

SKILLSET & MATCH

CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE PROMOTING
LEARNING FOR WORK

MAIN STORY:
**EUROPEAN YEAR
OF YOUTH AND VET**

INTERVIEWS:
MARIYA GABRIEL
DANIELE MANNI

ARTICLE:
HELPING UKRAINE REFUGEES
FIND JOBS IN THE EU

OCCUPATION IN FOCUS:
SALES WORKERS

MEMBER STATE:
GERMANY



ISSUE 25 / MAY 2022



The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Publications Office of the
European Union, Luxembourg

ISSN: 2363-0183
TI-AQ-22-002-EN-N
No of publication: 9167 EN
Free of charge

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JÜRGEN SIEBEL
Cedefop Executive Director

Faced with crises, the young provide hope

“ *The young will change the world for the better;
they also have the creativity the job requires*

‘I am not young enough to know everything,’ to borrow a famous line from Oscar Wilde, but I do know that when the European Commission designated 2022 the European Year of Youth, the plan was to give back to those who had lost most during the coronavirus crisis. Rightly so. And yet, we are now facing a second crisis as ‘one man’s war’ – to borrow another quote, much used in western media – brings atrocities to Ukraine and threatens the prospects of millions around the world. Our young people deserve better.

In our exclusive interview, Commissioner Gabriel shares the ideas behind the Year of Youth and the initiatives aiming to make it a success by engaging Europe’s young generation. In an adjacent article, more light is shed on the intended effects on youth employment. And two further pieces illustrate how crises are dominating the agenda for Cedefop, for vocational education and training (VET), and for skills and the labour market. One tells how the skills mismatch was exacerbated by the pandemic, and the second suggests how refugees’ skills could be utilised as millions flee Ukraine.

On a lighter note, the end of a sporting season brings a focus on league tables, reflecting the hopes and disappointments of those involved. We are

finding the same with our European skills index, the latest version of which is presented in this issue. There are suggestions in some areas that a composite indicator – like a league table position – cannot give a complete picture of the quality of a VET system. This is very true but perhaps a lower than desired league table position can be the driver of renewed efforts for improvement. That, not a desire to point the finger, is the aim of the skills index.

To finish with the words of another famous writer, George Bernard Shaw is credited with the suggestion that youth is wasted on the young. We choose to disagree. The young are ready, competitive and in solidarity, eager to move the needle. They will change the world for the better. They also have the creativity the job requires. See for yourself how this year’s #CedefopPhotoAward winners prove that point.

Enjoy!



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EU skill mismatch and the pandemic

“ *Our approach should ensure that all people have opportunities for continuous skills development and job redesign*

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an accelerator of much-needed structural changes in European economies, with inevitable implications for skill mismatch. Cedefop’s longstanding work to define and measure skill mismatch can help understand what has been going on in European labour markets in recent years.

The concept of skill mismatch is widely used to illustrate trends shaping today’s economies. As it can manifest at several levels (individual, organisation, sector and geographic), it is often misleadingly used as an umbrella term. At Cedefop we strive to distinguish between aggregate labour market imbalances, where structural unemployment coincides with difficult-to-fill vacancies (skill shortages), and the skill gaps and qualification mismatches that individual workers and enterprises may experience.

Skill mismatches at workplace or job level are often caused by changing managerial and workplace practices, alongside the adoption of innovative digital technologies. These changes may manifest in rising skill gaps or obsolescence but may even lead to skill underutilisation when workplace changes are accompanied by poor job design and work routinisation.

For unemployed or inactive workers, inefficient active labour market policies, lacking a clear strategy to identify skill gaps and recognise prior

informal learning, may further inhibit sustainable reintegration into well-matched employment. Those making a school-to-work transition also often need to overcome insufficient career guidance and counselling. Together with inefficient corporate human resource management (HRM) practices, such systemic bottlenecks may prolong skill shortages and high overqualification rates.

PANDEMIC-INDUCED SKILL MISMATCHES

In the wake of the health crisis, Cedefop’s 2nd European skills and jobs survey reveals the magnitude of changing digitalisation in our economies: 29% of European workers now work more time away from their employer’s premises, 39% use digital technologies to perform their job tasks more often compared to pre-pandemic, while 14% saw some of their job tasks being automated due to new digital technologies.

Since the start of the COVID-19 social and economic shock, Cedefop’s analysis has highlighted that some sectors and jobs are likely to be pandemic-proof, mainly those characterised by job-task features conducive to remote work (e.g. ICT and professional services, finance) as well as essential services (utilities, education, health). By contrast, social distancing practices have exerted downward employment and productivity pressure in occupations dependent on interpersonal skills (e.g. hospitality

and leisure, travel and transport). European policy responses, such as the proliferation of short-time working arrangements, have nevertheless contributed to keeping skill mismatches at bay.

