



CEDEFOP

CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT (CAAR) 2019

In pursuance of FR 2018/1046, FFR No 2019/715 (1)

(1) Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/715 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies set up under the TFEU and Euratom Treaty and referred to in Article 70 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 122, 10.5.2019, p. 1).

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MANAGEMENT BOARD'S ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2019/128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training and Article 48 of Cedefop's Decision of 16 July 2019 on the Financial Regulation require the Management Board to send to the Court of Auditors, the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council the Consolidated Annual Activity Report (CAAR) of the previous financial year together with its assessment, no later than 1 July.

The Management Board, based on its analysis and assessment of the Executive Director's Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2019:

- takes note of Cedefop's report on the implementation of the annual work programme 2019, and in particular:
- congratulates the Agency on its overall performance as attested by its performance indicators which confirm that it is a highly acknowledged centre of expertise in VET, qualifications and skills policies with high impact in its field of expertise thanks to the uniqueness of its research and policy analysis;
- acknowledges the Agency's contributions and expertise in providing new knowledge, evidence, monitoring policy trends and acting as a knowledge broker to highly relevant policy themes on the Union agenda;
- congratulates Cedefop on its new online vacancy analysis system complementing its well-established battery of skills intelligence tools to inform VET policy and its work to understand the implications of the gig-economy for VET; these activities confirm the Agency's foresight capacity at the intersection between education and training and the labour market;
- acknowledges the many political, regulatory and organisational changes the Agency faced and managed successfully in 2019, a year when the overall and the VET-specific EU policy framework was in transition, with a new political leadership at the Commission, a recast Agency Regulation and a new Executive Director;
- acknowledges the Agency's communication initiatives and, in particular, the #CedefopPhotoAward which is recognised as an integral part of the European Vocational Skills Weeks since 2016;
- congratulates the Agency for conducting its first user satisfaction survey and for obtaining high satisfaction rates among national, EU and international bodies;
- acknowledges the deployment of further online interactive tools, visualisations and databases on the Agency's Web Portal, specifically the databases for financing apprenticeships and VET systems in Europe; encourages Cedefop to promote these tools more widely, as recommended by their users.
- acknowledges the continued emphasis put on implementing the actions stemming from the 2018 audit of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) on HR management and ethics, in particular on an overall recast of Cedefop's selection and recruitment procedures; is highly satisfied that the recommendation on recruitment procedure which had been flagged as 'critical' has been closed by the IAS as a result of a follow-up audit and that all other recommendations are (being) implemented as planned;

- commends the Agency for the good gender balance, with representation of women at all grades including at management level. Notes the Agency's aims to ensure a geographical balance;
- congratulates Cedefop for pursuing its efforts to reduce the organisation's environmental footprint and for regularly monitoring its environmental performance;
- acknowledges the establishment plan's occupation of 95%, meeting the set target;
- commends the Agency for the excellent budget implementation rate of 99.99%;
- congratulates Cedefop on the fact that the final report of the European Court of Auditors of October 2019 on the financial year 2018 confirms the reliability of Cedefop's accounts as well as the regularity and legality of the underlying transactions in all material aspects;
- acknowledges with satisfaction the European Parliament's positive appreciation of Cedefop's work in its report of May 2020 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2018 and of the Agency's *exemplary* performance measurement system and other measures that improve budget management;
- welcomes the European Parliament's acknowledgement that an efficient Agency requires sufficient funding, requiring Member States to match the Agency's activities with the funding allocated;
- questions the added value of the European Parliaments' call on the Commission to conduct another feasibility study to assess the possibility of merger with Eurofound; stresses that the recent external evaluation underlined the high risks that merging Cedefop with Eurofound would involve and that reinforced cooperation was highlighted as the most feasible option; underlines that Cedefop's expertise in VET, skills and qualifications has a distinct added value and is invaluable to the Commission, Member States and social partners;
- acknowledges the effective bilateral collaboration with Eurofound and the strengthening of the long-standing cooperation on core business activities; welcomes in particular the synergies on the fourth edition of the joint European company survey, as well as the collaboration with Eurostat in the field of big data analysis of online job advertisements;
- acknowledges the collaboration within the EU Agencies network to ensure efficiency gains in administrative matters, as for instance joint procurement procedures and exchange of knowledge and expertise on IT system, cyber-security or HR practices;
- acknowledges the collaboration with ENISA and the renewal of the commitment to cooperate and share services between the two Agencies; welcomes the recent signature of a new Service Level Agreement that will further the cooperation and synergies between both Agencies;
- welcomes Cedefop's contributions to the EU Agency's performance development network and Cedefop's involvement in the cluster 'Social and employment' for the peer review exercise on critical risks;

- acknowledges the Agency's new evaluation policy describing the overarching rationale and principles underpinning Cedefop's approach to evaluate its activities and projects;
- appreciates the fact that, throughout 2019, Cedefop's management kept the Executive Board and Management Board fully informed in all meetings on the finalisation of the Programming Document 2020-22 and the preparation of the Programming Document 2021-23;
- thanks Cedefop's management for launching a reflection process on the Agency's post-2020 strategy at the 2019 Management Board meeting and involving its members actively;
- takes note of the declaration of assurance of the Executive Director and the information provided on all underlying building blocks for assurance that underpin the declaration;
- appreciates the continued improved communication and transparency vis-à-vis the Executive Board and the Management Board as well as staff;
- congratulates and thanks Cedefop's staff and management on their achievements in 2019 despite several challenges and the lack of capacity also at management level; appreciates the high level of commitment and quality of work; also acknowledges that Cedefop's staff and management proved flexible in achieving a demanding work programme and meeting new requests despite financial and human resource constraints;
- confirms that the Management Board's analysis of the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2019 is positive and, in its opinion, provides the necessary assurance for the positive assessment of the results achieved by Cedefop in 2019.



26 June 2020

Barbara Dorn
Chairperson of the Management Board

Executive summary

Agency in brief

Cedefop is one of the oldest EU's decentralised Agencies. Founded in 1975 and based in Greece since 1995, Cedefop supports the promotion, development and implementation of the Union policy in the field of VET, skills and qualifications by working together with the European Commission, EU Member States and the social partners ⁽²⁾.

In line with its vision and values, Cedefop's strategic areas of operation are:

- a) **shaping VET:** foster the renewal and modernisation of VET systems and institutions in response to rapidly changing policy needs and priorities, and support the development and use of EU tools and principles promoting lifelong and lifewide learning;
- b) **valuing VET:** support the development and implementation of VET policies and programmes helping all citizens to achieve competences and skills required for work, employability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning in a constantly changing labour market.
- c) **informing VET:** inform the design of VET and employment policies that ensure the availability of a qualified workforce and its continuous as well as effective skilling, and promote jobs that value, develop and make the best possible use of people's skills throughout their working lives.

Cedefop's multiannual objectives – providing evidence and new knowledge; monitoring and analysing policies; acting as a knowledge broker for countries and stakeholders – reflect the core functions of the Agency. Combined with the thematic strategic areas of operation, they define the type and scope of the work the Agency delivers. They steer the activities of Cedefop's annual work programmes and ensure continuity of its work, allowing the necessary flexibility to respond to changing needs.

According to its recast Founding Regulation, Cedefop is governed by a Management Board made up of three members from each Member State representing the Government, employer and employee organisations; three European Commission representatives and an independent expert nominated by the European Parliament. Member State and social partner representatives are appointed by the Council. Each member has an alternate; all are appointed for four years (renewable).

The Management Board convenes once a year. It is assisted by an Executive Board, i.e. a restricted group of members who usually meet three times per year. They help prepare decisions, monitor the Agency's activities and advise the Executive Director, aiming to reinforce supervision of administrative and budgetary management. The Management Board may decide to enlarge the Executive Board to discuss strategic issues informing their future decisions ⁽³⁾.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about-cedefop/what-we-do/cedefop-regulation>

⁽³⁾ Article 4(3) of the Rules of Procedure of Cedefop's Management and Executive Boards (RB(2019)01358).

The year in brief

Performance at a glance ⁽⁴⁾
40 publications – 424 000 downloads
59 meetings – 1 541 external participants
68 contributions to EU-level documents; 7 to documents by international organisations
454 references to Cedefop work in 167 EU-level policy documents and 253 references to Cedefop work in 98 documents issued by international organisations (OECD, UNESCO, ILO, IMF, United Nations (UNHCR), World Economic Forum, World Bank)
150 contributions to policy-relevant meetings of senior stakeholders, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission conferences <i>VET for all – Skills for Life</i> and <i>VET in and for the World</i> as well as other meetings organised during the European vocational skills week • EESC hearing on the changing world of work and ageing workers • Meetings of Directors General (DGVF) and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) • European Commission working groups on VET, adult learning, innovation and digitalisation • Direct support to Member States: meetings with national senior stakeholders related to thematic country reviews on apprenticeship and skills governance • ETUC Education and training committee meeting
Website traffic: 790 000 visits, 1 335 000 page-views
EU skills panorama: the total number of page-views was more than 384 000
52 contributions to other conferences and major events, including keynote speeches and participation in discussion panels such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILO Global Forum on a <i>Just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all</i> • International BIBB/IAB/ZEW Conference: <i>Robotics, artificial intelligence and the future of work</i> • Skills Finland - Taitaja 2019 event • 3rd <i>Validation of prior learning (VPL) biennale</i>
838 citations in academic literature 2018-19. Most frequently quoted themes: skills supply and demand, qualification frameworks, validation of non-formal and informal learning, lifelong guidance, early school leaving and learning outcomes.
95% occupation rate of the establishment plan
Budget implementation rate: 99.99%

Continuity and innovation characterise the achievements of Cedefop in 2019 – a year when the overall and the VET-specific EU policy framework was in transition. The new Commission’s ambitious goals and priorities confirmed the added value of Cedefop’s forward-looking approach and its readiness to explore untrodden paths.

Several months ahead of the new Commission’s Green Deal, Cedefop published an update of its report on major changes in green jobs, employment and policies supporting green skills in several EU countries ⁽⁵⁾ building on an earlier joint initiative with ILO. The

⁽⁴⁾ Figures do not necessarily add up to the totals presented in this table and in Annex II as some values may refer to a combination of activities from different operational areas.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3078>

Agency's contribution to the ILO's global forum on boosting skills for a just transition and the future of work was highly valued.

To help people and enterprises manage these transitions, VET and qualifications need to adjust accordingly. Hence, foresight and analyses of skill demand and mismatch to inform policy making remained central to Cedefop's work. Within this activity, the Agency assisted several countries in strengthening their anticipation capacity and use labour market and skills intelligence to support social dialogue and policy-making for VET.

To meet immediate and emerging demand, upskilling and reskilling activities require speedy and detailed information. Taking up this challenge, Cedefop adopted big data and machine learning techniques to provide real-time information from across the EU based on 70 million online job advertisements in all Member States and languages and in a wide variety of occupations. The data sets for 18 countries released in the new Skills-OVATE database will be complemented in 2020. Complementing Cedefop's well-established sources of labour market intelligence, this new system attracted particular interest by the Agency's partner DG in the European Commission. As Cedefop used the European classification for skills, competences, qualifications and occupations (ESCO) for the analysis, its findings also inform the further work on this scheme.

Besides skills requirements and jobs, also the way people work and learn is changing. *Platform/gig or crowd* work, influences skill needs, matching and development and affects VET and people's lifelong learning and career paths. These issues were at the core of Cedefop's *CrowdLearn* study. Its findings were presented at a seminar hosted by the Finnish Presidency within Cedefop's regular Brussels-based events and recognised as European Vocational Skills Week event. It attracted high attention among representatives of the EU Institutions, Member States, European social partners and different interest groups. The resonance to this strand of work – which the European Parliament mentioned favourably in its discharge reports on Cedefop's 2017 and 2018 budget implementation ⁽⁶⁾ – and download statistics of the briefing note *Artificial or human intelligence?* ⁽⁷⁾ prove that the Agency has the finger on the pulse of time.

To manage transitions and build lifelong learning and career development paths, people and organisations need assistance. Validation and guidance help to value skills gained outside formal learning and identify training to fill gaps or upgrade them. Both underpin the joint priority of EU cooperation in VET to 'enhance access to qualifications for all' ⁽⁸⁾ and the European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽⁹⁾. As essential parts of successful upskilling and reskilling strategies ⁽¹⁰⁾ they need to complement and reinforce one another. A Cedefop study explored how best to interlink, coordinate and improve these services. Its findings - together with the analysis of country progress in setting up comprehensive validation arrangements to which Cedefop has contributed - will inform the Commission's

⁽⁶⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0258_EN.pdf [accessed on 24.1.20] and https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0092_EN.html.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9140>

⁽⁸⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/200c516d-b8de-4c2a-a233-218671296c8d/language-en> [accessed on 24.1.20].

⁽⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en [accessed on 24.1.20].

⁽¹⁰⁾ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN) and [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220\(01\)&qid=1580206834588&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220(01)&qid=1580206834588&from=EN) [accessed on 24.1.20].

report on following up the 2012 Council recommendation ⁽¹¹⁾. The success criteria for a holistic and coherent approach to guidance and validation presented in Cedefop's study, can inspire countries in their efforts to boost lifelong learning policies as called for by the Education Council at the end of 2019 ⁽¹²⁾.

To be able to encourage more people to develop their skills, it is also important to understand how they perceive VET and its benefits. Considering the massive need for skills development, Cedefop's second opinion survey on VET focused on their views and attitudes towards continuing training. Full results will be released in 2020 and discussed at key EU level events, including the European Vocational Skills Week.

Increasingly valued as an effective way to meet companies' skills demands and ease transitions into jobs, apprenticeships are not only seen as a valuable option for young people but also for adults. Cedefop's explorative study on apprenticeships for adults ⁽¹³⁾ – the first to look at this issue from an EU-wide perspective – was, therefore, timely. In its continued support to countries' and social partners' efforts to expand and improve apprenticeships and the related European alliance, the Agency focused on three areas: enriching the evidence base; supporting the implementation of the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeship; and stimulating reflections on the future.

A new database was released which presents funding arrangements and instruments used in more than 20 countries to motivate employers and individuals to embark on apprenticeships ⁽¹⁴⁾. It offers new evidence for policy learning and development. Together with the one on apprenticeship schemes ⁽¹⁵⁾, it helps to monitor how countries progress in applying the respective European quality framework. For this purpose, Cedefop has mapped the database information against the criteria set by the framework in an 'implementation dashboard' ⁽¹⁶⁾.

The outcomes of a symposium ⁽¹⁷⁾ that Cedefop organised jointly with the OECD, will feed into the Agency's reflections on how best to support policy-makers and social partners in building tomorrow's apprenticeships. The event, which presented recent international research, was attended by 100 participants representing ministries, social partners and national apprenticeship institutions from around the world. Discussing these research findings, senior experts and policy analysts from the European Commission, ETF, ILO, UNESCO, OECD and Cedefop acknowledged the importance apprenticeship continues to have.

Finding the right mix of occupational and transversal skills for VET to be relevant for today's and tomorrow's jobs is one of the main challenges. Key competences are not only crucial for personal development, social integration and lifelong learning; they are

⁽¹¹⁾ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN) [accessed on 24.1.20].

⁽¹²⁾ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG1118\(01\)&qid=1580289388774&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG1118(01)&qid=1580289388774&from=EN) [accessed on 24.1.20].

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4179>

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-apprenticeships>

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/apprenticeships-work-based-learning/referencing-to-efqea>

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/2019-joint-cedefop-and-oecd-symposium-next-steps-apprenticeship-0>

increasingly important for jobs, as Cedefop evidence shows. Strengthening them has been one of the priorities for European cooperation in VET. To understand better how countries have translated this decision into policy and programmes, Cedefop conducted a comparative study which focused on literacy, multilingual and digital competences in initial VET. Findings were presented to Directors General for VET during the Romanian Presidency and discussed in a Cedefop workshop which also reflected on how to shape key competences for VET in the future.

Comparing and analysing VET features, trends and progress requires thorough understanding and up-to-date information on how VET works in each Member State, Iceland and Norway. A backbone of Cedefop's expertise and activities, it has proved a valuable source of information for its partners and a prerequisite for policy learning. The newly released database makes this wealth of information easily accessible and presents it in a comparable and user-friendly way. Its comprehensive information complements the concise overviews provided in the *Spotlight on VET* series ⁽¹⁸⁾.

In 2019, Cedefop also contributed substantially to the European Vocational Skills Week: it co-shaped the *VET for all – Skills for life* ⁽¹⁹⁾ conference; provided a key note speech and moderated and contributed to workshops drawing on different strands of its work. The Agency also contributed to the event *VET in and for the world* ⁽²⁰⁾. The #CedefopPhotoAward was once more an integral part of the VET excellence award competition.

Key achievements 2019

The quality, relevance and impact of Cedefop's work by contributing to EU level VET and adult learning policy and its implementation was confirmed by the European Commission, concluding on the 2017 external evaluation of agencies within the remit of DG Employment ⁽²¹⁾. Recommendations for further improvement, in most cases relating to all four agencies, are being followed up.

A survey Cedefop conducted for the first time in 2019 among its users indicates high satisfaction rates. For 80% - from a list of EU, international and national bodies – Cedefop is the organisation they use most frequently to obtain information for their work. This correlates with the high rating the Agency received. Around 90% of the respondents considered Cedefop's outputs overall as reliable, clear and up-to-date, suitable to their needs and presented in an attractive form. More than 70% of respondents use Cedefop publications regularly and assess them very positively - a well-known product line for over 40 years.

When asked if they would recommend any of Cedefop's outputs to their colleagues, 56% of the respondents are extremely likely to do so; only 12% considered this unlikely. With the resulting net promotor score of 44, Cedefop has clearly set a benchmark for public-service institutions. Users' recommendation to promote Cedefop's interactive tools and

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4168>

⁽¹⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/social/vocational-skills-week/vet-all-skills-life-conference_en [accessed on 24.1.2020].

⁽²⁰⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/social/vocational-skills-week/vet-and-world-conference_en [accessed on 24.1.2020].

