



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Ref. GP/RPA/ReferNet_FPA/001/11

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.....	7
3.1.	Reporting on national VET systems and policy developments.....	7
3.2.	Raising the visibility of VET and online dissemination.....	11
3.3.	Working arrangements.....	12
4.	FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT	13
4.1.	Eligibility Criteria.....	13
4.2.	Exclusion Criteria	14
4.3.	Selection Criteria	14
4.4.	Award Criteria	16
5.	SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENT FOR THE 2012 WORK PLAN.....	17
6.	FINANCIAL CONDITIONS	18
6.1.	General terms and conditions	18
6.2.	Specific terms and conditions for the 2012 work plan	19
6.3.	Payment procedures.....	19
6.4.	Ex-post Control, Audit and Evaluation	20
6.5.	Double financing	20
6.6.	Eligible Costs.....	20
7.	SUB-CONTRACTING.....	23
8.	PUBLICITY	23
9.	DATA PROTECTION	23
10.	PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS.....	24
10.1.	Publication	24

10.2. Application forms	24
10.3. Submission of the application.....	24
11. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE	25
12. APPLICABLE REGULATION	26
13. CONTACT	26

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 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 2012-14, 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, sectoral 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.

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.

⁽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.

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 29 members, known as ReferNet national partners, from an EU Member State, Iceland or 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 the 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⁾.

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.

⁽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 2.4.2011] and *Europe 2020: a new European strategy for jobs and growth: European Council Presidency Conclusions 25-26 March 2010*. Available from Internet: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st00/st00007.en10.pdf> [cited 2.4.2011].

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

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

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

- (a) selecting one applicant from each eligible country (EU Member States, Iceland and Norway) with which Cedefop will conclude a four-year framework partnership agreement ⁽⁵⁾; and
- (b) concluding, with each successful applicant, a specific grant agreement for a work plan to be carried out in 2012.

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 four-year period and ensure adequate co-financing for the implementation of the annual work plan.

Applicants are therefore required to:

- (a) submit a proposal for a four-year framework partnership agreement for the years 2012-15; and
- (b) submit a grant application for work to be carried out under a specific agreement for 2012.

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 Europe's 2020 headline targets, in particular specific education and training

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

⁽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 from Internet: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st00/st00007.en10.pdf> [cited 2.4.2011].

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⁾ focuses European cooperation on the following objectives applying to all types and levels of education and training:

- (a) make lifelong learning and mobility for learning and working a reality;
- (b) improve quality and efficiency of education and training;
- (c) promote equity and social cohesion; and
- (d) foster creativity and innovation.

The European Commission, supported by Cedefop, will monitor and report on progress by countries in implementing the agreed priorities.

The Bruges communiqué and related Council conclusions⁽⁸⁾ define the strategic objectives for European cooperation in VET between now and 2020. They also set out 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.

The Bruges Communiqué builds on the European Commission's communication *A new impetus for European cooperation in VET*⁽⁹⁾ and on the findings of Cedefop's policy report *A bridge to the future* which reviews the achievements of European cooperation in VET since 2002⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Bruges Communiqué entrusts Cedefop with continuing to report on progress by countries towards the strategic objectives and the short-term deliverables. This acknowledges Cedefop's contribution in reporting on European cooperation over the period 2002-08⁽¹¹⁾, to which ReferNet contributed substantially.

⁽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 from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:en:PDF> [cited 2.4.2011].

⁽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 from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:324:0005:0015:EN:PDF> [cited 2.4.2011].

⁽⁹⁾ European Commission: *Communication on A new impetus for European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 strategy* (COM(2010) 296, 9.6.2010). Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0296:FIN:EN:PDF> [cited 2.4.2011].

⁽¹⁰⁾ Cedefop. *A bridge to the future: European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3058_en.pdf [cited 2.4.2011].

⁽¹¹⁾ See Cedefop's four reports on European VET policy published in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010.

Cedefop's next report on European VET policy will feed into the European Commission's report on the achievements of ET 2020, which is due in mid-2014. Consistent follow-up will require continuous monitoring and thematic stock-taking at different points in time. It may also entail responding to ad-hoc requests.

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 partners are well placed to inform on their VET systems and the current situation regarding 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 sectoral levels.

Therefore, Cedefop will require ReferNet national partners to:

- (a) provide up-to-date information on VET in their country; and
- (b) report on VET policy in their country and on how the specific objectives of the European VET policy agenda are being met at national level.

Working methods for the activities and expected deliverables listed below will be specified further in annual work plans, after consultation with ReferNet national partners.

3.1.3. Expected deliverables

Deliverable 1: Policy reporting

Based on a set of guidelines provided by Cedefop, ReferNet national partners will report 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. The reports will describe policy initiatives, measures and actions and analyse them in relation to the main features of national VET systems and relevant socio-economic conditions.

Reports on policies should draw on a wide range of sources, including policy papers, legislation, evaluation reports, research and policy analysis, case studies. Reporting will require broad cooperation with various national stakeholders to mobilise their expertise to prepare and validate reports.

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.