While aggregate labour market imbalances are expected to revert to the pre-pandemic 'normal', structural changes accelerated by the pandemic have aggravated skill mismatch tensions at micro level; 3 in 4 EU firms face difficulties finding employees with the right skills while, alarmingly, there has been a collapse in corporate training investments. At the same time, about half of the European workforce is not, or is only moderately, satisfied with the match of their qualifications and skills with their job requirements (Figure 1). Better designed skill matching policies in the recovery period can offer marked productivity dividends for the EU labour market.

FROM SKILL MISMATCH TO LEARNING POTENTIAL

It is desirable for EU skills policies to aim to tackle skill shortages, which are common among growing and innovative smaller-sized firms. But, for a large share of companies claiming to have skill shortages, this also reflects poor hiring and managerial practices and lack of worker consultation. Although alarmist reporting of skill shortages is sometimes true, as in the case of highly specialised or advanced digital skills and specific vocational education and training (VET) occupations, we should bear in mind that bad working conditions, low wages, unattractive career prospects, poor HRM practices and geographic barriers all contribute to shortages. Well-designed skills policies should strike a balance between both demand and supply aspects of mismatch.

Skills and VET policy should also move away from one-shot solutions, treating mismatches as something that can be 'solved', and acknowledge instead their highly dynamic nature. Our approach should ensure that all people have opportunities for continuous skill development and job redesign. Two-thirds of European adult workers, for instance, acknowledge that they need to improve their knowledge and skills considerably if they are to do their job better (Figure 2).

We should talk more about learning potential than underskilling, and recognise that, in some circumstances, some overskilling is desirable for career development and to support innovation. But better tapping into and igniting people's potential requires reorganising work processes and tasks that can stretch people's skills. We trust that Cedefop's new European training and learning survey, launched this year, which focuses on understanding organisational and other barriers to workplace learning, will provide us with much required insight to inform EU VET policies.

CEDEFOP'S EUROPEAN SKILLS AND JOBS SURVEY



The Agency's own periodic survey collects information from representative samples of European adult workers on their job-skill requirements, digitalisation at work, skill mismatches and workplace learning. The 2nd survey wave, carried out in 2021, interviewed 46 213 adult workers from the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. It aims to inform the policy debate on the impact of digitalisation on the future of work and skills, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cedefop has joined forces with the European Training Foundation to extend the survey to 35 countries in total by the end of 2022.

Figure 1: Qualification and skill mismatch, adult workers (EU-27, Iceland, Norway)

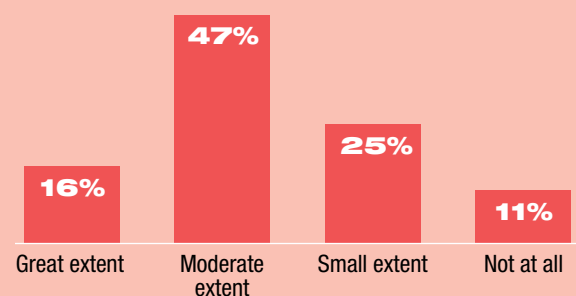
How satisfied are you with your job match with your qualifications and skills?



Source: Cedefop's 2nd European skills and jobs survey.

Figure 2: Potential skill gap of adult workers (EU-27, Iceland, Norway)

To what extent do you need to develop your overall level of knowledge and skills further to do your job even better?



Source: Cedefop's 2nd European skills and jobs survey.



Cedefop report: Insights into skill shortages and skill mismatch



Cedefop research paper: Tackling unemployment while addressing skill mismatch



Cedefop working paper: EU jobs at highest risk of COVID-19 social distancing



Cedefop working paper: Job loss and COVID-19: do remote work, automation and tasks at work matter?



Helping Ukraine refugees find jobs in the EU

“ *Cedefop doesn't start from scratch in skills-based refugee mobility* ”

With Europe welcoming millions of refugees from Ukraine, and the European Union taking steps to provide them with immediate as well as longer-term support, integrating those fleeing the war into the EU's education systems and labour market has emerged as a priority.

In this context, skills intelligence and Cedefop's pioneering analytical and research work in the field may prove a valuable asset in the efforts to alleviate the plight of millions of people fleeing the war.

