



Annex I

Specifications for the 2016 ReferNet work plan

REFERNET WORK PLAN 2016

ReferNet's annual work plan for 2016 ⁽¹⁾ will be the object of a specific grant agreement based on the framework partnership agreement concluded between Cedefop and the partner.

General and specific conditions are available in the framework partnership agreement.

A. Reporting on national VET systems and policy developments
Deliverable type 1: Reporting on VET and VET-related policy
Deliverable type 2: Reporting on VET systems
Deliverable type 3: Ad-hoc thematic and other support
B. Raising the visibility of VET and online dissemination
Deliverable type 4: Visibility activities, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website and social media activities

⁽¹⁾ Start date of the annual work plan: January 2016 – end date: December 2016.

1. POLICY BACKGROUND

The current European Commission's agenda for jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change includes a specific investment package ⁽²⁾ to stimulate job creation and increase competitiveness – not least through education and training. Already Europe 2020 ⁽³⁾ considered investment in education and training a prerequisite to help create the necessary conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

VET's excellence and inclusion dimensions are important building blocks in the EU's effort to realise the current European Commission's agenda and advance towards the Europe 2020 goals, 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 %. While in some flagship initiatives VET's role is more distinct than in others, it contributes to all of them.

To support Member States in addressing the current challenges, the European Commission has launched a series of initiatives. Its communication on *Rethinking education and training* ⁽⁴⁾ focuses on the need to enable people to acquire the skills needed on the labour market. It complements the employment package *Towards a job-rich recovery* ⁽⁵⁾, which emphasises the need to invest in and validate people's skills ⁽⁶⁾.

Given high youth unemployment rates in several countries, the youth opportunities initiative and the communication *Moving youth into employment* ⁽⁷⁾ aim at combining education and training and employment policies to address this challenge ⁽⁸⁾. In 2013, Member States were advised to establish youth guarantees ⁽⁹⁾ and involve young people in shaping the design of policies that affect them ⁽¹⁰⁾. Apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning are a main pillar of the youth guarantee. A specific European alliance – launched mid-2013 and reinforced in 2015 – aims at supporting partnerships

⁽²⁾ European Commission, *An Investment plan for Europe*. Communication <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2014:903:FIN> [accessed 15.10.2015].

⁽³⁾ European Commission (2011), *Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Available from Internet at: http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm, and *Europe 2020: a new European strategy for jobs and growth: European Council Presidency Conclusions 25-26 March 2010* http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/113591.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ 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 from Internet: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0669:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁽⁵⁾ European Commission, *Towards a job-rich recovery*. COM(2012) 173 final. Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁽⁶⁾ 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 from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>

⁽⁷⁾ European Commission, *Moving youth into employment*, COM(2012) 727 final, and accompanying staff working document SWD(2012) 406 final. Available from Internet: <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>

⁽⁸⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1006>

⁽⁹⁾ Council of the European Union, Recommendation on establishing a youth guarantee. Common guidelines, 7123/13, Brussels, 3 April 2013, Available from Internet at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%207123%202013%20INIT>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Council of the European Union, *Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy*, Conclusions, 9094/13, Available from Internet at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209094%202013%20INIT>

between countries and different education and labour market actors to develop or strengthen apprenticeships in their specific country contexts ⁽¹¹⁾.

Despite some positive developments, Europe is still far from achieving the ET2020 target on adult participation in learning. Only around a fifth of low-skilled adults take part in non-formal job-related learning. Even in countries that have a long tradition in investing in vocational training or other types of adult learning as part of their active labour market policies, there seems to be a backward trend ⁽¹²⁾. Long-term unemployment and high numbers of young people on the dole remain a major concern.

Long-term unemployed require individualised support tailored to their needs and potential. Therefore, the European Commission has proposed measures that are similar to the youth guarantee: assessing the situation of each registered long-term unemployed within 18 months; based on skills audit and guidance, personalised job integration agreements should offer them a plan for returning to work.

