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of Vocational Training

50
YEARS
SHAPING LEARNING AND
SKILLS IN EUROPE

European VET for the 21st century

The balancing of excellence and
inclusion

22nd ReferNet annual plenary meeting

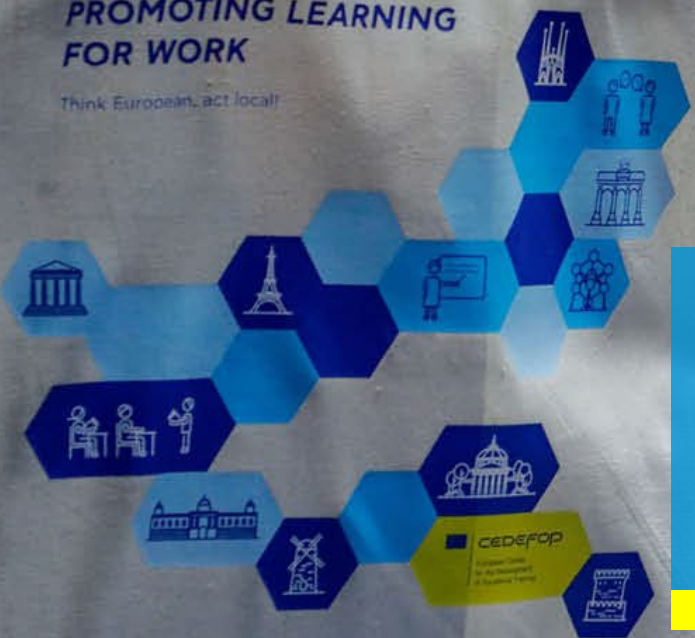


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**PROMOTING LEARNING
FOR WORK**

Think European, act local!



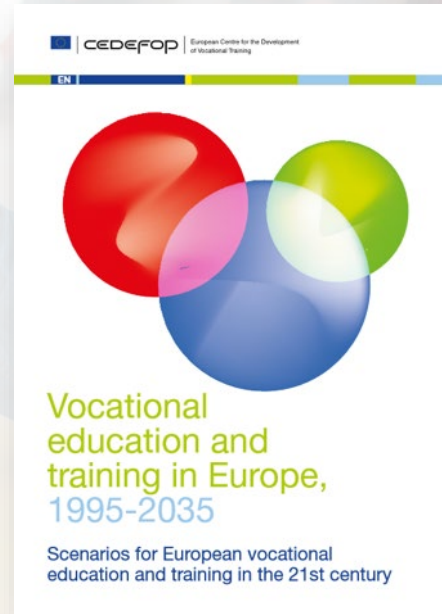
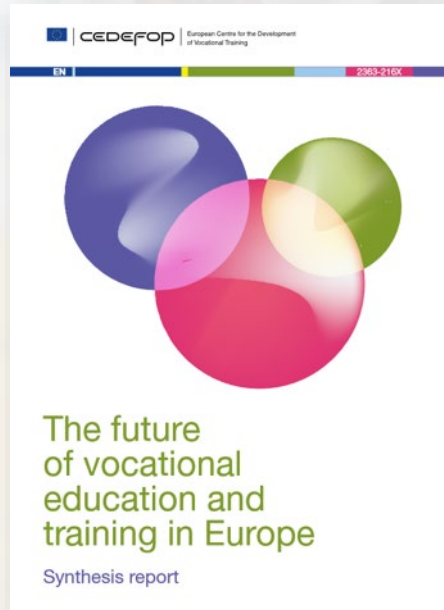
**The Changing Nature and Role of VET (2016-19)
The Future of VET in Europe (2020-22)
Balancing of Excellence and Inclusion (2023-26)
EU-27 + IS, NO, UK**

Conceptual background: The balancing of excellence and inclusion

Context of the study

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

The study seeks to deepen Cedefop's understanding of the challenges facing VET systems in the coming decade..