The sheer number of displaced persons poses an unprecedented challenge to European institutions, and the EU has earmarked nearly EUR 17 billion of assistance and is offering refugees temporary protection status that will last a year and could automatically be renewed twice, for 6 months each time.

This offer will include a residence permit, welfare support and healthcare, and access to education and to the labour market. Member States are asked to help those arriving take up their right to work, as well as to vocational education and training (VET).

To optimise the access of refugees to the labour market the Commission will:

- pilot a new talent pool to match skills with job vacancies throughout the EU;
- develop new guidelines to facilitate recognition of professional qualifications obtained in Ukraine.

As the Agency's Head of Department for VET and Skills, Antonio Ranieri, told *Skillset and match*, 'Cedefop doesn't start from scratch when it comes to assisting the Commission and Member States in these areas of the humanitarian support package. We have already done pioneering work in skills intelligence, bringing together analytical and research work to provide better evidence on labour market trends, emerging skills needs and talent demand in the EU.

Cedefop's skills forecasts, foresight exercises and the skills OVATE vacancies tool are some of the main elements of a broader approach to skill needs identification and matching.'



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Poland, March 2022

SKILLS-BASED REFUGEE MOBILITY

Mr Ranieri also notes that ‘Cedefop has been specifically investigating the potential of skills-based pathways to refugee protection. We designed and provided evidence about the potential advantages of new solutions for the management of the refugee crisis that would allow combining a skill-matching mechanism with the legal and the humanitarian aspects of the phenomenon.

‘Today, we see the opportunity to take forward such an approach in the context of the decision to introduce temporary protection for those fleeing Ukraine because of the war. We also very much welcome the Commission’s decision to develop a new web-based talent pool to match skills with job vacancies, which appears to be a crucial element in the effort to provide access to work and very much in line with our proposal.’

The skill-matching approach to intra-EU mobility of refugees can be developed at different levels. ‘There is a bottom-up approach that is mainly driven by the demand generated by the local labour market and notably by employers. In the context of the current refugee crisis, there is also the possibility of implementing a policy-driven approach, matching

refugees with the skills demand that can be primarily driven by humanitarian motives.’

A key element for labour mobility in the EU in relation to the refugee crisis is the recognition of VET skills and competences obtained in Ukraine, which is necessary to allow people fleeing the war to integrate into the labour market of EU Member States.

Cedefop Head of Department for VET and Qualifications, Loukas Zahilas, commenting on the Agency’s potential contribution to EU efforts, says that ‘Cedefop, along with the European Training Foundation and UNESCO, monitors global developments concerning comprehensive national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), as the certificates and diplomas awarded are vital in modern societies and affect our ability to get a job, practise a profession, pursue lifelong learning and move between countries.

‘Although Cedefop is not working directly with Ukraine, its conceptual work on the changing nature of qualifications and credentials influences worldwide developments in the valuing of VET skills and competences and the ability of individuals to progress in both learning and working.’

READY TO EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES

The EU has invited Member States to take up measures under the Cohesion’s Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) legislative proposal, to help those arriving take up their right to work, as well as vocational training swiftly. Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit explained that ‘Member States will be able to use Cohesion funding to support refugees in finding jobs, starting or continuing education and accessing childcare. They can also receive support for counselling, training and psychological assistance.’

In this context, Mr Ranieri emphasises ‘Cedefop’s readiness to explore, in close coordination with the Commission, all possible opportunities for cooperation with Member States willing to engage with innovative initiatives of intra-EU refugee mobility, aimed at alleviating national asylum systems currently challenged by the mass influx of persons from Ukraine.’



Listen to Cedefop's podcast on refugee skills-based mobility



Skills-OVATE: the online job vacancies tool



Explore Cedefop's skills intelligence data



DANIELE MANNI

Entrepreneurship and computer science teacher,
winner of the Global Teacher Award 2020

Practising entrepreneurship at school

“ *My students experience first-hand how fascinating, important and possible it is to go from being just ‘users’ or ‘spectators’ to being active protagonists in their own lives* ”

Daniele Manni says that he ‘turns teens into start-uppers’. His track record supports that claim. Winner of multiple awards, he uses innovative techniques to teach entrepreneurship at a vocational school in the small city of Lecce, in his native Italy. He has become a sort of celebrity in Italian education circles, his fame earning him an invitation to speak at Cedefop’s recent workshop on entrepreneurship competence in vocational education and training. *Skillset and match* grabbed the chance for a chat with this inspiring educator who argues that he does not ‘teach’ at all!

What do you look to teach your students when it comes to entrepreneurship?