The policy framework focuses on the interdependence between employment, economic, social, education and development policies ⁽¹³⁾. Getting people (back) into work and promoting equality and inclusion is the main thread of current EU policies. A wide range of policy documents reflect this: from the five Presidents' report, which calls for 'a stronger focus on employment and social performance' ⁽¹⁴⁾, to the employment guidelines and the (draft) joint report on implementing the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) ⁽¹⁵⁾. In recent years, the impact of the crisis and the need to steer Europe back to the road of recovery have drawn more attention to addressing the pressing economic and employment challenges.

Thus, presenting the draft ET2020 report, Commissioner Thyssen underlined the need to reach out to the most disadvantaged. The ET2020 report ⁽¹⁶⁾ identifies the need to '*recalibrate the policy focus*' and stresses the role of education and training in promoting

⁽¹¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/eafa-declaration_en.pdf, and Council of the European Union, *Declaration on European alliance for apprenticeships*, Luxembourg, 15.10.2013, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/139011.pdf.

⁽¹²⁾ European Commission, European social policy network, *Social investment in Europe, A study of national policies 2015*, Available from Internet at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=ESPNSocInv&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en&search.x=15&search.y=8> [accessed 07.09.2015]

⁽¹³⁾ Council of the European Union, *Conclusions towards a job-rich recovery and giving a better chance to Europe's youth*. 5.10.2012. Available from Internet: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st14/st14426.en12.pdf> [accessed 07.09.2015].

⁽¹⁴⁾ European Commission, Juncker, J.C. et al, *Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union* Available from Internet at: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/economic-monetary-union/index_en.htm [accessed 17.10.2015]

⁽¹⁵⁾ European Council, *Conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (ET2020), 12.5.2009 (C 119), Available from Internet at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:ef0016> [accessed 17.10.2015].

⁽¹⁶⁾ European Commission (2015), *Draft joint report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (ET2020), New priorities for European cooperation in education and training, Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015_en.pdf [accessed 17.10.2015].

equity and in imparting fundamental values. This reflects the Education Ministers' declaration to support the values at the heart of the EU in response to the terrorist attack in France in early 2015 ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Hence, ET2020 will pay particular attention to promoting inclusive education and active citizenship besides increasing youth employability. These aspects will certainly gain in importance in the coming year in the context of the envisaged 'migration agenda'. The meeting of Directors General for VET in autumn 2015 will discuss how European VET systems can support and integrate the newly arrived migrants – a theme that is likely to be high on the agenda throughout 2016. The ET2020 joint report defines six priority areas for the period 2015-20 on:

- Relevant and high-quality skills and competences, focusing on results, for employability, innovation and active citizenship;
- Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences;
- Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era;
- Strong support for educators;
- Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility;
- Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency of education and training systems.

Accomplishing the deliverables that Ministers agreed for VET and the renewed European adult learning agenda are seen as essential to achieve the first of these new priorities until 2020. Although not explicitly referred to, they are also key to attaining the others.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship have been ET2020 and Bruges communiqué ⁽¹⁸⁾ objectives from the outset. The Bruges Communiqué's strategic objectives for European cooperation in VET until 2020 combined a longer-term vision for VET with sets of specific policies or measures to be delivered in the short to medium term. The longer-term objectives include attractiveness, excellence and quality of initial and continuing VET. They also comprise improved cooperation between stakeholders, monitoring, use of EU and national tools, and flexible access to learning that promotes mobility, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

Replacing the deliverables agreed for the period 2011-14, the Riga conclusions ⁽¹⁹⁾ set out five medium-term deliverables (MTDs) until 2020. They promote:

- all forms of work-based learning for young people and adults;
- quality assurance mechanisms in line with the EQAVET recommendation and feedback loops to IVET and CVET;

⁽¹⁷⁾ Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, <https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/964-education-ministers-release-declaration-to-tackle-intolerance-discrimination-and-radicalisation>, and Council of the European Union, 3388th Council meeting Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, Outcome, Brussels, 18 and 19 May 2015 8965/15, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/topics/education-training> [accessed 17.10.2015].

⁽¹⁸⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf

⁽¹⁹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf

- access to VET and qualifications for all through flexible systems, guidance and validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills;
- key competences in both IVET and CVET;
- VET teacher and trainer development.

Transversal areas and principles to support the work on these deliverables include:

- partnerships with social partners and other stakeholders,
- efficient funding,
- promoting excellence and innovation,
- using the learning outcomes approach,
- using EU tools and principles.

