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CEDEFOP

Briefing Towards new horizons

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TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

Shifting realities for vocational education and training Cedefop activities 2019-20

NAVIGATING THE TRANSITIONS

Transition is the key word that marks the 2019 and 2020 policy framework in which Cedefop operates. The new Commission has set a high ambition for the EU: to move to a green and digital economy that works for people and leaves nobody behind. Reinforced investment in skills and learning throughout life for all is essential to make this transition successful. As all adults will need to upskill and reskill, vocational education and training (VET) will play a pivotal role in the sustainable growth strategy.

Cedefop is ready to work with the Commission, the Member States and social partners to help develop and realise the future skills and VET agenda. The Agency flexibly adjusts to evolving stakeholder needs, as its remit to work on VET, skills and qualifications, set out in its recast Regulation, proves (in force since 2019). Maintaining the tripartite governance structure, the Regulation ensures Cedefop’s research, analyses and support to countries bridge VET and the labour market. Its 2019 achievements and 2020 activities demonstrate this, as is evident from the following examples.

NEW SKILLS INTELLIGENCE FOR DYNAMIC CHANGE

To help people and enterprises manage the transition to new skill demands and types of work, VET and qualifications need to be adjusted. Comprehensive labour market and skills intelligence (LMSI) that keeps up with dynamic developments and anticipates longer-term trends is a prerequisite. Cedefop is well-placed to support EU Member States, social partners and other stakeholders in this process. Skills anticipation is therefore central to its work.

In 2020, the results of the Agency’s skills governance reviews in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece and Slovakia will become available. With these reviews, Cedefop assisted the countries in their work to strengthen their anticipation capacity and use LMSI to support social dialogue and policy-making for VET, guidance,

employment, sectoral development and innovation strategies.

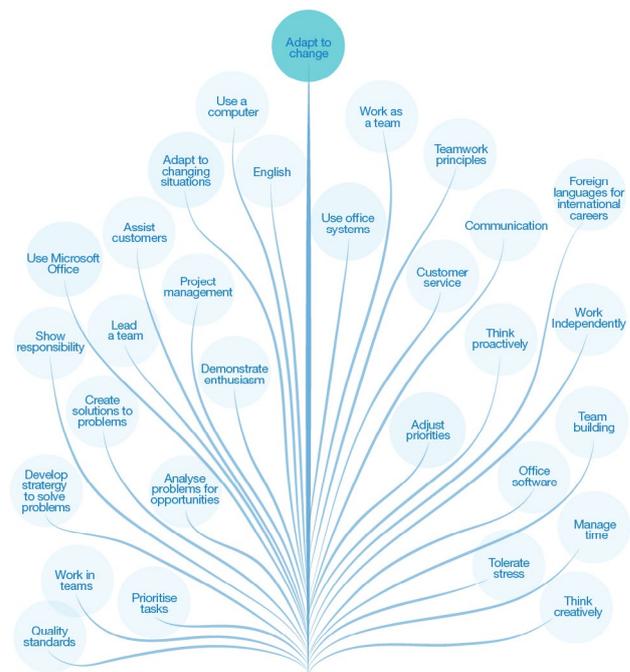
Real-time evidence



Upskilling and reskilling activities need to meet immediate and emerging skill demand. The speed of change requires adapting and blending traditional intelligence and recent data analytics to provide evidence on skill supply, demand and mismatch. Machine learning and other artificial intelligence methods help make LMSI become faster and more detailed.

Cedefop has ventured into new territory and developed a **real-time information system** using big data. It signals how jobs are changing from within and which new ones are emerging – an asset that forecasts cannot provide.

FIGURE 1. THE SKILLS EMPLOYERS WANT



Source: Cedefop.

Cedefop analysed over 70 million online job adver-

tisements in all Member States and languages. The data show which jobs employers offer and what skills they demand within and across countries. Adapting to change is at the top of the list across the board. Working in a team, using a computer, English and assisting customers are also in high demand. Transversal skills make up a third of those listed in vacancy notices; less than half are hard skills, while a quarter are digital skills. This information could also guide jobseekers.

By the end of 2019, data sets were available for 18 countries. In 2020, the database will be fully populated. Cedefop will also prepare a handbook on technological skill foresight methods and focus on combining different ways of collecting LMSI to support policy learning and targeted action.



Skills outlook beyond 2030

In line with its mandate, in spring 2020, Cedefop will release new long-term projections on skill supply and demand in the EU. These regular forecasts provide the only EU comparable outlook of labour market trends across countries, sectors and occupations.

The projections will cover a time horizon of 15 years. Cedefop will also assess the data to understand how skill demand and supply are likely to be affected by the EU Green Deal, the increasing use of automation and artificial intelligence, and the ageing population.

