

# skillset AND MATCH

CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE  
PROMOTING  
LEARNING FOR WORK



CEDEFOP



40  
years

ISSUE 3 / JANUARY 2015

MESSAGE: **MARIANNE THYSSEN**

**INTERVIEWS:**

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FEATURE: **EUROSKILLS 2014**

MEMBER STATES: **LUXEMBOURG**



The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training.

We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice.

Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

Cover photo: © EuroSkills 2014



Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

ISSN: 2363-0183

Cat. No: TI-AQ-15-001-EN-C

No of publication: 9093 EN

**Free of charge**

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Printed in the European Union on Elemental Chlorine-free bleached paper (ECL)

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European Centre  
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# 40 years of relevance

JAMES CALLEJA

CEDEFOP DIRECTOR



*Cedefop has evolved with the times enabling vocational education and training to achieve a higher place on many Member States' political agendas*

An anniversary celebration is a sign of achievement. In 2015, Cedefop celebrates 40 years. On 10 February 1975, Council Decision 337/1975 established a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training which, over the years, acquired its frequently used acronym *Cedefop* from the French translation of its name.

The years spent in Berlin (1975-95) and those in Thessaloniki (since 1995) have moulded a European vocational training resource centre of excellence. The world in 1975 was quite different from that of today and Cedefop has evolved with the times enabling vocational education and training (VET) to achieve a higher place on many Member States' political agendas.

Hence our motto for this celebration: old roots for new routes. What and how we learn, the skills we need and jobs we do change constantly. The old roots of recognised European VET systems provide new routes to jobs and careers. With 40 years' experience, Cedefop continues to help European policy-makers adapt VET to new labour market demands.

Our key responsibilities can be articulated in three main directions: how to make VET more attractive; how to match skills with the labour market and how to link employability to lifelong learning.



Over the years, Cedefop has developed evidence-based research and analysis demonstrating that VET can play a key role in fighting economic crises, unemployment, low skills and deficiencies in key competences. But it also has the capacity to enable high flyers to achieve qualifications in higher education.

Today, VET covers the whole spectrum of many qualifications frameworks across Europe and is considered a valued route to employment, lifelong learning and continuous professional development. Governed by potentially robust European tools for transparency, mobility and progression, VET provides a reliable learning structure that supports employability and competitiveness.

By looking at the various activities reported in this edition, readers will notice the dynamic approach VET can take to present learning in conditions conducive to employment and personal development.

# TWO parliaments

# ONE milestone

# appearance

Cedefop presented its work to a Member State parliament for the first time in October. A delegation headed by Director James Calleja addressed Greek MPs of the education and social affairs select committees and answered questions on the agency's contribution to development of vocational education and training (VET) and its cooperation with Greek authorities and VET institutions.

In his speech, Mr Calleja noted that permanent employment nowadays means permanent employability and that Cedefop's aim is to promote employability, help Member States resolve unemployment issues, give people an opportunity to train and develop apprenticeships.

Education affairs committee chair Spyros Taliadouros told *Skillset and match* he was honoured to chair and coordinate the session, adding that Cedefop's presentation 'signalled a will to upgrade the already close cooperation between Greek authorities and the agency; cooperation that started

in 1995, when Cedefop relocated to Greece and has been growing ever since.'

Mr Taliadouros stressed: 'Our aim is to strengthen this cooperation to promote apprenticeships and develop fully the national qualifications framework for the benefit of end-users – individuals and employers.'



James Calleja (second right) speaking to MEPs in Brussels

## At the European Parliament

James Calleja, with directors of ETF, Eurofound and EU-OSHA, presented their respective EU agencies' work to the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) on 4 November in Brussels, with particular focus on informing new committee members.

Mr Calleja outlined Cedefop's vision saying that 'employability of European citizens is at the core of our work, and this has been all the more so since the onset of the crisis and the ensuing recession. We want to help with our expertise, on the ground, by reaching out to policy-makers in Member States. For this we need you, the members of the European Parliament.'

He invited the members of the EMPL Committee to make use of Cedefop resources for their work both at European level and in their constituencies.

## Cedefop presented its work to the Greek parliament in Athens



photo: © Aliki Eleftheriou / Hellenic Parliament

photo: © Juha Reiminen, EUP&images

# Cedefop's expertise invaluable for the Commission

**MARIANNE THYSSEN**

COMMISSIONER FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS,  
SKILLS AND LABOUR MOBILITY



*This year marks Cedefop's 40th anniversary. No organisation understands better how Europe's vocational education and training systems are struggling to meet 21st century expectations*

I have become a European Commissioner at a challenging time, with almost 25 million Europeans out of work following an economic crisis worsened by long-term structural problems in Europe's labour market.

Too many young people leave school unqualified, while many highly-qualified people have to accept jobs below their skill levels. The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth stresses that in the context of an ageing workforce, we need to do much more to update Europe's skills-base and produce better goods and services using less energy and fewer resources in order to remain competitive. Difficulties in recognising qualifications from other European countries also restrict opportunities for people to work and study abroad.

Consequently, my priorities are to boost jobs and social inclusion, encourage skills development and promote labour mobility, all of which are central to Europe's recovery. Cedefop's expertise in these areas will be invaluable.

This year marks Cedefop's 40th anniversary. No organisation understands better how Europe's vocational education and training (VET) systems are struggling to meet 21st century expectations. Equally, because of its extensive support and the demands upon its expertise, Cedefop knows the

effort being invested by the Commission, Member States and social partners to improve VET systems.

Cedefop's monitoring shows that action countries have taken to reduce early leaving from education and training, improve the validation of non-formal and informal learning and develop apprenticeships are yielding results. But many challenges remain.

To make systems more flexible and crossing borders for study or work easier, we must implement the common European tools that Cedefop helped to develop and that Member States have committed to. We must further reinforce the link between vocational programmes and labour market needs in order to reduce skills mismatch. And we need to increase the attractiveness of VET to an equal footing with academic study, and participation in lifelong learning so that no talents go untapped.

I look for Cedefop's support through its expert policy analysis of VET reform in Member States; its expertise in developing and using common European tools; its capacity to facilitate exchanges of good practice and support countries under the European alliance for apprenticeships; and its insights into labour market trends from its skill supply and demand forecasts and research on skills mismatch.