The Bruges Communiqué and Riga Conclusions entrust Cedefop with reporting on progress towards the MTDs and strategic objectives. This acknowledges Cedefop's contribution in reporting on European cooperation in VET over the periods 2002-10⁽²⁰⁾ and 2011-14⁽²¹⁾ to which ReferNet contributed substantially. The evidence provided in these reports informed the discussions on future deliverables and working methods in VET. For the period up to 2020, two reports are foreseen: an interim report in 2017 and a final report in 2020.

To ensure consistent implementation of Europe 2020 in the different policy areas, the Council of the European Union endorsed an economic governance process. The so-called 'European semester'⁽²²⁾ process helps identify the main challenges that the EU and its Member States face and provides strategic policy advice. This advice goes beyond economy, finance and employment to include education and training.

The specific recommendations 2015-16 focus on growth drivers. They tend to cover fewer areas and are more specific than in the past. For many countries recommendations used to coincide with several of the 2011-14 Bruges communiqué 'deliverables', this is less likely in the future. Hence, fewer relate to education and training. Nevertheless, for 16 countries, VET related issues have been included: some are on improving participation and learning outcomes of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g. migrants); a few refer to apprenticeships or similar schemes.

The need for country-specific information and analysis will persist to inform Cedefop's own work and that of its partners. As Cedefop is increasingly supporting Member States directly, this will also contribute to enriching its country-specific expertise. Outcomes of Cedefop's work will help improve the evidence base to inform policy making more comprehensively, for instance the European Commission's work on the European semester.

The Commission's new working groups are likely to focus on workplace learning of adults and trainers and in-company trainers (for work-based learning, apprenticeships).

⁽²⁰⁾ 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.

⁽²¹⁾ 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. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6116_en.pdf, and Cedefop (2015), *Stronger VET for better lives: Cedefop's monitoring report on vocational education and training policies 2010-14*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, Cedefop Reference series; No 98. Available from Internet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3067>

⁽²²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/index_en.htm

Cedefop also supports countries' cooperation on apprenticeships and in 2015-16 engages in further in-depth thematic reviews of Greece, Italy and Slovenia, following the 2014 pilot in Lithuania and Malta.

Cedefop's different strands of activities at the interface between VET and the labour market and its policy learning forums will also inform the Commission's planned 'skills agenda' and the work to create synergies between the commonly developed transparency tools, ESCO and the EU Skills Panorama.

Following first discussions in Riga and Luxembourg, both Presidencies in 2016 will focus on VET excellence and innovation. While partnerships for excellence, internationalisation and mobility will be in the focus of the Dutch events, the Slovak Presidency intends to focus on fostering talents. Higher level VET, permeability of education and training systems and the transparency tools are the intended themes to underpin discussions in the second semester.

All these policy processes and exercises are likely to increase the need to respond flexibly to different types of information requests, often at short notice. They also require reinforced cooperation between education and training and employment and different stakeholders, in particular the social partners, at EU and country level. For Cedefop and its ReferNet this also means tapping the expertise of social partners and including their views in monitoring and reporting activities.

2. PURPOSE OF THE 2016 ACTION

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.

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.

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

ReferNet is also 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, targeting various audiences.

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.

Therefore, Cedefop will require ReferNet national partners to:

- (a) report on VET policy and the way VET-related objectives of Europe's 2020 strategy and other European VET and related policy priorities are being addressed in their countries;
- (b) provide up-to-date information on VET systems and the way VET is developing in their country;
- (c) deliver thematic and other support to complement the information on VET systems and/or address topical information needs; and
- (d) carry out visibility activities, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website and social media activities.

3. DELIVERABLES

A. Reporting on national VET systems and policy developments	
Deliverable type 1: Reporting on VET and VET-related policy	
Deliverable 1a	VET policy reporting
Deliverable 1b	National news on VET
Deliverable type 2: VET in Europe – Reporting on national VET systems	
Deliverable 2a	VET in [country X] report
Deliverable 2b	VET in [country X] – Spotlight
Deliverable 2c	VET in [Presidency country] – Short description (hard-copy publication based on VET in [country X])
Deliverable type 3: Ad-hoc thematic and other support	
Deliverable 3a	Survey on international mobility of IVET learners
Deliverable 3b	Ad hoc thematic support – Article or other request
B. Raising the visibility of VET and online dissemination	
Deliverable type 4: Visibility activities, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website and social media activities	
Deliverable 4a	Maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website and social media activities
Deliverable 4b	Other visibility actions

All deliverables shall be provided in English. They shall be checked by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with the relevant terminology used at EU level before submission.