⁽²¹⁾ The evaluation in 2017 assessed Cedefop individually and in a cross-cutting perspective with the other three agencies within the remit of DG Employment: Eurofound, Cedefop, ETF and EU-OSHA. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=21035&langId=en> [accessed on 24.1.2020].

databases more widely clearly signals that deploying more online sources was the right decision. Their suggestions to include more visualisations and link the different databases also confirm that the Agency’s current work is moving in the right direction. 90% of the respondents assessed the individual databases very positively.

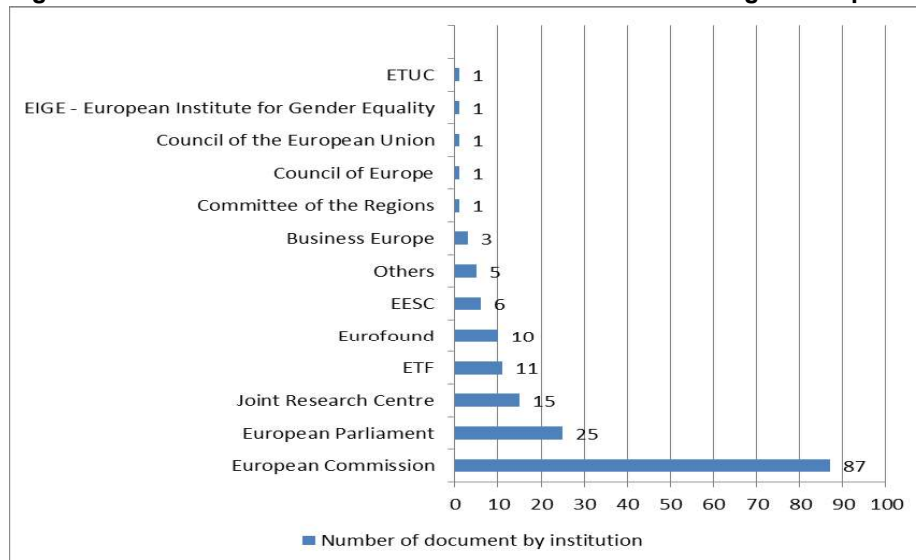
The policy learning fora introduced a few years ago are highly valued among participants: for 98% of respondents who participated they are ‘a good way to share the experiences of countries/stakeholders in policy and practice and learn from one another’; over 90%) consider the policies/practices of others relevant for their own countries/work and 90% applied some of the knowledge gained (90%).

Use of Cedefop evidence by its European stakeholders and partners

Given the transition period in EU-level policy making, with many decisions being shifted to 2020, take-up of Cedefop work was expected to be limited. Nevertheless, the Agency’s performance measurement system, which the European Parliament acknowledged as ‘exemplary’ ⁽²²⁾, demonstrates high use of its evidence and expertise. The Council conclusions on the implementation of the Upskilling pathways recommendation, which invite the Commission to draw on Cedefop’s expertise ⁽²³⁾, and the opportunity to present Cedefop’s work in this field to the Education committee are noteworthy.

As in previous years, the European Commission used Cedefop’s work extensively. Commission papers account for about half of a total of 167 citing or referring to it, followed by European Parliament documents and other agencies (Figures 1 and 2). Commission reports covered a variety of themes, including digital transformation. The use of Cedefop work by the sister agencies reflects the continued strive for synergies.

Figure 1. EU institutions and EU-level stakeholders using Cedefop work

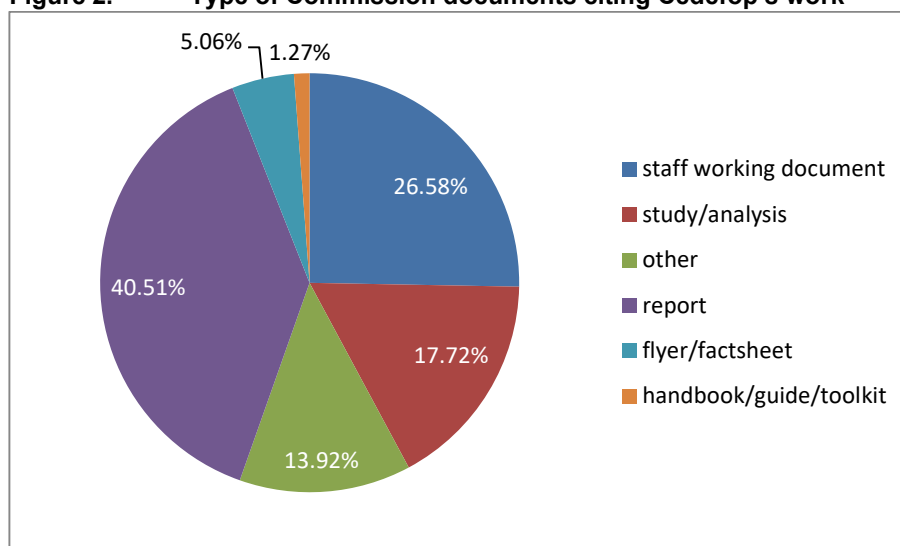


Source: Cedefop performance measurement, indicator 1: EU-level documents citing Cedefop.

⁽²²⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0092_EN.html [accessed on 15.5.2020].

⁽²³⁾ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0605\(01\)&from=RO](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0605(01)&from=RO) [accessed on 24.1.2020].

Figure 2. Type of Commission documents citing Cedefop’s work



N.B. 'other' includes background documents for discussion by policy makers and experts, for instance in Commission working groups.

Source: Cedefop performance measurement, indicator 1: EU-level documents citing Cedefop.

Citations in academic literature and publication downloads again demonstrated the longer-term value of Cedefop’s work. Research on the benefits of VET published in 2011 had the highest downloads in times when investing in skills is a must to ensure digital and green transformation and education and finance ministers for the first time ever jointly discussed how to ensure high-level learning outcomes and inclusiveness of education and training. Downloads, which increased by over 20% in comparison to 2018, confirm the continued need for information on VET systems and user preference for concise formats.

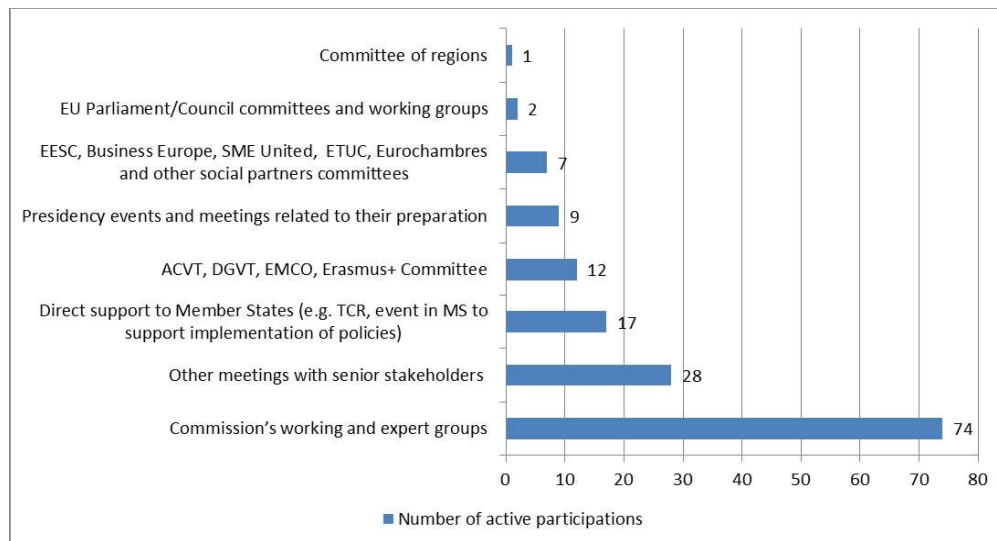
The 35% increase in web portal visits in comparison to 2018 coincided with updates and the release of several new databases. Skills Panorama, which Cedefop manages for the Commission, again attracted more traffic than in the previous year: nearly 50% growth in users, also in new visitors and over 20% in returning visitors.

Invitations by European stakeholders and partners to share Cedefop expertise

Cedefop was again invited to contribute to European social partner events and prepare background notes, present its findings and chair discussions at many meetings of the Presidencies, the Commission’s Advisory Committee and Director Generals for VET and Commission working groups (150 in total; Figure 3).

It may seem natural that the EU’s Agency for VET, skills and qualifications participates in meetings dedicated to EU-level policy development and implementation. However, being invited to help shape and steer (parts of) Commission events, as for instance in the vocational skills week, is not a given. Cedefop takes this as acknowledgment of its expertise. The invitation by the European Asylum Support Office, to share expertise on learning outcomes to support their certification and accreditation working group exemplifies that Cedefop is valued as a European source for VET, skills and qualifications also outside its usual partners.

Figure 3. Active participation of Cedefop in policy relevant meetings of senior stakeholders



Source: Cedefop performance measurement, indicator 4.

Cedefop's direct support to Member States in implementing EU-level policy in the countries decreased in comparison to previous years, as the first cycles of country reviews on apprenticeship and skills anticipation and governance were being concluded. In addition, following the need to reprioritise, in 2018 the Governing Board agreed not to undertake new thematic country reviews in 2019. Noteworthy was the invitation to present Cedefop findings to members of Germany's Parliament investigating *VET in the digital work environment* (June 2019) ⁽²⁴⁾.

Cedefop evidence and expertise valued outside Europe

Cedefop was also invited to share expertise from its different strands of work globally in events organised by ILO and UNESCO; the Southeast Asian nations; the South African Qualifications Authority as part of the ongoing South Africa-EU dialogue; and in the framework of the Asia-Europe Education Ministers' meeting.

Among the international organisations OECD again used Cedefop work most extensively, followed by ILO and UNESCO-UNEVOC. Overall, take-up of Cedefop's findings by international organisations remained at the same level as in previous years (98 documents) but was more evenly balanced across different strands of work. This applied specifically to monitoring of VET developments and skills anticipation and matching with around 28% of the references each; the closely interrelated strands of

⁽²⁴⁾ https://www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/weitere_gremien/enquete_bb/anhoerungen?url=L2F1c3NjaHVlc3NIL3dlaXRlcmVfZ3JlbWlbi9lbnF1ZXRIX2JiL2FuaG9lcnVuZ2VuL2FuaG9lcnVuZy1hdXMtdW5kLXdlaXRlc mJpbGR1bmctMi1zaXR6dW5nL S02NDQ3NTY=&mod=mod585204
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/how-vet-systems-respond-digitalisation-and-future-work-challenges-cedefop-evidence> [accessed on 18.8.2019].

work on promoting access to and attractiveness of VET, increasing efficiency and supporting inclusion made up over 20%.

An efficiently run organisation committed to high standards

Cedefop continued its work to increase administration efficiency and achieve collaboration with other Agencies. More recent actions have aimed at pooling content expertise to create synergies, e.g. in the fourth edition of the European company survey jointly managed by Cedefop and Eurofound.

Cedefop continued supporting its highly qualified staff through continuing professional development and a healthy and safe working environment conducive to dialogue, innovation and learning. To capture the efforts to improve our energy and environmental management Cedefop was among the first agencies to introduce an environmental indicator.

The excellent budget execution of 99.99% in 2019 demonstrates the Agency's successful effort towards optimal use of resources entrusted. Cedefop's achievements illustrate also the high commitment of the Agency management and staff to meeting the highest standards of ethics, integrity and compliance.

PART I - Policy achievements of the year

1.1. Operational activity: shaping VET by modernising VET systems and institutions and by supporting the use of EU tools and principles

Performance	
183 references in EU policy documents	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission staff working document on 'Employment and social developments in Europe 2019 - Sustainability and governance: the role of social dialogue' • European Commission 2019 reports on the European Semester • European Parliament briefing on 'Skills for the labour market: EU policies for VET and upskilling'
60 active contributions to policy relevant meetings of senior stakeholders	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission steering group on the instruments supporting the European Union VET policy • EQF and Europass advisory groups and ESCO meetings • 17th European week of regions and cities • European Asylum Support Office working group on certification and accreditation
55 written contributions to policy documents of EU 51 and international organisations (4)	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • input to the country reports of the 2019 <i>Education and training monitor</i> • background papers for the meetings of the DGVT on key competences • joint papers with the Commission for the EQF advisory group • review of (updated/draft) reports relating countries' NQFs to the EQF • Conclusions of the Asia-Europe education ministers' meeting
45 000 downloads of Cedefop publications	Top three publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes (5 283) • Spotlight on VET – 2018 compilation (4 713) • Briefing note – What future for vocational education and training in Europe? (3 047)

In line with its multiannual objective to **monitor policy trends and analyse developments**, Cedefop drafted thirty-five ⁽²⁵⁾ country chapters on VET policies in EU-28+ on the implementation of the priorities agreed in the 2015 Riga conclusions. They describe the state of play in each country in 2015 to and policy developments until 2019. The country chapters inform Cedefop's and ETF's joint synthesis report on measures that Member States are taking to implement the agreed five Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs) over the period 2015-20 and the strategic objectives for European cooperation in VET. Findings of Cedefop's analysis were discussed in several events

⁽²⁵⁾ These include EU28 countries, Norway and Iceland. Separate chapters are drafted for the three communities in Belgium and for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The country chapters will be published online in the first half of 2020.

⁽²⁶⁾. Final outcomes will be presented at a high level Cedefop-ETF joint conference in June 2020 organised under the auspices of the Croatian Presidency and in cooperation with the German Presidency to feed the work towards the Osnabrück declaration on the future priorities for VET.

At the request of DG EMPL, Cedefop drafted 28 country fiches on latest developments on VET and adult learning for the '2019 Education and training monitor', the Commission's annual publication on recent policy measures in education and training.

Work in 2019 also focused on analysing Cedefop's current approach to **policy reporting**. Discussions took place with ReferNet partners on ways to improve the annual data collection of recent policy developments and improve the quality and timely availability of its outputs. This was the key topic of discussions in the two ReferNet partnerships forums that took place in May in Bergen and Valletta and a specific working group organised in June in Thessaloniki with representatives of ReferNet coordinators, national representatives and Cedefop Management Board members. In the light of the proposed improvements, Cedefop designed a new concept of policy reporting and analysed all policy developments reported by ReferNet since 2015 to fit the structure of a new database. As a result, a database of policy initiatives is under development and will be made available to ReferNet for the 2020 policy reporting exercise.

Work continued in '**VET in Europe online presentation tool**' ⁽²⁷⁾. The tool allows for easier selection, compilation and comparison of data on VET systems in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. It is designed to help policy-makers, social partners, researchers and other stakeholders better understand similarities and differences of national VET systems through easy-to-navigate up-to-date descriptions structured by theme. The database also contains information about each VET programme type, including qualification levels, share of work-based learning, providers and target groups. The tool was launched in December 2019. In addition, Cedefop finalised twenty-three ⁽²⁸⁾ **VET in Europe country reports** with detailed descriptions of European VET systems which were used to populate the tool.

For the Romanian and the Finish Presidencies, **short descriptions** ⁽²⁹⁾, **spotlights** ⁽³⁰⁾ **and animated videos** ⁽³¹⁾ **on VET in Romania and Finland** were released and disseminated at several high-level meetings (e.g. the meeting of Directors General for VET and the European Vocational Skills Week).

A special edition '**Spotlights on VET in Europe – 2018 compilation**' ⁽³²⁾ was published in March offering a clear and concise overview of VET systems in the EU-28, Iceland

⁽²⁶⁾ E.g. the March meeting of DGVTs, the UNEVOC 2019 TVET Leadership Programme, DG EMPL summer school on skills, the December meeting of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training.

⁽²⁷⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/cedefop-launches-vocational-education-and-training-europe-database>

⁽²⁸⁾ The following country reports were made available in 2019: BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HU, IE, IS, LT, LU, LV, NL, NO, PL, PT, SI, SE, SK, UK.

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4171> , <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4176>

⁽³⁰⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8128>, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8133>

⁽³¹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/watch-cedefops-new-video-romania-vet-system>, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/vocational-education-and-training-vet-finland>

⁽³²⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4168>

and Norway, including graphical presentations of systems that allow comparison between them. This edition includes a set of statistics on key aspects of VET, including: share of upper secondary learners in vocational and general education programmes; participation of adults in lifelong learning, early leavers from education and training, employment rates of young graduates.

Previous year's efforts to develop quality criteria and guidelines for the national news on VET begun to bear fruit. **109 national news on VET** were published in 2019⁽³³⁾ improving further their timely availability on Cedefop website. Some of them were used in and informed several Cedefop activities. Themes covered included the impact of automation on jobs, promoting excellence and modernising VET, upskilling and reskilling vulnerable groups, skills anticipation and matching, apprenticeship-related measures and improving digital skills among VET learners.

Work on the **mobility scoreboard** focused on the update of the online data based on the information received from countries in 2018. The updated scoreboard was made available on Cedefop's website and on Eurydice-Cedefop joint platform. Country-specific policy briefs were also prepared and sent to stakeholders in Iceland, Portugal and Slovenia. In parallel, work on the cross-country thematic policy briefs continued; a concept for these briefs was designed in collaboration with the Commission and a draft prototype was submitted to the Commission in December.

Results of the '**Key competences in initial VET**' study were discussed in the ET2020 working group on digital education (Brussels, 15 February), at the DGVT meeting (Alba Iulia, 18 March) and in the ET2020 WG on VET during the EU Vocational Skills Week (Helsinki, October). The study analyses how literacy, digital and multilingual competences are promoted in initial VET in the EU, Iceland and Norway. Results show that despite a broad range of national policies promoting key competences, only few focus on initial VET and even less target a single key competence. Most policies are linked to broader societal objectives: employability, social inclusion and lifelong learning. Too broad policies, abstract objectives, time and budget constraints are among the main challenges preventing smooth implementation. Programme delivery varies by key competence and sector and implementation is often channelled through a combination of programme delivery, standards, teacher training, and less through assessment standards. On 19-20 September, Cedefop organised a workshop to discuss the results of the study with national policy makers, social partners, researchers, the European Commission, ETF, UNESCO and WorldSkills. It was also an opportunity to identify challenges and remedies in implementing policies supporting key competences and define topics that stakeholders would like Cedefop to provide evidence on in the future.