A summative, but holistic approach to excellence and inclusion

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



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3 Main thematic areas

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

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

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

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

Methodology

WA1: Evolving national VET objectives and priorities - excellence and/or inclusion

30 countries (EU-27 + NO + IS + UK)

Expert survey:

- Selection and analysis of 5 key policy documents/country
- General assessment of situation in the country

Case study countries



WA2: Excellence and inclusion – concept exploration and inclusion in national VET objectives

Case studies

- Desk research
- Expert interviews

Scenario development

- future scenarios for the promotion and balancing of excellence and inclusion (workshops)

Case studies

- Desk research
- Expert interviews

Overview all EU countries

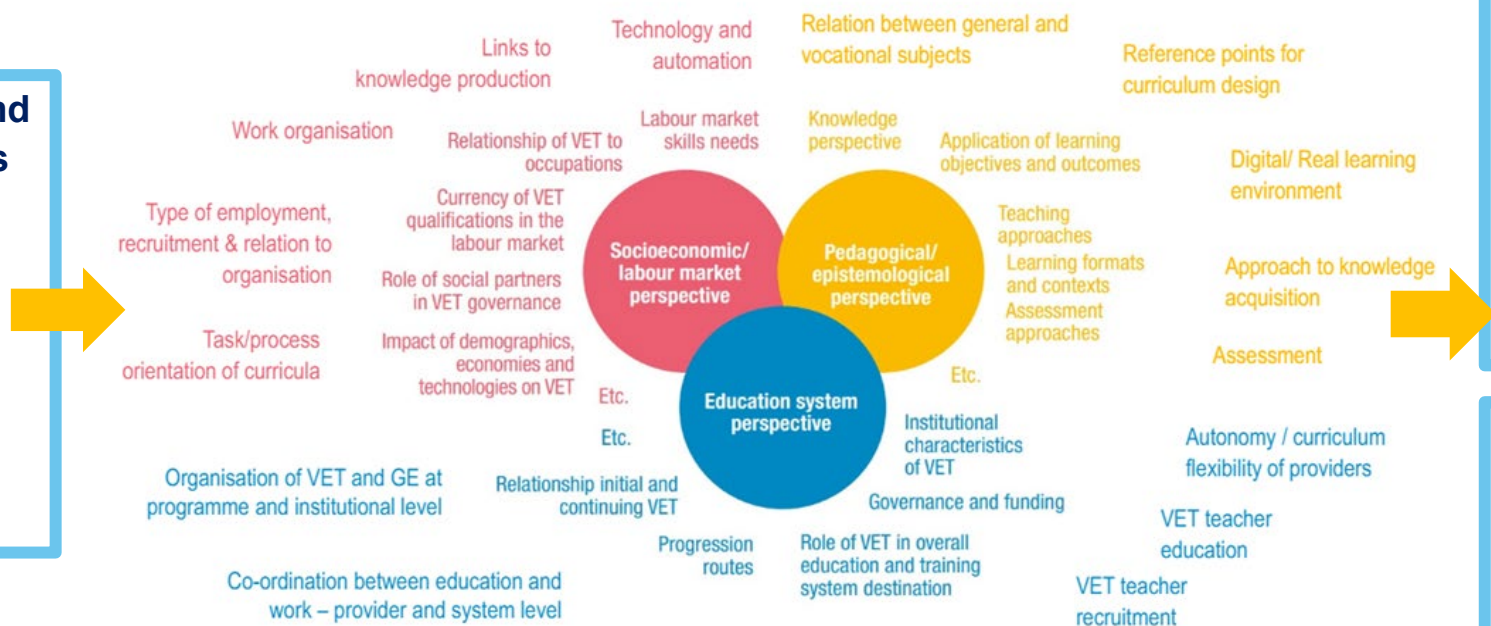
- Desk research
- Cedefop ReferNet questionnaire (27 EU Member States)

WA3: Expanding VET at higher levels and the implications for excellence and inclusion

Applying the three-perspective model for analysing excellence and inclusion

Vocational excellence and inclusion in VET policies at European level (past 25 years)

The concepts of vocational excellence and inclusion in VET in literature



Dimensions used:

- Central aim
- Target group
- Content of curriculum
- Delivery
- Funding

Theory of convention/orders of justifications in VET

- Market-based
- Industrial
- Domestic
- Civic
- Inspired
- Fame-based
- Project-based

Research questions (WA1)

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



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Research questions (WA2)

1. How are the concepts of excellence and inclusion **understood at national level**?
2. Which **instruments** are used to promote excellence and inclusion at national level:
 - 2.1 **Institutional initiatives** and reform;
 - 2.2 **Pedagogical and content** (curricular) reform;
 - 2.3 **Stakeholder involvement** and coordination (inside and outside the VET system).
3. How do the **conceptualisation** and comprehension of these concepts **vary across Europe**?
4. Which **future scenarios** for the **promotion** and **balancing** of excellence and inclusion could be developed?