Peer review among ReferNet partners is strongly encouraged and, when indicated in the Work plan, shall be mandatory for certain deliverables.

All deliverables type 1-3 shall be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet before delivery to Cedefop.

Deliverable type 1: Reporting on VET and VET-related policy

Deliverable 1a VET policy reporting

Background/Aim

In 2016, ReferNet will be asked to provide information on five medium-term deliverables (MTDs) and transversal principles set in Riga Conclusions. ReferNet will provide factual data on national policy measures and actions in response to a questionnaire designed by Cedefop.

ReferNet's input will focus on countries' priorities in terms of MTDs and in the ways to address them. In contrast to the 2010-14 cycle, monitoring will not consider all policy measures that can be used to achieve an MTD but focus on those a country selects.

This input informs country fiches, cross-country overviews of developments by deliverable as well as Cedefop's analysis and reports on progress in implementing the Bruges Communiqué and Riga Conclusions. It also informs the Commission's work in the context of the European semester (see above). To complement this evidence base, Cedefop also draws on its own work, ReferNet's other activities (thematic reporting, information on VET systems), and further EU and international sources.

The input by ReferNet will also provide data for Cedefop's interim report in 2017 which will focus on progress in achieving the MTDs.

Methods

Cedefop will provide ReferNet partners with country-specific questionnaires that will reflect national priorities. In 2015, Cedefop will ask DGVTs of the participating countries to indicate the MTDs they decide to prioritise nationally for the coming years and the policy options linked to these. As national priorities differ and may change, questionnaires will be tailored to each country and include questions:

- a) on developments in all the MTDs with emphasis on country priorities and selected policy options addressing them;
- b) general issues and trends relevant to each of the five Riga MTDs to provide the contextual information needed to interpret the findings.

While reporting will focus on policy priorities indicated by the DGVTs, ReferNet will also be asked to report on all five Riga MTDs and transversal areas, i.e. also on the MTDs that their countries have attributed lower priority.

The questionnaire will be shorter than the one used for the 2011-14 cycle and adapted to the needs of the EU-28 countries, Norway and Iceland. Key points are to ensure, for each initiative reported on, that:

- it is clear whether the action is planned or whether it has taken place and whether transversal areas and principles of the Riga conclusions (partnerships, funding, innovation, use of learning outcomes) have been applied;

- the degree of implementation/scope/coverage (²³) is clear (e.g. pilot, regional measure, national measure);
- information is available on the ways in which the new measure changes the arrangements previously in place;
- some assessment of results can be made (in relative terms).

Part of the information will need to be collected and/or processed in a structured way to make outcome evaluation possible.

Next to standardised information, understanding VET policy developments also requires information based on ‘open’ questions. These allow explaining comprehensive strategies which combine several policy options or address more than one deliverable. ReferNet’s responses to these questions will at the same time be the basis for short national policy reviews that can feed into the reports in 2017 and 2020. These reviews could also be disseminated at national level.

Reporting should draw on a wide range of sources, including policy papers, legislation, evaluation reports, research and policy analysis as well as case studies. This also requires broad cooperation with various national stakeholders, to mobilise their expertise to prepare and validate the responses.

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

Cedefop may also seek feedback on its own analysis of progress at country level and ask ReferNet as well as DGVT/ACVT to validate the information.

Steps/Deadlines

Cedefop will develop and make the questionnaire available during the ReferNet plenary meeting on 18-20 January 2016.

The questionnaire will be deployed end of January 2016 with a deadline to deliver the information end of March. These timing arrangements are needed to enable discussion on initial findings with ACVTs and DGVTs and to provide information to support the Commission’s work on the European Semester in October.

As previously, Cedefop will provide assistance and feedback throughout the process.

