



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

MODEL SPECIFIC AGREEMENT FOR AN ACTION GRANT
SPECIFIC AGREEMENT No 2024-CED.1885/GP/DVQ/ReferNet_FPA/001/23

This Specific agreement ('the Specific agreement') is concluded between the following parties:

on the one part,

The **European Union** ('the Union'), represented by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, ('Cedefop'), represented for the purposes of signature of this Specific agreement by **Mr Loukas Zacheilas, Head of Department for VET and Qualifications**

and

'the partner'

Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania - ŠIOV

Bellova 54/a

83763 Bratislava

Slovakia,

represented for the purposes of signature of the Specific agreement by **Mr Branislav Hadár, Director**

The parties referred to above

HAVE AGREED

To the Specific agreement and the following annexes:

Annex I Description of the action

Annex II Estimated budget

ARTICLE 1 – SUBJECT MATTER OF THE SPECIFIC AGREEMENT

The Specific agreement is concluded in the context of the partnership established between the parties. It is drawn up in accordance with the relevant terms of Framework partnership agreement No 2023-FPA19/GP/DVQ/ReferNet_FPA/001/23 signed between Cedefop and the partner on 20/12/2023 ('the Framework agreement').

Cedefop has decided to award a grant ('specific grant for an action'), under the terms and conditions set out in the Specific agreement and the Framework agreement, for the action entitled **ReferNet work plan 2024** ('the action') as described in Annex I.

By signing the Specific agreement, the partner accepts the grant and agrees to implement the action in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Specific agreement and the Framework agreement, acting on its own responsibility.

The generic term '*action*' used hereinafter in the Specific agreement means the work programme of the partner as described in Annex I.

ARTICLE 2 – ENTRY INTO FORCE AND IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD OF THE SPECIFIC AGREEMENT

2.1 The Specific agreement enters into force on the date on which the last party signs.

2.2 The *action* runs until 31/12/2024 starting on the date when the last party signs the Specific agreement.

2.3 If the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before signature of the Specific Agreement by both parties (see also point 5.6 of the invitation GP/DVQ/ReferNet_FPA/001/23), the starting date shall not be earlier than that of the notification by Cedefop of award of the grant, i.e. on 08/01/2024. The ending date remains unchanged.

ARTICLE 3 – MAXIMUM AMOUNT AND FORM OF GRANT

3.1 The maximum amount of the grant is EUR 33625.

3.2 The grant takes the form of:

The reimbursement of a maximum of 70% of the eligible costs of the action ('reimbursement of eligible costs'), which are estimated at EUR 48036 and which are actually incurred ('reimbursement of actual costs') for the partner.

ARTICLE 4 –REPORTING, REQUEST FOR PAYMENTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

4.1 Reporting periods

The action covers the sole reporting period as set out in Article 2.2, subject if applicable to Article 2.3.

4.2 Request for pre-financing payment

The partner must submit a request for a pre-financing payment within 60 calendar days from the starting date of the action mentioned in Article 2.2.

4.3 Request for interim payment[s]

Not applicable

4.4 Request for payment of the balance and supporting documents

The partner must submit a request for payment of the balance within 60 calendar days following the end of the sole reporting period.

This request must be accompanied by the following documents:

- (a) a final report on implementation of the action ('final technical report'), drawn up in accordance with Annex IV of the Framework agreement, containing:
 - (i) the information needed to justify the eligible costs declared or the contribution requested on the basis of unit costs and lump sums (as provided for in Article 3.2);
 - (ii) information on subcontracting as referred to in Article II.11.1(d)(ii) of the Framework agreement;
- (b) a final financial statement ('final financial statement'). The final financial statement must include a consolidated statement and a breakdown of the amounts claimed by the partner and its affiliated entities.

The final financial statement must be drawn up in accordance with the structure of the estimated budget set out in Annex II of the Specific agreement and in accordance with Annex V of the Framework agreement and detail the amounts for each of the forms of grant set out in Article 3.2 for the sole reporting period;

- (c) a summary financial statement ('summary financial statement').

This statement must include a consolidated financial statement and a breakdown of the amounts declared or requested by the partner and its affiliated entities, aggregating the financial statements already submitted previously and indicating the receipts referred to in Article II.25.3 of the Framework agreement for the partner and its affiliated entities.

The summary financial statement must be drawn up in accordance with Annex V of the Framework agreement;

(d) a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts ('certificate on the financial statements')

This certificate must be produced by an approved auditor or, in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer and drawn up in accordance with Annex VI of the Framework agreement.

The certificate must certify that the costs declared in the final financial statement by the partner or its affiliated entities for the categories of costs reimbursed in accordance with Article 3.2 are real, accurately recorded and eligible in accordance with the Specific agreement and the Framework agreement.

In addition, the certificate must certify that all the receipts referred to in Article II.25.3 of the Framework agreement have been declared.

The partner must certify that the information provided in the request for payment of the balance is full, reliable and true.

The partner must also certify that the costs incurred can be considered eligible in accordance with the Framework agreement and the Specific agreement and that the request for payment is substantiated by adequate supporting documents that can be produced in the context of the checks or audits described in Article II.27 of the Framework agreement.

In addition, the partner must certify that all the receipts referred to in Article II.25.3 of the Framework agreement have been declared.

