

# **The Changing role and nature of VET in Europe**

## **Overview and findings from ongoing Cedefop research**

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# Image of VET

- VET is often (but wrongly) seen as a 2nd choice

*"if nothing else works..."*

- Skills Agenda, and 2015 Riga Conclusions:

*"Raise the attractiveness and improve the image of VET"*



## Our starting point

Traditional VET at upper secondary level (EQF 3-4) is under considerable pressure in a number of countries.

- Participation seems to drop.
- Low esteem is a problem.

### HOWEVER

Vocationally oriented education and training is expanding and is increasingly delivered by institutions outside the traditional VET sector

- At higher levels (EQF 5 and above)
- By private sector organisational and companies, in sectors and at national and international levels



## Two competing stories

### The negative story

*Declining participation*  
*Low esteem*  
*'Academic drift'*  
*Fragmentation*  
*No clear conception*  
*of VET*

### The positive story

*Expansion into*  
*higher levels*  
*'Vocational drift'*  
*Diversity and richness of*  
*provisions*  
*A new VET concept*  
*emerging*



## The aim of the project

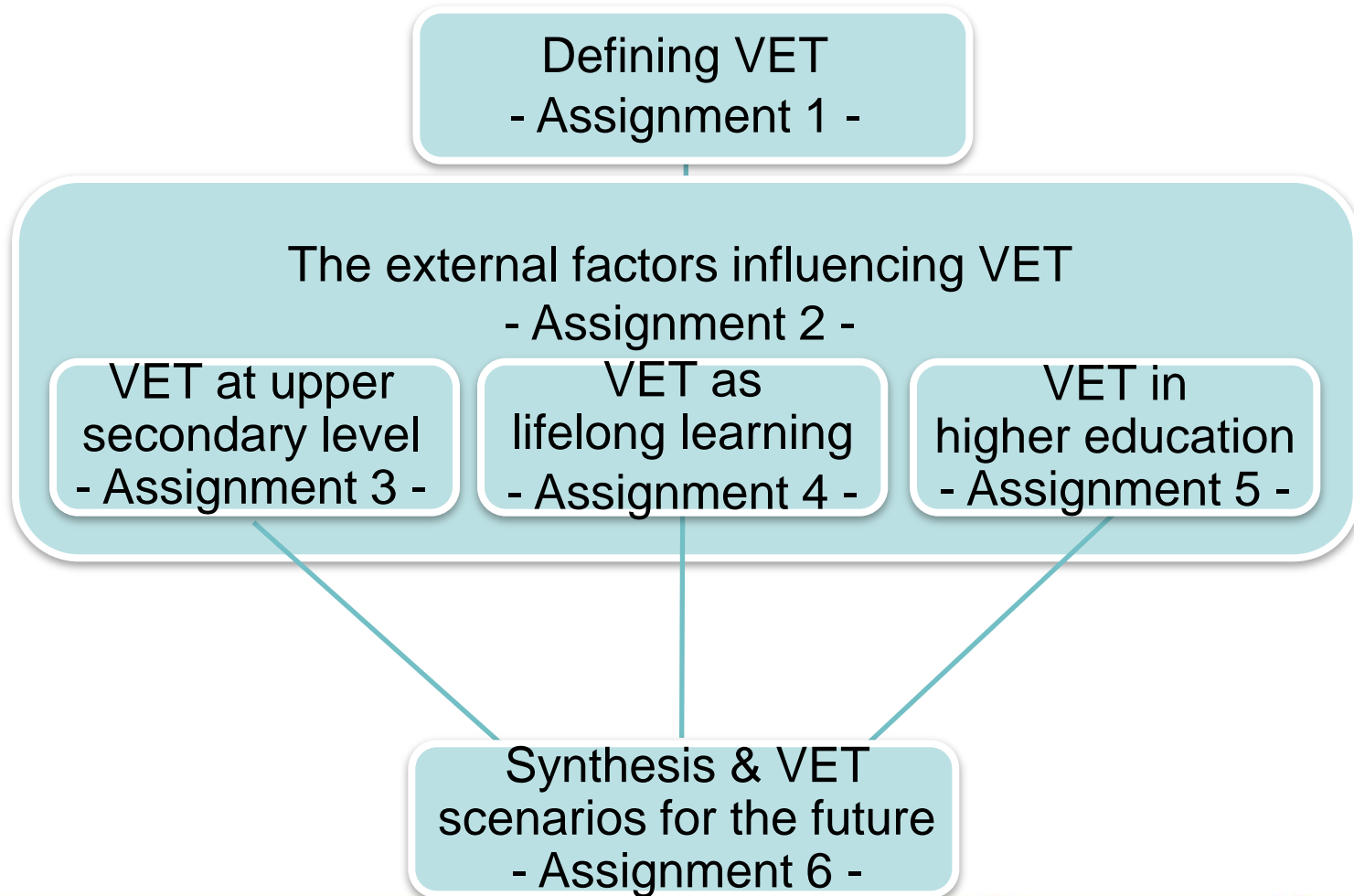
- We need to “take one step back” and get a deeper understanding of the ‘VET system’
- To get a better understanding of differences across Europe (EU + Norway and Iceland)
- To improve our understanding of change and development