Deliverable 1b National news on VET

ReferNet provides short news items to inform on the latest national developments on VET and related labour market issues as well as other topics that are linked to or influence VET (e.g. employment policies linked to training, active ageing, enterprise policies, guidance and counselling, validation). These news items should focus on topics that reflect the European VET policy agenda, in particular the Bruges Communiqué, Riga Conclusions, EU Presidency country priorities as well as country specific recommendations in the relevant areas. Cedefop may provide ReferNet with guiding themes for the news, e.g. Presidency priorities or topical issues like the role of VET in integrating newly arrived migrants or themes that Cedefop is expected to contribute to.

(²³) Complemented with information on funding or changes in it in relative terms where possible. Absolute funding amounts give little insight on the importance of policy measures.

This deliverable will be used to report on national VET developments via Cedefop's newsletter, website and magazine and contribute to other Cedefop work where relevant (e.g. country fiches, thematic studies, contributions to the biennial DGVT and ACVT meetings). News items may also be used as a basis to propose presentation of country examples at these and other EU-level events.

Methods

ReferNet is responsible for the relevance, reliability, completeness and correctness of the news items.

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 but complementary information can be added as an attachment or as links to related websites. Visual material (graphs, logos, photos, etc.) can also be included.

News items will be published under the ReferNet partner's name. Cedefop reserves the right to decide whether to publish.

Cedefop may request clarification and/or further information or revision. Cedefop may also seek feedback on news items edited for publication or information prepared by Cedefop based on them.

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

Steps/Deadlines

ReferNet partners should submit news items as soon as national/regional developments in VET policies or systems take place and not less than four news items per year. Cedefop may also announce to ReferNet partners a specific theme for the news expected. A news template will be provided by Cedefop

Deadlines: March, June, September and December.

Deliverable type 2: VET in Europe

Reporting on national VET systems

In 2012-14, Cedefop piloted and adjusted a new approach for reporting on national VET systems. According to this approach, the country reports – VET in [country X] – (2a) have become more concise and country-driven to better fit the specificities of the national VET systems and form a more suitable basis for the hard-copy publication known as Short description of VET in the EU Presidency countries (2c); VET in [country X] – Spotlights (2b) were introduced as a new deliverable for all countries to summarise key features of the national VET systems.

In 2015, a ReferNet workshop on the evaluation of the VET in Europe country reports has revealed the advantages and challenges of the current approach to preparing the VET in Europe reports and possible solutions for improving the structure, content and visibility of the reports and their production cycle. The evaluation was based on discussions in the 2014 ReferNet regional meetings in Stockholm (3-4 April) and Bled (8-9 April), and in the 12th plenary annual meeting and the ReferNet reflection group (18-20 November). Based on the conclusions of the workshop, the main changes in the 2016 VET in Europe country reports may lead to integrating policy information and a section on teachers and trainers. The reports will also contain more structured information that can easily be updated.

In 2016, ReferNet will be asked to update and complement the information provided in their 2014 country reports and update the Spotlight content provided in 2015. On the basis of the on-line version, the Presidency countries will also prepare a version to be published in hard copy.

Deliverable 2a VET in [country X] report

Background/Aim

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.

Methods

There is no fixed reference year for the 2016 report; authors will refer to the latest developments. The work will consist of updating and improving as necessary the information on the previous years.

The ReferNet national partner will ensure that the report is up-to-date, relevant, reliable, complete and correct. It will be published online under the name of its author by Cedefop. Cedefop may request revisions to further improve the report's clarity, readability and responsiveness to the requirements set out in the guidelines. Such feedback will be given based on the agreed quality criteria.

Additionally, the **peer-review** exercise among ReferNet partners introduced by Cedefop in 2013 becomes mandatory in 2016. As previously, it will aim at improving the quality and consistency of the reports.

Cedefop in cooperation with ReferNet partners may update the guidelines for the reports, including quality criteria, to reflect lessons learnt from the previous reporting and peer-review exercises.

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

The national partner shall submit the report electronically, in Word format. Updates to the 2014 report (see <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vet-in-europe-country-reports>) and complementary information should be visible by working in 'track changes' mode.

Steps/Deadlines

Guidelines, including the quality criteria, will be published by the end of March 2016.