4.5 Information on cumulative expenditure incurred

Not applicable

4.6 Currency for requests for payment and financial statements and conversion into euro

Requests for payment and financial statements must be drafted in euros.

The partner and affiliated entities with general accounts in a currency other than the euro must convert costs incurred in another currency into euros at the average of the daily exchange rates published in the C series of the *Official Journal of the European Union* (available at <http://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/exchange/eurofxref/html/index.en.html>),) as well as on the ReferNet Extranet, determined over the corresponding reporting period.

The partner and affiliated entities with general accounts in euros must convert costs incurred in another currency into euros in accordance with their usual accounting practices.

4.7 Language of requests for payments, technical reports and financial statements

All requests for payments, technical reports and financial statements must be submitted in English.

ARTICLE 5 — PAYMENTS AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Payments to be made

Cedefop must make the following payments to the partner:

- one pre-financing payment, on the basis of the request for the pre-financing payment referred to in Article 4.2;
- one payment of the balance, on the basis of the request for payment of the balance referred to in Article 4.4.

5.2 Pre-financing payment

The aim of the pre-financing is to provide the partner with a float. The pre-financing remains the property of Cedefop until it is cleared against interim payments or, if it is not cleared against interim payments, until the payment of the balance.

Cedefop must make the pre-financing payment of EUR 20175 to the partner within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the request for a pre-financing payment, except if Article II.24.1 of the Framework agreement applies.

5.3 Interim payment

Not applicable.

5.4 Payment of the balance

The payment of the balance reimburses or covers the remaining part of the eligible costs incurred by the partner for the implementation of the action.

If the total amount of earlier payments is greater than the final amount of the grant determined in accordance with Article II.25 of the Framework agreement, the payment of the balance takes the form of a recovery as provided for by Article II.26 of the Framework agreement.

If the total amount of earlier payments is lower than the final amount of the grant determined in accordance with Article II.25 of the Framework agreement, Cedefop must pay the balance within 60 calendar days from when it receives the documents referred to in Article 4.4, except if Article II.24.1 or II.24.2 of the Framework agreement apply.

Payment is subject to the approval of the request for payment of the balance and of the accompanying documents. Their approval does not imply recognition of the compliance, authenticity, completeness or correctness of their content.

Cedefop determines the amount due as the balance by deducting the total amount of pre-financing and interim payments (if any) already made from the final amount of the grant determined in accordance with Article II.25 of the Framework agreement.

The amount to be paid may, however, be offset, without the partner's consent, against any other amount owed by the partner to the Commission or to an executive agency (under the EU or Euratom budget), up to the maximum amount of the grant.

5.5 Notification of amounts due

Cedefop must send a *formal notification* to the partner:

- (a) informing it of the amount due; and
- (b) specifying whether the notification concerns a further pre-financing payment, an interim payment or the payment of the balance.

For the payment of the balance, Cedefop must also specify the final amount of the grant determined in accordance with Article II.25 of the Framework agreement.

5.6 Interest on late payment

If Cedefop does not pay within the time limits for payment, the partner is entitled to late-payment interest at the rate applied by the European Central Bank for its main refinancing operations in euros ('the reference rate'), plus three and a half points. The reference rate is the rate in force on the first day of the month in which the time limit for payment expires, as published in the C series of the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Late-payment interest is not due if the partner is a Member State of the Union (including regional and local government authorities and other public bodies acting in the name of and on behalf of the Member State for the purpose of the Framework agreement and the Specific agreement).

If Cedefop suspends the time limit for payment as provided for in Article II.24.2 of the Framework agreement or if it suspends payments as provided for in Article II.24.1 of the Framework agreement, these actions may not be considered as cases of late payment.

Late-payment interest covers the period running from the day following the due date for payment, up to and including the date of actual payment as established in Article 5.8. Cedefop does not consider payable interest when determining the final amount of grant within the meaning of Article II.25 of the Framework agreement.

As an exception to the first subparagraph, if the calculated interest is lower than or equal to EUR 200, it must be paid to the partner only if the partner requests it within two months of receiving late payment.

5.7 Currency for payments

Cedefop must make payments in euros.

5.8 Date of payment

Payments by Cedefop are considered to have been carried out on the date when they are debited to its account.

5.9 Costs of payment transfers

Costs of the payment transfers are borne as follows:

- (a) Cedefop bears the costs of transfer charged by its bank;
- (b) the partner bears the costs of transfer charged by its bank;
- (c) the party causing a repetition of a transfer bears all costs of repeated transfers.

5.10 Payments to the partner

Cedefop must make payments to the partner.

Payments to the partner discharge Cedefop from its payment obligation.

