⁴⁾, which emphasises the need to invest in and validate people's skills ⁽¹⁵⁾, the youth opportunities initiative ⁽¹⁶⁾, and the communication *Moving youth into employment* ⁽¹⁷⁾. Member States are advised to establish youth guarantees ⁽¹⁸⁾ and involve young people in shaping the design of policies that affect them ⁽¹⁹⁾; a European alliance for apprenticeships ⁽²⁰⁾ is to support partnerships between countries and different education and labour market actors to develop or strengthen such schemes.

-
- (¹¹) European Council Conclusions of 14 March 2013.
Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/136151.pdf [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹²) Council of the European Union, Conclusions *Towards a job-rich recovery and giving a better chance to Europe's youth*. 5.10.2012.
Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st14/st14426.en12.pdf> [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹³) European Commission, *Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socioeconomic outcomes*, and accompanying staff working documents, in particular *Vocational education and training for better skills, growth and jobs*, SWD(2012) 375 final.
Available at: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0669:FIN:EN:PDF>; http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking_en.htm [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹⁴) European Commission, *Towards a job-rich recovery*, COM(2012) 173 final. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/and/or_headlines/news/2012/04/20120418_en.htm [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹⁵) See also Council of the European Union (2012), Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 398/01, 22.12.2012, pp. 1-5. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF> [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹⁶) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1006>, see also European Commission, Staff working document. *Implementing the Youth Opportunities Initiative: first steps take*, SWD (2012) 98 final. Available from this site [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹⁷) European Commission, *Moving youth into employment*, COM(2012) 727 final, and accompanying staff working document SWD(2012) 406 final.
Available at: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0727:FIN:EN:PDF>; <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹⁸) Council of the European Union, Recommendation on establishing a youth guarantee, Common guidelines, 7123/13, Brussels, 3 April 2013.
Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/13/st08/st08548.en13.pdf> [cited 24.6.2013].
- (¹⁹) Council of the European Union, *Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy*, Conclusions, 9094/13
Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/13/st09/st09094.en13.pdf> [cited 24.6.2013].
- (²⁰) See *Rethinking education* and *Moving youth into employment* (footnotes 8 and 11), http://ec.europa.eu/education/apprenticeship/index_en.htm and <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1934&furtherNews=yes>

The Bruges Communiqué entrusts Cedefop with reporting on progress towards the strategic objectives and the short-term deliverables. This acknowledges Cedefop's reports on European cooperation in VET over the period 2002-10 ⁽²¹⁾, to which ReferNet contributed substantially. Following an intermediary review in 2012 ⁽²²⁾, Cedefop's next comprehensive report on European VET policy is due mid-2014. It will assess to what extent countries have put in place the VET-related actions they agreed on in 2010, and discuss potential areas to focus on in the future. Thus, Cedefop's report will feed into Council conclusions on VET at the end of 2014 and a new Communiqué in early 2015. It will also inform the European Commission's report on the achievements of ET 2020.

The above policy processes not only require continuous monitoring and thematic stock-taking at different points in time but also systematic country-specific information and analysis. This may also entail responding to ad-hoc requests. In view of this framework, Cedefop aims at increasing synergy and complementarity among its reporting projects.

3.1.2. Purpose of activity

Analysis and understanding of policy developments and achievements within and across countries requires thorough information on how VET works. Information on VET's role, purpose, outcomes, governance, structure and delivery provides the necessary context. But VET varies considerably between Member States. To understand countries' starting points and the progress they have made, VET needs to be considered in its specific socio-economic context.

Wide ranging expertise is required to capture VET's role as an interface between education, employment, economic and social policies. To support evidence-based decision-making in VET, research findings, key documents and statistical data need to underpin analyses.

ReferNet national partners are well placed to inform on VET systems in their specific context and on relevant policy developments. ReferNet national partners have first-hand information from different stakeholders. They can also pool knowledge and experience from policy-making, implementation, evaluation and research at central, regional, local and sectorial levels.

Therefore, Cedefop will require ReferNet national partners to:

- (a) report on VET policy and the way VET-related objectives of Europe 2020's strategy are being met in their countries; and
- (b) provide up-to-date information on VET systems and developments in their country.

Expected deliverables, working methods and other arrangements for the activities are listed below.

⁽²¹⁾ See Cedefop's four reports on European VET policy published in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010. The Bruges communiqué reflects the findings of the 2010 report.