Cedefop worked closely with the Commission in **supporting the implementation of the EQF** in line with the priorities of the revised 2017 EQF recommendation. Cedefop provided conceptual input to the EQF Advisory Group (AG) meetings in February, May, June and November and comments to the updated 'referencing reports'⁽³⁴⁾ of Latvia, the Netherlands, UK (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) and draft reports of Bosnia

⁽³³⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/news>

⁽³⁴⁾ Referencing reports provide information and evidence on the referencing of national qualifications levels to the EQF levels, following the 10 EQF referencing criteria. These include: a clear and demonstrable link established between the NQF levels and the EQF; qualifications are based on learning outcomes; the procedures and criteria for inclusion of qualifications in the NQF are transparent; all qualifications with an EQF level are quality assured. Referencing reports are available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/referencing-reports-and-contacts>

and Herzegovina and Serbia. Cedefop also contributed to the work of various EQF AG project groups by providing substantial input to the 'horizontal comparison project group' and to the final report of the project group on the levelling of international qualifications. In addition, Cedefop actively supported the peer learning activities of the EQF AG on transversal skills and competences (Brussels, January 2019) and qualifications databases (Budapest, March 2019).

In 2019, Cedefop put substantial efforts in reviewing and analysing progress in the implementation of national qualifications frameworks. The **European inventory of national qualifications frameworks (NQF) 2018** ⁽³⁵⁾, covering 39 countries and consisting of 43 national chapters was drafted in-house in close cooperation with national stakeholders. In addition, a concise NQF overview was released to capture the latest developments ⁽³⁶⁾.

Data on NQF progress were gathered through a survey on implementation, communication and use of NQF/EQF, carried out with the European Commission. Cedefop's analysis shows that comprehensive frameworks are gaining ground in Europe. European countries tend to use their frameworks to create comprehensive maps of qualifications in all sectors (VET, higher education, general education, adult learning) and many frameworks are being opened up to include qualifications awarded outside regulated formal education and to help validate non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences. In several countries NQFs play an increasingly important coordination role, allowing for a better linking of policy domains: education, validation of non-formal and informal learning, quality assurance, monitoring skills supply, etc. Impact of NQFs is growing in the review and renewal of qualifications standards and stakeholders' involvement as comprehensive frameworks act as a platform for cooperation across educational subsystems and education and labour market.

Increased cooperation and international dialogue on qualifications frameworks has continued in 2019, in close collaboration with the ETF, UNESCO-HQ and UNESCO (UIL). Cedefop has contributed to the **fourth edition of national and global qualifications frameworks inventory, published in 2019** ⁽³⁷⁾. The inventory gathers information on progress in establishing national and regional qualifications frameworks, as well as the challenges and success factors in implementation in more than 100 countries in all five continents. It covers seven regional qualifications frameworks, including the EQF.

Cedefop continued contributing to the development of **ESCO**, focusing on the restructuring of the skills terminology and the further development and integration of a terminology on transversal skills and competences. Cedefop's input to the further development of the skills terminology reflects its experience on the analysis of online job vacancies and the development of methodologies for comparing VET qualifications.

The work on an international **handbook** supporting the writing and application of **learning outcomes** in education and training continued in cooperation with UNESCO. A first regional peer learning activity was organised in June - as part of the South Africa-EU dialogue - and allowed for in-depth discussions on similarities between European

⁽³⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/european-inventory-on-nqf>

⁽³⁶⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8609>

⁽³⁷⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2224-0> and <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2225>

and African experiences. The handbook will significantly strengthen Cedefop's expertise and capacity in taking forward work on learning outcomes in the European context. In 2019, Cedefop created an overview of existing and relevant guidance material and research that has been produced at European and international level.

Maintenance and improvements of the existing **Europass** platform focused on new statistical visualisation tool, portal available in Serbian, easy-to-read Excel sheet service. Cedefop continued to support DG EMPL on the conceptualisation and development of the new Europass to ensure a smooth transition from the current portal to the new platform to be taken over by the Commission in June 2020. Record traffic was reported to the Europass portal in 2019: 30 million visits (+13 % compared to 2018) and 25 million CVs created online (+13 % compared to 2018). The milestone of 150 million CVs filled online since its launch in 2005 was reached in November 2019.

The **European Community of Learning Providers** continued its work within the three dedicated subgroups on the challenge of technology enhanced learning, EU mobility and migration. The Community's main conclusions and proposals were presented in the EU Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki in October.

Cedefop took also active part in the working group looking at the future of **ECVET** and **EQAVET**.

On the **Future of VET** work, a dedicated event in the European Parliament in February discussed main findings of the 'Changing nature and role of VET in Europe' research project with stakeholders at European level. Findings have informed policy discussions on VET post-2020.

The development of a methodology for **comparing the content and profile of VET qualifications** continued. A first report on terminological reference points for comparison was completed in June. The report looks into the strengths and weaknesses of existing classifications (e.g. ESCO, O*NET, World Skills Standards) and makes recommendations on their future use. A second report, exploring how to gather and analyse national qualification data, was completed in November. The overall objective is to develop methodologies making it possible for countries to more systematically learn from others, making visible content priorities and choices. This work is closely coordinated with the EQF AG working group on horizontal comparison of qualifications. Close links are also established to the work of UNESCO on world reference levels.

1.2. Operational activity: valuing VET to empower people to achieve competences and skills for work and life

Performance	
89 references in EU policy documents	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Council conclusions on the implementation of the Council recommendation on upskilling pathways: New opportunities for adults</i> • EESC opinion on 'Sustainable funding for lifelong learning and development of skills' • ETUC Action programme 2019-23
40 active contributions to policy-relevant senior stakeholder meetings	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of the EU Education Committee • the Romanian Presidency conference '<i>Adult upskilling and reskilling - Balancing the labour market</i>' • European Commission high-level conference Skills for Industry Strategy 2030 • EESC conference on <i>Skills and competences acquired in civil society organisations</i>. • ET 2020 working groups on adult learning
19 written contributions to policy documents of EU (17) and international organisations (2)	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributions to Commission studies on validation of non-formal and informal learning and the workshop on the Recommendation • background papers for the EQF advisory group on validation of non-formal and informal learning • input to joint declaration on lifelong guidance in adult learning support together with OECD, ILO, UNESCO, European Commission
20 000 downloads of Cedefop publications	<p>Top three publications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing note - Preventing low skills through lifelong learning (2 738) • Handbook of ICT practices for guidance and career development (2 547) • Apprenticeship schemes in European countries: a cross-nation overview (1 771)

In 2019, Cedefop intensified its conceptual work and policy learning activities in the area of **adult learning and vocational training**.

The research on the potential of **work-based learning in developing upskilling pathways** for adults provided new evidence on the extent of the low-skilled adult population, the priority target groups most in need of upskilling, selected national case studies and best practices, as well as insights about effective design and implementation of upskilling pathways policies in different national contexts. Cedefop's first version of the **analytical framework on upskilling pathways** was disseminated to national and European stakeholders bringing together various resources and knowledge generated within the Agency, including on adult learning, early leaving, financing, guidance, validation, and work-based learning. The analytical framework is organised around ten key areas which represent important systemic features for establishing strategic, coherent and coordinated approaches to upskilling pathways for adults.

For the first time, Cedefop was invited by the Romanian Presidency to present its work on upskilling pathways at a Council Education Committee meeting in April.

In May Cedefop organised in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee the **second Policy Learning Forum (PLF) on 'Upskilling pathways: a vision for the future'**. Building on the outcomes of the first PLF, the event brought together stakeholders to support them in the implementation of Upskilling Pathways for adults. Discussion revolved around Cedefop's analytical framework on upskilling pathways which was enriched based on feedback received from the stakeholders, as well as complemented by good practice examples which may inspire stakeholders on possible ways to address existing challenges. Drawing in this experience, the 7th Cedefop Brussels-based seminar organised with the Romanian Presidency, shared evidence on the extent and heterogeneity of low skills among adults and stimulated the debate on coordinated and strategic approaches to developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Cedefop continued to provide expert input to the Commission and other stakeholders activities, including the Adult Learning Working Group, the Romanian Presidency conference on Upskilling and reskilling and the European Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki.

Cedefop long-standing work on **apprenticeships** continued in 2019 and was enriched by new lines of activities. The call for papers and Cedefop symposium 'Next steps for apprenticeship' organised in cooperation with the OECD held in Paris on 7 October 2019, looked at the future of apprenticeship from the perspective of external mega trends - such as socio-demographic changes, new technologies and new forms of work organisation, trends in education and training - and how they (would) affect the design and delivery of apprenticeship and/or the policy approaches towards its provision.

Cedefop has further developed its **Community of apprenticeship experts**. Set up in 2018, the Community includes one individual apprenticeship expert for almost all EU Member States, plus Norway and Iceland. The Community has a dedicated webpage on Cedefop's website ⁽³⁸⁾. Thanks to the voluntary contribution of its members, the first activity of the Community for 2019 concerned the update and revision of schemes listed in Cedefop's European database of apprenticeship schemes. Cedefop has mapped the information the database provides against the criteria set by the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The aim is to develop a user-friendly and interactive tool to retrieve the relevant information directly and generate an 'implementation dashboard'. The Community members have been also engaged in exploring topics of their interest for which they intend to work with Cedefop in 2020 to generate new knowledge in this area. The Community's second annual meeting was held back-to-back to the joint Cedefop-OECD Symposium on apprenticeships.

Within the ongoing study on **long-term cross-country mobility in apprenticeships**, an analytical framework has been prepared and disseminated to Cedefop's stakeholders. It identifies several dimensions and corresponding variables of possible relevance for long-term cross-country apprentice mobility at three levels: frameworks, systems and implementation. The dimensions and variables have been tested during the field work in 2019 through country and project case studies, together with an approach to assess demand for apprenticeship mobility policies in the EU. To complement this study, ReferNet partners prepared articles on long-term mobility in apprenticeships with a focus

⁽³⁸⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes>

on institutional aspects. The articles ⁽³⁹⁾ aimed at identifying possible or actual enablers and disablers of long-term cross-country mobility of apprentices at two levels: framework (external factors to apprenticeships) and apprenticeship system/scheme design. The articles also aimed at identifying what works and what doesn't in existing policies, initiatives and projects regarding international mobility of apprentices.

The summary report from the explorative study on **apprenticeship for adults** was published in November ⁽⁴⁰⁾. The study analyses what EU countries and four non-EU countries have in place in relation to apprenticeship for adults. It is the first piece of work that addresses the topic in an EU-wide perspective. Largely based on data collection and findings from both literature review and field work, the study confirms that adults increasingly participate in apprenticeship training often due to policy interventions that have removed barriers to participation in existing apprenticeships schemes. While no truly specific schemes of apprenticeships for adults were identified in the EU, the study confirms the fundamental distinction between apprenticeships proposed by Cedefop in previous research, namely: apprenticeships as a mode of learning vs. apprenticeships as an educational system.

Finally, with the completion of reports on **Croatia and Cyprus** ⁽⁴¹⁾ as well as French Speaking Belgium, the first cycle of thematic country reviews and flash Thematic Country Reviews in nine countries was concluded. Building upon lessons learned during the reviews, Cedefop published online a revised analytical framework on apprenticeships ⁽⁴²⁾. Mainly addressed to policy makers and social partners, the framework is a common tool to analyse apprenticeship systems and schemes in Europe.

In relation to its activities on legal adult-refugee mobility, Cedefop published the conceptual framework that sketches the potential, the key elements and main issues to be addressed in creating a skills-based complementary pathway to protection. The central element of such a pathway is matching refugees' skills and qualifications and labour market needs in a potential receiving country that offers adult refugees a clear perspective of employment with a clear route to self-reliance. The publication is complemented by two flyers ⁽⁴³⁾ ⁽⁴⁴⁾ that support Cedefop's work in promoting the project among national stakeholders, in particular employers' organisations.

In April, Cedefop held the second policy learning forum (PLF) on 'Unlocking the potential of learning at the workplace by, and for, **teachers and trainers in VET**' ⁽⁴⁵⁾. Building on the outcomes of the first forum in 2016, participants discussed how to build stronger bridges between school and the workplace so that teachers and trainers benefit in their professional development and better support learners in innovative and effective ways. The PLF discussed the role of school leadership, co-creation of knowledge by teachers, trainers and learners, the need to actively involve all stakeholders and stronger partnerships between education and the world of work. Cedefop also contributed to the

⁽³⁹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives/international-mobility-apprentices>

⁽⁴⁰⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4179>

⁽⁴¹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4173>

⁽⁴²⁾ https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/cedefop_analytical_framework_for_apprenticeships_0.pdf

⁽⁴³⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8132>

⁽⁴⁴⁾ https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/8131_en.pdf

⁽⁴⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/second-policy-learning-forum-unlocking-potential-learning-workplace-and-teachers-and-trainers-vet>

feasibility study on expanding the Commission's SELFIE tool ⁽⁴⁶⁾ to VET and in particular to work-based learning environments.

On **validation of non-formal and informal learning**, Cedefop provided continued support to a variety of activities, including the finalisation of the 2018 inventory update ⁽⁴⁷⁾. Results of the inventory show increasing diffusion of validation arrangements and strategies across Member States, with all countries having validation arrangements in place or under development in 2018. However, results also show that work still remains to be done to ensure more comprehensive approaches as well as to improve training provision for validation practitioners and the associated monitoring and evaluation of policies. The results were presented at the 3rd Validation of prior learning biennale conference. The event gathered around 300 participants and served to share Cedefop's work on validation with a wide range of stakeholders. Cedefop is also providing expert input to the Commission's study on the evaluation of the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on validation.

Cedefop new study on **validation and lifelong guidance** ⁽⁴⁸⁾ contributes to increasing understanding of these two important policy areas and moving towards a more holistic and coherent approach to the development of truly lifelong learning systems. The analysis of 13 case studies identified main factors ensuring successful coordination between guidance and validation services, including:

- a) adequate information and guidance before deciding to undergo validation, throughout and also after the entire validation process;
- b) use of common qualifications or competence standards, occupational standards or other reference frameworks through all the stages of the practice in order to identify, document and assess skills; and
- c) quality of staff resources/competences and tools used.

Cedefop is co-steering with the European Commission, the study on **Lifelong guidance** policy and practice in the EU: trends, challenges and opportunities. Aiming to contribute to defining a post-2020 vision, this research identifies opportunities and challenges for the development of national lifelong guidance systems across the EU, including diverse types of coordination at different levels. Continued work of **CareersNet** – Cedefop's experts network on lifelong guidance – has been producing new knowledge on policy developments and trends in national lifelong guidance systems. In addition, an interactive online version of the decision-making tool was introduced – for testing and feedback – during the annual CareersNet meeting in Rome in September 2019.

In the scope of the work on financing and attractiveness of VET, Cedefop launched a **new database on financing apprenticeships in the EU** ⁽⁴⁹⁾. The information presented reflects the outcomes of Cedefop's study on 'Financing apprenticeships/dual VET in the EU' and brings together a significant amount of data on financing apprenticeships across the EU countries for the first time. The new tool presents financing arrangements for apprenticeships at system level, including the main sources of funding and financial flows, the characteristics and the level of some apprenticeship costs and the volumes of funding involved. It also offers detailed descriptions of the main financing instruments (such as training funds based on levies, tax incentives and grants) implemented to

⁽⁴⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital_en

⁽⁴⁷⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation/inventory>

⁽⁴⁸⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5575>

⁽⁴⁹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-apprenticeships>

incentivise employers to provide apprenticeship places and encourage individuals to take on apprenticeship training.

Cedefop also published a new version of the **database on financing adult learning** ⁽⁵⁰⁾. This on-line tool provides comprehensive information on financing instruments for companies and individuals implemented in EU countries to increase provision of, participation and private investment in CVET/adult learning. The database provides information on over 200 financing instruments such as training funds, tax incentives, vouchers/individual learning accounts, loans, training leave and payback clauses. It offers a mapping of all analysed instruments at country and EU level, descriptions for type of instrument and its diffusion across countries as well as a comparison between the instruments. New data will be collected in 2020.

Cedefop's work on **tackling early leaving from VET** led to a new edition of Cedefop's VET toolkit for tackling early leaving ⁽⁵¹⁾ aimed at supporting policy reflection, monitoring and evaluation. Users may get informed about how to use the toolkit to inform policy making and successful practice; benefit from over 200 resources of best practices, publications, tools, statistics and quick wins; and learn about 10 protective factors and 17 intervention approaches tailored to the needs of the six most common profiles of learners at risk or early leavers. A new reflection tool for VET providers and an improved version of the tool for policy makers aim to support key VET stakeholders to develop a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving. Since its first launch in May 2017, the toolkit has reached 47.000 users and generated over 122,200 page views. Cedefop 'ambassadors' ⁽⁵²⁾ of the toolkit include around 60 members from 21 countries actively contributing to its development and wide dissemination.

The new edition of the toolkit was launched in the Policy Forum 'What role for Community Lifelong Learning Centres? The potential of one-stop shops for preventing youth at risk from disconnecting', co-organised by Cedefop with the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL) in May 2019 ⁽⁵³⁾, hosted by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Participants valued the awareness raised that early leaving is better addressed on wider contexts such as community lifelong learning centres that can provide proximity, multidisciplinary services but also intergenerational and intercultural learning environments. The event allowed participants to better understand the role of VET for learners at risk, early leavers and their lifelong learning. The briefing notes 'Preventing low skills through lifelong learning' ⁽⁵⁴⁾ and 'Implementing a holistic approach to lifelong learning: Community Lifelong Learning Centres as a gateway to multidisciplinary support teams' ⁽⁵⁵⁾ were disseminated at the event.