I look forward to us working together. ■



# EuroSkills: win-win for young people and vocational training

photo: © E. Watteau, Euroskills

Proud, competitive, eager to learn, having fun... This is how young people taking part in EuroSkills 2014 came across during three days of contest in October, in Lille. Masters of their trades, mainly selected through competitions in their home countries, they came as part of smaller or bigger delegations to show thousands of visitors to Lille's Grand Palais and the judges what they can do in 41 trades.

Some 450 under-25s from 25 countries took part in the fourth edition of EuroSkills, with Austria the overall winner. 'Their dedication and trying to become the best is used to inspire and

motivate other young people,' Jos de Goey, President of WorldSkills Europe, told *Skillset and match* (see full interview on page 9). Mr de Goey explained that, apart from promoting vocational education and training (VET) as a smart choice for employability, these competitions serve as a stimulant to mobilise a big network of countries to work together and exchange good practice, and industry to test the latest developments.

A living example of how successful competitors can become in their careers is Willem Beverloo, carpentry champion at EuroSkills 2010. After that competition, Willem set up his

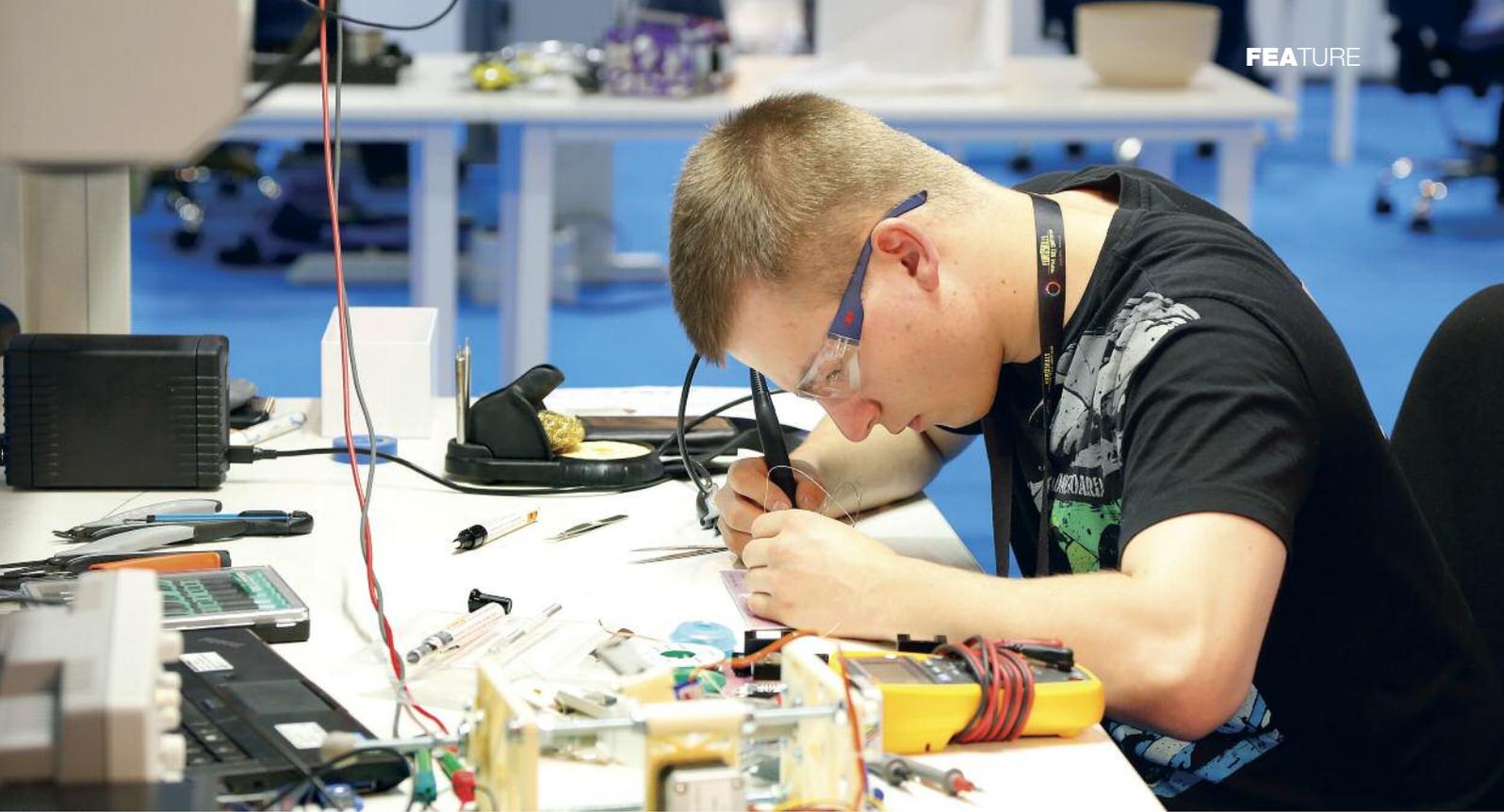
own building company in the Netherlands despite the economic crisis in the sector. He now employs 30 people and has also been involved in a project in neighbouring Belgium.

Willem came to Lille as an expert. He told us that competing at EuroSkills was a catalyst: 'The experience was very nice and it made me stronger in my head, in dealing with other people in my daily work. It helped me see how important education is to be successful.'

## Making an impact

Jos de Goey, impressed by his compatriot's achievements, believes that staging such





competitions is good not only for participants but also for hosts. VET programmes in Finland became so popular after Helsinki hosted WorldSkills in 2005, that the Finnish capital is now eager to organise EuroSkills. Seija Rasku, President of Skills Finland, explains: 'If we look at numbers of applicants for VET before and after national competitions in Finland, normally numbers increased in all areas afterwards. Also, one year before WorldSkills and several years after, applicants for VET increased throughout Finland.'

According to Ms Rasku, her country benefits from taking part in international competitions

because experts and policy-makers meet people, learn best practice and implement it in their system. Meeting people, she says, is good for competitors too: 'They can build networks and use them, for example, when they want to have an on-the-job period in Europe or elsewhere. A lot of competitors have done that.'

