

# skillset AND MATCH

**CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE  
PROMOTING  
LEARNING FOR WORK**



CEDEFOP



40  
years

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**FEATURE: CEDEFOP  
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

**REPORT: SKILL MISMATCH**

**INTERVIEWS:**

MICHEL SERVOZ, SHYAMAL MAJUMDAR,  
JANE SHACKLETON, GIORGIO ALLULLI,  
STYLIANOS MAVROMOUSTAKOS

**MEMBER STATES: THE NETHERLANDS**



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.

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European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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# making VET more visible

**JAMES CALLEJA**

CEDEFOP DIRECTOR



*Cedefop's strength is in connecting today's challenges with a more demanding future for learning and working*

”

In June, Cedefop marked its 40th anniversary with a social activity at the Thessaloniki Concert Hall, as well as a conference on the future prospects of European vocational education and training (VET). Making VET more visible is not just Cedefop's role.

It is an objective which, in Riga, Latvia, European ministers agreed to accomplish at national level through five key deliverables by 2020. An article in this magazine (p. 18) illustrates the intention to promote work-based learning through more apprenticeships, ensure quality in VET provision, give more access to VET qualifications, embed key competences in VET programmes, and provide continuous professional training to VET teachers, trainers and mentors. This is a tall order but success will lift VET provision to standards that would attract more learners, increase social partner participation, and build trust in VET systems and qualifications.

The focus on VET is neither capricious nor frivolous. Unemployed youth, long-term unemployed, NEETs (people not in education, employment or training), unskilled workers, and early leavers from VET are some of the groups that require special attention if Europe is to become a sustainable, inclusive and competitive labour market economy.

The flexibility that VET provision offers is strong justification why VET needs more investment in its structures, information campaigns and greater support from funding sources at European and national levels. The article on skills mismatch (pp. 4-5) indicates that Europe may, after all, not be so short of skills if the job offer is a quality one and if businesses move towards building learning cultures in workplaces.

Immediate solutions also require vision, which is why Cedefop embarked on a new project on VET's changing nature and role about which you may read further in this issue (p. 8). Cedefop's strength is in connecting today's challenges with a more demanding future for learning and working. ■

by STEVE BAINBRIDGE and  
KONSTANTINOS POULIAKAS

# A portrait OF skill IN THE mismatch European Union

photo: © shutterstock, Peter Bernik

The common portrait of skill mismatch in the European Union (EU) is one of employers unable to fill vacancies despite high unemployment. But Cedefop's European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey paints a more complex picture. Skill mismatch, a term not always clearly understood (see Box), is not only a problem for those looking for a job; it affects most of the workforce.

Cedefop's survey asked 49 000 adult employees (aged 24-65) across all 28 Member States about how well their qualifications and skills match those they need to perform their job tasks. People continually develop their skills, while job complexity and skill intensity may change significantly. Unlike previous studies examining a specific moment, the ESJ survey is the first to look at skill mismatch over time. The survey also distinguished between qualification level and skills needed for the job. A job requiring a particular qualification level, medium or high, may not be skill-intensive.

## SKILL MISMATCH AND FINDING A JOB

Launched in January 2014, the survey shows that the economic crisis has made skill mismatch worse. Due to weak employment demand, more people are taking jobs below their qualification or skill level. Around 25% of highly qualified adult employees in the EU are overqualified for their job. Those graduating after 2008 are almost twice as likely to be overqualified for their first job as those who graduated between 1991 and 2000.

The worry is that the economic downturn will undermine the long-term potential of the EU's skilled workforce. The survey confirms that the 'scarring' effect



photo: © shutterstock, Bekic Bojan

of unemployment (where someone out of work for a while is more likely to become unemployed again) is partly due to skill mismatch. Unemployed people returning to work are also more likely to enter less skill-intensive jobs that may not develop their skills.

The ESJ survey gives new insights into work-based learning in Europe. People whose studies involved such learning are more likely to go directly from education to their first job and into more skill-intensive jobs. Around 40% of adult employees have completed education or training involving some work-based learning, but this varies considerably across countries.

## SKILL MISMATCH AT WORK

The ESJ survey shows that, to avoid skill mismatch, 53% of adult employees in the EU need to learn new

## WHAT IS **SKILL** MISMATCH?

Employers unable to find the right talent, despite offering competitive wages, face **skill shortages**.

**Skill gaps** arise where the skills required are unavailable in the workforce, for example, due to technological advance.

**Over- or underqualification** is where individuals take jobs that do not match their qualifications.

People are **over- or under-skilled** where, whatever their qualification level, their skills do not match their job.

things continuously, and that the variety of their tasks has significantly increased since they started their job.

Around 26% of EU adult employees have significant skill deficits (their skills are much lower than those an average worker needs to be fully proficient in their job) leaving scope to improve skills and productivity. But even though these workers could 'bloom' and develop, not everyone has the chance: 27% are in 'dead end' jobs, with higher skills than they need to do their job and only limited potential to develop.

### GOOD JOBS FOR GOOD SKILLS

This points to another important finding. Good jobs are needed to develop good skills. Jobs with opportunities to acquire skills continuously are a sign of a healthy labour market. Europe needs more jobs that fully use and develop the skills of its workforce.

Skill demand is low and stagnant for many European workers. Cedefop's survey found that 40% of adult employees need only basic literacy skills to do their job and 58% need only basic numeracy. Over a third of jobs in sectors such as hotels and restaurants, transport, and wholesale and retail trades have stagnant skill needs.

The ESJ survey also confirmed the close link between job stability and people working in jobs with high skill needs. Job stability offers a better context for enabling workers to cope with complex workplace changes that place higher demands on their skills.