ARTICLE 6 – BANK ACCOUNT FOR PAYMENTS

All payments must be made to the partner's bank account as indicated below:

Name of bank: Statna Pokladnica

Precise denomination of the account holder: Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania - ŠIOV

IBAN code: SK0881800000007000064495

ARTICLE 7 - COMMUNICATION DETAILS OF THE PARTIES

7.1 Communication details of Cedefop

Any communication addressed to Cedefop must be sent to the following address:

Cedefop:
(Procurement Service)

‘SERVICE POST’

Europe 123

57001 Themi (Thessaloniki)

Greece

Tel: 2310 490111 (*indicate only in case of courier delivery*)

E-mail: c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu

7.2 Communication details of the partner

Any communication from Cedefop to the partner must be sent to the following address:

Mr Branislav Hadár, Director
Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania - ŠIOV
Bellova 54/a
83763 Bratislava
Slovakia
Email address: vantuch2011@gmail.com

ARTICLE 8 – ENTITIES AFFILIATED TO THE PARTNER – NOT APPLICABLE

ARTICLE 9 – ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS ON USE OF THE RESULTS (INCLUDING INTELLECTUAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY RIGHTS)

In accordance with Article II.9.3 of the Framework agreement, whereby the Union acquires rights to use the results of the action, these results may be exploited using any of the following modes:

(a) use for its own purposes:

- making available to the staff of the contracting authority;
- making available to the persons and entities working for the contracting authority or cooperating with it, including contractors, subcontractors whether legal or natural persons, Union institutions, agencies and bodies, Member States’ institutions;
- installing, uploading, processing;
- arranging, compiling, combining, retrieving;
- copying, reproducing in whole or in part and in unlimited number of copies.]

(a) distribution to the public in hard copies, in electronic or digital format, on the internet including social networks as a downloadable or non-downloadable file;

(b) communication through press information services;

(c) inclusion in widely accessible databases or indexes, such as via ‘open access’ or ‘open data’ portals, or similar repositories, whether freely accessible or accessible only upon subscription;

(d) edit or re-write in another way the results of the action, including shortening, summarising, modifying the content, correcting technical errors in the content insert other as appropriate;

- (e) cut, insert meta-data, legends or other graphic, visual, audio or word elements insert other as appropriate in the results of the action;
- (f) extract a part (e.g. audio or video files) of, divide into parts or compile the results of the action;
- (g) prepare derivative works of the results of the action;
- (h) translate, insert subtitles in, dub the results of the action in all official languages of EU, NO and IS
- (i) license or sub-license to third parties, including if there are licensed pre-existing rights, any of the rights or modes of exploitation set out Article II.9.3 of the of the Framework agreement;

The partner must ensure that the Union has the rights of use specified in Article II.9.3 of the Framework agreement for the whole duration of the industrial or intellectual property right[s] concerned.

ARTICLE 10 — INELIGIBILITY OF VALUE ADDED TAX

As an exception to Article II.19.2(h) of the Framework agreement, paid value added tax (VAT) is not eligible under the Specific agreement for the following activities as described in Annex I:

- taxed activities or exempt activities with right of deduction. For those activities, VAT is deductible, hence ineligible;
- activities engaged in as a public authority by the partner where it is a State, regional or local government authority or another body governed by public law.

ARTICLE 11 – SPECIAL PROVISIONS ON BUDGET TRANSFERS INVOLVING USE OF PROVISIONS FOR CONTINGENCIES AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE LOSSES

As an exception to the first subparagraph of Article II.22 of the Framework agreement, any use of the provisions for contingencies and foreign exchange losses included in the estimated budget in Annex II must be communicated by the partner and approved by the Cedefop.

SIGNATURES

For the partner

For Cedefop

Mr Branislav Hadár, Director

Loukas Zacheilas, Head of DVQ

[signature]

[signature]

Done at Bratislava, [date]

Done at Thessaloniki,[date]

In duplicate in English

Annex I

Description of the action

(as attached to the SGA)

Annex II

**Estimated budget
(as attached to the SGA)**


CEDEFOP

 European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Annex I

Specifications for the 2024 ReferNet work plan

REFERNET WORK PLAN 2024

ReferNet's annual work plan for 2024 ⁽¹⁾ will be the object of a specific grant agreement based on the framework partnership agreement concluded between Cedefop and the partner.

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

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

Deliverable type 2: Reporting on national VET systems

Deliverable type 3: Ad hoc thematic and other support

Deliverable type 4: Communication / Visibility actions

⁽¹⁾ Start date of the annual work plan: January 2024 – end date: December 2024.

1. POLICY BACKGROUND

In 2020, a new cycle of European cooperation in VET began with the first ever Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (hereinafter, the VET Recommendation) and the Osnabrück declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies (hereinafter, the Osnabrück declaration). In combination with other strategic documents and policies, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Skills agenda, the Pact for Skills, the two documents gave a new impetus to the Copenhagen process and set the stage for further cooperation of EU-27, Iceland and Norway.

The VET recommendation invites Member States in accordance with national and Union legislation, available resources, national priorities and circumstances, including the socio-economic situation and the characteristics of national VET systems, to implement reform in the following six areas:

- (a) VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges;
- (b) Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET;
- (c) VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand;
- (d) VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills;
- (e) VET promotes equality of opportunities;
- (f) VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.

As well as achieving by 2025 the following quantitative objectives:

- (a) the share of employed graduates from VET is at least 82%;
- (b) 60% of recent graduates from VET benefit from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training;
- (c) 8% of learners in VET benefit from a learning mobility abroad.

The implementation of the measures should rely on:

- (a) supporting sustainable partnerships for the VET governance and involving the social partners and other relevant stakeholders, including at regional and sectoral level;
- (b) making best use of the European transparency tools;
- (c) making best use of European Union funds and instruments supporting reforms and/or investment in VET, including on digitalisation and environmental sustainability, and stimulating further investments from both public and private sectors.