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Research questions (WA3)

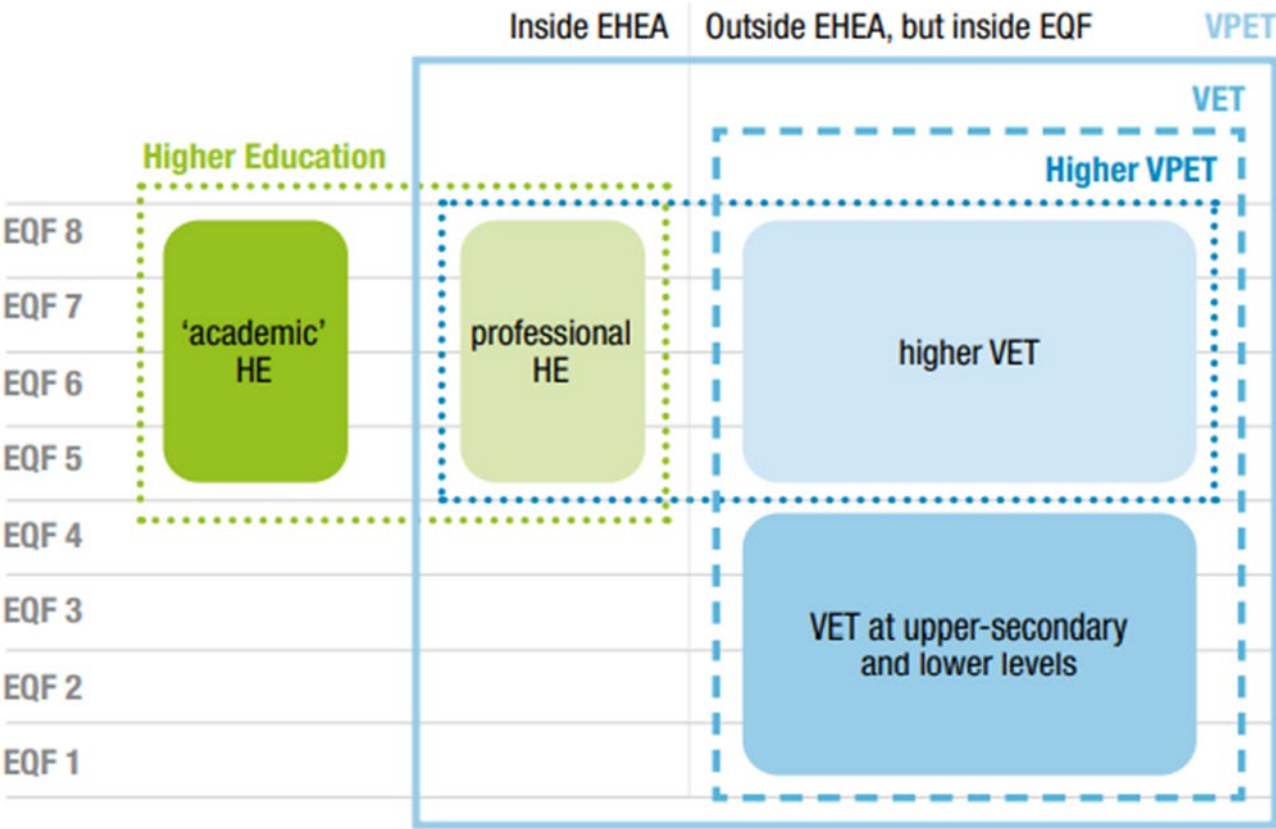
1. To what extent are **HVET institutions and systems** addressing the objectives and priorities of E and I?
2. How are the concepts of excellence and inclusion understood and **operationalised in HVET**?
 - 2.1. Which types of learners are targeted?
 - 2.2. Which pedagogies are used?
3. How do HVET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



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Higher vocational education and training – exemplifying change



NB: Width of levels roughly illustrates distribution of VET student.
Source: Cedefop. See also Cedefop (2019a).