One such person is Markus Mustikkamaa. He took part in WorldSkills 2007, where he finished seventh in metal roofing, and in EuroSkills 2008, where he won the bronze medal. He came to Lille as a volunteer and to watch his brother compete in the same category. Their father owns two metal roofing companies in

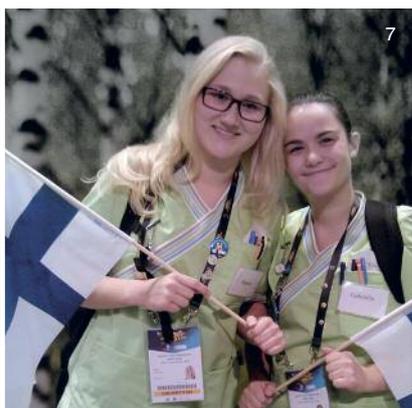
Finland and is preparing to hand one over to his sons. Although Markus sees his future in his father's companies, he happily took the chance to work abroad: 'First I went to Scotland, Edinburgh, and worked there for six months. Then I went to the Netherlands, then back to Finland for a year and then to Australia, where I worked in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. It was all a result of my participation in the competitions.'

### Lifetime experience

Some young people who competed in Lille will be hoping for the same chance. Before securing any job offers in other



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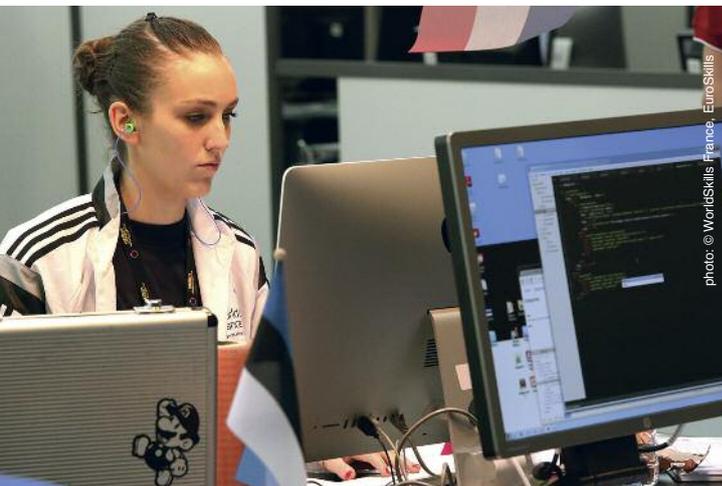
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From left to right:

1. Willem Beverloo
2. Seija Rasku
3. Markus Mustikkamaa
4. Dominic Engel
5. Huber Romer
6. Thomas Kühler and Lukas Stollberg
7. Hanna Hjulfors and Gabriella Snellman
8. Felix Esmenio



parts of the world though, they first had to do well in the competition. We met a few who were thrilled to be representing their countries. And they all finished in the medals later!

Germany's Thomas Kühler and Lukas Stollberg from Erfurt were crowned European champions in mobile robotics, their 'dream job'. They are 'products' of the famous German dual system – they do vocational training at school while working for a company.

'We were selected by our companies and school in Erfurt, as the best in our profession,' said Thomas. Lukas noted that they jumped at the opportunity because 'we wanted to live the experience and meet people,' adding that it has lived up to their expectations 100%. Not that it was all plain sailing: 'The technical description was a bit complicated, but we did well.'

Another German competitor, Dominic Engel, won silver in plumbing and heating. 'It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, which I can use for the rest of my career,' he enthused. He too found competing challenging but rewarding: 'It reassures me seeing how others work and comparing it with the way I work.' Dominic works for a trade

company with 180 employees in Bavaria while attending a technical school, but dreams of becoming an entrepreneur and having his own company.

### Always improving

With a long tradition in VET, Germany sets an example to other countries. However, Huber Romer, CEO WorldSkills Germany and head of a 60-strong delegation in Lille, argues his country can still improve: 'The European level is important to us to make a benchmark. Things are developing from day to day, so we have to check whether we have to develop our system again or everything is working properly.'

Mr Romer and his team promote competitions through social media: 'We show young people competitors who are heroes and say to them: if you want to be a champion, be part of WorldSkills Germany.' And taking part 'changes them for life – they get in contact with a lot of people, they see how they work, how they react, how they solve a problem and how creative these people are. EuroSkills is a real instrument bringing Europe closer together.'

The competition brings especially Europe's youth closer together. Two of the youngest and most enthusiastic competitors,

Finland's Gabriella Snellman, 18, and Hanna Hjulfors, 19, won the silver medal in health and social care. Hanna had some reservations at first because she was in her last year in school and wanted to focus on her final exams. But Gabriella persuaded her to give it a go and they came as a team. 'This is an opportunity of a lifetime. It would be nice to win, but I'm happy to know that I have done my best,' says Gabriella, and Hanna adds: 'It's been really fun and it's great to meet all the other competitors.'

They are both practical nurses working with elderly people and enjoying that 'every day is different to the day before', but their future plans differ slightly. Gabriella wants to be a midwife while Hanna has been accepted at a school in Helsinki to study to become a paramedic. They are happy with their choices and the educational options in Finland. 'If you really want something, it's possible,' says Gabriella, and Hanna agrees: 'Everyone can be what they want, because everyone is given the same opportunity.'

### Being attractive

Portugal is another country that places much importance on opportunities, according to Felix



photo: © WorldSkills France, EuroSkills



JOS DE GOEY

PRESIDENT OF WORLDSKILLS EUROPE

Esmenio, Vice-President of the board of directors at the Vocational Training and Employment Institute (IEFP): 'For us it is essential to promote vocational training's excellence. Our young people, here to compete, have prepared very hard and this, in our opinion, can influence the quality of vocational training in Portugal.'

One of the pioneers of skills competitions, Portugal organised its first contest in the 1950s. Mr Esmenio argues they remain popular with young people. However, he points to a common problem in many countries: 'There is a cultural problem with how parents and young people see VET. We need to say to parents that if their children take up an option of a profession with many qualities, it can make the difference between employment and joblessness.'

To make sure this happens, IEFP works with more than 5 000 companies: 'We are not at the level of Germany, Switzerland or Austria yet – we are in a process of identifying with companies the most important skills to respond to labour market needs. EuroSkills is crucial to make more visible the skills acquired through and the significance of following this pathway.'

### What's behind the idea of EuroSkills and WorldSkills?

At European level it is important to influence young people's development, especially in VET. You can see their passion and motivation. Their dedication and trying to become the best is used to inspire and motivate other young people. That is one part. The other is that with cooperation of the 25 countries involved, we are able to use a very big network practically involved in VET and stimulate working together, exchanging good practice and latest industry developments. So, industry experts are involved as well. We work together with organisations from the private sector in Europe and they inform us of what is happening in companies. That is essential for educational institutes, not only in competitions but also as an influence on training programmes at school. The third level is WorldSkills, the global level. It is extremely important to know what is taking place in other regions of the world. In Europe, we are united in diversity, but it's important to see in what way we can address and support the European agenda by organising EuroSkills and, with it, a lot of national competitions.