The peer-review exercise, including exchange of comments among ReferNet national partners will take place in May 2016.

The reports should be delivered to Cedefop by 1 July 2016.

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

Background/Aim

Spotlights summarise key features, challenges and developments within the national VET systems. The main aim of a *Spotlight* is to present a country's VET system in a clear and concise manner within a limited number of pages (leaflet). It addresses readers who need a brief, accessible introduction to VET in a specific country and the broader public.

For the Presidency countries, Spotlights will also be published in hard copy and disseminated during Presidency events. Cedefop may organise the translation of *Spotlight* into the official language of the Presidency country.

Methods

The work will consist of updating the *Spotlight* of the previous year as soon as changes occur. The ReferNet national partner will ensure that *Spotlight* highlights key features, developments, challenges and policy responses of the national VET system. The partner will work in close cooperation with Cedefop based on the content of the previously published *Spotlight*. Cedefop will provide feedback to ReferNet partner to ensure information is presented in a concise and clear manner.

A *Spotlight* template was developed and made available to ReferNet in September 2012 and updated by Cedefop in 2013. Based on lessons learnt from the previous reporting exercises, Cedefop, in co-operation with ReferNet, may update the template for the 2016 exercise.

The national partner shall submit *Spotlight* electronically, in Word format and using 'track changes'. The system chart should be based on the 2015 version and be in line with the unified approach developed by Cedefop in cooperation with ReferNet in 2013 (see <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4135>).

Updated information should be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet before delivery to Cedefop.

For the hard-copy versions of the Presidency countries' Spotlights, Cedefop will take care of the publication process. Cedefop may organise the translation of the hard-copy publication into the official language(s) of the Presidency country. Printing will be done on demand.

Steps/Deadlines

Each national partner will update *Spotlight* regularly and as soon as changes in VET system take place. For Presidency countries and for partners that were not involved in the work of ReferNet in 2015, the submission date will be agreed bilaterally between Cedefop and the ReferNet national partner.

Deadlines: March, June, September and/or December.

Deliverable 2c: VET in [Presidency country] – Short description (hard-copy publication based on VET in [country X])

Background/Aim

To raise VET visibility in the two countries holding the EU Presidency, their country reports (see deliverable 2a above) will be published as hard copies in English and the official language(s) of the Presidency. The publication should be available from the first day of the Presidency. This implies that it is prepared during the semester before and that work in 2016 will focus on:

1. VET in Slovakia, in the first semester
2. VET in Malta, in the second semester.

These hard-copy publications will be distributed together with Spotlights (see deliverable 2b above) during Presidency conferences and events.

Methods

On the basis of the VET in [country X] report and in cooperation with Cedefop, the Presidency country will prepare a version to be published in hard copy. Cedefop will further edit the document, add other parts (foreword, abstract), and be in charge of the publication process. Cedefop may organise translation of the hard-copy publication into the official language of the Presidency country. Printing will be done on demand.

Close cooperation between the author(s) and Cedefop is expected. A particular effort will be made to produce an attractive high-level publication, as it is an important visibility tool both for VET at national level and for cooperation between Cedefop and the national partner institution.

Steps/Deadlines

To be agreed with Cedefop project manager. The publication needs to be prepared in the preceding semester and should be ready for the start of the Presidency.

Deliverable type 3: Ad-hoc thematic and other support

Deliverable 3a Survey on international mobility of IVET learners

Background/Aim

IVET learning mobility is seen as a catalyst in internationalising VET, and as a driver of more mobility in the European labour market. Consequently, over the last decade, mobility for learning and work has been a central feature in the development of European tools – ECVET, EQAVET and Europass. The Bruges Communiqué (2010) stresses the need to substantially increase transnational VET mobility. It called on Member States to take appropriate measures, including by addressing legal and administrative obstacles (one of the deliverables for the period 2011-14 was dedicated to this issue). In 2011, the Council Recommendation ‘Youth on Move – promoting the learning mobility of young people’ called for developing a methodological framework (referred to as ‘Mobility Scoreboard’) to monitor progress in promoting learning mobility by the Member States. At the same time, the Council conclusions of 2011 defined a European benchmark: at least 6% of 18-34 year olds with an initial vocational education and training qualification should have undertaken an IVET-related study or training period abroad.