In the Osnabrück Declaration, the Ministers responsible for VET from EU Member States, candidate countries, EEA/EFTA countries agreed with the European Social Partners and the European Commission, to focus on four main areas for the years 2021-25:

- (a) resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET;

- (b) establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation;
- (c) sustainability – a green link in VET;
- (d) European education and training area and international VET.

VET is at the point of convergence of other programmes and initiatives of the EU, such as the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan, and will contribute to their successful implementation. VET policy has become much better linked to and integrated with broader economic and social agendas and skills policies and strategies, in particular those linked to the digital and green transitions.

VET needs to be agile and adaptive to the dynamic labour markets, work-based learning and apprenticeship continuing to be effective approaches for employability, reskilling and upskilling. VET programmes need to be more personalised and learner-centred, ensuring more engagement and ownership over learning by learners, teachers and trainers and employers. They will also adapt to prepare for the digital and green transitions: greening of VET programmes, curricula and content will go hand in hand with multi-dimensional digital strategies. Green and digital skills should become an integral part of upskilling pathways. Flexible, modern and excellent VET needs highly qualified and experienced teachers and trainers, including hybrid professionals who work both in VET institutions and in companies and have most up-to-date knowledge and skills.

At systems level, VET across the EU observe fewer clear-cut borderlines between VET for youth and adults, initial and continuing training. This calls for effective interaction between all education and training sectors in a lifelong learning perspective. For lifelong learning to become an operational reality, IVET and CVET provision must interact in more efficient and flexible ways to support individuals in their needs to progress in education, training and learning throughout their lives. VET should become ‘age-open’ instead of ‘age-neutral’ and should address the gender imbalances. Increasing CVET offer for all types of learners could be a step towards the establishment of a lifelong learning culture.

The role of the common European tools for transparency, comparability, documentation and recognition of qualifications within and across borders remains important. The EQF and related comprehensive National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) act as enablers of changes and facilitators of reforms in other education and training areas. Further work on transparency will support flexible and attractive learning pathways, help linking VET with other education paths and facilitate expanding VET to higher levels. Flexibility will be ensured through more modularisation and use of units of learning outcomes, through more systematic recognition and validation of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings.

Cedefop has monitored, analysed and reported on EU countries progress towards common objectives and priorities in VET since 2004, following the Copenhagen process on modernising VET systems in Europe (2002). In 2020, Cedefop organised a conference closing the reporting cycle on the Riga medium-term deliverables, which confirmed the potential of VET as enabler for individuals, companies, economy and society at large debating the role and future of VET at a time of unprecedented challenges.

The VET Recommendation invites the European Commission (EC) to ‘ensure qualitative and quantitative monitoring in line with the common objectives’ and ‘report to the Council on the implementation of the Recommendation every five years, building on data available at national and European level and annual monitoring by Cedefop’ while the Osnabrück Declaration reaffirms it and asks Cedefop (and ETF) to monitor the implementation of the

agreed actions and report annually to the Advisory Committee for Vocational Education and Training (ACVT) and Directors General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVTs).

Following the European Commission's proposal and discussions at the meetings of the ACVT in 2020 and 2021, an integrated approach was adopted for monitoring the implementation of both, the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration.

As stipulated in the Recommendation on VET, EU Member States, Iceland and Norway have worked to develop their national implementation plans (NIPs) describing how they plan to address the common EU priorities on VET for the coming years (long-term perspective of 2030). 27 NIPs from 26 of the EU 27+ countries have been developed by mid-2023 (24 Member States, NO and IS; BE submitted two NIPs, for BEfr and BEfl, while CZ, IE and SE are in the process of submitting their NIPs).

2. PURPOSE OF THE 2024 ACTION

The above policy processes not only require regular monitoring and thematic stock-taking but increasingly also systematic country-specific information and analysis. Such analysis informs the European Commission's work and discussions of Directors General (DGVT) and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT), as well as other Cedefop work.

VET varies considerably among Member States. Analysis and understanding of policy developments and achievements within and across countries requires thorough information on how VET and labour market work. This requires timely and accurate information on VET role, purpose, outcomes, governance and structure. Considered in its specific socio-economic and labour market context and tradition, this information helps understand countries' starting points and the progress they have made as regards VET.

ReferNet is Cedefop's European network for information on VET. Since 2008, Cedefop's cooperation with ReferNet has been taking place through four-year FPAs (Framework Partnership Agreement). Under the new FPA (2024-27) ReferNet will be the main source of information on national VET systems and developments contributing annually to Cedefop monitoring of policy developments in line with the EU priorities in VET. Its role has been strengthened in the integrated approach to policy monitoring and reporting of the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration as agreed by the ACVT Committee in its meeting of 8-9 June 2021, calling for a close cooperation of ReferNet with the Directors General for Vocational Training in the Member States.

Through their national networks of VET stakeholders, ReferNet partners are well-placed to collect first-hand information on VET systems and policy developments, skills and qualifications, to pool knowledge and experience from policy-making, implementation, evaluation and research at the national, regional, local and sectoral levels and report on the implementation of their NIPs. The partners will submit a set of deliverables which feed into several Cedefop projects and online databases.