The second **Cedefop opinion survey** entered in the field stage and first results were produced by end 2019 (reports to be published in 2020). This edition of the survey will provide information on the perceptions and opinions of European workers, learners and citizens about adult learning and CVET at the EU level as well as at the national level.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/tools/financing-adult-learning-db>

⁽⁵¹⁾ www.cedefop.europa.eu/TEL-toolkit

⁽⁵²⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/ambassadors>

⁽⁵³⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/policy-forum-what-role-community-lifelong-learning-centres>

⁽⁵⁴⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9136>

⁽⁵⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2226>

1.3. Operational activity: informing VET by offering labour market intelligence and skill needs analysis

Performance	
162 references in EU policy documents	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission staff working document on Employment and social developments in Europe 2019 - Towards a greener future: employment and social impacts of climate change policies • EESC opinion on 'Supportive education systems to avoid skills mismatches — what transition is needed?' • BusinessEurope position paper on the future of EU migration policy
36 active contributions to policy-relevant senior stakeholder meetings	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectoral Skills for the Future - Blueprint in the Spotlight Seminar • European Statistical System (ESS) net Big Data meetings • Labour market statistics working group • Meetings of the expert group on graduate tracking • committee meeting of German Bundestag • meetings in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece and Slovakia with senior stakeholders on the governance of skills anticipation and matching systems
1 written contribution to policy documents of international organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for a greener future: a global view based on 32 country studies by ILO
38 000 downloads of Cedefop publications	<p>Top three publications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing note - Artificial or human intelligence? (9 473) • Briefing note - The skills employers want! (4,869) • Skills forecast: trends and challenges to 2030 (4 305)
181 000 visits to the EU skills panorama website	<p>The total number of page-views was more than 384 000 - the sections with quantitative data and indicators (dashboards), analytical highlights and European Skills Index (ESI) are the most visited.</p>

Work on developing new surveys and collecting new data to be used for developing policy-relevant evidence progressed on several fronts. The joint **Cedefop/Eurofound European Company Survey** (ECS2019) closed the fieldwork. Technical reports and data were delivered by December. In addition, the necessary steps were taken to launch the second **European Skills and Jobs Survey** (ESJS2) early 2020. An expert working group comprised of academic and policy makers (e.g. European Commission, JRC, OECD) met in February to debate the survey concept developed by Cedefop. Cedefop drafted a discussion paper examining the feasibility of carrying out ESJS2 as a matched employer-employee survey. By the end of 2019 Cedefop had also developed a background report, a background note and a draft survey questionnaire.

Country reports based on Cedefop's 2018 **skills forecast** were released in January and an overview report of the 2018 **European skills index** was published in May. Most of the work on the skills forecast and the European Skills Index in 2019 focused on

preparing their 2020 release on Cedefop's web portal and Skills Panorama. Preliminary forecast results were discussed at an expert workshop held in Vienna (November) to validate forecast findings and methods and to generate new ideas for further development and analysis. The European Skills Index was updated using the most recent data and submitted to the Commission's Joint Research Centre for an independent statistical audit. To promote the skills forecast and index ahead of their upcoming releases, flyers outlining their value for policy makers and other stakeholders were released in December ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

The work on developing skills intelligence by analysing **online job advertisements** reached an important milestone. Results for seven countries were released in April via Cedefop's newly developed Skills-OVATE web interface ⁽⁵⁷⁾. The first release was supported by a briefing note ⁽⁵⁸⁾ and a video teaser explaining the approach ⁽⁵⁹⁾. Cedefop also published a short guide ⁽⁶⁰⁾ outlining the methodology and potential of its online job vacancy analysis, a synthesis report ⁽⁶¹⁾ providing an overview of trends shaping the online job labour market in the EU, and country reports providing insight in national online labour markets. Online job advertisements from eleven EU Member States were added to Skills-OVATE in September, along with a video teaser to showcase the tool's possibilities ⁽⁶²⁾. Information for the remaining countries was prepared for release in early 2020. In parallel to preparing the information for publication online, quality checks took place, significant efforts were made to increase the robustness of the information, and data analysis and visualisation options were expanded.

A preview of first results was presented at a high-level lunch discussion organised by DG EMPL in April. To support data quality, Cedefop has continued cooperating closely with national stakeholders as well as Eurostat and its Big Data taskforce and ESSnet Big Data project. Cedefop organised a training on how to navigate its online job vacancy data and hosted the ESSnet workshop in June. It also engaged with national experts in a workshop which aimed at understanding patterns and trends better and identifying challenges and future development opportunities. In parallel, discussions on the future possible cooperation with Eurostat to further develop a European system for gathering information from web sources (online job advertisements and other types web data) have led to concrete actions. To support the development of the European Trusted Smart Statistics Centre and the Web Intelligence Hub, the decision was taken to join resources and share expertise.

To contribute to the ongoing debate on the societal impact of **artificial intelligence and automation of work**, Cedefop released a working paper ⁽⁶³⁾. Findings were presented in a briefing note along with other evidence on artificial intelligence and implications for VET systems. To better understand where automation is likely to have the largest impact and to illustrate its potential employment effect, Cedefop started a small-scale study using matched employer-employee data from a technologically advanced EU country

⁽⁵⁶⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8134> and <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8135>

⁽⁵⁷⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/data-visualisations/skills-online-vacancies>

⁽⁵⁸⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9137>

⁽⁵⁹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/check-out-our-new-skills-online-vacancy-analysis-tool-europe>

⁽⁶⁰⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4172>

⁽⁶¹⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5572>

⁽⁶²⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/skills-online-vacancy-analysis-tool-expanding>

⁽⁶³⁾ https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/automation_risk_in_the_eu_labour_market.pdf

(Ireland). The study investigates the links between firms' propensity to automate work, employer characteristics and subsequent staff developments – in terms of growth and decline of occupations and changes in firms' occupational structure. Results show that firms embracing technological change and informing their staff about technological developments were more likely to hire people in occupations with growing employment shares. Firms without individual performance management system and on-the-job training provision are more likely to hire workers in declining 'automated' occupations.

To provide new evidence on learning and skill matching in ICT-based forms of work, Cedefop concluded its **CrowdLearn study** (Skills formation and skills matching in online platform work). To provide early access to key findings, a draft report based on a literature review and qualitative analysis of interviews with 80 crowd workers and 30 platform owners was made available ahead of the full report scheduled for release in 2020 ⁽⁶⁴⁾. Key findings of the study were discussed during Cedefop's 8th Brussels-based seminar, co-organised with the Finnish Presidency in December.

Analysing **statistical data on VET** and work-based learning to support evidence-informed policy making remains an important activity. Cedefop published a research paper on CVET in enterprises ⁽⁶⁵⁾ based on analysis of the latest two Continuing Vocational Training Surveys (CVTS). The research paper provides comparative evidence on various indicators for skills development in enterprises and pays particular attention to training in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The share of enterprises providing training is increasing, in particular in countries which somewhat lagged behind. Another key finding is that while the training gap between large and small enterprises is narrowing, it remains substantial. Analysis of the prevalence and labour market outcomes of work-based learning based on the 2016 ad hoc module of the Labour Force survey is ongoing. The update of the VET statistical overviews was completed. Cedefop has also continued its cooperation with Eurostat and its Education and Training and Labour Market Statistics Working groups tasked with preparing the LFS module on the situation of young people in the labour market.

The programme **Assisting EU countries in skills matching** was completed and final reports for all countries under review are being finalised. Following three rounds of consensus building among national stakeholders and the development of national policy roadmaps outlining feasible short-to-medium term actions to strengthen skills governance, final meetings were organised in Greece (April) and in Bulgaria (June).

A dissemination meeting held in April involving high-level policy makers formally concluded the review in Slovakia. In Estonia, meetings were held to inform stakeholders of the state-of-play of the review, to prepare the final round of consensus building, and to gather information linked to the Estonian 2035 strategy. A final meeting is planned for April 2020. Cedefop carried out an online survey targeting 1800 potential users of the Greek online skills intelligence web portal and surveyed guidance practitioners on their experiences in using the findings of the Estonian skills anticipation programme OSKA. In Bulgaria, an online survey was deployed among the country's 265 municipalities to understand better how they view and tackle skill mismatch, to map ongoing collaboration with local and regional stakeholders and other administrative levels and to detect their aspirations in terms of using labour market and skills information at local level for policy purposes. The online survey in Slovakia focused on mapping the information needs of

⁽⁶⁴⁾ http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/crowdlearn_literature_review.pdf

⁽⁶⁵⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5573>

VET institutions and employers and collecting suggestions on how skills governance can be strengthened in the future.

Building on review findings and identified development needs, Cedefop designed and organised tailor-made seminars to **support national capacity building**. A seminar on implementing graduate tracking and employer surveys was held in April in Slovakia and a course on skills anticipation and skills foresight methods targeted to the needs of Greek stakeholders was delivered in June. A seminar on skills foresight, scenario building and use of big data analysis was held in November in Estonia.

To support policy learning in the field of skills governance more widely, Cedefop launched **Matching Skills** ⁽⁶⁶⁾ in January. This web tool presents in-depth information on 130 education and training and labour market policy instruments in EU Member States. It aims to increase understanding on how skills intelligence can be used in policy measures to match jobseekers' and learners' skills better to current and future labour market needs. To promote its use, a flyer was released in April ⁽⁶⁷⁾. With a view to expanding coverage, Cedefop has identified a range of additional policy instruments to be analysed and included in the tool in 2020.

Cedefop's work on **sectors** is gaining interest. The ongoing collaboration with DG EMPL on the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills has been successful. Cedefop provided new insights on **green skills**, releasing a report to assess progress in greening the economy and skills since 2010 in six European countries along with a video teaser in April ⁽⁶⁸⁾. It presented the findings at the ILO's Global Forum on boosting skills for a just transition (June). Cedefop invited stakeholders from four EU Member States (including members of Cedefop's Management Board) at the forum.

Cedefop continues to actively disseminate its research and engages regularly with national and international stakeholder forums to debate the findings. Findings from Skills-OVATE have been extensively disseminated. New evidence developed on Digitalisation and Future of Work was presented at a high-level global conference *Artificial intelligence and education* in Beijing (May), in a committee meeting with Members of Parliament of the German Bundestag (June), an EESC hearing (June) and an ASEAN workshop in Vietnam (October). Chairing the Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET) on 'Digitisation and skills mismatch', Cedefop is also leading the interinstitutional discussions on the value and challenges of using big data and Artificial Intelligence methods for detecting skill needs and tackling skill mismatches in increasingly digitised labour markets. As part of this work, Cedefop is coordinating efforts to develop a brochure aimed at supporting policy makers in developing and using big data tools for policy.

Finally, the **Skills Panorama** is undergoing continuous updates: this includes several indicators, analytical highlights on occupations, plus the update of the **European Skills Index**. Five Skills Panorama blog articles were published ⁽⁶⁹⁾. Updates of analytical highlights on national skills anticipation systems and practices and a new highlight on the maritime sector were underway and are foreseen to be published in 2020.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/matching-skills/>

⁽⁶⁷⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8129>

⁽⁶⁸⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3078> and

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/skills-green-jobs-video>

⁽⁶⁹⁾ <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/articles>

1.4. Communication, information and dissemination

Performance	
72 000 downloads of Cedefop briefing notes	Continued, systematic and targeted promotion and dissemination of Cedefop publications succeeded in a high demand for briefing notes targeting policy-makers and published on Cedefop's web portal in eight languages
605 articles referring to Cedefop in European media	Close to 60% of the press clippings refer to the work done by Cedefop on skills anticipation and matching Events like the Cedefop Photo award are well addressed in the media (23 quotations).
13 857 followers on Facebook (increased by 14.67% over 2018) The total number of views of Cedefop videos clips and video interviews produced and published online in 2019 is more than 90,300. 8 798 followers on Twitter (increased by 16.84 % since 2018)	
59 events organised by Cedefop	96% of respondents rated Cedefop's events as good or very good 50% are policy-makers at EU/national level 14% researchers 7% practitioners 7% social partners 5% representatives of enterprises

This activity focuses on communicating Cedefop's key messages on VET to its stakeholders and on promoting a positive image of Cedefop at European, national and local levels.

Cedefop's key account specific communication activities are complemented by several tailored event and visitor programmes, informing about latest VET issues and Cedefop's role. Specific events for Brussels-based stakeholders were successfully continued.

In 2019, Cedefop received 15 delegations, including high-ranking visitors, like the Head of the EU representation of Cyprus, MEP Eva Kaili, MEP Theodoros Zagorakis and the former European Commission's Chief Spokesperson Margaritis Schinas. It also hosted the following EU-related third-party events: Thessaloniki's Maritime Economic Forum; meetings of the ICT Advisory Committee of EU agencies; the College of Chairs of Staff Committees of central EU institutions; the Italian trade union APF steering committee; the Interinstitutional IT Committee, and the Peer-learning and mentoring workshop for confidential counsellors and HR officers organised by Cedefop.

In Brussels, Cedefop's lunch event hosted by MEP Anne Sander at the European Parliament was organised in February on 'The role of VET in shaping the future of Europe'.

In June, a seminar on 'Developing coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults' was realised in Brussels in cooperation with the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In December, a stakeholder event on 'Skill development of workers in the platform economy' took place in Brussels in cooperation with the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Cedefop contributed to the two-day EUandU *Entrepreneurship and employment* conference organised by the European Commission in Thessaloniki on 29-30 November.

The close collaboration between Cedefop and DG EMPL continued in the area of social media activities, jointly promoting inter alia the European Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki and the #CedefopPhotoAward 2019.

Cedefop's award initiative, endorsed by the European Commission and recognised as an integral part of the European Vocational Skills Weeks in 2016, 2017 and 2018, proved also in 2019 to be an excellent tool to raise VET's visibility, to engage Cedefop's stakeholders and to reach out to European youth in initial VET and learners in continuing vocational training and adult learning. The participation rate has further increased: submissions from 380 learners (compared to 280 in 2018), representing 73 VET schools in 20 countries, had been received. The winning team from the College of Engineering, Art and Design and Institute for Research and Technology Graz-Ortweinschule in Austria and the team from the Economic and Tourism School of Daruvar in Croatia were nominated to receive their awards at the fourth European Vocational Skills Week (#EU Vocational Skills) in Helsinki (14-18 October) by European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen.

Cedefop's *Prix du jury* went to VET students from the Marmăția Technological High School in Romania. This team travelled to Thessaloniki for the opening of the 60th Thessaloniki International Film Festival on 31 October. The accompanying #CedefopPhotoAward 2019 exhibitions in Helsinki and Thessaloniki were very well received by stakeholders and the wider public.

Cedefop published six briefing notes: (1) *Setting sail for the future*; (2) *Preventing low skills through lifelong learning*; (3) *The skills employers want!*; (4) *Qualifications Frameworks in Europe: 2018 developments*; (5) *Artificial or human intelligence* and (6) *Not just new jobs: digital innovation supports careers*. All briefing notes are available online in eight languages plus the language of the European Presidency country (DE, EL, EN, ES, FI, FR, IT, PL, PT and RO). Communication activities included also three issues of Cedefop's print magazine *Skillset and match*, 10 issues of Cedefop's electronic newsletter, 59 website headlines, 134 Facebook posts and over 1,520 tweets and retweets. 17 press releases and 15 video clips and interviews (with over 90 300 views) complemented Cedefop's communication activities in 2019.

Noteworthy is also the agency's **media coverage** which included in 2019 an article on Cedefop in Social Agenda magazine's special issue on the new European Labour Authority, and interviews to Greece's Athens/Macedonian News Agency, the French newspaper Le Quotidien de la Formation, to the UK magazine Times Higher Education, to the French website Centre Inffo, to Spain's Radio Capital and to Spain's business website elEconomista.es.

Linguistic support, layout/design and dissemination services were provided for the realisation of communication and public relation activities. Most publications were published online only, and briefing notes and research papers are also available in E-book-format. But printing-on-demand and the dissemination of hard copy publications

continue to play an important role. The production of video animations for VET systems of EU Presidency countries continued successfully. The animations *Vocational education and training in Austria*, *Vocational education and training in Romania* and *Vocational education and training in Finland* were published in February, June and September.

Cedefop's Web Portal (<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>), a hosted cloud-based platform, continued to focus on new data visualisation functionalities for increasing usability and outreach.

Seven online tools were completed/upgraded and made available online: (1) the European database on apprenticeships schemes; (2) the online vacancy analysis; (3) a new edition of the VET toolkit for tackling early leaving; (4) the financing adult learning database; (5) the online database for financing apprenticeship; (6) upgraded mobility scoreboard data visualisations; and (7) the VET systems in Europe database.

At the same time preparatory work ⁽⁷⁰⁾ for the launch of a next generation Cedefop Web portal in 2021 has been carried out, providing valuable evidence for the development of Web portal specifications and implementation in 2020. A cross-departmental dedicated working group, chaired by Cedefop's Research Support Centre (former library), provided valuable input for the creation of a Cedefop Open Access Repository within the Web portal project, and developed scenarios for the future role of the service.

The Research Support Centre continued to ensure user friendly access to valuable scientific information and relevant electronic subscriptions for Cedefop's operational departments. Archive and records management continued successfully preserving the 'memory of the Agency' and ensured that organisational records are authentic, reliable, and accessible to meet business, financial, and legal obligations.

1.5. Resources

The performance indicators of the Agency attest of the efficient and effective delivery of administrative services, in support of the core business.

In 2019, Cedefop's administration put emphasis on implementing the actions stemming from the 2018 audit on HR management and ethics, in particular on an overall recast of Cedefop's selection and recruitment procedures. The revised procedure not only improves compliance with the Regulatory framework and its transparency for applicants; it also puts emphasis on increasing efficiency and quality in selection processes thus improving the capacity of the Agency for attracting and recruiting talents.

Streamlining and digitising procedures and harmonisation of the IT landscape with the European Commission and other Agencies are driving the modernisation of the Agency's administrative processes and of its ICT infrastructure and services. To pursue the efforts related to the simplification and digitisation of procedures and processes, an internal working group was set up to select a first set of procedures for digitisation.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Analysis and user consultation phase.

In parallel, preparatory work for the migration to ABAC (the finance and accounting system of the European Commission) were ongoing with a view to making efficiency gains, primarily in finance and accounting. The ABAC project is due to start in 2020.