Following these developments, and given the availability of more funding for mobility through Erasmus+, the Mobility Scoreboard is a necessary next step to help increase learning mobility in Europe. The aim of the Scoreboard is to survey the conditions for learning mobility in the 10 key action areas (‘thematic areas’) identified in the ‘Youth on the Move’ Recommendation, and to monitor the progress and support for learning mobility in the Member States. The Scoreboard is thus a new tool to help policy-makers identify obstacles to the mobility of IVET learners and weaknesses in mobility-related policies and practices. In conjunction with other Commission initiatives, the Scoreboard is intended to contribute to the design of new policy initiatives aimed to facilitate learning mobility.

Methods

In 2016, ReferNet will carry out a survey for the IVET-Mobility Scoreboard project. The general topic of this survey will be the international mobility of IVET learners.

The survey will comprise two strands:

Strand A: Questionnaire on various aspects of IVET mobility (thematic areas derived from the Council Recommendation ‘Youth on the Move’)

The questionnaire will have two Parts:

- Part 1 will focus on
 - Motivation of learners to participate in international mobility
 - Preparation of learners for mobility opportunities
 - Quality of mobility opportunities
- Part 2 will focus on
 - Portability of grants
 - Disadvantaged learners
 - Role of multipliers

The questionnaire (Strand A) will follow the same methodological approach as the one used in 2015 (see Annex 1). ReferNet partners will receive the MS Word file of the questionnaire before completing the survey online. Guidelines and assistance will be provided as necessary.

Strand B: Reviewing and updating the country information presented in the fiches that were drafted by Cedefop in 2015

The country information to be reviewed covers the four thematic areas that were addressed by ReferNet in the 2015 survey:

- Information and guidance
- Administrative and institutional issues
- Recognition of learning outcomes
- Partnerships and funding

ReferNet partners will receive the 2015 country fiches and will be asked to update them as necessary based on the changes that have recently occurred in these areas.

Steps/Deadlines

ReferNet partners will receive the survey materials early March 2016. The deadlines to complete the survey will be as follows:

- Strand A Part 1: mid-May 2016;
- Strand A Part 2: mid-May 2016 or mid-November 2016 (to be decided by each ReferNet partner).
- Strand B (update of country fiches): mid-May 2016 or mid-November 2016 (to be decided by each ReferNet partner).

A workshop will be organised mid-April for those in charge of completing the questionnaire. The purpose of the workshop will be to provide respondents with complementary explanations on the questions, their purpose, and the type of information expected. Clarifications and directions will be provided as necessary. The objective of the workshop is to ensure that respondents have a common understanding of the information expected by Cedefop.

Cedefop will process the responses and will come back to respondents as necessary for clarifications, corrections and complements (*'reiteration round'*). The National Representatives will be requested to validate the information presented in the country fiches. The reiteration and validation rounds are planned to take place as follows:

- For responses received mid-May 2016 – Reiteration in September-October 2016; validation in November 2016.
- For responses received mid-November 2016 – Reiteration in March 2017; validation in May-June 2017.

Deliverable 3b Ad hoc thematic support Article or other request

To respond to topical information needs, this activity aims to address VET-specific issues of European relevance nationally or at EU level. The activity may not be the same for all partners. Requests will be driven by Cedefop's work on VET and related issues in the countries and the required format(s) for information collection and analysis.

Background/Aim

The activity could take the form of ⁽²⁴⁾:

- articles,
- surveys,
- organising meetings,
- mobilising stakeholders, or
- any other format having comparative or analytical aims. The activity will tackle a specific issue selected for its actuality and European policy relevance, for instance the Presidencies' semester themes to support the Copenhagen process or ad-hoc requests on thematic information on issues that are high on the EU agenda. It may also focus on in-depth reviews involving one or more countries.

This activity is planned to feed into:

- Cedefop's contribution to the discussions of the Directors General for VET and the Advisory Committee for VET during the Dutch and Slovak Presidencies,
- other policy forums, as needed,
- Cedefop's own research work and its contribution to the work of the European Commission and its thematic working groups or similar activities.