ReferNet is also expected to help raising the visibility of Cedefop, its products and more generally VET issues at national level. The national ReferNet partners act as multipliers and dissemination channels in the countries, targeting various audiences.

National ReferNet partners' online presence, through national ReferNet websites and a professional presence on social media, can help improving visibility and dissemination of Cedefop's work. ReferNet websites also support exchanges of information with Cedefop and other national ReferNet websites.

In addition, as members of the European network of expertise in VET, partners are expected to exchange information and discuss between them topics of common interest in VET, skills and qualifications.

Therefore, in 2024-27, Cedefop will require national ReferNet partners to:

(a) report on VET, skills and qualifications policies and the way VET-related objectives are being addressed in their countries in line with the priorities defined in the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration;

(b) provide up-to-date information on VET and skills systems;

(c) deliver thematic and other support to complement the information on VET, skills and qualifications and/or address topical information needs; and

(d) carry out visibility activities, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet site.

3. DELIVERABLES

Deliverable type 1: Reporting on VET and VET-related policy	
Deliverable 1a	VET policy reporting
Deliverable 1b	National news on VET
Deliverable type 2: Reporting on national VET systems	
Deliverable 2a	VET in [Presidency country] – Short description
Deliverable 2b	Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country]
Deliverable type 3: Ad hoc thematic and other support	
Deliverable 3a	Thematic perspective on implementing national priorities in line with NIPs
Deliverable 3b	Thematic support on recognition of VET qualifications in the EU
Deliverable type 4: Communication / Visibility actions	
Deliverable 4a	Communication / visibility actions including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website, social media activities and participation in events

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

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

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

Rules for citations, bibliographies and lists of references:

1. MS Word file

- **Uses in-text citations as well as bibliographies and/or lists of references**
- **Uses Cedefop's publications template**
- **Follows Cedefop's referencing guide and style manual**

2. References file

- **Includes all references mentioned in MS Word file**
- **Format: uses preferably EndNote format (.enl). If it is not possible, RIS format (.ris) is accepted.**

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

Deliverable 1a Policy reporting

Background/Aim

ReferNet annual reporting on the progress of policy developments remains Cedefop's principal source of information for the integrated monitoring of the implementation of the objectives and actions of the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration as described in the countries' NIPs.

In 2024-27, ReferNet will be asked to report on the progress of the ongoing VET policies and initiatives that are already included in the VET REF and provide information on the new policies and initiatives that are part of the measures set out in the NIP.

This input in its final form will be made available in the *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* and will inform Cedefop's synthesis report on the achievement of the objectives and actions of the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration. Findings will be used to inform discussions of the Directors General for VET (DGVT) and the Advisory Committee for VET (ACVT) at their biannual meetings. Where relevant, they will also be used for other Cedefop work.

Methods

ReferNet partners will continue to review and provide information through the policy reporting tool (VET REF). Cedefop will provide them with guidelines.

Reporting should draw on a wide range of sources, including NIPs, policy papers, legislation, evaluation reports, research and policy analysis as well as case studies. This also requires broad cooperation with various national stakeholders, mobilising their expertise, and preparing and validating the responses; ReferNet are advised to establish cooperation with/seek feedback from DGVTs of their countries. Cedefop will organise webinars and customised online meetings, including bilateral meetings with the country managers, to get a better understanding of latest national developments in VET and align policy reporting to the countries' national implementation plans.

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

Information shall be provided in English. It shall be checked by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with the relevant terminology used at the EU level before submission. In 2021-22, Cedefop undertook the English language revision of all the policy developments reported so far that have been updated accordingly in the VET REF tool.

Cedefop will review information in the policy reporting tool (VET REF) and ask ReferNet partners for clarifications and complementary information where necessary.

Steps/Deadlines

The process will be deployed from 1 September 2024 on (guidelines available in May 2024) with a deadline to deliver the requested information by 30 October 2024. These timing arrangements are needed to prepare a synthesis report on the progress to inform ACVTs and DGVTs and to support the Commission's work related to VET.

In September and October, Cedefop will organise bilateral meetings with all countries to discuss progress of the measures described in the national implementation plans and identify national policy developments on which countries will need to focus their reporting. Dates of the bilateral meetings will be agreed between the Cedefop country manager and the national ReferNet coordinator.

Cedefop will provide assistance and feedback throughout the process and ask for clarification/complementary information when analysing the input during the period from November to December.

Deliverable 1b National news on VET

ReferNet partners provide short news items to inform non-national readers on recent VET and VET-related developments in their countries. These include issues that are clearly linked to VET, e.g. labour market developments influencing VET provision, employment policies linked to training, guidance and counselling, validation.

News items should focus on topics that relate to the European VET policy agenda, countries' NIPs, particularly the priorities of the Council Recommendation on VET, the Osnabrück Declaration, the European skills agenda, EU Presidency priorities as well as country-specific recommendations in relevant areas. Cedefop will provide ReferNet with guiding themes.

National news on VET will be disseminated via Cedefop's newsletter and website. They will also inform other Cedefop work where relevant, e.g. country fiches/chapters, thematic studies, discussions at DGVT and ACVT meetings or other events; they may also inspire proposals for country examples to be presented at EU-level events.