Finally, the Agency has pursued its efforts to reduce its environmental footprint. The environmental performance of the Agency is regularly monitored, and specific actions were taken in 2019 towards reducing the use of plastic.

PART II a) - MANAGEMENT

Cedefop's administration and internal services support operations effectively and efficiently. Cedefop conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable rules and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

II.1 Management Board

Key decisions adopted by the Management Board:

- Cedefop Internal Control Framework ⁽⁷¹⁾;
- Endorsement of draft Programming Document 2020-2022 ⁽⁷²⁾;
- Cedefop Anti-Fraud Strategy ⁽⁷³⁾;
- Decision conferring AIPN powers to the Chair of the Management Board ⁽⁷⁴⁾;
- Endorsement of updated draft Programming Document 2020-2022 ⁽⁷⁵⁾;
- Implementing rules for adviser, middle management and whistleblowing (DGEs 35-36-37);
- Decision delegating AIPN powers to the Executive Director ⁽⁷⁶⁾;
- Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure 2020 ⁽⁷⁷⁾;
- Decision on delegation of the power to make non-substantial amendments to the annual work programme to the Executive Director ⁽⁷⁸⁾;
- Annual Report 2018 ⁽⁷⁹⁾;
- Decision to extend participation to the Executive Board meeting of 27 and 28 June 2019 ⁽⁸⁰⁾;
- Confirmation of the Chairperson/Deputy Chairpersons of the Management Board and composition of the Executive Board of Cedefop ⁽⁸¹⁾;
- Implementing rules on Learning and Development (DGE 39);
- Cedefop Financial Regulation ⁽⁸²⁾;
- Cedefop Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2018 ⁽⁸³⁾;
- Cedefop's final annual accounts 2018 including the Opinion of its Governing Board ⁽⁸⁴⁾;
- Rules on the prevention and management of conflicts of interests for Management Board members, independent experts, seconded national experts and other staff not employed by Cedefop ⁽⁸⁵⁾;

⁽⁷¹⁾ RB(2019)00008

⁽⁷²⁾ RB(2019)00116

⁽⁷³⁾ RB(2019)00110

⁽⁷⁴⁾ RB(2019)00125

⁽⁷⁵⁾ RB(2019)00209 - RB(2019)00116 required an update

⁽⁷⁶⁾ RB(2019)00248

⁽⁷⁷⁾ RB(2019) 00456

⁽⁷⁸⁾ RB(2019)00530

⁽⁷⁹⁾ RB(2019)00356

⁽⁸⁰⁾ RB(2019)00654

⁽⁸¹⁾ RB(2019)00731

⁽⁸²⁾ RB(2019)01034

⁽⁸³⁾ RB(2019)00964

⁽⁸⁴⁾ RB(2019)00965

⁽⁸⁵⁾ RB(2019)01326

- Implementing rules on contract staff covered by Article 3a of the CEOS (DGE 40);
- Implementing rules concerning Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to documents ⁽⁸⁶⁾;
- Implementing rules on working time – re-adoption (DGE 41);
- Rules of Procedure of the Management and Executive Boards of Cedefop ⁽⁸⁷⁾
- Minutes of the 97th Management Board meeting ⁽⁸⁸⁾;
- Decision revised Amending Budget No1-2019 ⁽⁸⁹⁾;
- Programming Document 2020-2022 ⁽⁹⁰⁾;
- Cedefop Budget and Establishment Plan 2020;
- Decision to extend participation to the Executive Board meeting of 11 March 2020 ⁽⁹¹⁾.

The 97th Management Board meeting was held in Thessaloniki on 3 and 4 October 2019.

Throughout the year, Cedefop reported on a regular basis to its (Extended) Executive Board and Management Board members on risks and control issues. Updates on audit and evaluation activities (ECA, IAS, and other sources of assurance) are a standing agenda item at (Extended) Executive Board and Management Board meetings.

Key issues discussed with the Executive Board and Management Board included:

- a) Extraordinary Bureau meeting on 21 January 2019 to discuss the implementation of the recast Agency Regulation.
- b) Executive Board meeting on 8 March 2019
 - Draft Annual Report 2018 ⁽⁹²⁾;
 - Reporting from the Executive Board to the Management Board ⁽⁹³⁾;
 - Implementation of the Work Programme 2019 ⁽⁹⁴⁾;
 - Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure 2020 ⁽⁹⁵⁾;
 - Draft Rules of Procedure of Cedefop's Management and Executive Boards ⁽⁹⁶⁾;
 - Appointment of Management Board members and alternates ⁽⁹⁷⁾;
 - Internal rules concerning public access to documents, personal data protection and handling of sensitive non-classified information ⁽⁹⁸⁾;
 - Reporting on the selection procedure for a new Director ⁽⁹⁹⁾;

⁽⁸⁶⁾ RB(2019)01212

⁽⁸⁷⁾ RB(2019)01358

⁽⁸⁸⁾ RB(2019)01770

⁽⁸⁹⁾ RB(2019)01570 - decision was adopted by written procedure after the MB as the one adopted during the MB (RB(2019)01359) was conditional to and subject to the confirmation of DG EMPL and DG BUDG and required revision

⁽⁹⁰⁾ RB(2019)01757

⁽⁹¹⁾ RB(2020)00001 - repealed and replaced by RB(2019)00341

⁽⁹²⁾ RB(2019)00249_item 4a

⁽⁹³⁾ RB(2019)00195_item 4b

⁽⁹⁴⁾ RB(2019)00200_item 5

⁽⁹⁵⁾ RB(2019)00242_item 6

⁽⁹⁶⁾ RB(2019)00223_item 7a

⁽⁹⁷⁾ RB(2019)00170_Item 7b

⁽⁹⁸⁾ RB(2019)00207_item 7c

⁽⁹⁹⁾ No documentation-information provided by the Commission – item 8a

- Follow up to the cross-cutting evaluation – Commission’s Staff Working Document ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾
- Audits and Evaluations including update on action plan as follow up to IAS audit on HR management and ethics ⁽¹⁰¹⁾;
- Discharge 2017 ⁽¹⁰²⁾;
- In-camera meeting on legal issues.

c) Extended Executive Board meeting on 27 and 28 June 2019:

- Implementation of Work Programme 2019 ⁽¹⁰³⁾;
- Preparation of the revised draft PD 2020-2022 ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾;
- Articles 4(2), 9 and 14(3) of the draft Rules of Procedure of Cedefop’s Management and Executive Boards ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾;
- Internal rules concerning public access to documents, personal data protection and handling of sensitive non-classified information ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾;
- Cedefop’s Appeals Committee ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾;
- Follow-up to the cross-cutting evaluation of the four EU Agencies falling under the remit of DG Employment ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾;
- Audits and evaluations, including update on action plan as follow up to IAS audit on HR and ethics and Discharge 2017 ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾;
- In-camera meeting on legal issues.

d) Executive Board meeting on 2 October 2019 preceding the Management Board meeting:

- Preparation of the Management Board meeting of 3 and 4 October 2019 with special attention to items submitted for decision.
- In-camera meeting on legal issues.

e) Executive Board meeting on 6 December 2019:

- Implementation of Work Programme and budget 2019 ⁽¹¹⁰⁾;
- First draft PD 2021-2023 including the future of Skills Panorama ⁽¹¹¹⁾;
- Audits and Evaluations ⁽¹¹²⁾;
- In-camera meeting on legal issues.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ No documentation-information provided by the Commission-item 8b

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ RB(2019)00215 – item 9a

⁽¹⁰²⁾ RB(2019)00245 – item 9b

⁽¹⁰³⁾ RB(2019)00816 – item 3

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ RB(2019)00879-item 5

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ RB(2019)00762-item 6a

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ RB(2019)00843-item 6b

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ RB(2019)00852-item 6c

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ No documentation-information provided by the Commission-item 7

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ RB(2019)00886-item 8a

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ RB(2019)01493-item 4

⁽¹¹¹⁾ RB(2019)01542 and RB(2019)01515– item 5

⁽¹¹²⁾ RB(2019)01550– item 6b

f) Management Board meeting on 2-3 October 2019:

- Progress report on Work Programme 2019 ⁽¹¹³⁾;
- Revised draft Programming Document 2020-2022 ⁽¹¹⁴⁾;
- First indications for the Work Programme 2021 ⁽¹¹⁵⁾;
- Cedefop's strategy post-2020 ⁽¹¹⁶⁾;
- Cedefop's Action Plan as a follow up to the Commission's Staff Working Document on the cross-cutting evaluation ⁽¹¹⁷⁾;
- Rules of Procedure of the Management Board and Executive Board ⁽¹¹⁸⁾;
- Audits, Evaluations and Discharge ⁽¹¹⁹⁾;
- Staff engagement survey: follow-up on the action plan of the 2017 survey and preparation for the 2019 survey ⁽¹²⁰⁾;
- Elections of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons of the MB and composition of the Executive Board / Extended Executive Board ⁽¹²¹⁾.

II.2 Major developments

2019 was a year of continuity and change, generally for EU-level policy-making and for Cedefop as an institution.

The transitional period induced by the change-over to a new political leadership at the helm of the European Commission had implications for the Agency's multi-annual planning, as VET-related decision-making was postponed to 2020. The European Council's 2019-24 strategy and the new Commission's political guidelines presented in July signalled the need to reinforce education and training substantially and devise strategic approaches to lifelong learning. They also pointed to the crucial role of VET, skills and qualifications in the endeavour to shift to a green and digital economy that would leave nobody behind.

The publication of the Green Deal and the sustainable growth strategy, which, however, only became available in the second half of the year confirmed this. The European Commission's intention to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, revise the Skills Agenda and the Youth Guarantee, explore the idea of individual learning accounts, and boost digital skills provided some orientation on the future demand for Cedefop's expertise.

The broad overall EU priorities and indications and the 2018 ACVT opinion confirmed that the Agency's work was on the right track and its forward-looking approach and readiness to explore untrodden paths proved valuable. Nevertheless, the missing clarity on the EU-level post-2020 VET strategy and the implications of the Commission's work made programming Cedefop's work challenging. The more so, as discussions on the future Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27 were still ongoing and the potentially substantial implications for Cedefop's future budget induced by Brexit were also unclear.

⁽¹¹³⁾ RB(2019)01271-item 3

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ RB(2019)01273-item 4a

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ RB(2019)01252-item 4b

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ No documentation (workshop) – Item 4c

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ RB(2019)01279-item 5

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ RB(2019)01185-item 7

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ RB(2019)01265-item 8b

⁽¹²⁰⁾ RB(2019)01188-item 8d

⁽¹²¹⁾ RB(2019)01191-item 9

Despite the unknown parameters, a reflection process on Cedefop's post-2020 strategy was initiated, enabling swift adjustments once the EU policy and financial frameworks will be in place. The process was launched at the Management Board meeting in October inviting members to participate in a brainstorming and nominate representatives to a reflection group tasked to prepare ideas and a skeleton for a future strategy jointly with Cedefop management and staff.

Budgetary constraints in terms of financial and human resources also had substantial implications for Cedefop's work in 2019: following the 10% staff cut that had to be implemented in the period 2013-18, the Agency was down to 91 posts; classified as an Agency at cruising speed, it had received a nominally constant EU subsidy, which corresponded to a decreasing budget in real terms, and a 2% penalty applied by the European Commission due to the high level of payment cancellations in 2017. Although rationalising and streamlining procedures had enabled redeploying staff to core business in preceding years, operational areas faced a challenging situation in terms of human resources. While acknowledging the measures Cedefop has already taken to reinforce operational areas by reallocating human and financial resources, the Commission recommended to continue these efforts⁽¹²²⁾. Encouraging staff to take on new responsibilities, develop professionally and acquire new competences is in Cedefop's DNA. However, certain tasks require specific subject matter expertise and competences that cannot always be addressed effectively through internal mobility.

At the same time, Cedefop's recast Founding Regulation, which came into force in February 2019, extended the Agency's remit to VET to skills and qualifications, which reflects developments over time. It captures today's broad understanding of VET and its interlinkages with other education sectors as well as employment, economic and social policies. The current Regulation also confirms the actual scope of the Agency's role and tasks at the intersection between education and the labour market in the context of VET and skills policies. And it corroborates the principle of close partnerships between governments and social partners – a key ingredient for successful VET.

Given its limited resources and lack of capacity in 2019, Cedefop had to deprioritise or cancel activities launched in previous years or originally planned for 2019. In close dialogue with its Executive and Management Boards, it was decided to:

- suspend the highly valued thematic country reviews, i.e. cancel the foreseen new reviews on apprenticeship and skills governance;
- transfer the updates of the inventory of validation of non-formal and informal learning to DG EMPL;
- reduce the regularity of updates of policy relevant statistical indicators that point to progress in VET and lifelong learning across countries in terms of access and attractiveness, VET investment and outcomes and labour market transitions;
- cancel several planned studies, including: foresight of skill needs in selected sectors; developing sectoral approaches and social partners cooperation to designing and implementing VET-related policies; analysis of how financial instruments and accompanying (non-financial) measures can be combined

⁽¹²²⁾ See recommendations following the 2017 external evaluation of the Agency in the Commission's SWD(2019)159.

effectively to make training for individuals/companies more attractive; the use of guidance and counselling by EU citizens;

Deprioritising also entailed transferring the organisation of a conference for the learning providers' community to DG EMPL and cancelling a policy learning forum on IVET mobility.

While the recast Founding Regulation maintained the tripartite structure of its Management Board and reflected the two-tier level governance approach that Cedefop had already applied for many years, several adjustments were necessary to comply with the legal framework. This included revising the Management and Executive Boards' rules of procedure.

Following the decision of the former Director to abolish the Agency's internal legal service, Cedefop has had no in-house legal advisor since November 2017. The criticality of fully externalising the legal services was confirmed by the European Court of Auditors in 2018. In its decision on the closure of Cedefop's accounts for the financial year 2018, the European Parliament also considered the full outsourcing of legal services 'a risk to the consistent treatment of cases and to the principle of efficiency' ⁽¹²³⁾. When assessing the risks for the year 2020, as an integral part of the work programme, Cedefop identified and included the 'lack of internal legal expertise' as critical risk in its Risk Management Plan 2020 annexed to the Programming Document 2020-2022.

In January 2019, the Management Board adopted Cedefop's new Internal Control Framework ⁽¹²⁴⁾. A registry of deficiencies is the primary tool for the first yearly assessment in 2020. Targeted staff awareness and training sessions were organised. The Management Board also adopted the Agency's revised Anti-fraud strategy ⁽¹²⁵⁾.

The arrival of a new head of service for human resources in January 2019 helped alleviate the challenging situation that Cedefop had faced in the past years. The handover to the new Executive Director, who was appointed by the Commission in spring and took office in September worked smoothly following extensive preparation by the management team. To address the unexpected departure of one middle management member, another head of department was entrusted with the additional task to head the respective team until a new manager will be recruited.

Regular general staff assemblies introduced in the second half of 2018 in response to communication issues raised in the 2017 staff survey were held to present and discuss issues relating to administration, programming of Cedefop's work and challenges encountered as well as to communicate management decisions and the rationale underpinning them. As planned, another staff survey was held in Q4 of 2019. Follow-up actions are ongoing.

Sound management and concerted action, careful planning, prioritisation of expenditures and transfers to redirect available funds made it possible to deliver Cedefop services efficiently and effectively in support of its core business. Cooperation with the Agencies

⁽¹²³⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0092_EN.html [accessed on 15.5.2020].

⁽¹²⁴⁾ RB(2019)00008

⁽¹²⁵⁾ RB(2019)00110

within DG Employment's remit and others within the European Agency network was continued to ensure synergies and efficiency gains.

II.3 Budgetary and Financial management

This section summarises information presented in Cedefop's Report on Budgetary and Financial Management for the financial year 2019.

Rate and type of implementation of appropriations

In 2019, Cedefop continued to utilise essentially all of its available funding with an overall budget implementation rate of 99.99%. In particular:

- from a total final Title 1 budget of EUR 10 719 498 commitments to the value of EUR 10 719 498 were raised, representing an execution rate of 100%;
- from a total final Title 2 budget of EUR 1 601 952 commitments to the value of EUR 1 601 952 were raised, representing an execution rate of 100%;
- from a total final Title 3 budget of EUR 5 537 471 commitments to the value of EUR 5 536 256 were raised, representing an execution rate of 99.98%.

The budget revenue available and executed in 2019 included, besides the EU contribution of EUR 17 434 000, an amount of EUR 414 920 of contributions from associated countries Norway and Iceland, and an amount of EUR 10 000 of miscellaneous own revenue.

Indication of commitments for actions that will extend for more than one financial year; major items only

Title 3 appropriations are differentiated appropriation and multi-annual in nature.

The contracts ⁽¹²⁶⁾ signed in 2019 which gave rise to commitments extending for more than one financial year, which were booked on Title 3 (Operational activities) of the budget, are listed below:

Budget line	Title of procedure	Expires	Amount (committed in 2019)
3340	Order Form No 10 - Europass (last order form)	17/06/2020	139,815.00
3240	Order Form No 2 - Skills Data Intelligence	15/06/2020	141,250.00
3340	Order Form No 1 (WA 1) - The future of VET in Europe	18/12/2021	191,025.00
3340	Order Form No 2 (WA 2) - The future of VET in Europe	18/12/2021	233,050.00
3440	Support and incentives to learning and careers - LOT 1	20/12/2021	384,000.00

⁽¹²⁶⁾ Major contracts are shown only, with the threshold set at 100.000 EUR.

Budget line	Title of procedure	Expires	Amount (committed in 2019)
3440	Support and incentives to learning and careers - LOT 2	20/12/2021	474,650.00
3240	Order Form No 1 - 2nd European Skills and Jobs Survey	30/06/2021	800,400.00

Information on transfers and amending budgets

The Executive Director signed transfers between budget items, during 2019, which are summarised below (net effect between Titles):

- a **decrease** in Title 1 (staff expenditure) appropriations by EUR 65 712;
- an **increase** in Title 2 (administrative expenditure) appropriations by EUR 75 242;
- a **decrease** in Title 3 (operational expenditure) appropriations by EUR 9 529.