## Project organisation

- A duration of 36 months (2016-2018)
- A framework contract divided into 6 thematic work assignments
- National experts (100+) will feed into the work of the 6 assignments



# Overall structure of the project



# Methods used and possible synergies

Methods	WA 1 Defining VET	WA 2 External Factors	WA 3 Upper Sec. VET	WA 4 VET & LLL	WA 5 VET & HE	WA 6 VET Scenarios
Desk research / Literature review	X	X	X	X	X	X
Statistical analysis		X	X	X	X	
Qualitative interviews				X	X	
Country surveys	X		X	X	X	
Case studies		X		X	X	
Scenario workshops						X
Stakeholder survey / Delphi						X

## Work assignments 1-6

1. Systematically map the definition and conceptualisation of vocational education and training at national level
2. Analyse how external factors, notably demography and changes in occupational structures, influence VET
3. Analyse the developments of initial VET at upper secondary level (EQF 3-4)
4. Analyse VET from a lifelong learning perspective;
5. Analyse the role of VET at higher levels (EQF5 and above) and the issues of 'academic' versus 'vocational drift'.
6. Outline possible developments paths (scenarios) for European VET into the 21<sup>st</sup> century





## Key findings from work assignment 2: How external factors influence VET

- ✓ Study draws on analysis of statistical data, desk research, and country case studies: DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IT, NL, NO, PL, UK (England)
- ✓ Looks at change over the period 1995 to the present
- ✓ The key factors include:

Technological change  
Demographic change  
Macro-economic trends / shocks





## Initial findings from the country case studies

- The evidence suggests that the **provision of VET has changed** substantially since the early 1990s
- Demographic challenges in several instances results in a **declining population of young people.**
- All countries recognise the need to **improve matching skills supply to skills demand**
- Pace of technological change means that skills systems need to be **flexible in responding to the emergence of new skills** / new occupational standards
- Technological change places considerable **pressure on providers**



## Initial findings from the country case studies

- EU policy has - in selected countries - acted as a **catalyst for change**: in the development of qualification systems, the recognition of competences, and developing skills anticipation systems (c.f. use of ESF funding)
- Many countries are faced with a situation where much is expected of the VET system – what about funding?
- In general, research paints **an optimistic picture** but points to a range of factors potentially disturbing the stability characterising 1995-2015 period.