⁽²²⁾ Cedefop, *Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12*. Progress towards the Bruges Communiqué, Working paper nr 16, Luxembourg, Publications office of the EU, 2012

3.1.3. Expected deliverables

All deliverables should be provided in edited English.

Peer review among ReferNet partners is highly recommended.

All publications and public documents consulted and/or cited while preparing reporting deliverables shall be catalogued under Bibliographic references.

Deliverable 1: VET policy reporting

Based on a set of guidelines provided by Cedefop, ReferNet national partners reports every year on the implementation of the short-term deliverables (national measures and actions) defined in the Bruges communiqué and other actions or policies that contribute to achieving the strategic objectives of European cooperation in VET. ReferNet informs on policy initiatives, measures and actions in the requested format analysing them in relation to the main features of national VET systems and relevant socio-economic conditions.

To report on policies, ReferNet should

- draw on a wide range of sources, including policy papers, legislation, evaluation reports, research and policy analysis, case studies;
- cooperate with the relevant national stakeholders to mobilise their expertise to prepare and validate the information.

To assess progress in implementing the European VET agenda, ReferNet national partners may be asked to comment on or validate their countries' position against a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators prepared by Cedefop.

This deliverable will feed into Cedefop's regular country-specific policy monitoring and its cross-country analysis on European cooperation in VET. In 2014, Cedefop will publish its next policy report to inform the discussion on future deliverables/priorities.

The information should be checked and validated by the national representative before delivery to Cedefop.

Further information on Cedefop's and ReferNet's previous policy reporting exercises can be found at

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/reporting-on-european-training-policy/index.aspx>.

Applicants may request from Cedefop examples of previous guidelines or templates prepared for ReferNet's policy reporting exercises.

Deliverable 2: VET in Europe – Reporting on national VET systems

Reporting on national VET systems includes two deliverables (three for EU Presidency countries).

The ReferNet partner delivers

- (2a) a VET in [country X] report; and
- (2b) a VET in [country X] – Spotlight, a brief introduction to national VET,

which are updated on a yearly basis as necessary.

- (2c) The Presidency countries will also prepare a version to be published in hard copy.

The information provided in the following deliverables should be checked and validated by the national representative before delivery to Cedefop.

Deliverable 2a: VET in [country X]

Country reports present a brief but comprehensive and coherent picture of national VET systems to foreign readers. They are based on a common structure provided by Cedefop. Within this structure, the authors have the flexibility to select and present the topics that they deem important to better address the main features and challenges of their national VET. They are updated on a yearly basis as necessary.

Peer review among ReferNet partners, introduced by Cedefop in 2013, aims at improving the quality and consistency of the reports.

The ReferNet national partner will submit the report electronically, in Word-format. Reports are displayed online in pdf-format on Cedefop's web portal.

Further information on VET in Europe – country reports can be found at

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>.

Applicants may request from Cedefop examples of previous guidelines prepared for ReferNet's VET in [country X] reports.

Deliverable 2b: VET in [country X] – Spotlight

Based on guidelines provided by Cedefop, the ReferNet national partner will summarise key features, challenges and developments within the national VET system in a limited number of pages (leaflet).

For the Presidency countries, Spotlights will be also published in hard copy to be disseminated during Presidency events. Cedefop will be in charge of the publication process.

The ReferNet national partner will submit the report electronically, in Word-format. Spotlights are displayed online in pdf-format on Cedefop's web portal.

Spotlights can be downloaded from <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/Cedefop-Publications.aspx>.

Deliverable 2c: VET in [Presidency country] (hard-copy publication based on VET in [country X] [*not applicable to the Greek and Romanian partners*])

To raise VET visibility in the two countries holding the EU Presidency each year, VET in [country X] reports will be used as a basis to prepare hard-copy publications in English in cooperation with Cedefop. Cedefop will be in charge of the publication process. Together with Spotlights, they are distributed during Presidency conferences and events.

They can be downloaded from

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications.aspx?project=3353>

Deliverable 3: Thematic reporting

To respond to topical information needs and to complement the systems information in the country report and Spotlight, this reporting activity aims to address VET-related issues relevant to the European policy agenda.

It can take the form of articles (5-10 pages) or surveys having comparative aims.

The topic of the article/survey may remain open in the working plan agreed and be defined at a later stage to be able to meet ad-hoc information requests.

The information should be checked and validated by the national representative before delivery to Cedefop.