Data collection and analysis

Elements	Explanation
Introduction of the VET policy document	
General information	Title, date of its issue, type (regulation/legislation, strategy/action plan, other policy), link to further information, short description of its content, its scope (whether it refers to a part of the VET system or the entire VET system or whether it goes beyond the VET system) and validity
Overall positioning of the policy document	
Relevance	Assessing the positioning of the policy document in relation to excellence and inclusion – based on a rating scale from 5 (strong focus) to 1 (no relevance) for each concept separately.
Implicit/explicit	Indication whether these concepts are explicitly or only implicitly mentioned in the document and justification
Key characteristics	
Central aim	Primary focus or central objective of the VET policy in relation to the 'level of VET' it addresses in particular
Target group	Answer options with different types of target groups are provided.
How does the VET policy address or intends to have an impact on the following dimensions?	
Content of curriculum (intended learning outcomes)	Transversal competence, occupational competences, other or no impact; brief explanations to justify the selection.
Delivery	Modularisation/partial qualification, new programme or learning pathway, pedagogical and didactical approach - incl. learning format and context, guidance and support, other or no impact: brief explanations to justify the selection
Funding	Specific funding line
Other intended impact	Other or additional (to the above possibilities) intended impacts.
Economic sector	Focus on a specific economic sector or applicable to all sectors.

Expert survey:

- ❖ analysis of 5 policy documents/country
- ❖ overall assessment

Analysis

- ❖ changes over time
- ❖ patterns

Findings and observations

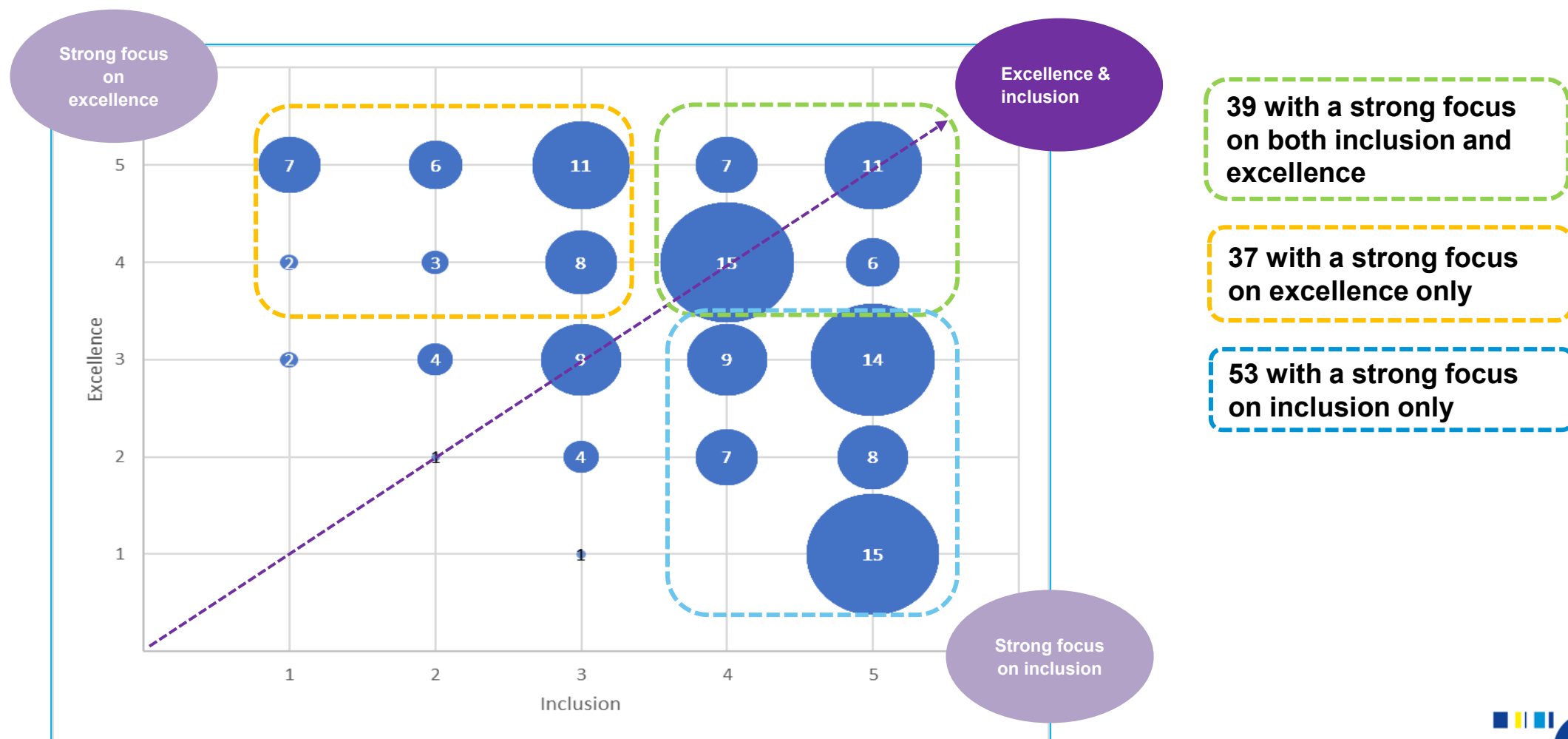


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Overview:

Focus of the 150 policy documents



Overview:

Characteristics of the 150 policy documents

- ❖ Policy documents that focus exclusively on **inclusion** are more frequently categorised as **regulations/legislation**
- ❖ Those with a strong focus on vocational **excellence** or with a shared high relevance to both goals are more common from around **2014 onwards**
- ❖ 40 percent have a **broad scope** and go beyond the VET system - more often the case with policy documents that have a strong focus on inclusion only



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How have the objectives on excellence and inclusion been addressed in national policy documents over the last 25 years?

- ❖ **Explicit reference** to the policy objective inclusion occurs more often than that to vocational excellence (increased from 2014 on)
- ❖ **Target group** – narrow/broad; expanding over the years
- ❖ **Flexible pathways** – access and/or progression
- ❖ **Expected learning outcomes:** transversal competences
- ❖ **Vocational excellence:** Teacher/trainer CPD; CoVEs; attractiveness, image of VET
- ❖ **Overall trend:** Focus on inclusion aspects; increased focus on vocational excellence in the last 10 years; more balanced approach; increasing emphasis on both objectives, especially in recent times

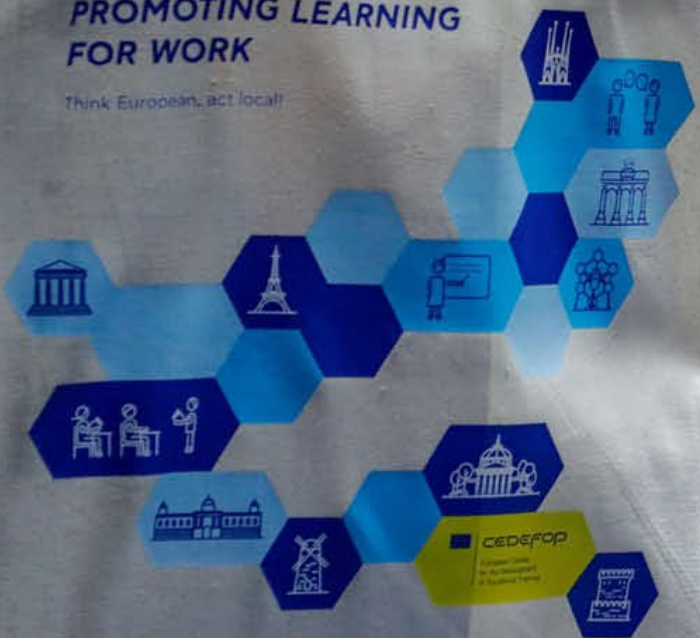


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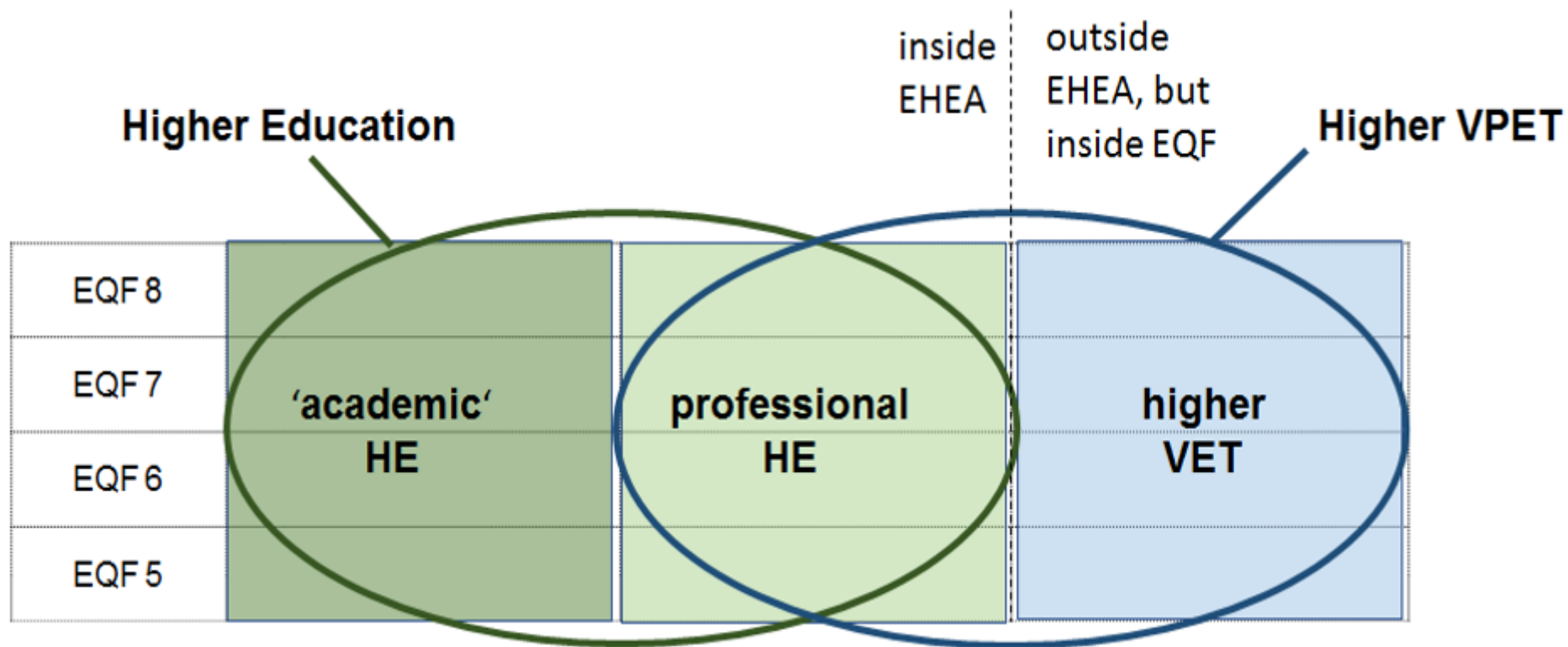


2025 ReferNet Workplan (deliverable 3a)

Expanding VET at higher levels

- ❖ VET's expansion to higher levels is **gaining speed**
- ❖ Opening up to higher levels can be understood by **either easing transfer into existing higher education programs** or by making **advanced level VET a priority** and thus developing a **separate pathway (a second pillar of higher education system)** offering work-based education and training beyond level 5 of the NQF
- ❖ Expansion to levels 6-8 will have to build on **existing institutions** (like Fagskoler) but also **include other providers** (Master-crafts can play a key role in this expansion).