A glimpse into future work and learning

Policy-making today requires an understanding of how we will work and learn tomorrow. Freelance work mediated by online platforms still accounts for only a small, albeit rapidly growing, share of employment. This trend has implications on skill needs, the way they are acquired and matched to jobs, and subsequently, on conventional VET and people's lifelong learning paths.

CrowdLearn, the first ever study to investigate these issues, conducted by Cedefop, complements work undertaken by the Commission's Joint Research Centre and the OECD. Its findings point to a unique blend of skills and personal dispositions as a prerequisite for success in this digital market place. The report will be published in 2020. Findings were presented in a series of Brussels seminars which the Agency organises with the EU Presidencies.

CONTRIBUTION TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

To manage transitions and build lifelong learning and career development paths, people and organisations need effective assistance at all stages.

Linking guidance and validation

Validation and guidance help to value skills gained

outside formal learning, put them to use and identify training to fill gaps. Both are crucial parts of successful upskilling and reskilling strategies.

A Cedefop study published in 2019 shed light on how best to improve, interlink and coordinate these interdependent services. It calls for an overarching policy or (legal) framework across occupations and education sectors with clearly defined objectives, roles and responsibilities. This requires extensive dialogue and strong commitment by policy-makers, social partners and a wide range of stakeholders. Study findings and the analysis of the 2018 European validation inventory update, to which Cedefop contributes, will inform the Commission's report on country progress in following up the 2012 Council recommendation. In 2020, Cedefop will also publish evaluation reports of national guidance systems prepared by the Agency's CareersNet members.

Learning outcomes in practice

Learning outcomes are the starting point for guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning. They underpin qualifications frameworks across the world, and aid comparing qualifications internationally and reforming education and training. Depending on purpose, learning outcomes are defined differently.

At UNESCO's initiative, Cedefop – together with the ETF – is contributing to an international handbook to aid those who need to describe and use learning outcomes. It will reflect experience and challenges encountered by experts in different regions. The evidence will feed into a publication and a website with definitions and examples from different countries. Cedefop's input will draw on its European handbook, its 2018 policy learning forum and research in using learning outcomes to compare qualifications.

Understanding the public's views

Ensuring and supporting access for all is not enough to make lifelong learning a reality. To be able to encourage more people to develop their skills, it is important to understand how they perceive VET and its benefits. Considering the massive need for skills development, Cedefop's second opinion survey on VET focused on their views and attitudes towards continuing training.

Initial findings suggest that Europeans of all education levels widely acknowledge the value of adult learning for career and personal development, job seeking and income. Full results will be released in 2020 and discussed at key EU level events, including the European vocational skills week. They will relate to the role and effectiveness of learning in adulthood as well as guidance and counselling services.

CONTINUED SUPPORT TO IMPROVING AND RENEWING VET

When it comes to young people, currently almost one third of learners in upper secondary VET are in combined school- and work-based programmes. Apprenticeships are increasingly valued as an effective way to match skills demands from companies and the economy better.

Improving apprenticeships

Its long history of qualifying young people for sustained jobs and creating a skilled workforce has made apprenticeships central to EU policy-making. It is also seen increasingly as a valuable option at higher qualification levels (EQF 5 and above) and for upskilling or reskilling adults. The publication of Cedefop's explorative [study on apprenticeships for adults](#) in 2019 was, therefore, timely.

In 2019, Cedefop continued working with countries and social partners to expand and improve apprenticeships and to support the related European alliance by:

- enriching the evidence base for policy learning and development;
- supporting the implementation of the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeship;
- stimulating reflections on the future of apprenticeships.

As the costs incurred by companies may hamper apprenticeship expansion, countries devise incentives to stimulate them, particularly SMEs, to engage in training and/or open up to specific target groups. A new Cedefop database presents different funding arrangements and instruments motivating employers to provide places and encouraging individuals to take up apprenticeship.

The [financing apprenticeship database](#):

- informs about some 30 apprenticeship financing arrangements;
- presents over 50 financing instruments;
- allows for comparison across countries;
- gives an overview of over 20 countries.



This comprehensive information on funding complements [Cedefop's database on apprenticeship schemes](#).



Both databases help to monitor the progress of countries' work in applying the [European quality framework on apprenticeships](#). For this purpose, Cedefop has [mapped the information they provide against the criteria set by the quality framework](#). The aim is to develop a user-friendly, interactive tool for users to retrieve the relevant information directly and generate an 'implementation dashboard'.

On these databases, Cedefop collaborated closely with its [community of national experts](#), set up to help improve the understanding of apprenticeship schemes. In 2020, a policy learning forum will focus on various approaches to ensure their quality. Preliminary results of the cross-country study on long-term mobility for apprentices will become available.