Deliverable 4: National news on VET

ReferNet provides short news items to inform on the latest national developments on VET and topics that are linked to or influence VET for young people and adults (e.g. labour market developments, employment, enterprise, innovation policies, guidance and counselling, validation). They will be screened by Cedefop and published on its website and via its newsletter and contribute to other Cedefop work where relevant (e.g. country fiches, thematic studies, 'snapshots' for the biennial meetings of the DGVT and ACVT). News items may also be used as a basis to propose presentation of country examples at these and other EU-level events.

ReferNet shall submit news items electronically, as Word documents and based on guidelines by Cedefop. Considering the specificities of web readability, news items should not exceed 500 words.

Information should be checked and validated by the national representative before delivery to Cedefop.

National news on VET can be accessed at

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/networks/refernet/refernet-national-news-on-vet.aspx>

Deliverable 5: Bibliographical references

ReferNet provides bibliographical information on the main publications and documents used in the context of reporting activities throughout the year, including VET legal texts. This information will be used in Cedefop's bibliographical database (VET-Bib), making the most representative national documents accessible online.

Further information on VET-Bib can be found at

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-bib-bibliographic-database.aspx>

3.2. Raising the visibility of VET and online dissemination

3.2.1. Background and purpose

ReferNet is expected to help raising the visibility of Cedefop, its products and more generally VET issues at national level. The ReferNet national partner acts as multiplier and dissemination channel in the country.

ReferNet national partners' online presence, through national ReferNet websites, can help improving visibility and dissemination. ReferNet websites also support exchanges of information with Cedefop and other national ReferNet websites.

3.2.2. Expected deliverables

A minimum requirement and expected deliverable is the regular maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website in the national language and also, if ReferNet national partners so wish, in English. The ReferNet website aims to disseminate information and raise visibility of VET and Cedefop's work nationally. Other types of online presence are also recommended, for example participation in social media, blogging online, discussions in VET forums.

Websites can be autonomously hosted on their own domain or a dedicated section in the ReferNet national partners' parent organisation's website. Cedefop provides guidelines to prepare national ReferNet websites as well as technical advice and support for the setup and maintenance of the national ReferNet website. Advice and support can take the form of style guidelines, website libraries, web programming code samples, discussions for optimum solutions. Cedefop looks for solutions that have minimum maintenance effort and cost, for example exchange of content (news, events, publications) via automated RSS feeds.

ReferNet national partners should be ready to adapt visibility and dissemination activities to Cedefop's strategy and annual objectives, and include in annual work plans other deliverables to raise visibility of Cedefop, of its products and more generally of VET issues at national level.

ReferNet national websites can be accessed from

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/networks/refernet/3314.aspx>

Applicants may request from Cedefop examples of previous guidelines for setting up ReferNet national websites.

3.3. Working arrangements

Language

All deliverables **must be submitted in English** and may additionally be provided in the country's official language. National partners will ensure that the English version is of high linguistic quality and that the format follows Cedefop's style manual.

Validation

Some deliverables must be validated by the ReferNet national representative. On behalf of the national government the ReferNet national representative validates reports by the grant beneficiary, whenever such validation is deemed necessary. In particular, reports on national VET systems and policy developments need to be validated to ensure that the information provided is in accordance with national policies and strategies.

ReferNet national partners can also use other validation processes. They should always provide comprehensive information on the procedures adopted.

Regional and working groups, core group

To support networking and regional cooperation, there are three **regional groups** (North, South and Centre). Cedefop may consult the network on a regional basis.

To improve, revise and develop specific activities or products, partners should be ready to participate in joint **working groups** composed of ReferNet national partners and Cedefop project managers.

A ReferNet **core group**, comprising two representatives from each regional group, may be set up to provide regular communication between the network and Cedefop. On Cedefop's request, the core group consults national partners and reports to Cedefop the network's views on the annual work plan and other related matters. The core group meets with Cedefop two times per year. Members of the core group attend all regional meetings.

Meetings

ReferNet national partners will attend the annual plenary meeting organised by Cedefop and a regional group meeting. Regional meetings are co-organised by Cedefop and the national partner hosting the meeting. Meetings are held in English.

ReferNet national partners may organise meetings in addition to those above with other national partners. For these meetings, Cedefop will provide information, documentation or other material at the organiser's request. Where appropriate, Cedefop will attend at the organiser's request.

(For further information on financing of the meetings, see 6.6.1).

Periodic assessment

ReferNet national 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.

Final report on activities

Within two (2) months of the end of the operational year, the ReferNet national partners will present reports describing the results of the activities conducted. Cedefop will provide a template for the report.

4. FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Using the eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria below, Cedefop will conclude a twelve-month framework partnership agreement with one successful applicant from Greece and one from Romania.

4.1. Eligibility criteria

To be considered eligible, applicants should meet the following requirements:

(a) be a public or a private organisation, with a legal status and legal personality (natural persons, i.e. individuals, are not eligible), as demonstrated by the following documents:

Private company, association, etc.:

- financial identification and legal entity form, duly completed and signed (see Annex II);
- extract from the official gazette/trade register and, if applicable, certificate of liability to VAT (if the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);

Public-law entity:

- financial identification and legal entity form, duly completed and signed (see Annex II);
- legal resolution or decision established in respect of the public company or body, or other official document established for the public-law entity;
- certificate of liability to VAT, if any;

(b) be established in one of the following countries:

- Greece, Romania.

4.2. Exclusion criteria

Applicants must state that they are not in any of the situations described in Articles 106(1), 107 and 109(2)(a) of the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012) and set out in the Declaration on honour included in the grant application form (see Annex II).

By signing this form, the undersigned acknowledges that they have been acquainted with the administrative and financial penalties described under Article 145 in conjunction with Article 142 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, which may be applied by analogy by Cedefop if any of the declarations or information provided prove to be false.

4.3. Selection criteria

The applicant ⁽²³⁾ must have the professional competence and qualifications required to complete the activities described in Section 3 (Scope of activities) for the duration of the framework partnership agreement.

4.3.1. Technical and professional capacity

The applicant must demonstrate competence in VET, including in carrying out activities similar in scope and/or nature to those specified in the scope of activities (Section 3), and capacity to network with national and international organisations.

The applicant's team of experts proposed to carry out the activities outlined in Section 3 must have relevant professional competence and qualifications to guarantee their successful implementation. In particular, they must meet the following requirements:

The ReferNet **team coordinator** must have a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in all of the below:

- managing projects similar in scope and/or nature to the one described in this call;
- conducting policy analysis, and/or relevant research and/or evaluation of programmes and policies in VET or related fields at national level;
- working in the field of VET and lifelong learning;

as well as

- capacity to understand, speak and write in English to a standard at least equivalent to level C1.

⁽²³⁾ Eligible organisation or grouping of co-beneficiaries which submits a proposal within the framework of this open call.

The **members of the ReferNet team** must have a minimum of 3 years of relevant professional experience and must, as a whole, demonstrate competence in all of the below:

- collecting national information and data;
- monitoring, analysing and reporting on developments in national VET systems, arrangements and policies;
- analysing, synthesising and summarising large amounts of information;
- drafting reports, articles and other material on national VET systems, arrangements and policies, for publication online or in hard copy;
- developing and managing website content;

as well as

- a thorough knowledge of VET (initial and continuing) arrangements, systems and policies and related education, lifelong learning, employment and social policies;
- capacity to understand, speak and write in English to a standard at least equivalent to level B2.

The following documents or information must be presented as evidence of the applicant's technical and professional capacity (see also Section 2 of Annex II – Application form):

For the applicant:

- a presentation of the applicant institution, including an organogram of the organisation showing the positioning of the service or team intended to deal with ReferNet within the whole structure; in case of network/consortium, its general structure must also be presented;
- a description of regular contacts between the applicant and other national (and international) institutions/organisations involved in VET policy, research and practice; if possible, evidence of joint work, for example, projects, reports or events;
- a list of projects similar in scope and/or nature to those specified in the scope of activities (Section 3), either completed or being carried out;
- evidence of reports, publications, online databases (and the like) describing or providing information on national VET systems, arrangements and policies.

For the ReferNet team:

- detailed CVs for all member(s) of the proposed team⁽²⁴⁾, underlining relevant professional experience and qualifications as well as English language competence⁽²⁵⁾ and including a list of publications.

⁽²⁴⁾ The CVs should preferably use the European format (see <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>).

⁽²⁵⁾ The levels of English are available in the Europass Language Passport: see http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/img/dynamic/c1347/type.FileContent.file/ELPTemplate_en_GB.doc.

4.3.2. Financial capacity

The applicant must be in a stable financial position and have the economic and financial capacity to carry out the requested tasks.

To permit an assessment of their financial capacity, the applicant must submit together with their application the profit and loss accounts and the balance sheet for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed. (See also Section 2 of Annex II – Application form).