Methods

ReferNet partners submit news items electronically, as Word documents. These should not exceed 500 words and consider the characteristics of effective online content and style. Visual material (graphs, logos, photos, etc.) is welcome, provided it is in editable format and does not violate copyright. Cedefop will provide relevant guidelines on content and style.

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

It is ReferNet's responsibility to ensure that the information presented is original, recent, relevant, reliable and complete. Information shall be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet before delivery to Cedefop.

Cedefop reserves the right to publish the news items on Cedefop website. News items that do not comply with the basic criteria described in the relevant Guidelines/Circular, will not be accepted by Cedefop and partners will be asked to submit another news item instead.

Cedefop will review the submitted news items and may request clarification and/or further information or revision. If clarification requests are not addressed within a reasonable time frame, the submitted news item will be rejected.

ReferNet partners should submit news items as soon as national/regional developments in VET take place and not less than three news items per year.

Steps/Deadlines

Guidelines will be provided by Cedefop in February. ReferNet partners should submit news items as soon as national/regional developments in VET take place and not less than three news items per year.

Indicative deadlines: March, June and October 2024

Deliverable type 2: Reporting on national VET systems**Deliverable 2a** *VET in [Presidency country] – Short Description**Background/Aim*

To raise VET visibility in the countries holding the EU Presidency, Cedefop and ReferNet partners cooperate to produce publications on descriptions of national VET systems based on the most recent information about VET systems, including that of the VET in Europe database. The reports will be published in English and, if Cedefop and the partner wish so, in the official language(s) of the Presidency.

As this publication should be available for the Presidency, it is prepared during the preceding semester. In 2024, the work will focus on:

1. VET in Hungary: Short Description, in the first semester
2. VET in Poland: Short Description, in the second semester

These publications will be distributed together with Spotlights on VET (see Deliverable 2b) during Presidency conferences and events, for instance DGVT meetings.

Methods

Cedefop and ReferNet partners of the future Presidency country will discuss the structure of the Short Description. Cedefop will prepare a first draft in English in line with the agreed structure based on data from the VET in Europe database complemented by other Cedefop, European and international VET literature, to present the information within around 70 pages. ReferNet will complement the draft and provide updated information for the report in consultation with Cedefop.

Cedefop will review and edit the Short Description, add other parts (foreword, abstract) and will be in charge of the publication process. Cedefop may organise translation of the publication into the official language(s) of the Presidency country. ReferNet will be asked to proofread the translation and agree with the final text. Printing will be done on demand and in line with Cedefop publication policy.

Preparing the Short Description entails close cooperation between the ReferNet partner and Cedefop. This may include joint working sessions at the ReferNet partner's seat at Cedefop or by online bilateral meetings with ReferNet partners and national experts.

Making the Short Description an informative and attractive publication for international stakeholders will improve the visibility of the country's VET system and inform the Presidency conferences and events.

Steps/Deadlines

Detailed work plan and submission date to be agreed bilaterally with Cedefop experts. The publication needs to be prepared in the preceding semester and should be ready for the DGVT meeting organised by the Presidency country.

Deliverable 2b *Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country]*

Background/Aim

Spotlight on VET summarises key features, challenges and developments within the national VET systems. They include a chart which depicts how VET relates to other education and training sectors. The main aim of *Spotlight on VET* is to present a country's VET system in a 'nutshell', i.e. within a few pages and in clear and simple language. It addresses readers who need a brief, easy-to-read introduction to VET in a specific country, and the broader public.

In 2024, work will focus on the *Spotlight on VET* in Hungary and Poland. These publications will be distributed together with the Short Descriptions (see Deliverable 2a) during Presidency conferences and events, for instance DGVT meetings.

Methods

Cedefop will prepare updated information based on the first draft of the *VET in [Presidency country] – Short description*.

Spotlight on VET highlights key features, developments, challenges and policy responses of the national VET system.

Updated information should be checked and validated by the national representative for ReferNet.

Cedefop will take care of the publication process. Cedefop may organise the translation of the publication into the official language(s) of the Presidency country. ReferNet will be asked to proofread the translation and agree with the final text. Printing will be done on demand and in line with Cedefop publication policy.

Steps/Deadlines

Detailed work plan and submission date should be agreed with the Cedefop expert in charge. The publication needs to be prepared in the preceding semester and should be ready at the beginning of the Presidency.

Deliverable type 3: Ad hoc thematic and other support

Deliverable 3a: Thematic perspective on implementing national priorities in line with NIPs

Background/Aim

In 2022, EU Member States' prepared comprehensive national implementation plans (NIPs) in response to the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration, to address the European priorities and achieve their national objectives in VET and lifelong learning⁽²⁾. All NIPs are based on broad national stakeholder consultations and set out countries' activities until 2025 and beyond. Based on the received NIPs, Cedefop published a [briefing note](#), *Working together towards attractive, inclusive, innovative, agile and flexible VET*, which provides a first overview of selected priorities and themes and distribution of countries.

Countries will be invited to reflect and provide their national perspective (5 to 7 pages) on the most important policies and flagship measures/initiatives in IVET and CVET that took place in the Member States in line with their national priorities set in the NIPs between 2021 and February 2024.