How should we tackle skill mismatch? A Cedefop conference in December 2015 will discuss precisely that. If you are interested in attending or following proceeding, check out the Cedefop website. ■

## IN THE EU

25%

of highly qualified adult employees are overqualified for their job

26%

of adult employees have significant skill deficits, leaving considerable scope for skill development

27%

are in 'dead end' jobs with limited potential to develop

41%

of adult employees need only basic literacy skills to do their job

>1 in 5

adult employees have not developed their skills since starting their job

# TRENDS

in **skill** and **demand**  
**supply**

over the  
**NEXT DECADE**

Scan for the forecasts  
database and forecasts  
for each Member State



How will skill supply and demand develop over the next decade and how might vocational education and training (VET) policy respond? Cedefop's forecasts and analyses for the European Union (EU) and – for the first time – each Member State, provide insights to help develop European VET policies.

Examining prospects up to 2025 for job growth, sector developments, job opportunities, changes in qualification levels and demographic trends, Cedefop's forecasts assume a modest economic recovery. They take account of global economic developments up to October 2014, the European Commission's economic forecast and Eurostat's population projections.

The forecasts highlight that European trends mask sharp differences between countries that may influence VET policy priorities.

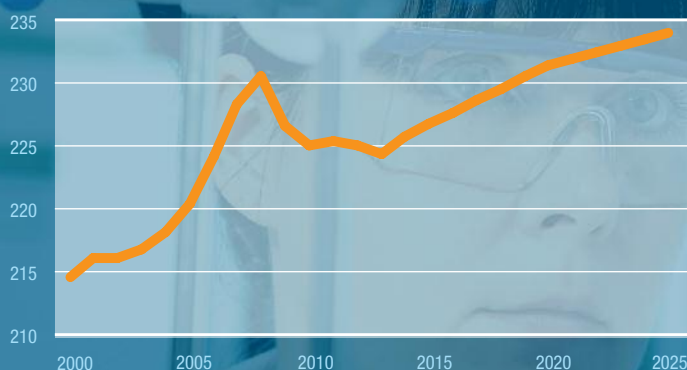
Job growth rates, for example, are forecast to be very different. By 2020, employment in the EU overall

(Figure 1) and several countries, including Italy, the Netherlands and Slovakia, is forecast to return to its 2008 pre-crisis levels. However, in others such as the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain and Portugal, employment is expected still to be below pre-crisis levels by 2025. In some countries, including Germany, France, Austria, Sweden and the UK, there are already more jobs than before the crisis began in 2008.

Business and other services should drive employment growth across the EU, but in Spain, Cyprus, Poland and Romania, for example, most job growth is forecast for the distribution and transport sector.

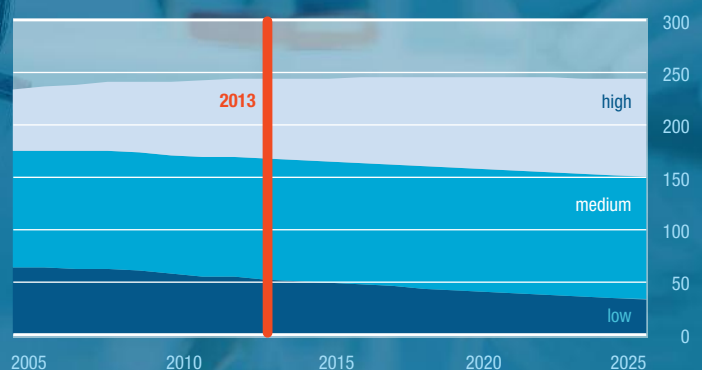
Other differences between countries include types of jobs on offer over the next decade. Cedefop forecasts that most job opportunities in the EU, around 24%, will be for high-level professional jobs in science, engineering, healthcare, business and

1. Past and forecast employment, EU (millions)



Source: Cedefop skills forecasts (2015).

2. Labour force trends by qualification, 2005-25, EU (millions)



Source: Cedefop skills forecasts (2015).



education, followed by 16% for service and sales workers. As examples of national variations, Cedefop predicts around a third of job opportunities in Denmark and Poland will be for professionals and around a fifth for service and sales workers in Malta and Austria. In Romania, almost half of vacancies are expected to be for skilled agriculture and fisheries workers.

Most people will continue to work in jobs requiring medium-level qualifications, but employers and jobs are expected to become more demanding. In the EU overall and, for example, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, around half of all job opportunities up to 2025 are forecast to require high-level qualifications. In countries such as Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, and Hungary, around half of job opportunities are expected to require medium-level qualifications.

Economic growth is important for job creation, but demography also plays a major role. Around 90% of job opportunities between now and 2025 will arise because of the need to replace people who are either moving to another job or leaving the labour market, for example to retire.

Europe's population is ageing and a substantial rise is forecast in those over 55 working or looking for work. But some countries are ageing faster than others. Due to the ageing of the labour force, between now and 2025, despite economic growth, employment is forecast to fall in Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania because of labour supply constraints.

Europe's labour force is becoming better-qualified (Figure 2). Cedefop forecasts that, by 2020, around 46% of 30 to 34 year-olds in the EU will have high-level qualifications, exceeding its benchmark of 40% by 2020. All Member States should reach, or be close to, this benchmark. Some 18 Member States have also reached the EU's benchmark of reducing to below 10% young people leaving education and training with low-level qualifications. But more improvements are needed.

In Riga, in June, ministers, the European Commission and social partners agreed new 'medium-term deliverables' for 2015-20 to improve VET (see p.18). Recognising the differences in VET across countries, it was agreed that countries may prioritise the deliverables differently and have flexibility in how to implement them.