The verification of financial capacity **shall not apply** to public bodies or international organisations; such status will be verified against the documentation provided by the applicant in relation to point 4.1 above (Eligibility criteria).

4.4. Award criteria

Applications meeting the selection criteria will be assessed against the following award criteria (based on the information provided in Section 3 of the grant application form in Annex II).

	Weight/points
1- Adequacy of the proposed approach to ensure broad cooperation with the various national VET institutions and stakeholders: – Variety and relevance of institutions and stakeholders considered (15 pts) – Methods proposed to mobilise their expertise to carry out the activities (15 pts) – Cooperation with – and support from – national authorities as demonstrated by a dedicated letter of recommendation issued by relevant government authorities (5 pts)	35
2- Adequacy and efficiency of work organisation including task distribution between ReferNet team members	20
3- Quality and relevance of: – working methods (10 pts) – data sources (10 pts) – quality assurance measures (10 pts)	30
4- Relevance of risk analysis and adequacy of contingency measures	15
TOTAL	100

A committee shall be appointed in order to evaluate the proposals. Outside experts might assist the committee.

Only the proposals scoring in total a minimum of **60 points** (out of max. 100) against the above award criteria will be considered for a framework partnership agreement.

The framework partnership agreement (standard model can be found in Annex III) will be awarded to the applicant scoring the highest number of points.

5. SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENT FOR REFERNET WORK PLAN 2015

All applicants are required to submit a proposal for ReferNet work plan 2015 including an estimated budget in euro. The proposal must fulfil the specifications outlined in Annex I (Specifications for ReferNet work plan 2015).

This work plan will be co-financed by a specific grant agreement (see Section 4 of the grant application form in Annex II) which shall start on 1st January 2015 and end on 31st December 2015.

Cedefop will evaluate the proposal for ReferNet work plan 2015 only of those applicants which meet the eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria in Section 4 above.

The proposals for ReferNet work plan 2015 will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- consistency of the proposal with Cedefop specifications and expected deliverables, including timeliness and compliance with Cedefop timetable;
- quality of the proposal in terms of working methods, data sources, work organisation and project plan;
- amount of the grant requested not exceeding ceiling amount and percentage set by Cedefop (see Section 6).

In Section 4.4 of the application form in Annex II, applicants are required to indicate the estimated eligible costs for each activity/output of the 2015 work plan (see 6.6 for costs eligibility).

While the eligibility of the estimated costs will not be checked by Cedefop at the stage of evaluating the proposal, applicants must note that, if awarded a grant for the ReferNet 2015 work plan, they will be required, within two months of the end of the operational period, to submit to Cedefop:

- an activity report,
- a financial report including an overview on actual costs and funding and a summary statement of the receipts and expenditures of the action;
- a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts related to the implementation of the work plan, including a report and the relevant checklist, provided by a national external approved auditor or, in case of public bodies, an independent public institution/officer.

The abovementioned documents shall follow models provided by Cedefop.

6. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

6.1. General terms and conditions

Acceptance of an application by Cedefop does not constitute an undertaking to award a financial contribution equal to the amount requested by the applicant. Award of a framework partnership agreement does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

Cedefop grants aim to facilitate the implementation of a project which could not otherwise proceed without the EU's support. Cedefop's financial grant is based on the principle of co-financing. It is only an additional financial contribution to the ReferNet national partner's own financial contribution and/or local, regional, national and/or private contributions obtained elsewhere for the project (including sponsoring).

In all cases, Cedefop's total contribution may not exceed 70 % of the eligible costs. Therefore, a minimum of **30 %** of the total estimated eligible expenditure of the project must come from sources other than the budget of the European Union. Proposals must include evidence that co-financing amounting to the remainder of the total cost of the project is available (secured).

The estimated total budget available for the four-year duration of the framework partnership agreements for all countries (2012-2015) amounts to **EUR 4.000.000**, depending on the annual decisions of the Budget Authority.

6.2. Specific terms and conditions for the 2015 work plan

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2015 in all eligible countries ⁽²⁶⁾ is approximately EUR 980.000.

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2015 is distributed as follows ⁽²⁷⁾:

	Maximum grant amount
<u>Country group 1: Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Iceland</u>	EUR 23 615
<u>Country group 2: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden and Norway</u>	EUR 33 625
<u>Country group 3: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom</u>	EUR 43 620

⁽²⁶⁾ EU-28, Iceland and Norway

⁽²⁷⁾ The allocated amount may not under any circumstances exceed the amounts indicated in the table.