Steps/deadlines

The work shall take place in the period 1 January to 29 February. ReferNet will conduct the activity in accordance with the guidelines provided by Cedefop in January 2024. Information shall be provided in English. It shall be checked by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with the relevant terminology used at the EU level before submission.

It is ReferNet's responsibility to ensure that the information is relevant, reliable and complete presented in an attractive manner. Cedefop will review the submitted information and may request clarification and/or further information in March- April 2024.

The final version will be published on Cedefop's website.

⁽²⁾ Most NIPs are available at the EC website at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1603&langId=en>

Deliverable 3b Thematic support on recognition of VET qualifications in the EU

Background/Aim

Recognition of skills and qualifications has been a long-standing priority in European policy discussion as it plays a crucial role in supporting labour mobility and lifelong learning. Skills can be acknowledged and recognised through qualifications which are a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards (3).

In turn, recognition of qualifications has various levels of interest. It can encompass recognition for further learning or employment, it can take the form of formal recognition by a legal authority or de facto recognition (4). It can concern qualifications within a country including those from different regions or education and training sectors, as well as recognition across countries, both within and outside the EU. Recognition of qualifications from other EU countries will be the focus of this Refernet activity.

Recognition of foreign qualifications can be defined as a formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the validity of a foreign qualification with a view to access to educational and / or employment activities (5). Cedefop defines mutual recognition of qualifications the process of official acknowledgment by one or more countries or organisations of the similarity of value of qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) awarded in (or by) one or more other countries or organisations, including the associated rights and duties (6).

International and European legislation have addressed the recognition of qualification from other countries from different angles, often focusing on specific types of qualifications. The Lisbon recognition convention (7) provides a legal framework and guidelines for the recognition of academic qualifications. The EU directive on professional qualifications Professional Qualifications Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC as amended by Directive 2013/55/EC) establishes a system of automatic recognition of professional qualifications that give access to 9 occupations. In addition to these legally binding instruments, several (non-legally binding) EU initiatives have promoted transparency of learning outcomes to facilitate the recognition of qualifications across countries. Among these, the European qualifications framework has been instrumental in enhancing transparency and supporting recognition of qualifications across various types and levels, including those awarded outside formal education and training systems.

The multitude of initiatives and tools at EU and international level have created a complex environment with different treatments depending on the type of qualification leaving unclear

³ Council of the European Union (2017). Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01))

⁴ In 2016 the European Commission commissioned a study on obstacles to recognition of skills and qualifications which defines de facto recognition as the acknowledgement of value of skills and qualifications by economic and social stakeholders (such as employers) that does not lead to formal recognition of achieved learning outcomes, but can lead to access to non-regulated professions or non-formal training. European Commission and Directorate-General for Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion (2016). Study on Obstacles to Recognition of Skills and Qualifications - Final report

⁵ EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary: [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/recognition-foreign-qualifications_en#:~:text=Definition\(s\),educational%20and%20%2F%20or%20employment%20activities](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/recognition-foreign-qualifications_en#:~:text=Definition(s),educational%20and%20%2F%20or%20employment%20activities)

⁶ See Cedefop glossary on Terminology of European education and training policy: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-glossary/glossary>

⁷ Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention/LCR), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/higher-education-and-research/lisbon-recognition-convention>.

to what extent recognition of vocational qualifications across EU countries is progressing. More recently, the European Commission and Council have adopted a recommendation promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas (covering both general and vocational education and training) and recognition of learning outcomes during study period abroad (8). A mid-term evaluation has indicated that there might be differences between general education and vocational education and training systems (9). Furthermore, an ongoing Cedefop study on transparency and transferability of learning outcomes revealed a greater emphasis on promoting national initiatives in higher education compared to vocational education and training¹⁰.

The aim of this ReferNet activity is to gain a deeper understating of how countries have transposed the different international and EU initiatives and identify what other initiatives have been developed or are being currently developed. Attention will be given to vocationally oriented qualifications including those offered outside formal VET systems.

To accomplish this, countries will be invited to share information on their national legislative frameworks and practices regarding the recognition of qualification issued by other EU countries with particular emphasis on vocationally oriented qualifications. A detailed note to better define the activity will be developed and discussed with Refernet partners.

Steps/deadlines

The work shall take place in the period March-April 2024. ReferNet will conduct the activity in accordance with the guidelines provided by Cedefop in February 2024. Information shall be provided in English. It shall be checked by a native speaker or a professional language editing service familiar with the relevant terminology used at the EU level before submission.

Cedefop will review the submitted information and may request clarification and/or further information in May – July 2024.

The input will be used to develop a comparative analysis of developments across countries and / or countries reports that will be published on Cedefop's website.

⁸ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210(01))

⁹ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/automatic-recognition-of-qualifications>

¹⁰ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/transparency-and-transferability-learning-outcomes>

Deliverable type 4: Communication / Visibility actions

Deliverable 4a Communication / visibility actions, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website, social media activities and participation in events

Background/Aim

Partners will act as multipliers and dissemination channels for VET-related information and the cooperation between Cedefop and ReferNet at the national level, targeting various audiences.

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

The visibility strategy, currently based on recommendations developed in 2012 by the ReferNet working group on visibility and agreed by Cedefop and ReferNet partners, also includes recommendations for ReferNet national websites following the ReferNet workshop on visibility (February 2017). As a follow-up to the recommendations of the 2017 ex-post evaluation of the ReferNet FPA 2012-2015, a Discussion Forum has been established on the new ReferNet platform for all ReferNet partners, contributing to increase the exchange of information among members and the visibility of national best practices.