### How popular is this competition with young people?

Popularity differs per country. Some countries have a long history of traditional skills competitions. For example, here in France all regions are involved. They organise regional, and then national, competitions and that's the selection for EuroSkills and WorldSkills. In total, more than 7 000 young people are involved in France only.

### What do competitors get out of it?

Competitors achieve personal development. It's very interesting to see what happens to individuals. Some get motivated to take the next steps in their careers. It's our aim to see if we can influence national agendas to implement in the VET structure this instrument of skills competitions with which we motivate young people.

### After each competition do you see interest in VET increasing?

That depends on the research done at national level afterwards. For example, research done in Finland, where the WorldSkills 2005 competition took place, showed enrolment in VET rose after the competition and lasted for several years. Discussion is now whether we should organise an international competition in Finland again because I'm convinced we always need to promote VET, especially when parents always try to get their children on the university pathway first and if they don't succeed it's a second option (to send them to VET). Everybody knows they shouldn't see it as a second option, but we need to promote it and competitions help.

# OLD ROOTS for new routes in VET

On the 40th anniversary of its foundation, Cedefop is 'really and truly at the interface between education and the labour market as we know it today but also as we predict it could be in the future'.

That's according to Director **James Calleja**, who took the agency's reins in October 2013.

Speaking to *Skillset and match*, Mr Calleja assesses his first year in charge and outlines his vision for Cedefop.

I joined an agency which is very relevant to the key issues that Europe is dealing with today in terms of youth employment and upskilling and reskilling of a workforce facing a constantly changing labour market. Joining Cedefop meant for me joining a team which would help European citizens through national authorities and policy-makers to provide solutions for the economic crisis by having a generation of employees with the right skills, attitudes and opportunities to enter the labour market and be productive. Cedefop was, as the Commission frequently terms, 'cruising' in the sense of the content it generates for policy-makers and the support it gives key stakeholders that govern the agency, which are Member States' (MS) governments, social partners and the Commission itself. What is interesting in this tripartite relationship is that it assists European MS, particularly those hit hard by the economic crisis, to enable their young and older populations to acquire the right skills for the right jobs. In doing so, vocational education and training (VET) cannot be seen as the sole agent for solving the economic crisis. But VET has the potential to provide programmes

at both ends of the scale – economic excellence and social inclusion. This was one of the main forces that attracted me to Cedefop.

## How do you find working with many different actors as a European VET chief?

I realise after just over a year that, in terms of European vocational training policy, we are probably cruising at a height which sometimes is not visible enough to MS. The Copenhagen process and the Bruges communiqué had invaluable indicators on how vocational training could be improved or reformed to respond to the labour market. But my personal impression is that communication between the policy and provision levels has been weak over these past eight to 10 years. I think this is our challenge if we are to reach EU 2020 targets, namely to reduce early school-leavers to 10% or below, increase those in higher education to at least 40% and encourage more people to go into lifelong learning. Cedefop must ensure that its research and analysis reaches both weak and strong European VET systems and, more importantly, that it promotes attractiveness in learning.

“

*We need to see how VET's role is changing in society and build on this change process. To do that, we need to be closer to Member States*

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### How can it achieve that?

If we were to draw parallels between academic higher education, governed by the Bologna process, and VET, the major reforms that took place within the Bologna process were actually undertaken by those providing higher education – universities. This is not the case for VET institutions, although there are institutions in several countries where European policies can be seen as working because there is

a culture of vocational training in these MS. Our challenge is to create the same learning environment in countries where VET is not attractive to learners and employers. How to meet the challenge is, or should be, one of Cedefop's key objectives, at least in the next medium-term priorities. One way of reaching this provision level is to engage with national flagship vocational institutions, make them more visible to other VET providers in the same

country, region or locality, and assess to what extent European policies and European tools are being implemented to benefit end-users. By end-users I mean European citizens, both those looking for high-profile jobs and those seeking their first job or employment after redundancy. VET provides qualifications, at all levels of many national qualifications frameworks. Reaching end-users should be a priority. But if we manage to bring →



## THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS

Launched in 2002, the Copenhagen process aims to improve performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training through improved cooperation at European level. The process is based on commonly agreed priorities that are reviewed periodically. The Bruges communiqué is a review of the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-20.



*Our performance measurement is the end-user, not necessarily those at the top, but primarily those at the bottom*

photo: © Shutterstock, holbox

together through national authorities an alliance of VET providers from different MS, that can serve as an example to other institutions, then we would be providing a huge service to Europe in promoting mobility, transparency, competitiveness and economic growth. Our performance measurement is the end-user, not necessarily those at the top, but primarily those at the bottom.

**You have already taken steps to improve cooperation between MS through apprenticeship partnerships and reviews. How will this continue?**

Last year, we launched an apprenticeship review pilot project with Malta and Lithuania. Results so far indicate this is a constructive way to support our stakeholders in developing structures to create an employability culture. We plan to intensify this in the years to come. In fact, we have already been approached by other MS to

review their apprenticeship schemes. We strongly believe work-based learning and apprenticeships can attract European citizens to the labour market. Apprenticeship programme reviews is just one way of supporting MS. Through national authorities one could build profiles of VET institutions implementing European policies and tools and see how these have had a positive impact on learners and employers. Of course reform comes from policy, but we need to see how VET's role is changing in society and build on this change process. To do that, we need to be closer to MS. Not all MS require the same assistance or support. Our mission is to support, sharing knowledge and good practices. Cedefop's presence may not be required where VET is strong but it is certainly required where it is weak. Acting as brokers between MS is also a way of supporting European VET. Evidence clearly shows that where VET is weak, unemployment is statistically

high, particularly among youths. We also need to work with social partners who are important supporters of vocational training. Employers look for people with the right skills for the jobs they offer and bank on these skills to develop their businesses. I think we will get support from employers because it's in their interests that employees acquire the skills they need. Employee representatives also have every interest that people don't lose their jobs and there are enough jobs so unemployment is at the lowest level possible. Social partners are an important asset in moving towards MS. We are not just working with governments, we work where the jobs are, where they can be created and therefore this tripartite relationship must continue to be strengthened. Apprenticeship programmes are a good example where all players come together to create jobs, provide learners with skills relevant to the labour market and ensure that working conditions and job profiles are

attractive enough for VET to engage in continuous reform to attract more learners.