The transfers directed the surplus created in Title 1, attributed to the departure of staff and ongoing recruitment procedures for vacant posts, and Title 3, to Title 2. The transferred funds were successfully invested in new ICT equipment related to upgrades of existing infrastructure and facilitation of remote work arrangements, before the end of the year.

In December 2019 the Agency was granted a supplementary and amending budget to the value of Euro 1 424 634 relating to payment appropriations. There were no associated commitment appropriations. The funds were required to meet the Agency's operational outgoings (Title 3).

Appropriations carried forward to the following financial year

The Agency committed its annual budget (at a rate of 99.99%, as detailed above), within the year 2019. No non-automatic carry overs were needed.

The appropriations carried forward to 2020 in order to honour commitments made in 2019, are summarised below:

- Title 1 appropriations carried forward to 2020 were EUR 184 124 or 1.72% of the final Title 1 funds for the year;
- Title 2 appropriations carried forward to 2020 were EUR 610 149 or 38.1% of the final Title 2 funds for the year. As per common practice, Cedefop informed on 29 January 2020 the European Court of Auditors on the list of planned carry overs 2019 for Title 2.
- Title 3 appropriations are differentiated appropriation and multi-year in nature.

Implementation of appropriations carried forward from the previous financial year

Of Euro 145 058 Title 1 appropriations brought forward, Euro 18 811 were cancelled.

Of Euro 525 229 Title 2 appropriations brought forward, Euro 40 521 were cancelled.

Title 3 appropriations are differentiated appropriation and multi-year in nature.

Percentage of procurement procedure types used

29 procurement procedures were processed in 2019.

Type of procedure	2019		
	Number	%	Comments
Open	13	45%	Of which 1 (12%) were call for proposals
Negotiated	15	52%	
Competitive with Negotiation (two stages)	1	3%	
Total	29	100%	

Information on interest charged by suppliers through late payments (> 30 days)

Not applicable.

Summary information on budgetary operations

Cedefop continues to use its funds effectively and efficiently with a budget implementation rate of 99.99%. To achieve these exceptionally high figures, Cedefop utilises bespoke systems to constantly track its current and anticipated expenditures to ensure all funds are utilised by the end of the year.

With regard to legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, all costs are subject to audits by both the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the external auditors whose remit specifically include such testing. All Title 3 costs are required to comply with the procurement plan which is an integral part of the Programming Document agreed by the Management Board as well as the annual management plan. Similarly, all costs are signed off by the authorising officer(s) (by delegation) who again has(have) a specific remit to ensure regularity.

The internal controls are effective as no cases of irregular costs have come to light in spite of rigorous scrutiny by external parties. The cost of the external audit company which audits Cedefop's annual accounts ⁽¹²⁷⁾ - borne by the Agency - is low compared to the value and quantity of work they undertake and the value of the business they audit. The Court of Auditors costs are not borne directly by the Agency.

⁽¹²⁷⁾ According to the arrangements for the annual audits under Article 208 (4) and Article 107 of its Financial Regulation, Cedefop contracted an external audit company (MAZARS) to audit Cedefop's accounts 2019, based on a DG BUDG framework contract.

II.4 Delegation and sub-delegation of the powers of budget implementation to agency's Staff

Delegation of the powers of budget implementation are prepared in accordance with Article 11(5)(j) of the Regulation (EU) No 2019/128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019, establishing the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) 337/75 and Articles 39(1), 41(1), 43(1), 45 and 46 of Cedefop's financial regulation, adopted by the Management Board on 16 July 2019 (Decision RB(2019)1034).

The Executive Director, who is the Authorising Officer (AO) of Cedefop, delegates the powers of budget implementation to the Deputy Director and Heads of Departments who are acting as Authorising Officers by Delegation (AOD). The powers delegated include:

- making budgetary and legal commitments as well as carrying out the preliminary actions for these commitments;
- validating and authorising expenditure;
- establishing amounts receivable (including making financial corrections), and issuing recovery orders, waiving recovery and cancelling established amounts receivable;
- taking individual decisions on the award of public procurement contracts, grants or prizes; and
- proposing transfers of appropriations.

The Executive Director delegated the powers of budget implementation in all budget lines (BL). Such delegations are limited to the appropriations available under the specific budget lines and up to the ceiling of 1 000 000 Euros per transaction, with two exceptions: the delegation to the Deputy Director, which is for unlimited amount, and the delegation for transactions in Title 1 (Staff expenditure) to the Head of Department for Resources and Support, which is capped at 1 500 000 Euros. No sub-delegation decisions were in place in 2019.

The implementation of delegation decisions is monitored by Cedefop's Finance Service, which is in charge of drafting, amending, or repealing a delegation based on instructions received by the Authorising Officer. Specific controls are implemented accordingly in the Agency's accounting and budget system (Fibus), safeguarding that the budget lines and ceilings established by individual delegations are respected.

II.5 Human Resources Management

On 31 December 2019 the occupation rate of the establishment plan was 95% (of 91 authorised posts in the establishment plan 86 posts were filled). The overall gender balance at Cedefop was 59% female to 41% male. Women are well represented at all grades including at management level (60% male and 40% female in 2019). Cedefop also aims to ensure a geographical balance.

Following the recommendations from the Internal Audit Service audit on HR management and Ethics, the HR service increased its capacity through relevant training and focused on an overall recast of Cedefop's selection and recruitment procedures. The revised procedure and related documentation improve compliance with the Regulatory

framework and its transparency for applicants and puts emphasis on increasing efficiency and quality in selection processes.

As of 2019 a member of the HR team is present in every selection board and all selection boards members received mandatory training. HR further focused on the implementation of the agreed actions in relation to the IAS audit on HR management and Ethics: appraisal, learning and development, HR strategy, good governance.

In 2019 the HR service prepared and consulted with the Staff Committee eight implementing rules: on (1) delegation of powers of the AIPN; (2) outside activities; (3) the function of adviser; (4) middle management; (5) whistleblowing; (6) learning and development; (7) contract staff; and (8) working time. These model decisions were adopted by the Management Board in 2019.

The action plan to the 2017 staff engagement survey was developed using a fully participatory approach and its implementation was ongoing in 2018 and 2019. The Executive and Management Boards have been regularly kept informed of the developments. The 2019 Staff Engagement Survey was administered between 11 and 26 November 2019 and had a 79% response rate. The results of the survey were presented to staff in Q1 2020 and follow-up actions are ongoing.

Following the adoption of the model decision on learning and development, new implementing guidelines were prepared. The learning and development strategy 2018-20 sets out the organisation-level priorities. A cross-department working group developed a concept for knowledge building experts' seminars series. Following management approval in early 2019 the first seminar took place in January 2020.

Cedefop continued throughout the year to put emphasis on activities that aim to improve staff wellbeing, a respectful work environment and dignity at work. In-house training was offered on prevention of harassment and on work-life balance. Individual coaching was offered to support resilience building. The training for new confidential counsellors was concluded in 2019, following which they were appointed in September 2019.

II.6 Strategy for efficiency gains

Cedefop continued its work to increase administration efficiency and achieve collaboration with other EU Agencies and institutions. Actions aimed at pooling content expertise to create synergies, e.g. in the fourth edition of the European company survey jointly managed by Cedefop and Eurofound as well as with Eurostat in the field of big data analysis of online job advertisement.

To reduce administrative overheads Cedefop is joining wherever possible the Commission's or other Agencies' inter-institutional framework contracts and organises joint procurement procedures with other Agencies. As of December 2018, Cedefop uses e-tendering/e-submission for its open procedures.

Streamlining and digitising procedures and harmonisation of the IT landscape with the European Commission and other Agencies are driving the modernisation of the Agency's ICT infrastructure and services and its administrative processes. To pursue the efforts related to the simplification and digitisation of procedures and processes, an internal working group was set up.

Cedefop continues to be an active member of the EU Agencies' network (EUAN) and to share services and create synergies with other Agencies. On top of the above-mentioned joint call for tenders and participation in inter-institutional calls for tenders, this takes the form of exchange of knowledge and expertise across Agencies, on matters such as IT system, cyber-security or HR practices. Since end of 2019, Cedefop is a member of the EUAN task force to propose strategic directions for the next generation of shared services.

II.7 Assessment of audit and ex-post evaluation results during the reporting year

Cedefop's internal auditor is the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission (IAS) and the Agency is annually controlled by the European Court of Auditors (ECA). The Agency informs the Discharge Authority on the results of the audits.

Following each audit, Cedefop draws up an action plan for the implementation of all recommendations. A regular monitoring of actions is carried out by the Internal Control Coordinator. A consolidated action plan, updated at least biannually, is posted on Cedefop's intranet, accessible to all staff.

Cedefop also follows up closely the observations from the Discharge Authority.

In addition to the audits conducted by the IAS and ECA, Cedefop has developed several procedures and tools to allow systematic ex-post and ex-ante controls and evaluations and, thus, further ensures that the necessary control layers and actions are in place and implemented.

The Executive Board and Management Board are kept regularly informed of audit, controls and evaluation outcomes as well as on progress in the implementation of the agreed action plans. This is a standing agenda item in all meetings.

II.7.1 Internal Audit Service (IAS)

Following the IAS Strategic Audit Plan for 2017-2019, the IAS conducted an audit on Cedefop's HR Management and Ethics from 14 to 18 January 2018. Following the audit, an action plan was agreed with the IAS to follow up on the six recommendations (one 'critical', two 'very important' and three 'important'). The IAS conducted a follow-up audit at Cedefop's premises on 20-22 November 2019 on the implementation of the agreed actions for Recommendations Nr 1 'Recruitment procedures' (ranked critical) and Nr 2 – 'Appraisal' (ranked very important). The IAS concluded that Cedefop has implemented both recommendations adequately and effectively. Therefore, the IAS closed both recommendations.

All recommendations from the agreed action plans resulting from previous IAS audits are implemented according to the deadlines agreed in the action plan. Five out of six recommendations were implemented. One recommendation will be implemented by Q2/2020.

II.7.2 Other sources of assurance

As part of awareness-raising activities on ethics, integrity and internal control issues, Cedefop provides regular mandatory sessions on good governance for new comers.

Sessions are mandatory for all staff every two years and also address the revised internal control framework and the updated anti-fraud strategy. Dedicated sessions on the revised internal control framework and the updated anti-fraud strategy were held during departments' meetings in 2019.

A presentation on the dignity at work policy took place on 14 November 2019.

A user-friendly guide was developed to acquaint staff with the DGE on outside activities. The guide and the Equal Opportunities Policy are being finalised.

Following the request of the Commission for a peer review exercise on risk management in Agencies, as part of the exercise to align implementation of the recast Agency Regulations in line with the 'Common Approach', Cedefop's Internal Control Coordinator participated in the cluster with ETF, EU-OSHA, Eurofound and the Centre de Traduction. The results were shared with the parent DGs. The main benefit for the Agencies in the cluster 'Social and employment' was the comparison of methodologies and a common understanding of what constitutes a critical risk. While all Agencies follow the same (Commission's) guidelines, an occasional peer review was considered a useful exercise.

a) Evaluation and control activities

As a follow-up to the last external evaluation, Cedefop prepared an action plan which was discussed with the Management Board in October 2019. The revised action plan was transmitted to DG EMPL on 11 October. In its letter of 7 November 2019, DG EMPL welcomed Cedefop's proposed actions, including precise deadlines, addressing the Cedefop-specific recommendations, as well as the cooperation with the other Agencies concerned.

A **new evaluation policy** was adopted by the Executive Director on 14 November 2019. It describes the overarching rationale and principles underpinning Cedefop's approach to evaluate own activities and projects, in line with statutory requirements and with due regard to the proportionality principle and Cedefop's specificity.

Ex-ante evaluations ⁽¹²⁸⁾ were carried out in 2019 for procurement procedures above 200.000 Euros. A report reviewing progress and lessons learned was prepared by the Head of finance and procurement in November 2019.

Cedefop carries out **ex-post evaluations** ⁽¹²⁹⁾ for projects/activities that have come to an end and entailed a total budget expenditure of above 500.000 Euros.

For 2019/2020, ex-post evaluation focuses on two activities:

- document management (ICT Services for Livelink-Open Text Content Server 10);
- changing role of VET research project.

The ex-post evaluation exercise is expected to be finalised in Q3 2020.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ Article 29.2 of Cedefop Financial Regulation adopted by its Management Board on 16 July 2019

⁽¹²⁹⁾ Article 29.3 of Cedefop Financial Regulation

As part of the ex-post controls plan, a sample of three ReferNet files is being audited and will be finalised in Q3 2020.

Five Cedefop payments selected at random by the Internal Control Coordinator were reviewed by Cedefop's Accountant to check that all procedures were followed, and that the supporting documentation was in place and in line with Cedefop's Financial Regulation. The Accountant's report confirmed that all five transactions followed the correct process and the internal control objectives of: (a) compliance to Cedefop's financial regulation; (b) operational efficiency; and (c) accurate reporting were satisfactorily met.

Evaluation and control activities are carried out through a framework contract resulting from a tendering procedure led by ETF and that Cedefop joined. This allows efficiency gains through shared services.

II.7.3 European Court of Auditors (ECA)

On 15 October 2019 the European Court of Auditors published its final report on the annual accounts for the financial year 2018.

In the Court's opinion, Cedefop's annual accounts 2018 present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency at 31 December 2018. The results of its operations, its cash flows, and the changes in net assets for 2018 are in accordance with its Financial Rules and the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer. The transactions underlying the annual accounts 2018 are legal and regular in all material respects.

ECA included observations on the legality and regularity of transactions, in particular related to two recruitment procedures in 2015 and 2016, and two observations on sound financial management and performance. ECA expressed concerns that the full outsourcing model of the legal service decided by the former Director in November 2017 creates a risk to the consistent treatment of cases and the principle of sound financial management, namely the principle of efficiency, despite several improvements introduced by the Centre in the second half of 2018 addressing some of the critical areas identified. To address ECA's observations, Cedefop is currently reassessing the way its legal function is organised.

On the annual accounts for the financial year 2019, the European Court of Auditors conducted its audit from 18 to 22 November 2019 and its desk review off site from 9 to 13 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 epidemic outbreak. The final report is expected in autumn 2020. According to the arrangements for the annual audits under Article 208 (4) and Article 107 of its Financial Regulation, Cedefop contracted an external audit company (MAZARS) to audit Cedefop's accounts 2019, based on a DG BUDG framework contract.

II.8a Follow up of recommendations and action plans for audits and evaluations

Following each audit and evaluation, Cedefop draws up an action plan for the implementation of all recommendations. A regular monitoring of actions is carried out by the Internal Control Coordinator. A consolidated action plan, updated at least biannually, is posted on Cedefop's intranet, accessible to all staff.

Cedefop is also following up closely on the recommendations received from the Discharge Authority.

The following recommendations, flagged by the IAS and the ECA as critical or very important, were addressed by Cedefop in 2019 and closed by IAS end 2019 and early 2020:

Critical:

- *Recruitments procedures (Year 2018 following audits of IAS and ECA)*

Very important:

- *Appraisal and reclassification/promotion exercises (Year 2018 following audit of IAS);*
- *HR strategy, planning and reporting (Year 2018 following audit of IAS)*

II.8b Follow up of recommendations issued following investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

Following OLAF's request of 20 December 2018 ⁽¹³⁰⁾, Cedefop provided the Agency's follow-up to disciplinary recommendations adopted in relation to investigations OF/2005/0674, OF/2005/0181 and OF/2013/0281 on 14 January 2019 ⁽¹³¹⁾.

Details of OLAF's requests and Cedefop's follow-up actions are not provided in this document for sensitivity reasons.

II.9 Follow-up of observations from the Discharge Authority

Cedefop has followed up all observations from the Discharge Authority in the past years.

The report on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of Cedefop for the financial year 2018 ⁽¹³²⁾, adopted by the European Parliament on 14 May 2020, praises Cedefop's work on several aspects, including the following:

- notes with satisfaction that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2018 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 100%, representing a slight increase of 0,04% compared to 2017; takes note of the fact that the payment appropriations execution rate was at 96,50%, representing an increase of 6,84% compared to the previous year;
- notes that the Centre uses an exemplary performance measurement system that includes key performance indicators to assess the added value provided by its activities in the project, activity and organisational levels and other measures to improve its budget management;
- notes furthermore that the Centre's Work Programme 2018 has been fully implemented in line with the set objectives, targets and indications;
- welcomes the fact that the Centre is developing synergies and sharing resources

⁽¹³⁰⁾ JBR olaf.a.1(2018)32061

⁽¹³¹⁾ RB(2019)00046

⁽¹³²⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0258_EN.pdf

- with the other agencies;
- notes the Centre's continued and formalised close cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound);
 - notes that the external evaluation, to which the Centre was submitted in 2017, as required by the financial rules, concluded that the Centre's reinforced cooperation with the three other decentralised agencies within the remit of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment - ETF, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and Eurofound - emerged as a feasible option; notes that the Centre's recast founding regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/128), which came into force in February 2019, took up the outcome of that external evaluation;
 - appreciates the Centre's expertise and its continued high-quality work to provide research, analyses and technical advice to assist the development of European lifelong learning and vocational education and training (VET), qualifications and skills policies with the aim of promoting high-quality training tailored to the needs of the labour market; stresses, to that end, the importance of ensuring adequate material and human resources allowing the Centre to implement its growing and changing tasks, while ensuring, in general, the Centre's pre-eminence over private contractors;
 - welcomes the Centre's contributions and expertise in providing new knowledge, evidence and policy analysis, monitoring policy trends and acting as a knowledge broker to highly relevant policy themes on the Union agenda; acknowledges the Centre's quality work on different projects, in particular the Skills Agenda for Europe, Europass, the revision of the Skills Panorama and its role in supporting the participants of the Copenhagen process, the European Skills Index and Skills forecast;
 - considers noteworthy the Centre's initiative on a new strand on digitalisation, and in particular on its online tools, providing country-specific information and improved visualisation opportunities of online data, such as guidance resources on labour market information or skills forecasts; acknowledges to that end the Centre's targeted marketing campaigns in raising awareness on the content of its website;
 - welcomes the fact that, in light of the observations and comments of the discharge authority, the Centre adopted implementing rules concerning Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on 2 September 2019.