Policy reporting will feed into Cedefop's regular policy monitoring and reporting on European cooperation in VET. In 2014, Cedefop will publish its next policy report and ReferNet partners will be invited to publish national policy reports.

Further information on previous Cedefop's and ReferNet's policy reports 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 country report

Based on a template and a set of guidelines provided by Cedefop, ReferNet national partners provide up-to-date information on VET in their country. 'VET in Europe' country reports describe the main features of the national VET systems (both initial ⁽¹²⁾ and continuing ⁽¹³⁾ training), the institutional and legal framework, policy developments and several other topics such as financing, teachers and trainers, guidance and counselling. In addition, ReferNet national partners may be asked to report on ad-hoc themes or topics, following ongoing development (e.g. VET in the crisis) or the European policy agenda (e.g. transnational mobility of VET learners).

Reports will be updated every year to reflect the latest developments in the country, changes to the Cedefop's guidelines and introduction of new topics or themes. Templates and guidelines are adapted in cooperation with ReferNet.

ReferNet national partners will submit their VET in Europe country reports in Word format. Reports are displayed online in pdf and html format in the VET in Europe database on Cedefop's web portal. Information can be retrieved from the database by country or by theme.

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 or templates prepared for ReferNet's VET in Europe country reports.

Deliverable 3: Short Description of VET in the EU Presidency country

To raise VET visibility in the two countries holding the EU Presidency each year, VET in Europe country reports are used as a basis for hard-copy publications (*Short*

(¹²) IVET: Initial vocational education and training.

(¹³) CVET: Continuing vocational education and training.

description and *Spotlight*, which are published in at least three languages). *Short descriptions* and *Spotlights* are prepared in close collaboration between ReferNet national partners and Cedefop. They are distributed during Presidency conferences and events.

Short descriptions and *Spotlights* can be downloaded from

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

Deliverable 4: National news on VET

To inform on the latest national developments on VET and related labour market issues, ReferNet national partners provide short articles.

Articles are published in Cedefop's newsletter and online in Cedefop's website. Each newsletter issue includes at least one article from each of the three ReferNet regional groups (see 3.3 Working arrangements). Each group decides on individual country contributions.

Articles may be used in Cedefop's contributions to biennial meetings of Directors-General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVET) and to the Advisory Committee for Vocational Education and Training (ACVET).

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. 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 partners act as multipliers and dissemination channels in their countries.

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.

Core, regional and working groups

A ReferNet **core group** provides regular communication between the network and Cedefop. The core group comprises two representatives from each regional group (see

below), elected by the network. 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.

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

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.

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 will be 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 four-year framework partnership agreement with one successful applicant from each eligible country.

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, as in certain countries, 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:

- EU-27 (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom);
- associated countries (Iceland and Norway).

4.2. Exclusion criteria

Applicants must state that they are not in any of the situations described in Articles 93(1), 94 and 96(2)(a) of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 as amended) 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 134b in conjunction with Article 133a of the Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23/12/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation 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 ⁽¹⁴⁾ 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.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Eligible organisation or grouping of co-beneficiaries which submits a proposal within the framework of this open call.

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.

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 organigramme 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⁽¹⁵⁾, underlining relevant professional experience and qualifications as well as English language competence⁽¹⁶⁾ and including a list of publications.

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:	35
– Variety and relevance of institutions and stakeholders considered (15 pts)	

⁽¹⁵⁾ The CVs should preferably use the European format (see <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>).

⁽¹⁶⁾ 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

– 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)	
2- Adequacy and efficiency of work organisation including task distribution between ReferNet team members (20 pts)	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 pts)	15
TOTAL	100

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

Only the proposals scoring a minimum of **60 points** ⁽¹⁷⁾ against the above award criteria will be considered for a framework partnership agreement.

Within each eligible country, the multi-annual framework partnership agreement ⁽¹⁸⁾ will be awarded to the applicant scoring the highest number of points.

5. SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENT FOR REFERNET WORK PLAN 2012

All applicants are required to submit a proposal for ReferNet work plan 2012 including an estimated budget in euro. The proposal must fulfil the specifications outlined in Annex I (Specifications for ReferNet work plan 2012).

Cedefop will evaluate the proposal for ReferNet work plan 2012 only of those applicants which meet the eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria in Section 4 above.

This work plan will be co-financed by a specific grant agreement (see Section 4 of the grant application form in Annex II).

The proposals for ReferNet work plan 2012 will be evaluated using the following criteria:

⁽¹⁷⁾ Out of the maximum 100.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The model standard framework partnership agreement can be found in Annex III.

- consistency of the proposal with Cedefop specifications and expected deliverables;
- quality of the proposal in terms of working methods, data sources, work organisation and project plan;
- timeliness and compliance with Cedefop timetable;
- 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 2012 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 2012 work plan, they will be required, within two months of the end of the operational period, to submit to Cedefop:

- a final report on the implementation of the work plan;
- a final financial statement of the eligible costs actually incurred, following a budget structure provided by Cedefop;
- a full summary statement of the receipts and expenditure of the action;
- a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts related to the implementation of the work plan, provided by an approved auditor or, in case of public bodies, a competent and independent public institution/officer. The certificate shall certify, in accordance with a method approved by Cedefop, that costs declared by the partner in the financial statements on which the request of payment is based are real, accurately recorded and eligible and that all receipts have been declared, in accordance with the framework and specific agreements.