**2015 marks a milestone in Cedefop's history: 20 years in Thessaloniki, 40 years since it was founded in Berlin.**

**Considering its history, how do you see Cedefop's future role?**

Cedefop is perhaps the richest European VET resource. It should be strengthened and move towards action from which end-users benefit directly. The 40 years Cedefop is celebrating represent a rich heritage, a valuable resource which has greatly supported the Commission, governments and social partners in making VET a reliable option for employment and putting it high on the political agenda of many MS. The extent to which this priority has been translated into a reform process and has attracted more learners to the vocational training strand needs to be critically looked into. Evidence shows that unfortunately fewer people are attracted to VET than to higher education. This is a wake-up call for us and we should use 2015,

not just to celebrate achievements, but to strengthen the foundations built since 1975 and be faithful to our motto: from old roots to new routes. Roots of vocational training have been with us since time immemorial: people learn by doing; they learn in workplaces; while working. But today, we also know that VET can open up so many different routes for employment at so many different levels that it would be a pity if it is not given parity of esteem and the right financial and political support. VET is a deeply-rooted culture of learning, still valid today. The Copenhagen process and the Bruges communiqué have established more exciting routes for learners to be employable and to find employment. Our challenge is to ensure that reform structures guarantee mobility, transparency and progression; that VET is not a dead-end but a roadmap to success, well-paid jobs and careers. A credible and attractive VET system is one which carries quality assurance, a credit system and a transparent certification process.

**Does Cedefop have the right tools to do that?**

Cedefop's experts are well prepared to meet these challenges. Building new capacity to interact more effectively with stakeholders is another challenge. Our new policy-learning forums, strengthening ReferNet and ongoing activities on a wide range of VET-related issues will fill this gap in the years to come. We also look forward to new Founding Regulations and an extended multi-annual work programme. These instruments will take Cedefop to the next cycle of its development, which in my view will be to ensure that European policies in various forms seep effectively into national, regional and local systems, and empower governments, social partners and learners – as end-users – to achieve greater employability and better employment opportunities. ■

**Cedefop is at the interface between education and the labour market. Director James Calleja addresses the European Parliament of Enterprises**





2



Cedefop will be 40 in February. 'Old roots for new routes' is its anniversary theme, which it will celebrate throughout 2015. Its aim is to draw inspiration from the past to continue the work of improving vocational education and training (VET). These two pages provide snapshots of Cedefop's history.

- 1. Maria Weber, Cedefop's founding mother / 2. Open for business, 1977 / 3. Cedefop, Bundesallee 22, West Berlin, West Germany / 4. Free movement in the Cold War: Checkpoint Charlie, West Berlin / 5. Commission President Jacques Delors at Cedefop, 1989





A special edition of *Skillset and match*, in May, will explore VET's accomplishments in the past 40 years and its future challenges. A conference linked to the annual Cedefop Governing Board meeting in June and a photo exhibition at Cedefop premises are among events celebrating the anniversary.

**6.** Symbols of change / **7.** Spreading the word on VET / **8.** Starting again: moving to Thessaloniki, Greece, 1995 / **9.** Cedefop today: Olympus of VET / **10.** Knowledge-sharing



# VET

## EUROPEAN

### tools

#### and

## HOW THEY CAN WORK

# together

A Cedefop conference in November explored how common tools can help achieve the main objectives of European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) together: easier mobility and career progression for learners, better education and training. The event built on extensive work carried out by Cedefop in this area over the past two decades.

Participants discussed conceptual and technical conditions for taking tools to the next level and increasing their overall relevance to citizens and society. The main idea was that work needs to be refocused and that the existing ‘tool-by-tool’ approach should be replaced with a more integrated one, explicitly addressing end-users’ needs.

In his opening speech, Cedefop Director James Calleja said that ‘we have not managed to reach end-users in the ways that we aspired to; there is still too wide a gap.’ He added: ‘The conference has come at the right time, when changes at Commission level have moved Cedefop and VET to the Employment Directorate; when creation of jobs is a priority for the new Commission; when the drive to reduce early school-leavers and increase participation in higher education and in lifelong learning is gaining greater momentum.’

To progress in learning and work, citizens must be able to move within and across countries, sectors of education, training and employment. For the tools to be relevant to learners and workers, they need to take on a ‘bridging function’, allowing them to move across institutional, sectoral and geographical borders. Apparent in some tools (for example comprehensive

qualifications frameworks), this function is less developed in others.

Cedefop’s proposal on how European tools and principles can move to the next stage envisages creation of a front and a back office. The front office sees tools from the perspective of end-users, who should not be expected to understand technical specificities. Instead, they must be aware of the services provided, where these can be found and how they can add value to their education and employment careers. To serve end-users and address both education and training and labour market needs, the front office should be a virtual institutional reception area giving end-users direct insight in and access to services and functions provided by the tools. Based on Cedefop’s experience, it should focus on transparency, representation, valuing and guidance.

According to Cedefop’s proposal, a well-functioning front office requires a back office, appropriately designed and organised, based on solid technical, conceptual and organisational elements. This is where implementation challenges have to be addressed. But instead of doing that on a ‘tool-by-tool’ basis, core objectives listed above (transparency, representation, valuing and guidance) provide a reference point for reorientation. We must ask whether tools are still needed, if their original design should be adjusted, and what combinations/linkages to other tools could be beneficial. This triggers questions related to stakeholder involvement and commitment: who to involve and at what level.

European Commission’s Karin van der Sanden told



# STEPPING UP THE PACE

*Skillset and match* that she finds the idea of a front and a back office 'a good approach,' adding: 'We will probably work on how we can bring tools together in a single access point so that they are easily attainable by the user, and backed up by centres where physical contact is possible, as not everyone has access to internet or digital skills.' She also praised Cedefop's 'good work doing research, bringing stakeholders together, coming with good proposals and suggestions that can improve the tools.'

