



Director

Thessaloniki,
Log**REFERNET – THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR VET
DRAFT CHARTER ⁽¹⁾****PREAMBLE**

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. It has 29 members, representing the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The ReferNet national partners are key institutions involved in VET in the countries they represent.

ReferNet's activities have evolved to concentrate on supporting Cedefop by reporting on national VET systems and policy developments in the context of the Copenhagen process and by raising the visibility of VET and of Cedefop's products.

Since 2006, it has been recognised that Cedefop is not in a position to finance the work of ReferNet in full and that the members of the network also benefit from membership. The first framework partnership agreement was signed with ReferNet national partners for the years 2008 to 2011. It established the principle of co-financing for ReferNet activities, whereby the financial contributions of Cedefop to the ReferNet partners are based on a grant procedure ⁽²⁾.

As cooperation between Cedefop and ReferNet also benefits from the support of national authorities, ReferNet national representatives were appointed to contribute to the network's activities at national level.

Evaluation of the network began as early as 2009 and was concluded in early 2011. In parallel, an audit of the grant procedure was conducted in 2010. One of the findings of these exercises is that there is a need for a charter to define more clearly the objectives, roles and responsibilities of the network members.

⁽¹⁾ To be considered and endorsed by Cedefop's Governing Board in June 2011.

⁽²⁾ Rather than study contract procurement procedures as was previously the case.

ARTICLE 1: MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS

- (1) ReferNet's mission is to support cooperation in VET between the EU (Cedefop) and the Member States and associated countries, to facilitate the flow of information between the EU and the individual countries and so ensure mutual awareness of EU and national developments.
- (2) ReferNet produces reliable, good quality reports on VET systems and policy developments, validated by national representatives, thereby ensuring the availability of information on national developments and facilitating Cedefop's comparative analyses and synthetic reporting.
- (3) ReferNet national partners increase the visibility of VET and improve the dissemination of Cedefop's outcomes at national level, and support the dissemination of VET-related information by overcoming existing language and other national barriers.
- (4) ReferNet is a platform for the exchange of information, best practices and ideas and for promoting understanding of European cooperation in VET and awareness of the different VET challenges in the partner countries.
- (5) ReferNet national partners are expected to benefit from the exchange of information by being involved in the process of European cooperation in VET and by collaborating with Cedefop. Working together provides a stronger evidence base and a stronger voice for VET issues in Europe.

Explanatory note: Ultimately cooperation in the network could have an impact on aligning research and policy development across partner countries. ReferNet partners, including Cedefop, are also expected to benefit from network cooperation, which may also open up possibilities for collaboration beyond the scope of activities as defined in the framework partnership agreements and annual work plans. The specific competence of ReferNet partners has developed – and will continue to develop – over time.

ARTICLE 2: NATURE AND SCOPE OF REFERNET

- (1) ReferNet comprises Cedefop and representatives from all countries participating in Cedefop's work programme.
- (2) ReferNet is part of Cedefop's work programme and is therefore subject to decisions of Cedefop's Governing Board and the budgetary authorities. It is regularly evaluated to ensure that the resources allocated are used efficiently and economically, in keeping with the objectives set for the network and with the policy agenda and strategy of Cedefop.

Explanatory note: Governing Board members, more specifically Government representatives, are invited to support ReferNet by encouraging appropriate national organisations to participate in the call for proposals (grant procedure) and by securing the necessary funds to finance the portion of the cost not covered by Cedefop's grant.

Governing Board members, more specifically Government representatives, support ReferNet by ensuring that the competent national authorities designate national representatives.

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERS OF REFERNET

The members of ReferNet are:

- (1) Cedefop in its capacity as the organisation managing and coordinating the network,
- (2) the ReferNet national representatives nominated by their national governments,
- (3) the ReferNet national partners that are beneficiaries of the grant procedure ⁽³⁾.

Explanatory note: Since the network's creation, one of the activities of ReferNet national partners has been to animate national networks of key institutions in VET. Following the results of the evaluation, it has been decided that the animation of a national network will not form part of the requirements of ReferNet national partners ⁽⁴⁾. Nevertheless, ReferNet activities will continue to require cooperation with a broad range of national VET stakeholders comprising research institutes, social partners' organisations as well as the Eurydice national unit, either by animating a national consortium or other appropriate working methods.

ARTICLE 4: ROLE OF REFERNET NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES ⁽⁵⁾

- (1) ReferNet national representatives are nominated by the national governments and approved by Cedefop.
- (2) ReferNet national representatives are expected to cooperate with the grant beneficiary and support its work.
- (3) On behalf of the national governments, they validate 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.

⁽³⁾ Only public and private institutions can participate in the grant procedure (not natural persons).

⁽⁴⁾ The evaluation revealed that in most cases deliverables were produced by the coordinating institution, with little or no involvement of the national network.

⁽⁵⁾ In many cases the national representative and the ReferNet team coordinator of the grant beneficiary are the same person.