Relevant templates will be 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 amounts to **EUR 4.000.000**, depending on the annual decisions of the Budget Authority.

6.2. Specific terms and conditions for the 2012 work plan

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2012 in all eligible countries ⁽¹⁹⁾ is EUR 955.000.

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2012 is distributed as follows ⁽²⁰⁾:

	Maximum grant amount
<u>Country group 1: 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

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**. If the amounts paid by Cedefop as pre-financing give rise to interest or other equivalent profits, according to the national regulation of the country where the bank account is established, such interest or profit will be recovered by Cedefop.

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 45 days of the signing of the

⁽¹⁹⁾ EU-27, Iceland and Norway.

⁽²⁰⁾ The allocated amount may not under any circumstances exceed the amounts indicated in the table.

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 45 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 the national currency (where it is not the 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 1/1/2012 and end on 31/12/2012 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.

In case the accounts are submitted in a national currency other than the Euro as per point 6.3 (d) above, and in order to neutralize the effect of possible important exchange rate fluctuations, Cedefop shall calculate the actual eligible costs by applying an exchange rate composed of 60% of the daily rate of pre-financing payment and 40% of the daily rate of final payment.

6.6.1. *Eligible direct costs*

The eligible direct costs for the activities/project are those costs which, with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the work plan and which can therefore be attributed to it directly.

In particular, the following direct costs (incurred by the partner and/or co-beneficiaries) are eligible provided they satisfy the criteria set out in 6.6:

- (a) costs of staff working directly on the activities, corresponding to their actual salaries plus social charges; if applicable, the cost of collaborating external personal should be indicated separately;
- (b) travelling and subsistence expenses for staff provided they are in line with the usual practices of the partner or co-beneficiary, and do not exceed the *per diem* scales approved by Cedefop, as well as travelling and subsistence expenses for staff participating in ReferNet regional meetings ⁽²¹⁾;
- (c) other direct costs associated with the project:

⁽²¹⁾ Participation in meetings convened by Cedefop will be reimbursed in accordance with Cedefop's rules for the reimbursement of the travel, subsistence and miscellaneous expenses of experts from outside the Centre invited to meetings (DIR/2008/280).

- the costs of running ReferNet-related training activities for the team, conferences, and seminars (organisation costs, room and equipment hire, travelling and subsistence costs for participants and speakers, interpreting costs, fees for external speakers, reproduction costs);
- information dissemination costs: production costs (hardcopy and/or electronic publications, books, CD-ROMs, videos, Internet, etc.), translation and editing, dissemination and distribution costs;
- the costs of consumables and supplies, provided they are identifiable and assigned to the work plan; and
- the costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the agreement, including the costs of financial guarantees and audits.

6.6.2. *Eligible indirect costs*

A flat-rate amount, not exceeding 7 % of the eligible direct costs of the work plan, representing the partner and co-beneficiaries' general administrative costs, can be regarded as chargeable to the project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Indirect costs are not eligible where the partner or co-beneficiary already receives an operating grant from Cedefop.

6.6.3. *Ineligible costs*

The following costs are not eligible:

- (a) return on capital;
- (b) debt and debt service charges;
- (c) provisions for losses, or potential future liabilities;
- (d) interest owed;
- (e) doubtful debts;
- (f) exchange losses;
- (g) VAT, unless the partner or co-beneficiary can show that they are unable to recover it;
- (h) costs declared by the partner or co-beneficiary and covered by another action or work programme receiving an EU grant;
- (i) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- (j) substitution costs for replacing persons involved in the project;
- (k) expenses for travel to or from countries other than those participating in the work plan unless explicit prior authorisation is granted by Cedefop; and
- (l) contributions in kind.

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

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

You have the right of recourse at any time to the European Data Protection Supervisor for matters relating to the processing of your personal data.

Your personal data (name, address, legal form, registration number and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) 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/info_contract/legal_entities_en.htm), 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/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: **8 July 2011. 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, 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/001/11** 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 20 June 2011. 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 around November 2011.

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 30 November 2011.

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
- Cedefop's Work Programme 2012
- Cedefop's Financial Rules and Implementing Rules (of 05.06.2009 and 17.12.2010 respectively)
- OJ L 248, 16.9.2002 (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union)
- OJ L 357, 31.12.2002 (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union)
- OJ L 48 of 22 February 2008 (Council Regulation (EC) N° 1525/2007 of 17 December 2007 amending Regulation N° 1605/2002 on the Financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union)
- OJ L 111, 28.04.2007 (Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 478/2007 of 23 April 2007 amending Regulation No 2342/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union.

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 Paraskevaïdis
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 2012

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

III. Model of standard framework partnership agreement and specific grant agreement

IV. (Draft) Charter