'The core objective of European tools for us is to allow progression of learners and workers,' said Cedefop Deputy Director Mara Brugia at the closing panel of the conference. ■

## WHAT ARE THE TOOLS?

Several European policies and instruments have been developed and are being implemented in the context of the education and training 2020 strategy and the Bologna process for higher education. Qualifications frameworks (QF EHEA and EQF), based on a learning-outcomes approach, provide a reference point for comparison of qualifications across countries. European credit systems (ECTS and ECVET) support learners in shaping their own learning pathway through accumulation of credits. Common European quality assurance arrangements (ESG and EQAVET) aim to generate common trust in education and qualifications systems, enabling recognition across borders. Europass, including the Europass CV and the European skills passport, provides documentation tools for citizens to describe their acquired knowledge, skills, competences and qualifications in a more transparent and structured way. Additionally, there are European principles and guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning, guidance and counselling, and the European terminology on skills, competences, occupations and qualifications (ESCO).

by STEVE BAINBRIDGE  
and JASPER VAN LOO

# UNLEASHING EUROPE'S INNOVATIVE SPIRITS



Scan to read  
the Bruges  
communiqué

## entrepreneurship

Between 2011 and 2014, European Union Member States, plus Iceland and Norway (EU+), have been working to strengthen entrepreneurship in vocational education and training (VET), one of the Bruges communiqué's 22 short-term deliverables.

Entrepreneurship and a sense of initiative is the ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and managing projects to achieve objectives. An entrepreneurial mindset can bring personal success. Employees with initiative and skills to work in teams and innovate also benefit enterprises.

Europe's drive for entrepreneurial skills aims both to build an entrepreneurial workforce and new job-creating businesses. Around half of the EU's young adults would like to set up their own businesses, but many find it too complex and risky, or feel they lack the skills.

Cedefop has analysed several options countries can use to strengthen apprenticeships. While this helps recognise broad trends, it is important to note that countries' starting points, contexts and priorities differ. Levels of government and institutions responsible for VET, as well as their degree of autonomy, also vary.

Progress by EU+ countries on innovation and entrepreneurship and other Bruges communiqué priorities were discussed at a joint Cedefop and European Commission conference, *Building European VET – Time to move on* in Thessaloniki on 29 and 30 September 2014.

In most EU+ countries entrepreneurship is, increasingly, an underlying principle of VET. For



photo: Shutterstock / bikenderfondon

example, Estonia, France, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Slovenia have introduced entrepreneurship as a learning module, or a subject area in their VET curricula.

Less progress has been made in training VET teachers/trainers to help learners acquire entrepreneurship skills. Some countries, such as Germany, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia, have introduced training courses for teachers to bring entrepreneurship into the classroom through e-training modules and business games.

Entrepreneurship strategies including VET were not common in 2010, but many EU+ countries have worked on them. For example, in Belgium (Flanders), the entrepreneurship in education action plan aims to set up mini enterprises in compulsory education. Germany has a dedicated entrepreneurship initiative targeting young people, teachers and school heads. ■



# LUXEMBOURG

## ASSESSES VET INITIATIVES



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Youth  
guarantee,  
reform  
and quality  
assurance  
to be assessed  
in 2015

On 1 July, Luxembourg will take over Presidency of the Council of the European Union. At this time the country will be in an assessment phase.

In June 2014, Luxembourg officially launched the youth guarantee which aims to ensure that all young people up to age 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

By the Luxembourg EU Presidency, it will be possible to make a first assessment after one year of implementation. A conference organised by the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Social Economy and Solidarity will offer an opportunity for a first evaluation with all stakeholders.

A mid-term review of the 10-year Europe 2020 strategy will take place during the second semester of 2015 so that Luxembourg moves ahead to fulfil the EU recommendations during the second half of the decade leading to 2020.

Luxembourg will pay special attention to monitoring vocational education and training (VET) reform. The reform began during school year 2010/11 and has been fully implemented during school year 2014/15. An in-depth evaluation of its implementation will be carried out with stakeholders to adapt learning outcomes to needs of vocational training. The relationship between education and the labour market will continue to be strengthened.

A new study by the training Observatory of the National Institute for the Development of Continuing Vocational Training on the entry to labour market and professional trajectories of VET students aims to get actual figures and information about their first steps into working life. Results of this study will also provide substantial information on strengths and weaknesses of the vocational secondary education school system.

In collaboration with professional chambers, the government will put special focus on implementation of work-based learning quality assurance. This will be done by defining the process to ensure best quality without crippling enterprises and discouraging them from participating in work-based learning.



by REFERNET  
LUXEMBOURG  
[www.refernet.lu/article/accueil/fr](http://www.refernet.lu/article/accueil/fr)



# REFERNET

## EUROPE'S network FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING



**Sylvie Bousquet, speaking at the ReferNet plenary**

An important aspect of Cedefop's work involves study and comparison of vocational education and training (VET) systems and policies in European countries. With 30 partners (28 EU Member States, Iceland and Norway), ReferNet is a vibrant network that studies and promotes VET in these countries. It was set up by Cedefop in 2002, with Marc Willem as coordinator. Sylvie Bousquet, a long-serving

member of the Cedefop team, has been in charge since 2008 and explains the need behind its creation:

'ReferNet was created because there was growing demand for comparative information. We needed detailed thematic information on VET systems and policies, to be able to compare, and that was exactly the beginning of the Copenhagen process (*see page 11*), which explains why we had this growing demand. Cedefop was expected to support monitoring the process and in the Maastricht communiqué in 2004 Cedefop networks are mentioned as support to this monitoring.'

ReferNet's role has evolved over the years: 'In the beginning, ReferNet delivered information on VET systems and bibliographic references. Cedefop then decided to change the cooperation to a framework partnership agreement, and ReferNet was given a full range of activities in Member States – not only reporting, but also disseminating information,

visibility, and communication. ReferNet partners were also consortium leaders. The information they delivered was based on links to other key VET institutions and social partners, so it was very reliable and representative of all national trends. After this big expansion in 2008-11, we entered the current framework partnership agreement, and decided to reduce numbers of activities, focusing mainly on quality of reporting. With the Bruges communiqué and Europe 2020 strategy, regular monitoring of VET progress became essential. We also set up a new role with national representatives in every country, who validate data, are the voices, let's say, of national authorities.'

European VET benefits from ReferNet in various ways: 'Comparable information, a big added value of ReferNet, allows national and EU policy-makers to "visit" all countries at the same time to get information to take informed decisions. But ReferNet is not just one more network; it is *the* network for VET. It gives an

**ReferNet** is a network of institutions created by Cedefop in 2002 to provide information on national VET systems and policies in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. Each national partner is a key organisation involved in VET in the country it represents. ReferNet activities are cofinanced by Cedefop and Member States under a framework partnership agreement. Activities benefit participating countries as well as Cedefop.

image of VET at national level. Partners have a certain prestige as the link between national and EU levels, and VET benefits very much from that.'