Methods

ReferNet will conduct the activity in accordance with guidelines provided by Cedefop. Whenever possible, Cedefop will involve ReferNet in defining them. However, type and degree of involvement will depend on the given parameters.

In case the activity involves delivering an article or a survey, information should be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet before delivering it to Cedefop.

Steps/deadlines

ReferNet will be informed about the theme and the format of the activity as soon as they have been defined.

⁽²⁴⁾ All activities will imply approximately the same workload.

Deliverable type 4: Visibility activities, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website

Deliverable 4a: Maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website and social media activities

Background/Aim

A national ReferNet website in the national language and also, if the ReferNet national partner so wishes, in English will be regularly maintained and updated. 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, etc.

Methods

The national ReferNet website can be autonomously hosted on its own domain or a dedicated section in the ReferNet national partner's parent organization's website. Cedefop provides guidelines to prepare the national ReferNet website as well as technical advice and support for its setup and maintenance. 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.

The collaboration between ReferNet members will be both encouraged and facilitated by providing virtual collaboration spaces.

Reporting of the web statistics will allow Cedefop and the partners to evaluate the impact of the various efforts.

Cedefop will periodically review the national websites and report on their status and progress.

National ReferNet social media accounts are encouraged to follow/like Cedefop's social media accounts (currently on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) and retweet/share/view Cedefop's posts to enhance visibility, including by translating them in the national language. Cross-promotion of all partners' activities will also be encouraged.

Steps/Deadlines

Continuous activity

Deliverable 4b: Other visibility actions

Background/Aim

Cedefop intends to increase the visibility of Cedefop/ReferNet products by making potential users aware of the quality, reliability and relevance of the information and analysis they provide.

This visibility strategy is based on recommendations developed in 2012 by the ReferNet working group on visibility and agreed by Cedefop after consultation with ReferNet partners.

ReferNet partners are encouraged to support actively the promotion of all deliverables and activities of the network and contribute to raise the visibility of Cedefop and ReferNet at national level.

Methods

The national visibility strategy will rely on existing channels such as the ReferNet national website. It can also include the dissemination and/or production of papers, flyers, newsletters, web banners, videos, etc. and the organisation of – and participation to – public events involving relevant stakeholders.

ReferNet national partners will submit a list of visibility actions carried out in 2016 at national level, including details on the audience targeted, the channels used, possibly the outcomes of the action, etc.

A survey on all visibility actions (see above) carried out at national level will be filled in by the ReferNet partner as an attachment to the Final Implementation Report on the 2016 action.

Steps/Deadlines

Continuous activity

BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFERNET 2016 WORK PLAN

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2016 in all eligible countries ⁽²⁵⁾ is approximately EUR 980.000.

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2016 is distributed as follows ⁽²⁶⁾:

<u>Country groups</u>	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

See also the call for proposals full text, general, specific and financial conditions of the framework partnership agreement. Cedefop reserves the right not to award the total budget available.

⁽²⁵⁾ EU-28, Iceland and Norway

⁽²⁶⁾ The allocated amount may not under any circumstances exceed the amounts indicated in the table.

TIMETABLE

Start date of the annual work plan: January 2016

End date of the annual work plan: December 2016

Duration of the annual work plan: 12 months

Activity	(Approx.) deadline/Frequency
1. Reporting on VET and VET-related policy	
1a. VET policy reporting	End of March
1b. National news on VET	March, June, September and December, or more frequently on own initiative
2. Reporting on VET systems	
2a. VET in [country X] report	1 July (peer review in May)
2b. Spotlight on VET	March, June, September and/or December, on own initiative
2c. VET in [Presidency country] (hard-copy publication based on VET in [country X])	To be agreed with Cedefop project manager (Slovakia and Malta)
3. Ad-hoc thematic and other support	
3a. Survey on international mobility of IVET learners	Strand A Part 1: mid-May 2016 Strand A Part 2: mid-May 2016 <u>or</u> mid-November 2016 (to be decided by each ReferNet partner) Strand B (update of country fiches): mid-May 2016 <u>or</u> mid-November 2016 (to be decided by each ReferNet partner)
3b. Ad hoc thematic support – Article or other request	Ad hoc
4. Visibility actions	
4a. National ReferNet website and social media	Continuous
4b. Other visibility actions	Continuous