- (4) ReferNet national representatives should attend the annual plenary meeting of ReferNet. The cost of attendance will be reimbursed by Cedefop.
- (5) ReferNet national representatives may also attend the regional and national ⁽⁶⁾ meetings of ReferNet. Attendance of these meetings will not be directly reimbursed.

Explanatory note: National representatives should be selected on the basis of their high level of expertise in national VET and lifelong learning issues. National representatives should also possess good knowledge and understanding of European VET policies processes, strategies and objectives and their impact on national systems and policies. Experience in comparative VET research is an additional asset. Furthermore, it is recommended that ReferNet national representatives are nominated in collaboration with social partners.

ARTICLE 5: ROLE OF THE GRANT BENEFICIARIES / REFERNET NATIONAL PARTNERS

- (1) Grant beneficiaries are institutions which, following Cedefop's call for proposals, have been selected to sign a framework partnership agreement ⁽⁷⁾. The grant procedure is governed by the financial rules of Cedefop.
- (2) The scope of activities of the beneficiaries of grants is determined in framework partnership agreements, while the annual work plan, deliverables and their timing are defined in specific grant agreements.
- (3) ReferNet national partners will implement annual work plans in accordance with guidelines and requirements laid down by Cedefop. They are responsible for providing deliverables and final implementation reports within the deadlines and to the standards agreed.
- (4) Specific grant agreements will also define restrictions on the publication of national contributions whenever applicable.
- (5) The ReferNet national partner will designate a ReferNet team coordinator who will represent the grant beneficiary at the annual plenary meeting of ReferNet. The cost of attendance will be reimbursed by Cedefop ⁽⁸⁾.

Explanatory note: ReferNet national partners are institutions working in the field of VET and lifelong learning. They must demonstrate competence in VET issues and experience of conducting policy analysis, and/or relevant research and/or evaluation of programmes

⁽⁶⁾ If applicable.

⁽⁷⁾ Only one proposal per country is selected by Cedefop.

⁽⁸⁾ In each plenary meeting, Cedefop will reimburse the attendance of two participants per country. Thus, when the ReferNet national representative is the same person as the ReferNet team coordinator representing the grant beneficiary, he or she may propose a second person from the ReferNet national team.

and policies in VET or related fields at national level. The ReferNet national partner should be an institution with a capacity to network with national and international organisations. ReferNet national teams should have a very good knowledge of VET and lifelong learning and experience of collecting information and data as well as monitoring, analysing and reporting on developments in national VET systems, arrangements and policies.

ARTICLE 6: SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES, FUNDING AND MODES OF COOPERATION

- (1) The scope of Refernet's activities is aligned with the European process of cooperation in VET and with Cedefop's work programme as adopted by Cedefop's Governing Board.
- (2) Cedefop will define the scope of activities, set up and monitor the execution of the annual work plans and steer and animate the network.
- (3) Annual work plans will, as far as possible, be discussed and agreed with ReferNet members to accommodate views and major concerns, provided that the requirements referred to in point (1) are respected.
- (4) Cedefop co-finances the activities of the grant beneficiaries up to 70 % of the cost, within pre-determined budgetary ceilings, and it pays directly for the annual plenary and core group meetings.
- (5) ReferNet national partners co-fund at least 30 % of ReferNet activities or secure co-funding from a third party.
- (6) ReferNet will meet at least once a year (annual plenary meeting).
- (7) ReferNet will discuss and decide on the details of its work organisation and communication structures ⁽⁹⁾.

ARTICLE 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE

- (1) Templates and questionnaires developed for the national contributions will take into account the results of the discussions in the network and facilitate comparable, good quality contributions.
- (2) Cedefop may provide feedback on deliverables to ReferNet national partners focusing on quality, adequacy and relevance. ReferNet national partners will take account of the feedback provided and revise deliverables as necessary.
- (3) Cedefop will establish reasonable deadlines for deliverables. ReferNet national partners undertake to respect the agreed deadlines.

⁽⁹⁾ National partners are currently organised into three regional groups (Centre, North and South) and are represented by a core group. The core group is composed of two representatives from each regional group.

- (4) ReferNet national partners will implement adequate procedures to collect information and data and to validate reports with national VET stakeholders and national representatives, as appropriate and as required. Those procedures will also ensure the quality of the deliverables in terms of comprehensiveness, reliability of content (analysis, description), and language.

ARTICLE 8: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

- (1) Grant beneficiaries own the intellectual property rights to their contributions and may publish them under their name. Since they are produced in the context of ReferNet's activities, Cedefop's agreement to such publication is required.
- (2) Whenever Cedefop uses ReferNet inputs, it will be acknowledged as appropriate.
- (3) Whenever ReferNet national partners publish work relating to a ReferNet project, they will acknowledge and cite Cedefop and the ReferNet project.
- (4) The usual rules for citations will apply when partners, including Cedefop, use inputs from other partners in their publications.

ARTICLE 9: AMENDMENTS AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

- (1) Once adopted, this Charter may be amended in agreement with the Governing Board.
- (2) This Charter will come into force upon its adoption by the Governing Board.

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