## Major developments in VET from the 1990s onwards

Timeline →	1990	1995	2000	2005	2015
<b>Establishing the VET system</b>	The integration of VET in the education system as a mainstream choice upon completion of lower secondary education				
<b>Major thrust in building participation</b>	Increasing participation levels in VET especially where little previous history of delivering, for example, apprenticeships				
<b>Emphasis on WBL</b>		Increased emphasis on workplace based learning as a relatively effective means of delivering skills			
<b>Increased emphasis on skills matching</b>	Major developments in trying to better match skills supply to skills demand				
<b>Developing a competence based approach</b>	Creating a competence based systems				
			Introduction of qualification frameworks that recognise competence EQF / NQF		
<b>Focus on transversal skill needs</b>				Broadening occupational skill profiles	
				Increased recognition of transversal skills (especially digital ones in the context of Industry 4.0)	
<b>Consolidation of the VET market for training</b>				Austerity affects VET budgets leading to some rationalisation of provision	
	Importance of finding ways to accredit skills learning outside of formal learning				
				Increased emphasis on CVET within the formal VET system	
<b>Skills supply</b>				Substantial boost to skills supply with accession of nine countries to EU	
				Further boost to skills supply with inflow of refugees to EU	
<b>The push to higher level VET</b>	Push toward provision of VET at higher levels				

Source: Cedefop 2018 (forthcoming)



## **Key findings from work assignment 3: Developments of initial VET at upper secondary level (EQF 3-4)**

- The research uses national data covering enrolment at VET programme level to establish a better overview of long-term trends
- The research questions the reliability of international statistics as regards VET enrolment



## Is the importance of upper secondary IVET in Europe dwindling?

- International data (Unesco, Eurostat and OECD) indicate a decreasing share of enrolment in VET among upper secondary students (ISCED level 3) in Europe since 1995
- This has given rise to the notion that “VET is under threat”
- The reliability of these data can be discussed
- The project ‘went to the source’ and collected national enrolment data at programme level in 30 countries for the period 1995-2015



## Initial VET at upper secondary level - stability rather than decline

- While declining in a few European countries,
  - ✓ There is **no overall trend towards declining** enrolment in VET
  - ✓ There is **no general move** away from VET **towards general education**
- Demographic changes has led to a drop in the total number of young people attending upper secondary education and training
  - ✓ VET has been able to retain its position relative to general education at this level

## Changing VET influences statistics

- The borderline between VET and general education is blurring.
- The borderline IVET-CVET is also blurring.

**What is the implication for VET policy post 2020?**





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## A catalyst for reflection and development

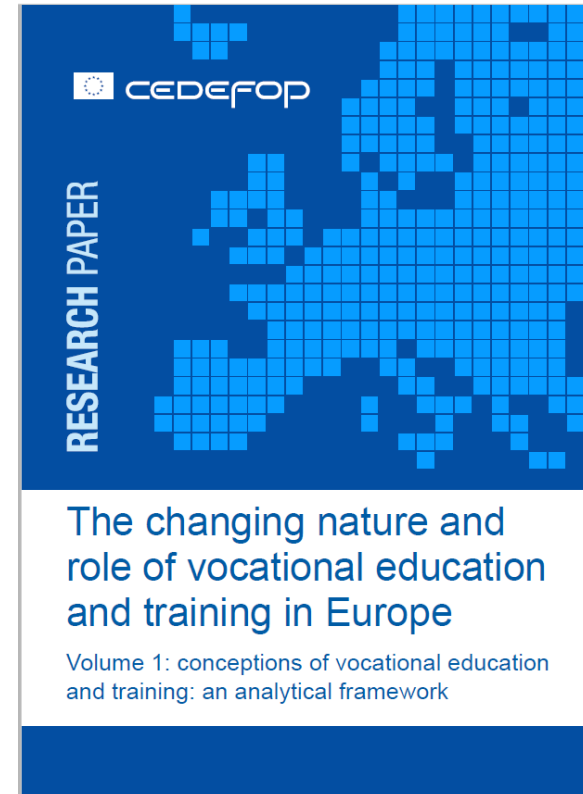
- Feeds into and builds on existing work of Cedefop (the work of ReferNet, the Monitoring of VET-policy developments etc.)
- Cedefop's 'Opinion survey on VET in Europe' and the 'Changing role of VET-project' strengthen each other
  - The Opinion survey: data from the individuals' point of views
  - The 'Changing nature and role of VET': the context in which these views can be understood
- Will feed into policy discussions – final conference Autumn 2018



## A catalyst for reflection and development

- Publishing has started in 2017 and will continue throughout and beyond the project period
- For more information visit the project's page:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/changing-nature-and-role-vocational-education-and-training-vet-europe>



**Thank you for your attention!**

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