**New Cedefop study on key competences presented at workshop**

**The main findings of Cedefop’s comparative study on key competences in initial vocational education and training (IVET), which will be published in 2020, were presented at a workshop organised by the agency on 19 and 20 September in Thessaloniki.**

In his opening remarks, Cedefop Executive Director Jürgen Siebel said that work on key competences is not new to the agency, with several projects supporting their development.

He introduced the Cedefop study, which focuses on three key competences: digital, literacy and multilingual, and outlined the workshop objectives: to share the study results, collect participants’ views, discuss challenges and remedies in implementing supporting policies, and identify related topics that stakeholders would like Cedefop to provide evidence on in the future.

Project coordinator Dmitrijs Kulss presented in more detail **[Cedefop’s work on key competences](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/key-competences-vocational-education-and-training)**. He noted that, according to the study, purely occupational skills are not enough for VET learners; key competences are also required, as they are essential for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion, lifelong learning, and employment.

**A closer look at policies**

The study’s main findings were presented by Cedefop expert Iraklis Pliakis and the research team’s Simon Broek.

The study identified 79 policies promoting literacy, multilingual and/or digital competences in EU28+ countries (2011-18); 31 of those focus on all three. When it comes to policies promoting one key competence, countries have focused more on digital.

There are 78 qualification types in the EU28+. Literacy is included in all, while multilingual and digital are included in more than 88%. Literacy and multilingual are usually included as standalone modules; digital competence is more often integrated in other modules.

Other study findings show that two-thirds of policies (2011-15) have completed their planned activities; policies promoting key competences mainly lead to follow-up actions; policies embedding key competences contribute to changes in IVET.

More than 500 interviews and 39 focus groups were conducted in the context of the study. Seven case studies focused on specific challenges. In total, 105 programmes covering different European qualifications framework levels were investigated in three sectors (accommodation and food, construction, and manufacturing).

**Other initiatives**

The European Commission’s Helen Hoffmann gave an update on EU vocational education and training policies, focusing on the key competences reference framework, which was updated in 2018.

EU frameworks and tools supporting digital competences, including SELFIE, a digital tool providing a snapshot of schools’ use of digital technology, were presented by the Joint Research Centre’s Panagiotis Kampylis. He stressed that use of technology is different from digital skills.

The European Education Area and language learning as a tool that takes VET further was the theme of European Commission Ana-Maria Stan’s presentation. She referred to a 2019 Council Recommendation on language learning which specifies that at the end of upper secondary education young people should be able to: fully use the language of schooling; fully use another European language; confidently use a third language.

**A global view**

Looking at the issue of key competences from a global perspective, Head of UNCESCO-UNEVOC Shyamal Majumdar said that, in a fast-changing world, we need to work out the major trends that have an impact on our life, learning and work. He argued that people need a new set of transversal skills in addition to occupational and foundation skills.

Mr Majumdar also identified as a challenge the different terms used for transversal skills or key competences across the world, and urged Europe to take a lead in providing clarity.

Representing WorldSkills, President Jos de Goey and standards and assessment advisor Jenny Shackleton presented key competences in global skills competitions.

**Way forward**

Participants attended parallel sessions to analyse the Cedefop study results, discuss national examples and identify policy challenges and remedies.

An open session, moderated by Cedefop expert George Kostakis, provided ideas for Cedefop research future priorities, and a panel discussion focused on a vision for shaping key competences in VET, critical elements, benefits to end-users, links to employment, security, personal development and other areas.

Closing the workshop, Cedefop Head of Department for VET Systems and Institutions Loukas Zahilas thanked participants for giving feedback and ideas on moving forward, adding that the final study report will take into account their input.

The event was part of the European vocational skills week 2019, of which Cedefop is a partner.