Moreover, the Discharge authority:

- calls on the Commission to conduct a feasibility study in order to assess the possibility of, if not fully merging, then at the very least setting up shared synergies with Eurofound;
- notes the Centre's concern that its new founding regulation extends the mandate of the Centre to include qualifications and skills policies in addition to VET, but without accompanying the new duties by additional resources; notes that the Centre has already experienced a 10 % staff reduction and this experience has led to an increased workload and pressure for staff in the Centre.

II.10 Environment Management

Even though there is currently no specific legal obligation for EU institutions and Agencies to produce sustainability reports, Cedefop is fully committed to gradually

implementing the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where appropriate.

Sustainability reporting is the practice of measuring, disclosing and being accountable to internal and external stakeholders for organisational performance towards the goal of sustainable development. Sustainability reporting is both a management and an accountability tool. It involves reporting on how the organisation considers sustainability issues in its operations, and on its environmental, social and economic impacts ⁽¹³³⁾.

Currently, Cedefop does not compile or publish stand-alone sustainability reports. The Agency however monitors and reports its impact on various environmental and social sustainability indicators. Also, as part of its core business, Cedefop maps developments in the area of 'Skills for green jobs', jointly with the ILO. Working at the interface of VET and the labour market, Cedefop's work as a whole contributes directly to Sustainable Developments Goals 4 (quality education) and 8 (decent work and economic growth).

Examples of the environmental and social sustainability indicators currently compiled and reported include:

Environmental Management

Since 2008, Cedefop is making a firm commitment to environment management practices. It introduced a comprehensive and structured internal Environmental Management System (EMS) and uses performance indicators to measure progress towards the achievement of the Agency's green objectives. The related performance indicators are reviewed annually. In the period 2021-2023, in addition to enhancing the functionality of its building facilities, Cedefop will, within the limits of evolving budgetary constraints, gradually convert to a reliable, sustainable and competitive energy system. The aim is to generate savings through energy efficiency as well as to reduce the environmental footprint of the organisation.

Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12)

To reduce the use of paper, Cedefop is moving towards a paperless office (incl. e-procurement since 2018) and monitors closely the use of paper for printing in order to reduce consumption. The Agency sorts its waste and has taken actions to reduce the use of plastic.

Climate action (SDG 13)

Cedefop conducts calculations of Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions since 2008. Cedefop's CO₂ emissions main producers are: electricity consumption, heating oil consumption, water consumption and waste. Due to its remote location, Cedefop favours video and teleconferencing when possible to reduce the need for travelling.

⁽¹³³⁾ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/> [accessed on 13.11.2019].

Social sustainability information

Gender equality (SDG 5)

Gender equality indicators are reported in Annex V - D (Human resources – qualitative – Gender representation) of the Agency’s Programming Document as well in the Consolidated Annual Activity report.

Committed to gradually implement the UN’s 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its 17 SDGs, Cedefop plans to design and implement a corporate sustainability policy and produce a first sustainability report by 2021.

II.11 Assessment by Management

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by Cedefop’s management that support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives.

These elements are: a) comprehensive set of processes and documents to plan its annual work programme; b) comprehensive set of processes to monitor and report on the implementation of its annual work programme and the deployment of its human and financial resources; c) processes to monitor and report on legality and regularity; d) internal control framework and e) safeguarding of assets.

a) comprehensive set of processes and documents to plan the annual work programme:

- i. The programming document 2019-2021 was adopted by the Governing Board (now Management Board) on 18 December 2018 by written procedure.
- ii. The annual work programme 2019 was designed within the framework of the programming document. The risk management plan - which results from an in-depth ex-ante assessment of the generic risks and risks by project and by ABB activity - is an integral part of the annual work programme. The work programme also includes a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators within Cedefop’s Performance Measurement System (PMS).
- iii. Along with the adoption of the annual budget (estimate of revenue and expenditure) a multi-annual staff policy plan sets out the resources required for the implementation of the annual work programme.
- iv. Finally, the annual management plan (AMP) 2019 comprises detailed planning for the Agency’s key deliverables (e.g. conferences, publications, procurement procedures) outlined in the annual work programme. It also includes evaluation and audit plans, risk assessment and the anti-fraud strategy action plan for the year 2019.

b) comprehensive set of processes to monitor and report reliably on the implementation of annual work programme and the deployment of human and financial resources.

- i. The Executive Director, Deputy Director and Heads of Departments meet on a weekly basis. The aim of these meetings, chaired by the Executive Director, is to monitor developments in all operational, administrative and support activities and take decisions on issues related to financial and human resource management, internal controls, outreach activities of management and experts as well as the

day-to-day administration of the Agency. Follow-up actions are reviewed on a weekly basis.

- ii. The Executive Director, Deputy Director, Heads of Departments, Internal Control Coordinator, Head of Finance and Procurement, Head of Human Resources, coordinators of services (ICT and facilities) and the accounting officer meet in Performance Monitoring Meetings (PMM) three times per year, in which systematised reports on financial issues (budget implementation, procurements), human resources developments, and monitoring reports on achievements compared to the planned objectives are discussed. In the first yearly meeting, the PMS team and a representative of the Staff Committee are also invited. In the third meeting, budget correspondents also participate. Achievements are monitored through the performance indicators and targets set in the annual work programme. In addition, these meetings support strategic considerations and opinion exchange on policy issues, planning, and other operational and organisational issues.
- iii. A budgetary mid-term review is conducted in early July and September to discuss in detail progress on the implementation of the budget and the work programme and to agree on corrective actions as necessary. The 'budget correspondents' assigned to each Department provide regular monitoring of the budget's (planned) commitments and payments throughout the year.
- iv. The progress report, the annual report and the consolidated annual activity report are discussed with the Executive and Management Boards, besides the regular reporting to the Executive Board/Management Board on the results of audits and evaluations, budget implementation, transfers of appropriations. Executive Board members are also systematically informed on key changes that may occur in the implementation of the annual work programme. This is a standing agenda item in all Executive and Management Boards meetings.
- v. As requested under Art. 31.4 of the Cedefop Financial Regulation, the list of contracts – recipients of funds – is posted on the Agency's website.

c) processes to monitor and report on legality and regularity.

- i. As regards legality and regularity of underlying transactions, the objective is to ensure that the estimated annual risk of errors in commitments and payments at the time of the authorisation of the transactions is less than 2%. Cedefop's standard quantitative material threshold is set at EUR 200.000. Deviations from this materiality threshold must be justified in the Consolidated Annual Activity Report. No deviations were recorded in 2019.
- ii. As foreseen in the Commission's Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) and in the action plan of the Inter Institutional Working Group's roadmap, Cedefop's Management Board adopted its updated Anti-Fraud Strategy on 28 January 2019, which repealed the first version from 2014.

Following the IAS audit on HR management and ethics, new guidelines on reporting potential conflicts of interests in selection and recruitment processes were adopted on 29 March 2019. Rules on the prevention and management of conflicts of interests for Management Board members, independent experts, seconded national experts and other staff not employed by Cedefop were adopted by Cedefop's Management Board on 2 October 2019.

Internal procedures on reporting irregularities/whistleblowing, including the legal framework, basic principles and steps to be followed by staff members, already in place since 2008, have been revised and complemented with Cedefop's

guidelines on whistleblowing ⁽¹³⁴⁾, based on the Commission's Guidelines and in compliance with the requirements set out in Art. 22c of the Staff Regulations.

- d) Internal control framework. Internal Control standards are in place in Cedefop since 2009. The Agency revised its Internal Control Framework in 2019 to align it to the European Commission's own revised Framework, basing it on the highest international standards set by the COSO framework. Shifting from a compliance-based to a principle-based approach, Cedefop's revised Internal Control Framework, adopted by the Management Board on 9 January 2019, is structured around five components: control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, monitoring activities. Each component consists of several principles, 17 in total.
- e) With regard to safeguarding of assets, regular controls and checks are in place, which are in line with the Commission's control structures. They are tested and have proven to be sound. Procedures and recordkeeping concerned with the safeguarding of assets and reliability of financial records are designed to provide assurance that:
- i. transactions are executed in compliance with management's (delegated) authorisation;
 - ii. transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements in conformity with the Agency's Financial Regulation and to maintain accountability for assets;
 - iii. access to assets is restricted through the hierarchical structure of verifications and in line with the Financial Regulation;
 - iv. the recorded value of assets is compared with existing asset checks e.g. inventory controls and bank reconciliations at reasonable intervals.

⁽¹³⁴⁾ DGE/37/2019 of 9 April 2019

PART II b) - External Evaluations

As required by the Financial Regulation, Cedefop is subject to periodic external evaluations which are carried out by the Commission. The most recent one was conducted in 2017 for the period 2011-16 as part of a comprehensive exercise aiming at implementing a more coherent framework for decentralised EU agencies ⁽¹³⁵⁾. The evaluation covered the four Agencies that fall within the remit of DG Employment ⁽¹³⁶⁾ and assessed them individually and in a cross-cutting perspective, considering also the European Labour Authority being planned at that time.

The evaluation report, which assessed Cedefop and its work positively, informed the revision process of the Agencies' Founding Regulations in the course of 2018. In April 2019, the European Commission published its conclusions on the Agencies' performance ⁽¹³⁷⁾. Confirming the overall assessment that they operated effectively and efficiently and contributed to EU-level policy making, the Commission highlighted some areas for improvement and issued Agency-specific as well as general recommendations addressed to the four Agencies. Cedefop received only two recommendations (see below).

Confirming the evaluators' positive assessment of Cedefop's work, the Commission conclusions referred particularly to skills anticipation and comparative thematic analyses; apprenticeship reviews and the support to the European Qualifications Framework and Europass.

The Commission reaffirmed that the four Agencies have different remits and provide unique outputs and services. The conclusions also pointed to the tension between the work and quality that is expected from the Agencies and their resource constraints. In view of achieving further synergies and efficiency gains, the Commission's 18 general recommendations relate to the following areas: a) policy support for the EU and the Member States; b) the outputs and services we provide; c) organisation, processes and performance; d) governance; e) cooperation among the Agencies.

As requested, Cedefop drew up an action plan which was discussed by the Management Board and submitted to the Commission in October 2019. It comprises detailed actions to address the two Cedefop-specific recommendations:

- i. continue efforts to reallocate even more resources from administration to its core operations;
- ii. present the results of its performance measurement indicators that relate to informing policies and their implementation in a more detailed manner;
- iii. further align the four Agencies' performance indicator methods.

Using the 'degrees of implementation' logic, for each action Cedefop indicated its status at the outset and a target date for completion to help track progress - an

⁽¹³⁵⁾ The so-called Common Approach on the decentralised agencies signed in 2012 by the European Parliament, Council and the Commission.

⁽¹³⁶⁾ European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA).

⁽¹³⁷⁾ SWD(2019) 159 final
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=85&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9348> [accessed 08.05.20]

approach that the Commission considered exemplary and also recommended to others.

As regards i), actions are planned for 2020 and 2021. They include revisiting the HR situation, identify opportunities to transfer budget lines, using more IT tools to streamline administrative procedures; as well as further cooperation, use of shared services with other agencies (see Agencies' shared services catalogue). In several cases actions had been completed, for instance, the joint procurement with ENISA in 2018 for ICT help desk services and the joint company survey with Eurofound.

As for ii) and iii), by the time the action plan was approved, Cedefop had already implemented the recommendation to present disaggregated data for the two indicators since its 2018 annual and CAAR reports and its progress report 2019 respectively; this practice will be continued (see figures 1, 2 & 3 of the Year in brief of this report).

Drawing on other Agencies' experience, by October 2019 Cedefop had designed a survey to understand better how its outputs and services are perceived and used. Information on the survey results were included in the performance section of the 2019 annual report and this activity report (see Year in brief). User surveys will be conducted every two years.

In 2019, Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF commenced the work to compare administrative indicators - which in most cases are included in the list to measure Directors' performance (COM SWD 2015, 62 final) - with the aim to align their methodologies where feasible. The four Agencies also agreed to consult with other members of the European Agencies' performance development network, regarding the indicators on uptake in and contributions to policy documents, including national level ones.

PART III - Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems

III.1 Effectiveness of the Internal Control systems

The methodology applied for the assessment of Cedefop's Internal Control Framework is compliant with the Implementation Guide of the European Commission (2018 updated version of Ares(2017)3293999-30/06/2017).

The assessment of the internal control framework is founded both on ongoing (continuous) monitoring and on specific (periodical) assessments.

Ongoing monitoring is built into business processes and performed on a real-time basis at all levels of the organisation. This enables the Agency to timely react to changing conditions and to correct deviations from intended performance and effectiveness levels. The internal control framework is monitored by performance and specific indicators adopted by the Management Board.

Deficiencies identified in the context of the ongoing monitoring activities and actions were registered in the Deficiencies Register and appropriate mitigations addressed the issues.

The assessment of fraud risks is integrated in the overall annual risk assessment. In 2019, two fraud-related risks were identified: mistakes in financial management (regularity, compliance, ethical and anti-fraud framework) and mistakes in procurement/contract management. Both were properly mitigated.

The assessment of the internal control framework has been carried out at three levels:

- the principles - based on the analysis of the detected strengths and deficiencies;
- the components - based on an analysis of the results at principle level;
- the internal control framework as a whole - based on an analysis of the results at component level. See section III.2.

The final conclusion, based on professional judgement, assessed also whether the components are well operating together in an integrated manner.

III.2 Conclusions of assessment internal control framework

The assessment of the overall internal control framework shows that it is effective, all its components are in place and functioning well.

Overall (Specific) Assessment of Internal Control System		
To be done globally at Directorate-General level. In addition this assessment can be done for one part of the organisational structure (Delegation, Representation, Directorate, Function, etc.)		
Internal control Component	Present and functioning (Category 1/2/3/4)	Explanation/Conclusion
CONTROL ENVIRONMENT	Category 1. The component is present and functioning well	The Management has set properly the tone at the top with respect to the importance of internal control, including expected standards of conduct
RISK ASSESSMENT	Category 1. The component is present and functioning well	All risks are properly mitigated.
CONTROL ACTIVITIES	Category 2. The component is present and functioning but some improvements are needed	Control activities are well in place and functioning.
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	Category 1. The component is present and functioning well	External communication is well organised and functions well. Internal communication can be improved
MONITORING ACTIVITIES	Category 1. The component is present and functioning well	Continuous assessments provide timely information on any deficiencies. Findings are assessed and deficiencies are communicated and corrected in a timely manner
OVERALL ASSESSMENT (1/2/3 or 4). Are all components operating together in an integrated manner? Assess globally the combination of the assessments of the internal control components.	Category 1. The internal control system is present and functioning well, only minor improvements needed	
Is the overall internal control system effective? Category 1. Minor- Yes Category 2. Moderate- Yes Category 3. Major- Partially Category 4. Critical- No	Yes	
Comment		The assessment of the internal control framework concludes that the organisation is able to deliver its objectives. The key component 'Control environment' is present and functioning well. The number of non-compliances and exceptions is limited to 15 and for each, precise mitigation actions have been identified and followed-up

The overall assessment was performed by using the tool (excel file) provided by DG BUDG to Agencies' Internal Control Coordinators.

DG BUDG and IAS delivered a specific training session to ICC teams of EU Agencies on the annual assessment of the internal control system. The assessment tool comprises:

- a) a register of deficiencies populated from different internal sources: register of non-compliance events and exception requests, recommendations from IAS, ECA, OLAF and ICC, deficiencies reported spontaneously by staff, the action plan of Cedefop's Anti-Fraud Strategy, Cedefop internal control indicators;
- b) an assessment of each principle with regards to the related deficiencies, ranked from 1 to 4 (1= None, 2=Moderate, 3=Major, 4=Critical);
- c) an assessment of each component with regards to the related principles, also ranked from 1 to 4;
- d) overall assessment of the internal control system (see table above).

III.3 Statement of the manager in charge of risk management and internal control

DEPUTY DIRECTOR
INTERNAL CONTROL COORDINATOR

RB(2020)00709
Thessaloniki, 9 June 2020

STATEMENT OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND INTERNAL CONTROL COORDINATOR TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MR JUERGEN SIEBEL

I, Mara Brugia,

in my capacity as Deputy Director and authorising officer by delegation,

declare that in accordance with my responsibilities as authorising officer by delegation and as Deputy Director, I have reported to the Executive Director my assessment, advice and recommendations on the issues under my responsibility.

I hereby also declare that in accordance with my responsibilities as Internal Control Coordinator I have reported my assessment, advice and recommendations to the Executive Director on the overall state of internal control in Cedefop.

I declare that on the basis of my managing and monitoring operations I have reasonable assurance that the underlying actions have been legal and regular and that the information that I have provided has been accurate and complete.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2019 and its annexes, to the best of my knowledge, are accurate, reliable and complete.



Mara Brugia
Deputy Director and Internal Control Coordinator

PART IV Management assurance

IV.1 Review of the elements supporting assurance

Cedefop's internal control framework is built under the direct supervision of the management.

Taking Cedefop's size into account, a flat hierarchical structure has been adopted. Heads of Departments delegate various functions such as staff assessment of contract agents or contract implementation to Heads of Service and project managers/experts.

Heads of Departments, Heads of Service and project managers/experts are closely and actively involved in the planning, reporting and monitoring processes, as well as in the risk assessment exercise. Not only does this assure alignment of objectives; it also ensures a common understanding of the strategic objectives and the annual work programme.

Planning and monitoring tools for the Activity Based Budget, procurement, events and publications have been developed and are used to inform management decisions.

A comprehensive set of procedures and guidelines was developed to build and implement the Internal Control Framework. All main procedures have been documented, backups appointed to ensure business continuity - as also outlined in the job descriptions of all staff - and further skills development trainings provided to staff to ensure proper implementation of the annual work programme and effective controls.