As the Riga conclusions emphasise, it is not just differences in systems that VET policies need to take into account. To be responsive, VET needs to accommodate different developments in Member State labour markets. Cedefop is helping them to do that. ■

**By 2020, in the EU overall and countries including Italy, the Netherlands and Slovakia, it is forecast to return to 2008 pre-crisis levels**

**By 2025, in the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain and Portugal it is expected still to be below pre-crisis levels**

**In Germany, France, Austria, Sweden and the UK, there are already more jobs than before the crisis**

EMPLOYMENT IN THE EU



VET'S **new****routes****JENS BJØRNÅVOLD**

CEDEFOP EXPERT

*We need to take a step back and see how vocational education and training is changing* ”



In several European countries, fewer students now opt for initial vocational education and training (VET), preferring academically oriented education. Outside traditional VET, however – often at higher education levels – vocationally oriented education and training is gaining ground. So, falling numbers in initial VET could be deceptive.

A new three-year Cedefop project on the changing nature and role of VET will explore these trends. Cedefop expert Jens Bjørnåvold, who is leading the project, explains: ‘We’ve been working a lot on VET in different areas, but now we need to take a step back and see how it is changing; how it is related to other parts of education and training, to primary but also to higher

education, so we get a comprehensive perspective.’

One of the issues to be explored is whether the definition of VET should be updated: ‘Traditionally we think of VET as apprenticeships, as upper secondary levels of training of skilled workers,’ argues Mr Bjørnåvold. ‘What you see is that vocationally oriented education and training takes place at many levels and in many different types of institution. We need to look at how narrow or how broad the definitions are. This is not just a theoretical exercise; it’s also very practical. How you define it also influences the way you take it forward at national level.’

The Cedefop expert thinks, however, that the combination of theory and practice should remain at the core of vocationally oriented education and training: ‘I think demand for advanced VET, for example provided by universities or higher education institutions, is increasing. We are not used to

using the term VET, but the focus is on the combination of theory and practice and the close link to the labour market.’

At a workshop which kick-started the project in June, experts discussed, among other issues, declining trends in traditional VET: ‘Overall, we see some stability in Europe, but we also see countries where there is clear decline, like Germany and the Czech Republic. Elsewhere, such as in Finland and Spain, we see an increase. The figures are not entirely clear, particularly when we try to monitor them over a longer period.’

Germany is often quoted as an example of VET being done the right way, so why is there a decline there? ‘That’s difficult to respond to,’ says Mr Bjørnåvold. ‘It might be that other parts of education and training, higher education for example, have expanded. That is part of what we want to look at in this new study.’



by ROSY VOUDOURI



worldskills: converging with the  
21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY  
labour market



*I'm hoping that Cedefop research programmes will have a place for WorldSkills perhaps in being a test pit*

**JANE SHACKLETON**

ASSESSMENT ADVISOR, WORLDSKILLS

WorldSkills, which encompasses more than 45 skills in 72 countries and regions, describes itself as 'the collective voice for skills excellence and development in vocational, technological and service-oriented careers around the globe.' Founded in 1950, it is best known for its competition, the latest edition of which took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in August.

Assessment advisor Jane Shackleton was invited to the workshop which kick-started Cedefop's changing vocational education and training (VET) project (see p. 8) to give VET insights from a global perspective.

She told *Skillset and match* that her organisation has had a comprehensive facelift to ensure 'an entirely new approach to the portfolio of skills by converging with the 21st century labour market.'

Ms Shackleton sees WorldSkills as a vehicle for recognition of continuing professional development: 'We talk about triple professionalism. If you take somebody with a vocational skill, first they are a skill practitioner; then they will be a teacher, a trainer, so they have that double profession. We want a triple profession where a person is a pedagogical leader for VET. We are saying, you have to span boundaries and we want you to have mastery in the sense of postgraduate mastery but in your vocation and the way you take it forward.'

WorldSkills can contribute to the discussion about VET's changing role: 'I think it will

become a laboratory or observatory for technical VET in all its forms. We already bring competitors from universities because not all skills are taught outside universities. But we are also a melting pot for vocational teachers, industry and business.'

Ms Shackleton believes there are partnership opportunities with Cedefop: 'WorldSkills works with the research community across the continents and Cedefop is one of those important research communities. I'm hoping, as WorldSkills does not have the resource to do the same work, that Cedefop research programmes will have a place for WorldSkills perhaps in being a test pit, in being an experimental site. We would love to make ourselves available for that kind of work and we've got a number of research questions we would like answered. We will then be able both to help with the testing and be one of the first appliers.' ■

# VOCATIONAL training issues WITH global outlook

SHYAMAL MAJUMDAR

HEAD OF UNESCO-UNEVOC



photo: © shutterstock, Alexander Flaths

Cedefop and Unesco worked together in the past on qualifications frameworks, work-based learning and green skills. In May, officials from the two organisations, including **Shyamal Majumdar**, met in Paris to discuss renewed cooperation.

Discussions revealed great potential in sharing a common vision on attractiveness and excellence, and in streamlining work on issues such as learning outcomes, entrepreneurship and key competences.

Mr Majumdar, who heads Unesco's international centre for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), Unevoc, has joined the debate on the sector's future (see p.8) from a global perspective.

Speaking to *Skillset and match* during a visit to Cedefop in June, Mr Majumdar compared systems in different geographic regions and gave his views on the impact of technology on skills and on recognition of excellence.