Applicants must indicate the sources and amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the same financial year, for the same work plan, or for any other action and for routine activities (see application form, Section 5).

Under no circumstances may the grant have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the partner or co-beneficiaries. Profit is defined as a surplus of receipts over the costs of the work plan. The amount of the grant will be reduced by the amount of any surplus. The Bank account (and/or the sub bank account) indicated by the *partner* must allow for the identification of the amounts paid by Cedefop and **be denominated in euro**.

6.3. Payment procedures

After approval by Cedefop, a financial agreement (the annual specific grant agreement), drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be concluded between Cedefop and the beneficiary.

The financial agreement will lay down the payment arrangements.

- (a) A pre-financing payment equivalent to 60 % of the total EU contribution will be transferred to the partner within 30 days of the signing of the agreement by the last of the two parties. The pre-financing is aimed at providing cash flow to the partner and co-beneficiaries.
- (b) Cedefop will determine the level of the final payment to be made to the partner within 60 days of Cedefop approving the final report. Requests for final payments have to be accompanied by financial statements and underlying accounts certified by an auditor or, in case of public bodies, a competent and independent public institution/officer.
- (c) Should the actual eligible total cost of the project be less than the total estimated cost, Cedefop will reduce its contribution proportionally. Specifically, Cedefop will make a pro rata reduction of the grant on the basis of the rate indicated in the agreement and the partner will be obliged to reimburse amounts already paid in excess of the amount due.
- (d) The final accounts must be drawn up in euro, balanced, dated, signed and certified by the authorised person as provided for in the partner's articles of association. These must be presented using a specific structure which will be provided by Cedefop in due time.
- (e) Partners undertake to carry out the activities as they are presented in the grant application. Any change to the project must be authorised by Cedefop in advance.
- (f) Should the partner not perform all planned activities, Cedefop will reduce the grant amount proportionally in due consideration of the costs estimations breakdown provided by the partner in the grant application.

6.4. Ex-post control, audit and evaluation

Projects may be subject to ex-post controls, audits, ex-ante and ex-post evaluations. The responsible person representing the partner will confirm, with his or her signature, that

the grant has been used correctly and will provide proof if requested. Cedefop, the European Commission, the Court of Auditors of the European Union or any other bodies authorised by them to do so on their behalf may check the use made of the grant at any time during the term of the agreement and during a period of five years following expiry of the agreement.

Furthermore there are audit requirements for the requests for final payments.

6.5. Double financing

An organisation is not entitled to receive more than one grant from the European Union for the activities covered by the selected project.

6.6. Eligible costs

The only costs eligible in the context of this call are those which are:

- (a) directly linked to the project concerned, i.e. generated directly by the project and indispensable for its implementation. These costs have to be necessary and reasonable for the implementation of the project. The project must comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular in terms of value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- (b) generated during the lifetime of the project as defined in the agreement;
- (c) actually incurred by the partner and co-beneficiaries and recorded in their accounts in conformity with the applicable accounting principles, and which are declared in accordance with the requirements of the applicable tax and social legislation; and
- (d) identifiable and verifiable with original supporting documents.

The period of eligibility for expenditure resulting from the implementation of the work plan will begin on 1/1/2015 and end on 31/12/2015 provided the agreement has been signed by both parties. In exceptional circumstances, and if the partner is able to prove the need to commence the implementation of this work plan before the signing of the agreement, expenditure may be considered as eligible before the signature of the grant agreement.

The internal auditing and accountancy procedures of the partner shall make it possible to verify that the stated project costs and receipts correspond to the accounting statements and the supporting documents.

6.6.1. Eligible direct costs

"Direct costs" of the action are those specific costs which are directly linked to the implementation of the action and can therefore be attributed directly to it. They may not include any indirect costs.

To be eligible, direct costs shall comply with the conditions of eligibility set out in Article II.19.1 of the model Framework Partnership Agreement (See also Annex IIIa).