National ReferNet partners will be ready to adapt visibility and dissemination activities to Cedefop's strategy and annual objectives, and include in their annual work plans other deliverables, such as translations of Cedefop products into national language, organisation of meetings with VET stakeholders on Cedefop activities, cooperation with other European or global networks, etc to raise the visibility of Cedefop, its products and more generally VET issues at national level. Translations into national languages are strongly encouraged as an efficient dissemination and visibility tool.

Methods

A **national ReferNet website** in the national language plus English, if the national ReferNet partner wishes to do so, will be regularly maintained and updated to raise visibility of VET and Cedefop's activities in the member states. The national ReferNet website can be autonomously hosted on its own domain or a dedicated section in the ReferNet national partner's website. It is considered an essential tool allowing for a broad national audience to become aware of and use Cedefop publications through the creation of links to Cedefop webportal.

In 2017, Cedefop has provided technical SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) audit reports with recommendations for national websites on search visibility, domain authority, keyword rank, desktop and mobile page speed, mobile usability and external links to optimise their visibility online. Partners are expected to implement the recommendations gradually. Reporting of the web statistics will allow Cedefop and the partners to evaluate the impact of the various efforts.

National ReferNet websites can be accessed from

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/networks/refernet/3314.aspx>

To reach a wider audience at the national level, ReferNet partners are encouraged to translate and disseminate Cedefop publications in their national language(s). Cedefop may also ask partners to carry out the **language adaptation** of a specific Cedefop publication or audiovisual content.

It is also recommended to use the full potential of other types of online presence, for example professional participation in **social media**, tagging Cedefop events, blogging online, discussions in VET forums, to reach a wider audience. National ReferNet social media accounts are encouraged to follow/like Cedefop's social media accounts, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and retweet/share/view Cedefop's posts to enhance visibility, including by translating them in the national language. ReferNet partners should use Hashtag [#refernet](#) to connect with users and engage conversations with partners. Cross-promotion of all partners' activities will also be encouraged.

To increase mutual benefits to all national partners and Cedefop, ReferNet members are encouraged to use the Discussion Forum on the ReferNet platform for general discussions, surveys, requests for information, etc. making in this way national best practices and debates more visible to all.

Visibility actions will also include the dissemination and/or production of papers, flyers, newsletters, web banners, videos, etc. and the organisation of – and participation in – **public events** involving relevant stakeholders.

Steps/Deadlines

Continuous activity.

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

A survey on all visibility actions carried out at the national level, including details on the audience targeted, the channels used, possibly the outcomes of the action, will be filled in by the ReferNet partner at the end of the 2024 action.

BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFERNET 2024 WORK PLAN

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2024 in all eligible countries ⁽¹¹⁾ is approximately EUR 940 000.

The total available budget for ReferNet work plan 2024 is distributed as follows ⁽¹²⁾:

Country groups	Maximum grant amount
<u>Country group 1:</u> Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Iceland	EUR 23 615
<u>Country group 2:</u> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and Norway	EUR 33 625
<u>Country group 3:</u> France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain	EUR 43 620

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

⁽¹¹⁾EU-27, Iceland and Norway

⁽¹²⁾The allocated amount may not under any circumstances exceed the amounts indicated in the table.

2024 DRAFT TIMETABLE

Start date of the annual work plan: January 2024

End date of the annual work plan: December 2024

Duration of the annual work plan: 12 months

Activity	Deadline/Frequency
1. Reporting on VET and VET-related policy	
1a. VET policy reporting	30 October 2024
1b. National news on VET	March, June and October 2024, or more frequently on own initiative
2. Reporting on VET systems	
2a. <i>VET in [Presidency country] – Short description</i> (hard-copy publication based on the VET in Europe country report)	To be agreed with Cedefop experts (Hungary and Poland)
2b. <i>Spotlight on VET in [Presidency country]</i>	To be agreed with Cedefop experts (Hungary and Poland)
3. Ad hoc thematic and other support	
3a. Thematic perspective on implementing national priorities in line with NIPs	29 February 2024
3b. Thematic support on recognition of VET qualifications in the EU	31 July 2024
4. Communication / visibility actions	
4a. Communication / visibility actions, including maintenance and update of a national ReferNet website, social media activities and participation in events	Continuous



2.4 Grant applied for (give amounts in euro)

Please refer to Section 5 of the call for proposals (Financial conditions) for more information.

Cedefop's co-financing rate may not exceed 70 % of the eligible cost. Maximum amounts are further limited by country groups:

	Maximum grant amount
<u>Country group 1</u> : Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Iceland	EUR 23 615
<u>Country group 2</u> : Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and Norway	EUR 33 625
<u>Country group 3</u> : France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain	EUR 43 620

Breakdown of estimated costs per activity:

Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 1a:	12 000
Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 1b:	9 000
Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 2a:	N/A
Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 2b:	N/A
Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 3a:	11 000
Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 3b:	14 000
Estimated eligible costs for deliverable 4a:	2 036
Estimated total cost for all above activities (sum of 1 to 4a)	48 036
Amount of grant requested (EUR)	33 625