- ❖ **TSCs** are becoming increasingly important but higher VET programmes and qualifications tend to maintain their traditional focus on applied knowledge.

Higher VPET (or HVPET, including professional HE and higher VET)



ReferNet deliverable 3a

The **aim** of this exercise is:

- ✓ To examine the **emerging role and characteristics of expansion of VET at higher levels** and how this influences the objectives of excellence and inclusion.
- ✓ to help establish a first **overview of relevant documents and further sources** at country level that can inform the discussion and research on these topics;
- ✓ to contribute to a **first demarcation of the key terms** used in the study framework (glossary).

Structure of the questionnaire:

- ❖ 5 sections  an overarching question followed by 2/3 sub questions
- ❖ Length: 5 to 7 pages maximum (excluding Annexes) for each section

ReferNet will provide a starting point for in-depth country research  this will feed into the current research

ReferNet deliverable 3a – 5 sections

1. How is the HVPET area **conceptualized** in your country?
2. **Role** of higher VPET in supporting **vocational excellence and inclusion**.
3. What are the **institutional** and **pedagogical** factors influencing excellence and inclusion at higher levels?
4. Which **stakeholders** are brought together and what is their **role** in supporting excellence and inclusion in HVPET?

And finally (e), based on the above, which are your overall **observations** and **recommendations**?



ReferNet deliverable 3a

Timeline:

- ✓ Presentation of operational questions and guidelines/instructions:

February 2025

- ✓ Estimated person days: **10**

- ✓ Requested deliverable:

❖ Start: **01/03/2025**

❖ End: **30/06/25**

- ✓ Feedback to ReferNet:

Q4 2025



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Thank you

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Project pages

www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/vet-excellence-and-inclusion-21st-century

www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/themes/future-trends-vet



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