In particular, the following categories of costs are eligible direct costs, provided that they satisfy the conditions of eligibility set out in Article II.19.1 of the Framework Partnership Agreement as well as the following conditions:

- (a) the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the partner or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the partner's usual policy on remuneration; those costs may also include additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the partner other than an employment contract may be assimilated to such costs of personnel, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- (i) the natural person works under the instructions of the partner and, unless otherwise agreed with the partner, in the premises of the partner;
 - (ii) the result of the work belongs to the partner; and
 - (iii) the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the partner;
- (b) costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the partner's usual practices on travel;
- (c) the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the accounting statements of the partner, provided that the asset has been purchased in accordance with Article II.9 of the Framework Partnership Agreement and that it is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the usual accounting practices of the partner; the costs of rental or lease of equipment or other assets are also eligible, provided that these costs do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment or assets and are exclusive of any finance fee;

Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the period set out in Article 2.2 of the Specific agreement concerned and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account. By way of exception, the Special Conditions or the Specific agreement may provide for the eligibility of the full cost of purchase of equipment, where justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;

- (d) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are purchased in accordance with Article II.9 of the Framework Partnership Agreement and are directly assigned to the action;

- (e) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Framework agreement or the Specific agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with Article II.9 of the Framework Partnership Agreement;
- (f) costs entailed by subcontracts within the meaning of Article II.10 of the Framework Partnership Agreement, provided that the conditions laid down in that Article are met;
- (g) costs of financial support to third parties within the meaning of Article II.11, provided that the conditions laid down in that Article are met; **Not applicable**
- (h) duties, taxes and charges paid by the partner, notably value added tax (VAT), provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the Special Conditions or in the Specific agreement.

6.6.2. *Eligible indirect costs*

"Indirect costs" of the action are those costs which are not specific costs directly linked to the implementation of the action and can therefore not be attributed directly to it. They may not include any costs identifiable or declared as eligible direct costs.

To be eligible, indirect costs shall represent a fair apportionment of the overall overheads of the partner and shall comply with the conditions of eligibility set out in Article II.19.1 of the Framework Partnership Agreement.

Unless otherwise specified in the Article 3 of the Specific agreement, eligible indirect costs shall be declared on the basis of a flat rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs.

6.6.3. *Ineligible costs*

In addition to any other costs which do not fulfill the conditions set out in Article II.19.1 of the Framework Partnership Agreement, the following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- (a) return on capital;
- (b) debt and debt service charges;
- (c) provisions for losses or debts;
- (d) interest owed;
- (e) doubtful debts;
- (f) exchange losses;
- (g) costs of transfers from Cedefop charged by the bank of the partner;

(h) costs declared by the partner in the framework of another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by other bodies than Cedefop for the purpose of implementing the Union budget); in particular, indirect costs shall not be eligible under a specific grant for an action awarded to the partner when it already receives an operating grant financed from the Union budget during the period in question;

(i) contributions in kind from third parties;

(j) excessive or reckless expenditure;

(k) deductible VAT.

7. SUB-CONTRACTING

Where the implementation of subsidised actions requires subcontracting or the launching of a call for tenders, the partner or co-beneficiary should award this contract to the tender offering the best value for money, respecting the principles of transparency and equal treatment of potential contractors and ensuring there is no conflict of interests.

Any subcontracting/subcontractor must be approved by Cedefop, either by accepting the applicant's proposal, or, if proposed by the partner after Agreements' signature, in writing by an exchange of letters. In the latter case subcontracting/subcontractor will be accepted only if it is judged necessary and does not lead to distortion of competition (if applicable) or to weakening the partner's or Cedefop's control over the quality of implementation of the work plan.

The applicant must clearly indicate the identity of those subcontractors by filling in the related information in Annex 3 of the Grant application form. – Involvement of third parties in the action / work plan.

8. PUBLICITY

All grants awarded in the course of a financial year must be published on the Internet site of Cedefop during the first half of the year following the closure of the budget year in respect of which they were awarded. The information may also be published using any other appropriate medium, including the Official Journal of the European Union.

With the agreement of the beneficiary, Cedefop will publish the following information:

- name and address of the beneficiary,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded and rate of funding.

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge Cedefop's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and logo of Cedefop on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under

the co-financed work plan. Official logos and guidelines will be provided by Cedefop. If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced.

9. DATA PROTECTION

Your reply to the grant application will involve the recording and processing of personal data (such as your name, address and CV), which will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, your replies to the questions in this form and any personal data requested are required to assess your grant application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals and will be processed solely for that purpose by Cedefop's Finance and Procurement Service. Details concerning the processing of your personal data are available on the privacy statement at the page: http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf.

Your personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of the Commission, should you be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm), or
- the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm#BDCE) http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/sound_fin_mgt/privacy_statement_ced_en.pdf).

10. PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

10.1. Publication

The text of the call for proposals, annexes, and for information purposes a copy of the standard agreement, can be obtained from Cedefop website at the following address: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/working-with-us/public-procurements/calls-for-proposals.aspx>.