### What similar and different challenges do Europe and the rest of the world face in vocational education and training?

They face mostly similar challenges. It isn't always about resources. Emerging countries may not have the resources Europe has, but Europe still has problems with image and attractiveness of TVET, parity of esteem, and skills shortages. Some countries in Asia, South America or Africa regions facing dual economies have difficulty selling TVET to intended target groups given low social image, quality issues and gaps in information between university education and TVET. The valuing of TVET by users of TVET

qualifications, as well as low-paid jobs associated with it, aggravates low uptake. These commonalities suggest universality of TVET issues that need to be addressed on a global scale. In a comparison of common challenges, Europe seems to have progressed far better than its counterparts on the global stage. TVET development in higher levels of qualifications, for example, has been one of those interventions changing the face of TVET in the region. The involvement of the private sector and social partners is higher in Europe than elsewhere. This has become a positive driving force in many countries, making possible seamless implementation of dual training models. Developing countries, in contrast, face challenges on this front. TVET progress has been principally driven by issues of access, inclusion and addressing quality in formal and non-formal TVET.

### How can the problem of technology development be addressed, in the sense of impact on people's skills?

Technology development means that people's skills soon become obsolete, so education has to



change to make sure that people are prepared. For example, if an IT programmer has learnt to use C++ and then Java comes around, their training methodologies should have prepared them to learn fast how to use the new language and adapt to other future technological developments. Learning-to-learn skills and both domain-dependent and domain-independent generic/transversal skills are important for lifelong learning. There is also a need to emphasise that STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) will increasingly offer essential support to learning-to-learn skills and job retention in a fast-changing technological environment.

**You've said we should celebrate skills stars the way we celebrate Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and other global football stars.**

We have been used to celebrating the skills of soccer stars and artists but why not celebrate also the skills of TVET practitioners? There are many competitions, such as WorldSkills, that promote TVET internationally. The UN has designated 15 July as World Youth Skills Day to promote and highlight the importance of sound policies, knowledge management, advocacy and multi-stakeholder partnerships for youth skills development in the post 2015 development agenda. This is a far departure from the days when skills were regarded as confined to workshops and

*In a comparison of common challenges, Europe seems to have progressed far better than its counterparts on the global stage*

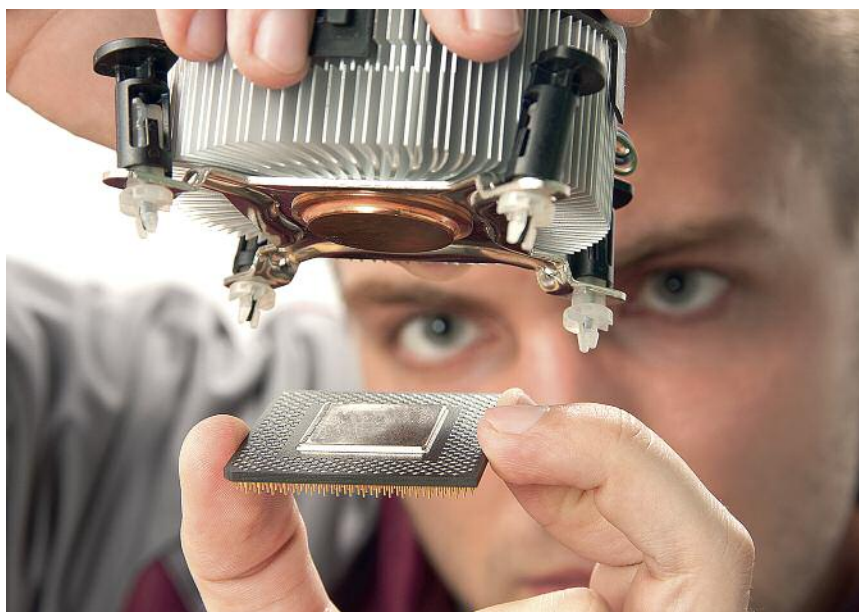
laboratories. It has become a global agenda and youth are centre stage. Similarly, Unesco-Unevoc initiated the 'skills in action' award to reward excellence and young people's abilities to shape their future equipped with vocational skills. I'm not saying that competitions are the only option, but they can help improve TVET's image and attractiveness by developing a culture of appreciating skills.

**What kind of opportunities for cooperation do you see between Cedefop and your organisation?**

There are ample opportunities for

cooperation. With Cedefop being primarily a research organisation with a strategic outreach in Europe, and Unesco-Unevoc primarily a centre that coordinates and works at international level to foster TVET transformations, I would like to see joint activities such as researcher and practitioner dialogues shaped to connect our constituencies (developed and developing countries), cross-share issues and approaches, and, together, produce evidence-based developments that represent cross-regional perspectives.