In the last plenary meeting, in November, partners were asked for feedback as preparation for a call for proposals to select a new network in 2015: 'What we have seen for years is a real dynamic on improving reports constantly, being more and more core to what is decided at EU level, and that's extremely positive. It is a real partnership now. It's not only a group of contractors. It's a group of friends really. We have contributed to developing relationships between countries and discussions on VET.'

Ms Bousquet argues that ReferNet has a future: 'Cedefop absolutely needs the information delivered by the network. We need traditional reporting for EU-level comparison, but there is also a new orientation at Cedefop towards supporting cross-country policy learning through policy-learning forums. Understanding the VET context

in each country is necessary. ReferNet will help in this regard. Where Cedefop gives specific support, such as thematic reviews on apprenticeship, ReferNet will also help understand what is feasible or not. It has a big role to play. It is still early to define what kind of impact Cedefop's transition to DG Employment will have on ReferNet'.



## WHY BE INTERESTED IN REFERNET?

Whenever you need information on national and European VET issues, you can easily access a wealth of reports, publications and other sources of information on the Cedefop website:

- **VET in Europe country reports** describe national VET systems in ReferNet partner countries;
- **Spotlights on VET** summarise key features, challenges and developments of national VET systems in a concise way;
- **Short descriptions of national VET systems** provide a review of the VET system in the country holding the EU Presidency;
- **VET policy reporting**
- **Thematic focuses** (articles or surveys)
- **National news on VET**
- **Bibliographic references**
- **ReferNet national websites**

Scan to visit  
ReferNet



# mobility

## AN UNDERUSED LEARNING TOOL

There are many positive aspects to mobility. It can increase cultural understanding and broaden perspectives. Mobility can also be a valuable learning tool.

Across occupations at all levels employers emphasise the need for generic skills, such as teamwork, the capacity to learn new ideas, techniques or equipment and adaptability to new circumstances. But many employers say they cannot find these skills.

Partly to address this problem, the European Union is encouraging apprenticeships, which combine theoretical and practical 'situated' learning. Elusive concepts such as teamwork, autonomy and communication skills are difficult to teach in a traditional classroom setting. Such skills are best learned in a situated learning environment that encourages their development.

Arguments in favour of apprenticeships also apply to mobility placements. They also provide situated learning and opportunities to acquire the generic skills demanded by the labour market.

By exposing participants to a different environment, mobility provides an opportunity for proximity to and interaction with another culture and mentality. Away from their usual support network of family, friends, colleagues or teachers, mobility participants need to devise ways of doing things for themselves. A new

environment also frees participants from expectations of others. People can experiment with aspects of their personality normally not activated and so can learn to become more adaptable, enterprising and open to new influences.

The EU is a major supporter of mobility through its Erasmus+ programme. Several countries and regions have bilateral transnational mobility programmes. Multinational enterprises also use mobility as a learning tool. But more is needed to integrate mobility into the education and, particularly, the vocational education and training system.

Mobility need not be transnational, or general. It can take place within countries and/or focus on specific sectors where, perhaps there are skill shortages. Mobility placements with vocational aims, for example to learn

about specific technologies or working methods, are more likely to engage enterprises, which can provide the physical location and vocational environment for the learning process.

Mobility as a didactic practice is still not widely recognised. Instead, it is often seen as some sort of exotic school outing or tourism rather than a pedagogic activity requiring and deserving resources. Labour market trends argue against that view.

**Mobility is the ability of an individual to move and adapt to a new occupational or educational environment:**

- it can be geographical or functional (a move to a new post in a company or to a new occupation, a move between employment and education);
- it enables individuals to acquire new skills and thus increase their employability.

*Source: Terminology of European education and training policy, Cedefop, 2014.*



# EUROPE ASSISTS Argentina's SKILLS SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT



*The differences between European Union countries in vocational training and qualifications are the same as those we encounter inside Argentina with diversity of provinces*



Investment in skills differs from country to country and from region to region in Latin America, as it does in Europe. Latin American countries call on Europe's experience of concerted policy efforts from multiple actors to devise and implement their own strategies for developing vocational education and training (VET).

Argentina is one of these countries. A delegation from the national and regional ministries for education visited Cedefop in September as part of a European mission to gather information on skills and qualifications. Head of delegation Mari Isabel Zbrun told *Skillset and match* that they hoped to get 'information and experiences that can help us continue advancing the dialogue which started a few years ago with the European Union (EU) programme in Argentina.'

This programme is intended for young people who weren't able to finish general secondary education and belong to the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society. Ms Zbrun explains further: 'It aims to provide them with the appropriate education to enter the labour market. We work using methodology proposed by the European Commission. We considered the general situation and differences in development of VET in various regions.



**Mari Isabel Zbrun (third left) with other members of the Argentine delegation and Cedefop representatives**

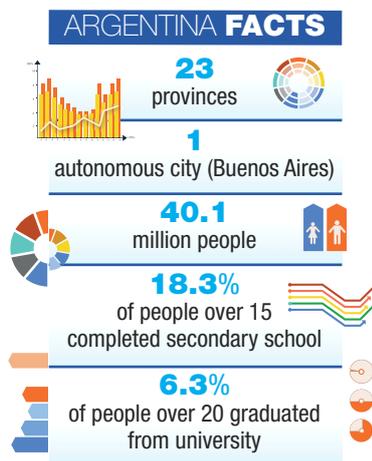
Then we consulted different actors: provincial government civil servants, experts, school heads and social partners in production and labour market.'

Cedefop has been active in Latin America. Last year, by invitation of the Inter-American Development Bank and the EU-Latin American Foundation, Cedefop

experts presented its work on investing in skills in Europe for more growth and better jobs at conferences in Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Peru.

Ms Zbrun argues that Europe and Argentina have a lot in common: 'The differences between European Union countries in vocational training and qualifications are the same as those we encounter inside Argentina with diversity of provinces. We have to think about a very heterogeneous system, but with universal quality criteria and relevant to offers from the production sector. So, Cedefop's studies on labour market demand and skills forecasts are also of interest to us.'

The Argentine official believes the agency can assist her country in the long run, especially in work with administrative areas or the National Institute of Technical Education, which regulates and recognises all VET qualifications.