Additionally, department and project team meetings or written briefings by the Heads of Departments/Services are used to inform all staff of relevant issues and new developments.

General assemblies were organised regularly throughout the year, more specifically on:

- 5 February 2019, to present and discuss the Work Programme 2019 and Programming Document 2020-22;
- 3 June 2019, to present and discuss the 2020 website project, promotion/reclassification exercise 2019, Internal Control Framework and Anti-Fraud Strategy, seat agreement, update on taking up duties of the new Executive Director and new schooling policy;
- 2 September 2019, to introduce and welcome Cedefop's newly appointed Executive Director.

The Executive Director in his capacity as authorising officer and the authorising officers by delegation in their areas of responsibility base their assurance declarations on the results of their direct management supervision. Statements of assurance delivered to the Executive Director by the Deputy Director/Internal Control Coordinator (ICC), Heads of Department and Heads of Service represent an additional layer of internal control and assurance.

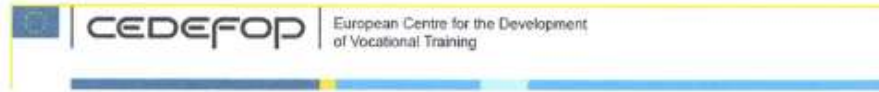
Following the assessment of the Internal Control system no significant weakness has been identified.

IV.2 Reservations

N/A

PART V Declaration of assurance

ANNEXES



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DIR/RB(2020)00716
Thessaloniki, 12/06/2020

DECLARATION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I, Juergen Siebel

Executive Director of Cedefop

In my capacity as Authorising Officer

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽¹⁾.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the ex-post and ex-ante evaluations and other sources of assurance as steered by the Internal Control Coordinator, the observations of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

I confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of Cedefop.



Juergen Siebel
Executive Director

12/06/2020

⁽¹⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the Agency.

Annex I Core business statistics

Selected performance indicators: MTPs 2017-2020			
Indicator	2019		
Cedefop value 2017-20	Cedefop is a key player in attaining the EU policy objectives for VET, skills		
	Policy documents to the preparation of which Cedefop has participated		
	of EU institutions	68	
	of international organisations	7	
	Contributions of Cedefop to policy relevant meetings of senior stakeholders (active participation)	150	
	Cedefop is acknowledged and valued as a European source for evidence and		
	EU policy documents citing Cedefop's work	167	
	Policy documents of international organisations citing Cedefop's work	98	
	Downloads of Cedefop Publications	424 000	
	of which briefing notes	72 000	
	Citations of Cedefop publications/studies in the literature	838	
	Active participation in conferences and events	52	
	Quality and expected impact of events organised by Cedefop	96%	
	Web site traffic		
	<i>Visits</i>	790 000	
	<i>Unique Visitors</i>	687 000	
	<i>Page views</i>	1,335 000	
	Media coverage, take-up of articles and press releases	605	
	Facebook followers	13,857	
	Twitter followers	8,798	
	Europass outcomes among citizens		
	<i>Visits to the Europass website</i>	30.1 m	
	<i>Creation of Europass CVs online</i>	25.08 m	
	Skills Panorama portal traffic		
	<i>Users</i>	150 000	
	<i>Sessions</i>	181 000	
	Cedefop is an efficient, well-run and compliant Agency providing a nurturing environment to a qualified and motivated staff		
	rate of implementation of commitment appropriations (budget execution)	KPIs for the Director	99.99%
	Rate of outturn (payment appropriations)		98.97%
	Rate of payments completed within the legal/contractual deadlines		98.56%
	Rate of accepted audit recommendations implemented within agreed deadlines		83.33%
	Percentage of establishment plan filled (including outgoing procedures)		95%
	Engagement of Cedefop staff members		60.00%
Timeliness of recruitment procedures (average number of days)			
from deadline for applications [date] to finalisation of selection board report to AIPN [date]	62		
from publication of vacancy notice [date] to decision of AIPN [date]	96		

Annex II Statistics on financial Management

Budget outturn	2016	2017	2018	2019
Reserve from the previous years' surplus (+)				
Revenue actually received (+)	17 910 504	18 002 235	17 912 176	19 308 595.23
Payments made (-)	-17 948 962	-16 092 569	-17 653 998	-18 342 813.06
Carryover of appropriations (-)	-911 165	-952 222	-670 287	-827 786.37
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	49 645	52 767	62 137	59 331.66
Adjustment for carryover of assigned revenue appropriations from previous year (+)	1 230 780	312 728	373 605	0
Exchange rate differences (+/-)	2 963	667	-1 122	-1 948.34
Adjustment for negative balance from previous year (-)				
TOTAL	333 764	1 323 605	22 510	195 379.12

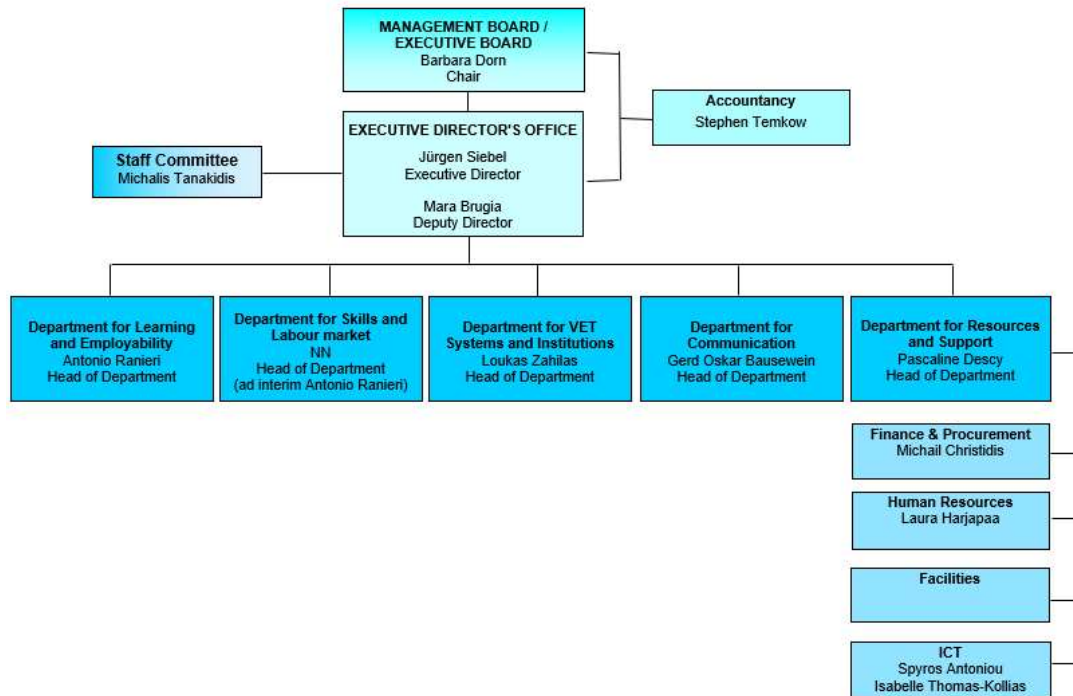
The budget outturn 2019 is EUR 195 379.12.

The Agency continues to utilise its funds effectively with disbursements up to a record EUR 18.3 million and revenue again a record EUR 19.3 million including a supplementary budget of EUR 1.42 million received at the end of the year.

Annex III Organisational chart

Situation on 31 December 2019

CEDEFOP organisation chart



Annex IV Establishment plan and additional information on Human Resources management

Key functions	Type of contract (official, TA or CA)	Function group, grade of recruitment	Indication whether the function is dedicated to administrative support or operations
Executive Director	TA external	AD14	Operations
Deputy Director	TA reassignment	AD12	Operations
Head of Administration	TA reassignment	AD11	Administrative
Head of Department	TA external	AD10	Operations
Administrator/Expert	TA external	AD 7	Operations
Administrator/Expert	TA external	AD 5	Operations/ Administrative
Support Expert	CA	FG IV	Operations
Senior Assistant	TA internal	AST 10	Operations
Assistant	TA external	AST 4	Operations
Administrative Assistant	TA external	AST 4	Administrative
Assistant	CA	FG III	Administrative
Assistant	CA	FG II	Operations/ Administrative
Head of Human Resources	TA external	AD 8	Administrative
Head of Finance and Procurement	TA inter-agency	AD 9	Neutral
Mail Clerk	CA	FG II	Administrative
Technical assistant	CA	FG II	Operations/ Administrative/ Neutral
Security officer	TA reassignment	AST 4	Administrative
Editing assistant	TA external	AST 2	Operations
Press officer	TA external	AD 5	Operations
Web manager	TA external	AST 4	Operations
Data Protection Officer	CA	FG III	Administrative
Accounting Officer	TA external	AD 7	Neutral

Job screening/benchmarking against previous year results

Job Type (sub category)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)
Administrative support and Coordination	21.01%	19.40%
Administrative support	19.57%	17.16%
Coordination	1.45%	2.24%
Operational	71.74%	73.13%
Top level Operational Coordination	4.35%	4.48%
Programme management and implementation	67.39%	68.66%
Evaluation & impact assessment	0.00%	0.00%
General operational	0.00%	0.00%
Neutral	7.25%	7.46%
Finance/Control	7.25%	7.46%
Linguistics	0.00%	0.00%

List of HR implementing rules adopted in 2019

European Commission decision on giving the Commission's agreement to the adoption by Cedefop of its implementing rules giving effect to the Staff Regulations regarding the delegation of the powers of the appointing authority and the authority authorised to conclude contracts of employment to the Executive Director.
CEDEFOP/DGE/35/2019 Cedefop decision on the function of adviser
CEDEFOP/DGE/36/2019 Cedefop decision on middle management staff
CEDEFOP/DGE/37/2019 Cedefop guidelines on whistleblowing
CEDEFOP/DGE/38/2019 General implementing rules on outside activities and assignments and on occupational activities after leaving the service
CEDEFOP/DGE/39/2019 Implementing rules on learning and development
CEDEFOP/DGE/40/2019 Decision on the general provisions for implementing Article 79(2) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, governing the conditions of employment of contract staff employed under the terms of Article 3a of those Conditions of Employment
CEDEFOP /DGE/41/2019 Cedefop Decision of 4 September 2019 on Working Time

Annex V Human and financial resources by activity

Activity Name	*FTE		Title 1	Title 2	Title 3	Total		
	Initial	Current				Initial	Current	(%)
Shaping VET	43.92	43.92	4,014,148.55	564,786.50	2,274,097.98	6,853,033.03	1,204,997.17	17.58%
Informing VET	27.71	27.71	2,534,984.87	356,363.34	1,469,464.82	4,360,813.03	212,287.27	4.87%
Valuing VET	32.60	32.60	2,973,713.15	419,268.93	1,498,888.56	4,891,870.64	197,871.69	4.04%
Communication and dissemination	13.80	13.80	1,262,355.73	177,581.10	304,548.44	1,744,485.27	187,789.81	10.76%
	118.03	118.03	10,785,202.30	1,517,999.87	5,546,999.80	17,850,201.97		
			10,785,210.00	1,518,000.00	5,547,000.00	17,850,210.00		

*FTE: The FTE comprises of a) the direct staff allocation and b) the redistribution of staff in support or non-operational activities. The initial redistribution key is based on the planned costs while the "current" is based on the activities' actual costs (blocked).

Annex VI Data Protection Officer – Annual Report 2019



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

DATA PROTECTION OFFICER

RB(2020)00278

Thessaloniki, 9 March 2020

NOTE

Data Protection Annual Progress Report 2019

1. Introduction

The objective of this document is to report on the progress of data protection issues in Cedefop and to present the activities of the Data Protection Officer during the period January to December 2019.

2. Management summary

Protection of personal data is a high priority for Cedefop and compliance of all processing operations with the provisions of the data protection regulation concerning EU institutions and agencies¹ is vitally important. In addition, staff members have an ethical obligation, extending beyond mere formal compliance, to respect the rights of the data subjects whose data they might process.

Cedefop's DPO continued in 2019 the activities of promoting data protection, disseminating information, providing consultation, cooperation and support internally with data protection stakeholders, and externally with the DPO network and the EDPS. 2019 was a year of change with the coming into force of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 for the EU institutions and agencies in December 2018, and 2019 activities were thus largely focussed on ensuring that Cedefop adjusted to the changes brought by the Regulation.

The DPO took an active position on consulting the EDPS on all relevant matters as well as responding to communications and requests of the EDPS and participating in the DPO network meetings. On the administrative side, the inventory and register were updated to include processing operations and related records (the new term for 'notification') that were established during this reporting period.

The part-time job allocation of the DPO was again supplemented with the work of a full-time trainee who possesses legal background, thus facilitating the

¹ Since 12 December 2018, the new GDPR-aligned Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

continuation of data protection work at Cedefop and supporting the DPO in the legal aspects of the role's responsibilities.

3. Activities

During the course of 2019, the DPO assisted responsible staff with the creation of records on six new processing operations, and all other records were reviewed and transposed into a new template provided by the EDPS. Advice was provided following consultations on a variety of data protection issues.

3.1. Records of processing operations

New records were created for the following processing operations:

- Publication of personal data Management Board members;
- Photo-award 2019;
- Web Portal User Satisfaction Survey;
- Skills Panorama User Satisfaction Survey;
- Requests for Skills Forecast dataset;
- Staff Engagement Survey 2019.

The inventory was updated accordingly.

Throughout 2019, the DPO was consulted by staff members from all departments on multiple issues. Advice was provided to staff members with regard to the exercising of their rights, and two requests for erasure of data from members of the public were handled.

The DPO participated in a working group concerning the 2019 user satisfaction survey, providing advice and guidance on data protection issues to ensure that contact data from various sources was processed in a lawful way, with consent being obtained where required. The survey was launched in October and no data protection issues were reported.

The DPO continued working with the expert working group on surveys, finalising guidelines covering the data protection issues to be considered by experts when contractors undertake a survey on Cedefop's behalf.

Further attention was given to event management, with the finalisation of guidelines on data protection and events, and the purchase of red lanyards to help identify participants who have not given consent to photography.

Assistance was provided to Cedefop's legal function with the handling of requests for public access to documents under Regulation (EC) 1049/2001, ensuring that timelines were observed and that redactions were applied to documents where necessary.

In relation to the advent of the new Regulation, the DPO worked closely with Procurement on introducing amendments to existing contracts, adding new contractual clauses on data protection provided by DG BUDG, and adjusting text where necessary to suit the nature of the contract. Throughout the year, feedback was provided to Procurement with regard to Article I.9.2 ('Processing of personal data by the contractor') of the contract templates, specifying requirements concerning data localisation for new contracts.

The DPO was actively involved in the drafting and finalisation of implementing rules on public access to documents and rules on the marking and handling of sensitive non-classified information, requirements outlined in the new Agency Regulation (EU) 2019/128.

4. Information

Informing on data protection obligations is one of the key duties of the DPO. General information on data protection issues including rules and regulations are available on the DPO intranet page, which was further revised and improved during 2019.

4.1. To controllers/processors

According to article 4 (1) of the Implementing Rules Concerning Data Protection at Cedefop, the DPO advises the data controllers on matters concerning the application of data protection provisions.

In the first quarter the DPO delivered a presentation to all staff covering requirements in terms of regulatory compliance as well as related issues of confidentiality. In addition, presentations were delivered on 'data protection and ethics' at all Department meetings.

In September, a presentation (open to all staff) was delivered introducing the new rules on the handling of sensitive information.

Several information induction sessions were also delivered to new staff members and trainees.

4.2. To internal data subjects

During internal information sessions it was emphasised to staff that they are also data subjects with rights regarding the personal data Cedefop processes concerning them. They were encouraged to contact the DPO for support should they have any related concerns and reminded of their right of recourse to the EDPS.

4.3. To external data subjects

The format of newly created privacy statements was further improved, making their language clearer and more concise, as well as to make them more easily accessible to data subjects. Event organisers were assisted with the creation of

specific privacy statements per event and an annotated template was created for this purpose.

5. Data Breaches during this reporting period

During the reporting period no personal data breaches were reported.

6. Cooperation

Cooperation includes, on one hand, the EDPS and the network of DPOs of EU institutions and bodies, and, on the other hand, Cedefop services.

6.1. Cooperation with the EDPS and the network of DPOs

Cooperation with the EDPS took place in a timely manner, with further responses being sent concerning the 2018 Europass inspection and the EDPS's ongoing investigation into the use of Microsoft products by the EU institutions and agencies.

The DPO participated in both scheduled DPO network meetings which provided an opportunity to discuss issues with the EDPS as well as with the DPOs of other institutions/agencies:

1. DPO Network Meeting, hosted by EIOPA, Frankfurt, May 2019 (Mission)
2. DPO Network Meeting, hosted by Historical Archives of the EU, Florence November 2019 (Mission)

At the latter meeting, the DPO delivered a presentation to the DPO network on data protection and archives.

6.2. Cooperation with Cedefop services

An important task of the DPO is to cooperate, inform and raise awareness among the controllers about data protection-related matters, principles of data protection and processes that need to be notified. Information sessions, meetings and consultations are organised by the DPO whenever needed.

Additionally, the DPO cooperates where necessary with the:

1. Staff Committee
2. Internal Audit Service of the European Commission
3. The Court of Auditors of the European Union

Throughout 2019, relevant issues and concerns were discussed with the chair of the Staff Committee, and the DPO completed actions detailed in the action plan concerning the IAS audit on HR and Ethics.

7. Human Resources

The dedication of time during the period of January-December 2019 was one contract agent with 40% of time allocated to the function.

A full time trainee with legal background was allocated to the Data Protection Officer under the 'Office of the Director' between October 2018 and June 2019, and then again from November 2019 until October 2020. Thus, a trainee was available for eight months of 2018.

8. Communication tools

The data-protection-officer@cedefop.europa.eu mail account is available for any questions or comments regarding data protection issues at Cedefop:

<signed>

Robert Stowell
Data Protection Officer