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CELEBRATING



OF

contribution

TO

EUROPEAN VET

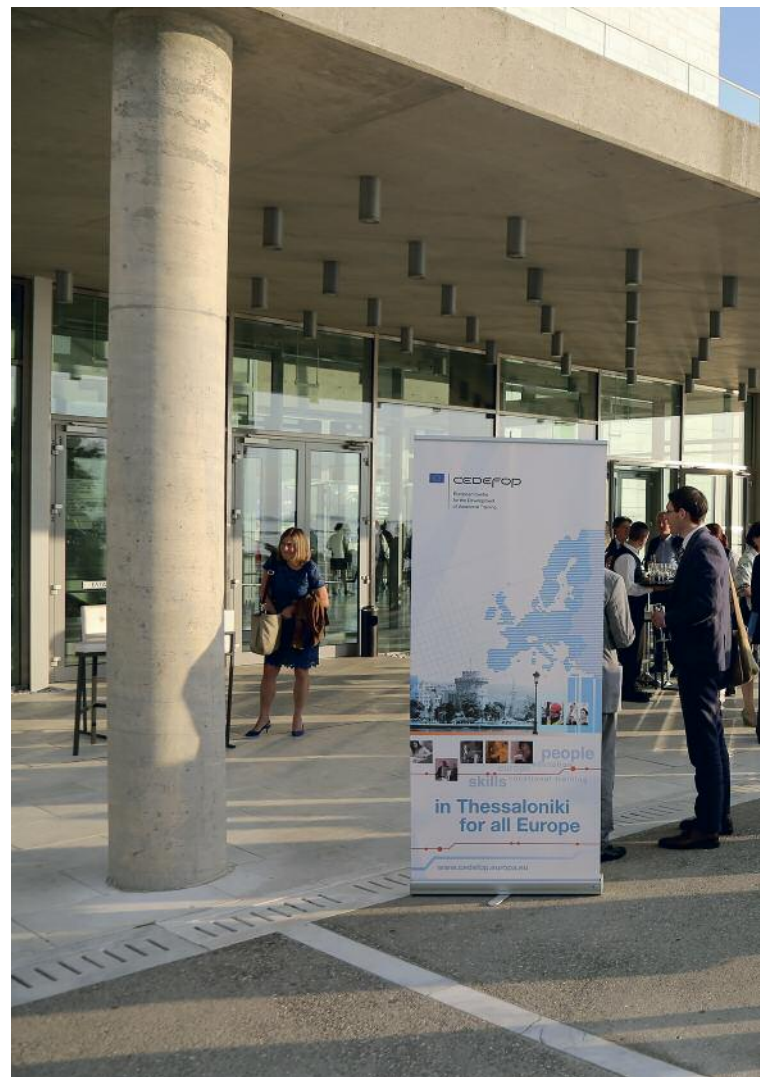
Cedefop celebrated 40 years' contribution to vocational education and training (VET) in Europe and 20 years in Greece with the opening of an exhibition on its history and a conference in June.

Friends and stakeholders, Commission representatives, Governing Board members and present and former staff were invited to the Thessaloniki Concert Hall on 11 June. In his speech before opening the exhibition, European Commission Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Michel Servoz, said that 'employment recovery depends on skills, vocational education and training, and apprenticeships.'

Cedefop Director James Calleja noted that 'what Cedefop does, improving and promoting learning for work, has proved to be important over the past 40 years and promises to be even more important for the next and for future generations.' He added that continuing to improve VET is essential to put all of Europe on the road to a strong and sustainable economic recovery.

In a video message, European Parliament President Martin Schulz underlined that 'the main challenge Cedefop now faces is that of elevating vocational training back to the level of respect it enjoyed many decades ago, while at the same time addressing today's realities, especially the need for a very adaptable workforce'. He added that Europe will be counting on Cedefop's input.

Greek Alternate Minister for Administrative Reform, George Katrougalos, argued that 'in



developing VET, Cedefop is deeply rooted in social values at a time and context where we all need to do much more to strengthen social Europe.'

Thessaloniki Mayor Yiannis Boutaris thanked Cedefop for its work, stating that during his term, cooperation between the municipality and the agency has taken on a new dimension.

Representing Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, the member of her Cabinet Julie Fionda



Scan here to access all Cedefop 40th anniversary material (videos, photo galleries, news)



# OLD ROOTS NEW ROUTES

## ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

The exhibition charts the political and social circumstances which led to Cedefop's establishment in 1975, and the events that have shaped its work over the past four decades – first in Berlin and then in Thessaloniki. Through images, texts and artefacts, the exhibition illustrates Cedefop's eventful history and the main themes of its work, including vocational education and training research, policy analysis and support for mobility. It will be on display at Cedefop's premises until the end of 2015.

Fortieth birthdays are not always welcome. The air is often greyer and thinner, while the middle tends to be thicker. By 40, most have some experience and perspective of what is important in life. But many are often too busy to enjoy it.

Cedefop turned 40 on 10 February 2015; it is more experienced, busier than ever, but uncomfortably thinner than it was a few years ago. Cedefop, with European agency. Agencies make a difference. Their presence in Member States demonstrates that the European Union is not only Brussels.

For 40 years Cedefop has played a pivotal role in strengthening European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET). Cedefop has seen many changes, not least transformation of a European Economic Community of nine Member States into a European Union of 28. But challenges of the 21st century for jobs and growth require new approaches to learning for work. VET needs to adapt, but implementing change can be slow and difficult and enthusiasm can be lost.



referred to the Commissioner's aim for VET to be recognised as 'first choice and not a second option' by parents and young people.

Cedefop's anniversary conference on 12 June looked at how VET has developed into its present role and discussed its future orientations up to 2020. Opening the conference, Mr Servoz stressed that job creation is very much at the top of the European agenda and clearly linked to VET and skills.



# FOCUS

ON Europe's  
employment  
recovery

Michel Servoz (left)  
cutting the ribbon of the Cedefop  
anniversary exhibition

**40**  
years

A guest of honour at the June celebrations of Cedefop's 40th anniversary, the Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, **Michel Servoz**, is, since the agency's move to his DG last year, one of the Commission senior officials who work more closely with the Thessaloniki-based organisation. Speaking to Cedefop staff, stakeholders and friends, he praised the agency's work and announced that he will be asking for more. Mr Servoz's visit to the Greek city was the first since the move and he talked to *Skillset and match* about the new relationship and the prospects for vocational education and training (VET).