First, it must be said that I do not ‘teach’ entrepreneurship but, together with my students, we practise it. I don’t teach anything on the blackboard. At the beginning of each school year each class is asked to come up with an original and innovative microbusiness idea (it can be a new service, a product, an application) and, from that moment on, exactly as an entrepreneur does, we start working on it to bring it to the real market. The students invent a start-up and trial its implementation with the learning-by-doing technique. That’s why I call my method ‘learning entrepreneurship by doing start-ups’. This practice helps a small percentage

of them (5-10%) to discover that they have the appropriate characteristics to undertake a definitive entrepreneurial activity and career (alone or in a team), while it offers everyone the opportunity, almost without realising it, to acquire many soft skills: problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, resilience, failure management, public speaking and, above all, self-confidence and self-awareness.

How do you go about it?

The creative and executive process changes from start-up to start-up. In most cases, after having had the right idea, the one that seems to be the most ‘brilliant’, we proceed with an initial small market survey to ascertain whether it is appreciated by potential customers; then we dedicate great attention to the choice of the most appropriate name and logo. In some cases, the next step involves the creation of a prototype: this happens when we want, for example, to design a new t-shirt, sweater or other item of clothing. In other cases, we develop and establish a website, working together with the social networks that we consider most suitable. In all cases, what we do for sure is to create working groups, dividing the class between those who want to deal with different aspects: graphics, marketing and advertising, accounting, suppliers, customers, the IT group, social network experts and contents. The other feature that we impose on ourselves is that



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we must always be able to bring the new service, product or application to the market. Perhaps it may not be in perfect form, but it must always be put on the track to see if it works or not.

Why is entrepreneurship so important in the current labour market environment?

What is important is, above all, the entrepreneurial mindset. All my students who manage to acquire this mindset from the age of 14 find themselves one step ahead of their peers as they have already understood and experienced how important creativity and its concrete application are. They experience first-hand how fascinating, important and possible it is to go from being just 'users' or 'spectators' to being active protagonists in their own lives. Is it more interesting and fun to play a video game or design one that others play with? Is it cooler to follow an influencer or to write content and be followed? Is it more captivating to buy a fashionable garment or create one?

Have you been following your students' entrepreneurship exploits after they finished their studies? Do any stand out?

Only a small percentage of students, at the end of their studies, continue to carry on the start-up implemented at school or create a new one. Most (90-95%) choose different paths (university, employee), but in those few cases, the results are

astounding. These students find themselves already having 4-5 years of experience behind them and start an entrepreneurial career at a very young age. For example, Alberto Paglialunga today has an e-commerce company (Deghi) which has a turnover of EUR 50 million a year and employs 170 young people. He has won a national award for three years in a row, beating IKEA into second place. Mirko Cazzato is now 20 years old and leads a social start-up against bullying (Mabasta). In 2021 he was among the 10 most impactful students in the world, top 10 at the Global Student Prize and was elected Italian student of the year.

What would you advise policy-makers and fellow teachers to do to promote better the entrepreneurship competence?

Over 20 years of experience have made me realise that entrepreneurial competence is truly a key competence for young people. My suggestion is that every school system should introduce it from the age of 11 and allow each student to acquire and experience the beauty of becoming protagonists of their own lives, and discover that everyone is a potential changemaker.



Cedefop workshop
on entrepreneurship
competence in
vocational education
and training



MARIYA GABRIEL

European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth



Europe's young in focus

“ *Young people can participate, raise their voices, share their views, spread the word and get involved in the European Year of Youth initiatives*

As the coronavirus pandemic continued to ravage people's health, wellbeing and immediate prospects last autumn, the European Commission decided that 2022 'should be a year dedicated to those who have dedicated so much to others.' Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, was tasked with the coordination of activities. We reached out to her to find out what was in store for the European Year of Youth (EYY).

Why was there a need for a European Year of Youth in the first place?

Young people in Europe have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. The disruptions in their education, employment and social activities had a severe impact on their lives. And then there's also the sharp economic decline: compared to 2019, at the end of 2020 nearly 725 000 more young people aged 15-29 were not in employment, education or training across the EU-27. This is why President von der Leyen decided to make 2022 the European Year of Youth: to honour, support and engage with the younger generation, to build on the dynamism of recovery started with NextGenerationEU. To give young people a voice in shaping the future of Europe.

How can young people benefit from the Year's programme and activities?