BECOMES

accessible



The New Year brought a welcome addition to the popular Europass CV – the document used by millions of people in Europe to promote their skills and competences to potential employers. A new accessible version is now available to visually-impaired users.

Europass website coordinator Philippe Tissot and his team developed a programme to assist these users in collaboration with the Thessaloniki School for the Blind: 'We started this project after receiving complaints from visually-impaired users, who couldn't find a tool to help them compile their Europass CV. We didn't have any knowhow on this issue. So, we thought about the school for the blind. We met five or six times last year and every time we came up with an improved version of the CV. It has been a rewarding experience that has made us see things from a different perspective.'

Yorgos Diamantis, a computer instructor for visually-impaired users at the school, has been testing the various versions with the Europass team: 'I accepted because I like to help when I can. We started working with Philippe and his colleagues last



Yorgos Diamantis tests accessibility of Europass CV



Left to right: Natasha Theodouli, Yorgos Diamantis, Philippe Tissot and Mary Papoutsoglou at the Thessaloniki school for the blind

spring. We have been trying to make the CV accessible and reduce the time someone spends filling it in. It is a good effort that will help those who want to use it.'

Yorgos is a computer expert. However, the team had to think about the average visually-impaired user who might not be tech-savvy, as team member Natasha Theodouli explains: 'I believe it will be easier for the average visually-impaired user to use the Europass CV now. To get a better picture we have to do a usability test, but we have made important steps to make the CV accessible and much simpler.'

Despite having a tool online now, Mr Tissot says development will continue: 'We will try to improve this

template, to have it translated into languages other than English until it is available in all 27 EU languages, and, if we have the necessary resources, we may develop an online application.'

Former Cedefop trainee Mary Papoutsoglou, who was part of the project when it started, still feels attached to it: 'It has shown me that you must care more about certain things. There is an accessibility issue in many projects, and when someone develops an application all potential users should be considered.'



## CHECK OUT CEDEFOP'S NEW WEBSITE!



Cedefop's official website has had a major makeover. The new web portal is now online with a fresher look and feel, additional features and a brand new technological platform.

To remain its users' most trusted source of information, Cedefop's website constantly faces challenges of identifying, adopting and implementing necessary changes.

The new portal was redesigned to change Cedefop's online presence significantly.

It uses leading technology to enable the agency to grow its online information well into the future. It showcases Cedefop's content more dynamically introducing more visuals for data and multimedia elements such as videos and podcasts.

To ensure all visitors gain quick and easy access, the new website adopts a modular approach to the

way information is organised. It is now divided into main entry points such as themes, publications and resources, events and projects, news and press and country-specific data.

Content that interests visitors most, such as publications, latest policy developments, briefing notes, news, events and country reports, is all still there. The website will also feature new content inspired by Cedefop staff expertise, accumulated knowledge and future surveys.

New features, identified as important to users, such as statistical display, presentation slides or discussion lists, are currently being developed and will be implemented in the coming months.

Interactivity with users will also be encouraged by means of discussion lists, comments and surveys thus bringing them closer to Cedefop's experts. ■

## EUROPASS HAS ALSO HAD A MAKEOVER

A new online editor has been launched for the Europass CV, the European skills passport, language passport and cover letter. The editor has been designed to make users' lives easier and is friendlier to new technologies.

### New features include:

- more intuitive, simplified look and feel;
- optimised, responsive layout compatible with tablets;
- interoperability with LinkedIn (users can import their LinkedIn profile to create a Europass CV);
- import and export of documents from/to the cloud (Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive).



# new

## CEDEFOP PUBLICATIONS



You can browse and/or download all Cedefop publications at:  
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 or by scanning this QR code

### IN FOCUS

#### EU, BE PROUD OF YOUR TRAINERS

These guiding principles give policy pointers on how to support VET trainers in companies in developing their competences.

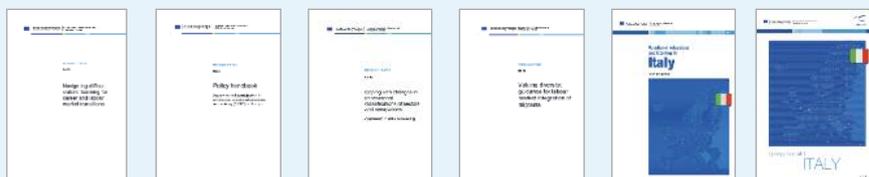
They are addressed to education and training policy- and decision-makers, illustrated by concrete examples of practice from Member States.

These can be further translated into actions for all stakeholders, depending on national situations and contexts.



#### EUROPEAN INVENTORY ON VALIDATION: 2014 UPDATE

Despite progress since 2010, Member States still have a long way to go to ensure that knowledge, skills and competences that people acquire outside school are formally validated, according to a European Commission report compiled in partnership with Cedefop. The 2014 *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning*, which covers 33 European countries (EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), shows that countries need to design carefully validation arrangements, and implement effective tools. Recognising all learning through validation will help countries tackle persisting skills mismatches.



#### OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

- Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions
- Policy handbook – Access to and participation in continuous vocational education and training (CVET) in Europe
- Coping with changes in international classifications of sectors and occupations
- Valuing diversity: guidance for labour market integration of migrants
- Vocational education and training in Italy – Short description
- Spotlight on VET – Italy

Download the publication you wish by clicking the cover and/or the corresponding title

# coming up



For more information on what's coming up go to the events page on the Cedefop website: [www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events) or scan this QR code

## IN FOCUS

# CEDEFOP 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: OLD ROOTS FOR NEW ROUTES

**11-12 JUNE**

THESSALONIKI, GREECE



In 2015, Cedefop celebrates the 40th anniversary of its foundation – and the 20th of its relocation to Thessaloniki.

A series of events have been planned throughout the year to mark this milestone. Celebrations will culminate on 11 and 12 June, in Thessaloniki, with a conference linked to the annual Cedefop Governing Board meeting. European Commission officials, Governing Board members, Members States' government officials and social partners' representatives will be invited to the conference.

OTHER EVENTS			
FEBRUARY	<b>13</b>	BRUSSELS, BELGIUM	Cedefop validation seminar: A system for short-term anticipation of skill needs
MARCH	<b>26</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop workshop on quality assurance of certification process in initial vocational education
MAY	<b>28</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop/EU Latvian Presidency conference: Expanding apprenticeship – Governance and financing models

Celebrating



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**CEDEFOP**

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Publications Office

ISSN 2363-0183



9 772363 018008