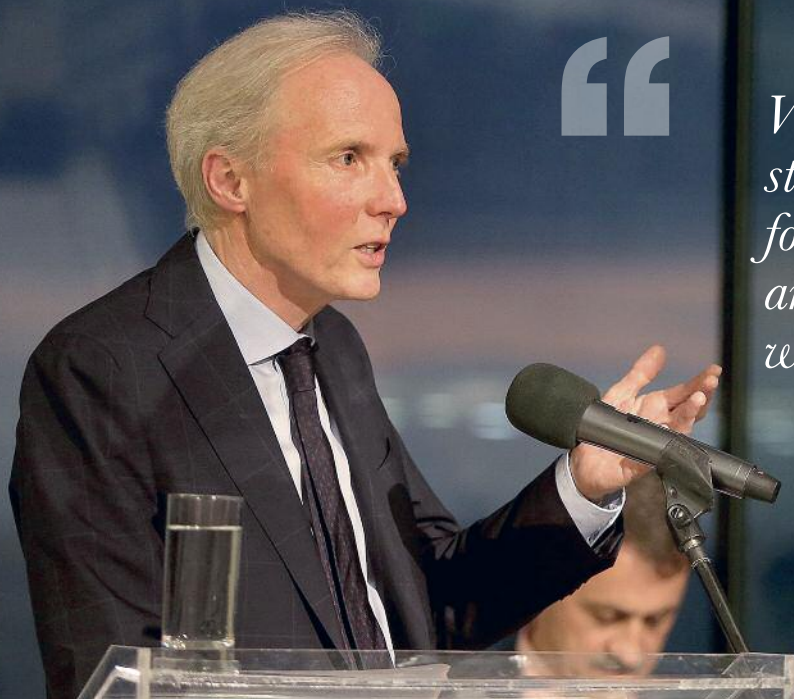
### How is cooperation with Cedefop in VET and employment issues progressing?

First, it gives me great pleasure to be in Thessaloniki today with Cedefop for the first time, and I should explain that this is a decision that President [Jean-Claude] Juncker took when he started with the new Commission. He wanted to put VET, skills and labour mobility together with the Commissioner for Employment. The administrative organisation followed and this is why Cedefop is now partnered with DG

Employment. The partnership is progressing very well. Xavier Prats, the Director-General for Education, is an old friend of mine, so we are working extremely closely and very well. Skills and VET are the key elements in resolving the unemployment crisis.

### What role do you expect Cedefop to play up to 2020? What are the agency's strengths in your opinion?

For me, the agency's strength is very much its expertise, its knowledge of countries, of Member States and their VET



“

*We want to develop a new strategy for skills, for VET, for apprenticeships, and we will partner with Cedefop*

”

systems. This is an expertise that the Commission needs. We want to develop a new strategy for skills, for VET, for apprenticeships, and we will partner with Cedefop. Cedefop will bring us the technical expertise and, at the same time, run important projects like the skills panorama.

**Is Europe in a better position now to fight unemployment than it was when the latest financial crisis started?**

I would say that the economic crisis is starting to disappear. We see the beginning of a recovery; unfortunately, it is an economic recovery but not yet an

employment recovery, which means that we have to continue focusing our efforts because unemployment is still very high in many Member States. Even in countries where unemployment is very high, there are skills mismatches, which means that there are some sectors in which there is shortage of skills and of skilled staff. So, the Commission needs to focus on this particular issue.

**How can VET become not only a policy priority but a first choice for parents and young people in Europe?**

It's clear that there is a question

about VET's attractiveness. Parents do not think it's the best option for their children and children themselves aren't attracted first to VET. So, for me, the way to improve the situation is to make sure that there is better-quality VET, and also a clear bridge between general education and VET.

**You mentioned the skills panorama website, which Cedefop has taken over. What do you think of the project?**

We have this very strange situation where you have very high unemployment levels in some Member States but in the same Member States you also have shortage of skills. So, you need to have an instrument to create a better match between employment offer and demand; this is what the skills panorama is about. This project was started by the Commission, but we do not have the capacity, the technical expertise that Cedefop has, which is why we have asked Cedefop to take it over. We see this as an instrument with a lot of potential, especially when combined with EURES [the European job mobility portal]. ■



## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

SUCCESS

AND TRAINING

stories



Some parents and young people in Europe may not find vocational education and training (VET) appealing, but those who do often have success stories to tell. And they are passionate about what they do. Two young people from Portugal and one from Greece were invited to Cedefop's anniversary celebrations after succeeding in VET competitions. **Svitlana Nastas** won the hotel reception gold medal in the 2014 EuroSkills, in Lille, France. **Diogo Fialho** and **Dimitris Iliadis** were winner and runner-up respectively of Cedefop's video competition, in which they told their VET story.



Diogo, an IT programmer from Lisbon, sent his video without expecting to win. His experience shows how useful good VET can be to someone starting their professional career: 'I was in a vocational professional course for IT programming and did an internship in a company that allowed me to design a system that manages land and buildings in Mozambique. I stayed in the company. I'm still working there after about two years and I am developing several skills that I'd never imagined I could. It's incredible to think how we can apply all we learn from vocational courses; it's an

incredible experience.'

Svitlana, also from Portugal, found a job as hotel receptionist after triumphing at EuroSkills: 'First, I went to Porto, where I won the national competition; after that I went to France, to the European competition, and I won that too. It was a great experience, I really enjoyed it and it helped me a lot with finding a job. Now I am working in a hotel which opened recently and it's been great. I have been developing a lot and learning new things almost every day. There are some things that we can't learn in class, but we do learn in the real world with a real job.'



Dimitris, from Thessaloniki, is a pastry chef and is also studying at university to become a librarian: 'I was very happy when I found out I was the competition runner-up because it gave me the opportunity to come and see VET from the inside. There are so many people here that are professional in their jobs, and I have heard very important things about VET, both in Greece and across Europe. I think that

excellent job with students.'

Diogo would advise other young people to follow the VET path: 'I think it gives us another perspective and allows us to have professional skills that general education doesn't develop. The internship is very important, because it gives us another view of the professional world, allows us, when we are among people that are working professionally, to develop skills

professional world. That is very important because at university we don't have the opportunity to do that so easily.'

Svitlana echoes the opinions of the other two: 'As Diogo and Dimitris said, it prepares you for the real world; you get a chance to work with professionals, something you can't do in general education, so yes I would definitely advise people to follow the VET path.' ■



Diogo Fialho and Svitlana Nastas (left) and Dimitris Iliadis (right)

from now on I can try harder to make myself and the whole section of confectionery and culinary arts better.'