The next steps for apprenticeships

Accelerating labour market change, new forms of work and learning, and changing partnership and cooperation models will make it necessary to rethink apprenticeships. A joint event organised by Cedefop and the OECD in 2019 discussed recent research on how these trends affect apprenticeships.

Cedefop and OECD symposium The next steps for apprenticeship

7 October 2019



The examples and scenarios presented ranged from collaborative training and making use of digitalisation, to graduate apprenticeships. The symposium will feed into Cedefop's reflections on how best to support policy-makers in building tomorrow's apprenticeships.

Promoting key competences in VET

Evidence from Cedefop's skills intelligence shows that key competences are gaining in importance for jobs. They are essential for lifelong learning, employability and personal development. Finding the right mix of vocational and transversal skills is one of the main challenges. Key competences were therefore among the priorities for European cooperation in VET.

A comparative Cedefop study explored how countries have promoted and embedded literacy, and multilingual and digital skills in initial VET. It revealed that policies embedding key competences contribute to changes in initial VET. The study will be published in 2020, but initial findings were discussed at the meeting of Directors General for VET during the Romanian Presidency and at a Cedefop workshop. A panel discussion at the latter focused on a vision for shaping key competences in VET.

Revealing a hidden trove of information

Comparing and analysing VET features, trends and progress requires thorough understanding and up-to-date information on how VET works in each country. It is also a prerequisite for policy learning. Since its foundation 45 years ago, informing about VET systems has been a backbone of Cedefop's activities. In

the past two decades, data were collected through ReferNet, the Agency's network in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. Systems information has underpinned Cedefop's own activities and those of its partners. In 2019, Cedefop moved this unique source of information to the forefront.

The **database** is easy to navigate and allows users to:

- learn about more than 35 VET systems;
- generate more than 2 500 pages of data through a single-entry point;
- compare information by country and theme;
- view national VET system diagrams;
- download national reports.



This database helps policy-makers, social partners, researchers and other stakeholders to understand better similarities and differences of national VET systems. It also informs about programme types, qualification levels they lead to, share of work-based learning, providers and target groups. The information will be updated biennially, with access to historical data.

CONTINUED EFFORTS FOR EFFECTIVENESS, SYNERGY AND EFFICIENCY

In 2019, Cedefop contributed substantially to the European vocational skills week: it jointly shaped the 'VET for all – Skills for life' conference and contributed to the event 'VET in and for the world'. The #CedefopPhotoAward was once more an integral part of the VET excellence award competition.

European cooperation: looking back and planning ahead

As the policy cycle for cooperation in VET is coming to an end in 2020, Cedefop, together with the ETF, analysed progress countries have achieved in their jointly agreed priorities for VET in the past years. Findings from regular reporting exercises informed reflections on the future of VET by the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT). The final report will be discussed at an event in June 2020, which the agencies will organise jointly under the auspices of the Croatian and the German Presidencies. Results will feed into a new strategy for VET to be decided in 2020.

Creating operational synergies

Cedefop continues its efforts to increase efficiency in administration and achieve collaborations with other agencies by sharing expertise and services.

More recent actions have aimed at pooling content expertise to create synergies. The fourth edition of the

European company survey is jointly managed by Cedefop and Eurofound. It focuses on the link between company skills and business strategies – including the response to digitalisation – and how they affect business outcomes. Beyond sharing cost, the analysis of the findings benefits from the combined expertise of the two agencies. It will assist policy-makers in devising evidence-based policies for better working conditions for employees – including training – and for supporting companies to thrive. In 2020, Cedefop and Eurofound will release the survey results at a joint event.

Cedefop will continue supporting its highly qualified staff through continuing professional development and a healthy and safe working environment conducive to dialogue, innovation and learning. Efforts to improve our energy and environmental management will continue. We remain committed to meeting the highest standards of ethics, integrity and compliance with regulations and auditor recommendations.

BOX 1. CEDEFOP IN NUMBERS

Citations of Cedefop's work in some **167** EU policy documents and reports by the Council, the European Commission, the European Parliament, EU social partners and **98** papers by international organisations such as the OECD, the ILO and UNESCO

150 contributions to senior stakeholder meetings that support policy implementation and **52** to other conferences and major events

838 citations in academic literature 2018-19

424 000 downloads of Cedefop publications

Europass: over **30 million** visits and over **25 million** CVs generated online

Web traffic: **790 000** visits, **1 335 000** page views

EU Skills Panorama: nearly **50%** user increase since 2018

Occupation rate of the establishment plan: **95%**

Budget implementation rate: **99.99%**

Source: Cedefop's performance measurement system.