10.2. Application forms

Applications must be drawn up in one of the official EU languages, preferably in English.

Please note that only typed applications, using the official application form annexed to the present call, duly filled in, signed by the legal representative of the organisation and sent to Cedefop according to the defined schedule, will be examined.

The application must be sent in **four copies** (the original, being identified as such, plus three copies).

10.3. Submission of the application

Deadline for submission of applications: **26/09/2014. Applications submitted after this date will be rejected.**

Applications can be submitted in one of the following ways:

- by registered post to the following address with the indication Ref. **GP/RPA/ReferNet-FPA/004/14** on the envelope, for which purposes the relevant date is to be the date of dispatch by post, as evidenced by the postmark or the registered delivery receipt issued by the Postal Services.

CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Procurement Service

P.O. Box 22427, GR- 55102 Thessaloniki

- By hand-delivery or courier service. For security reasons applications by hand-delivery or by a courier service can only be delivered to the central post service of Cedefop with the indication Ref. **GP/RPA/ReferNet-FPA/004/14** on the envelope. In case of hand delivery the submission date is the date of receipt. In case of delivery by a courier service the submission date is the date of receipt by the courier service.

CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Procurement Service

Europe 123, GR- 57001 Thessaloniki (Pylea)

Applications submitted by fax or e-mail will **not** be examined.

Contacts between the contracting authority (Cedefop) and applicants are prohibited throughout the procedure save in exceptional circumstances and under the following conditions only:

Before the final date for submission of tenders:

- At the request of the applicant, the Cedefop Procurement Service may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the call for proposals documents. Any request for additional information must be made in writing by fax (fax: +30 2310 490 028) or by e-mail (C4T-services@cedefop.europa.eu).
Requests for additional information/clarification should be received by 18/09/2014. No such requests will be processed after that date.
- The contracting authority may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or any other clerical error in the text of the call for proposals.

Any additional information, including that referred to above, will be published on Cedefop's website. Please ensure that you visit regularly the site for updates up to the closing date for receipt of tenders.

After the opening of proposals:

- If clarification is required or if obvious clerical errors in the proposal need to be corrected, the contracting authority may contact the applicant provided the terms of the proposal are not modified as a result.
- Applicants should not contact the contracting authority (i.e. Cedefop) on their own initiative after the applications have been opened.
- The applicants cannot change the content of their proposal nor the information submitted in the application form on their own initiative.

11. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

a) Reception of application

Applicants will be informed of the receipt of their proposal upon request by e-mail at the following address: c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu.

b) Admissibility of application

Only applications complying with all criteria stated in this open call will be taken into account for the award of a possible grant. If an application is deemed inadmissible, a letter indicating the reasons for the rejection will be sent to the applicant.

c) Selection of application

Applicants will be informed of Cedefop's decision concerning their grant application as soon as possible in writing. No information will be released until Cedefop's decision on partner selection has been taken. It is foreseen that successful applicants shall receive this written information based on the results of the procedure early November 2014.

d) Grant agreement

It is foreseen that successful applicants shall receive a framework partnership agreement and eventually a specific grant agreement for signature as from end of December 2014.

12. APPLICABLE REGULATION

The award of EU grants is governed by the legal basis to the Programme and the Financial Regulations, and must respect the procedures laid down therein:

- Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 of the Council of 10 February 1975 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (OJ L 39, 13.2.1975), last amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 2051/2004 of 25 October 2004 (OJ L 355, 1.12.2004)
- Cedefop's Work Programme 2014
- Cedefop's Financial Rules and Implementing Rules (DIR/RB(2014)/01287) of 03 June 2014)

- Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012)
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 362, 31.12.2012).

13. CONTACT

Cedefop department responsible for implementing and managing this call for proposals is 'Procurement Service'.

Additional information can be obtained from:

CEDEFOP
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
Procurement Service
 attn. Mr. George Paraskevaidis
Europe 123, GR- 57001 Thessaloniki (Pylea)
 or by fax: +30 2310 490 028
 or by e-mail at the following address: c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu

Annexes:

I. Specifications for ReferNet work plan 2015

II. Official application form and annexes:

- 1.a. Legal entity form private companies
- 1.b. Legal entity form public entities
2. Financial identification form
3. Involvement of third parties in the action/work plan
4. Check-list for applicants

IIIa. Model of standard framework partnership agreement

IIIb. Model of standard specific grant agreement

IV. Charter