Svitlana admits she wasn't so sure about VET at first but changed her mind after giving it a go: 'It's been amazing and it actually helps young people get a job more easily, because you gain some kind of experience; it's not a lot, but during the course we have several internships where we can learn things and prepare ourselves for a real job. As much as I want to get a higher degree, and hopefully I will, VET has been really great and I think that it is doing an

and learn things that we didn't learn in class, but are needed to give us better prospects for the future.'

With Greece being in a tough spot regarding employment, Dimitris also advocates the usefulness of vocational education and training: 'Comparing it with the university where I am studying, I have to say that the VET path is definitely positive because it helps you get the best work experience. It makes you more confident in your job; it makes you want to try harder. And you can come in contact with business people in the

“

*VET prepares you for the real world; you get a chance to work with professionals, something you can't do in general education*

”

## EUROPEAN MINISTERS

endorse

RIGA CONCLUSIONS  
ON VET

Another milestone has been reached in European cooperation on vocational education and training (VET), known as the Copenhagen process. Ministers from the European Union Member States, candidate countries, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein endorsed in June new deliverables for 2015-20.

They renewed their commitment to 'raising the overall quality and status of VET' to meet the education and training 2020 strategic objectives and support the wider European growth and jobs agenda. They also discussed VET's challenges and the future of the Copenhagen process.

The Riga conclusions, agreed by European social partners and the European Commission, focus on five priority areas:

- ◆ promoting all forms of work-based learning, in particular apprenticeships;
- ◆ further developing quality assurance in VET and informing initial and continuing VET on labour market needs and outcomes;
- ◆ improving access to VET and qualifications for all, through flexible pathways and progression opportunities, better guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- ◆ strengthening key competences in initial and continuing VET;
- ◆ ensuring initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors.



The Riga conclusions



The Copenhagen process



European alliance for apprenticeships



Cedefop work on apprenticeships

Strong partnerships with social partners and other stakeholders are seen as crucial to achieving these aims. Focusing on learning outcomes and using commonly developed transparency tools are further major principles, as are efficient funding

and promoting excellence and innovation.

Advancing apprenticeships moved centre stage at an event that was part of the ministerial meeting. This focused on the achievements and future scope of the European alliance for apprenticeships (EAfA), which aims to promote their supply, quality and positive image. Young people testified to their value. 'Creating a culture for apprenticeship starts before VET,' said Cedefop Director James Calleja at the event.

How to get companies, particularly SMEs, on board was a central question. Cedefop's role is to act as a catalyst, said Mr Calleja referring to a conference planned for November: 'We will focus on how we can foster more government-business partnerships to promote apprenticeships.'

The alliance, launched in 2013, is part of Europe's strategy to ensure the skills needed for growth and jobs, and to address youth unemployment. Most countries have committed to specific measures. Baltic countries are forming a regional alliance. In Riga, more than 40 companies and other organisations signed pledges to join EAfA; this will mean 140 000 more apprenticeships and training opportunities for young people.



# SHAPING FUTURE VET THE DUTCH WAY



photo: © iStock, Nisangha

With equivalent qualifications for dual and school-based pathways, Dutch VET is resistant to economic ups and downs

On 1 January 2016 the Netherlands will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Presidency takes place in a context where many people involved in Dutch vocational education and training (VET) wonder about the implications revolutionary technological changes will have for VET and its students. What will their prospects be if prognoses of a polarised labour market become reality?

Harvard researcher Nancy Hoffman sees the Dutch VET system as among the world's best, as it is both comprehensive and highly flexible. With equivalent qualifications for dual and school-based pathways, Dutch VET is resistant to economic ups and downs. If, during recessions, companies do not provide enough training places for apprentices, VET students can opt for the school-based pathway, which also provides for practical experience in the form of internships.

Another feature of Dutch VET is its four-level division, enabling students to move up the education ladder. Currently 70% of all upper secondary VET students follow courses at higher levels 3 and 4, with 30% at levels 1 and 2.

Many Dutch VET students see a high-level qualification as the best guarantee for employment. But will this be enough? Will this prevent VET students from being caught in the middle? Which strategies are open to VET systems to prepare for a highly uncertain future?

These important issues will be addressed in the VET conference organised by the Dutch Presidency. Thinking about future generations of learners, delegates will explore how we can achieve excellence and innovation. VET will need its partners to prepare for what lies ahead so along with VET policy-makers and practitioners, social partners are invited to attend.



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# HOW TO trust QUALIFICATIONS

## qualifications

A qualification has value and can be used to support employment or further education if the holder inspires confidence that they have acquired the learning outcomes associated with it. The certification process is particularly important and quality assurance mechanisms that support it are essential to ensure a qualification can be credible and trusted by all.

**Stylianos Mavromoustakos**, Vice-President of the European forum of technical and vocational education and training (EfVET) and **Giorgio Allulli**, independent expert in European education and training policies, were among participants at a Cedefop workshop on certification earlier in the year. They gave *Skillset and Match* their views on how quality and trust can be achieved.

### GIORGIO ALLULLI

#### How can you ensure qualification quality?

By an appropriate certification process, based on what the labour market wants, on sound standards, and on employers' needs. It should be reliable, not biased by opportunistic endeavours. Assessors, at least the majority, should be nominated by a third party. It is also important that the certification process be valid and able to recognise what the learner really knows. The examination process should cover most of the knowledge and competences learners should have at the end of their training course. It should be fair and take into account all previous learning pathways. Examination based just on a test or a single essay could be affected by the learner's attitude towards this kind of test, so it should be more comprehensive. Finally, it should be homogeneous throughout a country.

#### What about different Member States?

Each country has different labour market needs and has to set its certification standards. But if every country follows these five criteria – validity, reliability,



fairness, homogeneity and relevancy – then it can trust people getting qualifications elsewhere. I can trust, for example, German apprentices because I know that the Chamber of Commerce makes the submission and it's an external body to the company that has trained them. I know they follow sound occupational standards, continually renewed with the participation of social partners. I know they are based on German labour market needs. So, I can trust them.

# QUALIFICATIONS TRUSTS

Scan for Cedefop's  
learning outcomes and  
qualifications project



## What feedback do you get from companies and learners about certification process?

Learners say the certification process should be able to understand what they know. Employers point out that they should be permanently involved in defining learning outcomes. In some countries, learning outcomes are either defined independently of employers and social partners in general or their involvement is not permanent. We need permanent committees at sectoral level which set standards

and learning outcomes, and review them constantly, because new needs arise all the time while others are no longer valid.



## STYLIANOS MAVROMOUSTAKOS

### What are the challenges you face as VET providers in the certification process?

The challenges in the national setting quite often are not taken too much into consideration. We forget to go down to the grassroots and see how they feel. Do they have the resources? Do they have the capacity? Do they have the knowledge, skills, competence to implement what is being decided at the political level? Sometimes you don't see the political will at national level. And when it comes to the European setting, how do we translate the national systems and settings so they can talk to one another?

### Do you have any examples from particular countries or particular sectors?

There are countries where the system is largely centralised, and others where the system is more liberal or decentralised. There are countries with national, regional and local levels, and then the levels of qualifications vary

among Member States. For example, in Greece to be a beautician you have to have a bachelor degree, level 6, while in the Netherlands you start with level 3 or 4. The welding profession is recognised by different Member States at different levels. If you get a welding qualification in the UK, it may be level 5, and in Germany it is level 6 and 7. This has to be sorted out at European level; there is a need to work closely with industry to get realistic qualification systems standards.

### What opportunities do VET providers need to understand better the learning outcomes approach?

Implementation of learning outcomes is really for the benefit of the learner; it aids learning, and caters better for the needs of special groups of learners. But it puts a lot of pressure on VET providers. Funding becomes a crucial issue. For example, Finland has had an elaborate system based on learning outcomes for many years and is leading the way in Europe. At the same time, our members are complaining that they have been told there will be a 20% cut in finance this year. So, how do you continue developing and providing these opportunities for learners while giving less funding? ■



# new

## CEDEFOP PUBLICATIONS



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### IN FOCUS

#### **NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE ANNIVERSARY EDITION**



The report provides an overview of European national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and their qualifications, celebrating Cedefop's long-term work in the field and showing that the agency can make a difference to European vocational education and training (VET) and, more important, to European citizens. In the 1980s, Cedefop contributed significantly to European cooperation in VET by developing a five-level (partly) competence-based structure. This approach directly shaped work at national level, for example influencing the professional qualifications structures of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania. Work on qualifications transparency, starting in the 1990s, led directly to the initial outline of the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2003-04, which became a catalyst for NQF developments during the past decade.

#### **SPOTLIGHT ON VET ANNIVERSARY EDITION**



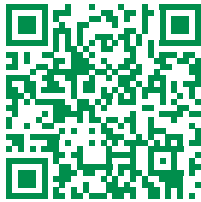
This anniversary publication presents a concise picture of essential VET features in Europe. Reporting on and analysing VET has been a Cedefop core activity throughout its 40-year history. Cedefop is at the forefront of monitoring countries' progress towards set VET priorities. It also supports cross-country policy learning and, increasingly, individual Member States and social partners in their joint work on modernising VET. In cooperation with its ReferNet partners, Cedefop publishes a *Spotlight on VET* for each EU Member State, Iceland and Norway. Spotlights present essential VET features of all 30 countries using comparable system charts based on each country's VET programmes, rather than schools or institutions.



#### **OTHER PUBLICATIONS:**

- Green skills and innovation for inclusive growth (with OECD)
- Briefing note: Europe's uneven return to job growth
- Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks
- Promoting learning for work

# 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

### JOINT CEDEFOP AND EUROFOUND ANNIVERSARY EVENT

WORK ORGANISATION AND WORKPLACE LEARNING – CREATING A WIN-WIN ENVIRONMENT?

#### 19 NOVEMBER

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



Cedefop will hold a joint event with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and Cedefop sister agency Eurofound to present recent findings and initiatives on work organisation and workplace learning, including results of Eurofound's 3rd European company survey and Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey. The half-day event will bring together 200 policy-makers, academics, practitioners and representatives from national authorities, European institutions, enterprises and trade unions to explore and debate work organisation and skill development practices that benefit both employers and employees. It marks the 40-year anniversary of Cedefop and Eurofound, the two longest-established EU agencies, and recognises the EESC's strong tripartite role in EU policy-making. Both agencies are tripartite organisations with a governing structure of employers, trade unions and governments. Keynote speakers will include Nicholas Schmit, President of the Council of EU Employment Ministers, and Pavel Trantina, forthcoming President of EESC Group III.

#### OTHER EVENTS

SEPTEMBER	<b>24-25</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Policy learning forum on the writing and application of learning outcomes
NOVEMBER	<b>9-10</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Expanding apprenticeship: Cedefop conference on apprenticeship and work-based learning
	<b>17-18</b>	LUXEMBOURG	EU Presidency conference on youth guarantee
	<b>26-27</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop conference: Vocational education and training and globalisation – changing expectations and requirements
DECEMBER	<b>1-2</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	ReferNet plenary
	<b>7-9</b>	THESSALONIKI, GREECE	Cedefop conference: Maximising the potential of skills for jobs and growth

Celebrating

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