Young people can participate, raise their voices, share their views, spread the word and get involved in the EYY initiatives. We want all young people to claim their future, find new opportunities and become agents of change. A vast programme of activities and participatory tools have been prepared: dedicated webpage with an activity map, social media channels, and much more on the European youth portal. A wealth of information showcases available opportunities and initiatives that allow them to connect with peers, learn, work or volunteer. To help at Member State level, each country has appointed a coordinator for national activities, events and initiatives; they will have grants to support implementation at national level and mobilise youth stakeholders at all levels. We have recently uploaded to the youth portal 27 initiatives on topics such as the green and digital transitions, education and mobility, health, culture and sport. One example is 'plastic pirates', aiming to engage young people from schools across Europe to collect plastic waste along coastal areas and then to analyse what has been collected. Triggering students' interest in scientific work is relevant for societal challenges and empowers them to take action for the protection



of Europe's rivers and seas. Our aim is to involve as many young people as possible in making such initiatives become reality.

Europe Day this year focused on youth employment. Some EU countries, especially in the South, still have serious problems in that area. What is the Commission doing to help?

To celebrate Europe Day, we encouraged the organisation of events across Europe with a focus on the young, not just including as many as possible but also to show that the EU is there for them. As one of the Year of Youth's main events, it was only normal that Europe Day would also focus on youth employment, to highlight the strong connections between the EYY and the NextGenerationEU investment and recovery initiative, aiming at expanding employment opportunities for youth and promoting youth entrepreneurship in the post-pandemic recovery. To address youth unemployment directly, the European Commission has initiatives, such as ALMA, a new scheme aimed specifically at young people who are not currently working and are not in education or training. We will also review the Council Recommendation on the Quality framework for traineeships, as we believe that, in the context of new challenges to youth employment, young people need better quality traineeships. 2022 is also a crucial year for the implementation of the reinforced youth guarantee, to fight youth unemployment and inactivity.

Young people often complain that decisions on their future are taken without their involvement. How are the EYY, and the Commission policies in general, addressing their concerns?

The European Commission is in touch with a wide range of youth stakeholders and young people around EYY initiatives. We have developed a series of policy dialogues, during which each member of the College of Commissioners will meet with young people to discuss and gather ideas over topics of great interest and concern. We have also launched surveys to collect young people's opinions and ideas. But the Year is not the only step the Commission has taken on the path to increasing youth engagement in the democratic process at European level. Since 2011, the EU youth dialogue has been a key tool that has already succeeded in bringing together young people and policy-makers. For example, the EU youth goals 2019-27 are the result of a collective process involving no less than 50 000 young people across Europe. This year, the voice of the young has also been heard loud and clear at the Conference on the future of Europe, which enabled European citizens to have their say in shaping the future EU. Of course, more can and will be done: 2022 is just the beginning. We want to build upon the foundations which we will lay this year, to build a new tomorrow for the young people of Europe, with the voice of youth being heard and shaping all our European policies.

How can young people best prepare to enter/move into the ever-changing labour market?

I strongly encourage our young people to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the EU. Look up the initiatives on the European youth portal, choose those that fit their profile and take part in mobility projects, volunteering or participate in the training and workshops organised throughout the year. There are many opportunities specifically designed for the young, from the European Apprentices Network and the European vocational skills week to Erasmus for young entrepreneurs. This last initiative is a cross-border exchange, which gives new or aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in other participating countries. It has reached 10 000 entrepreneurial exchanges, a milestone proving the enormous success of the programme!



Check out the European youth portal



Listen to Cedefop's podcast on youth employment with past #CedefopPhotoAward winners



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Making VET fit for young people's needs

“ *Cedefop's work is in perfect alignment with the four objectives of the European Year of Youth, to support and engage young people at many levels*



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The EU has dedicated 2022 to young people to underline their important role in reshaping Europe, aiming for a greener, more peaceful, inclusive and digital future. It is time to move forward to a post-pandemic perspective and focus on young people's priorities, including those with fewer opportunities, shaping policy-making to match their needs and organising youth-focused activities across the EU.

Young people's wellbeing, personal and professional development, and engagement in society, must be considered and addressed. Numerous youth programmes and initiatives have already been, or will be, launched to involve young Europeans: from the well-known Erasmus+ exchange programme, launched in 1987, to the most recent Conference on the future of Europe, where a third of participants in citizens' panels were aged under 25.

Cedefop's work, and especially the contribution of the vocational education and training (VET) for youth team, is in perfect alignment with the four objectives of the European Year of Youth, to support and engage young people at many levels. Our vision is to make VET fit for young people's needs.



Objective 1: Support the generation that lost out the most during the pandemic, offering new perspectives and opportunities while highlighting the potential of the green and digital transitions.

Cedefop's VET for youth team leads research and supports evidence-based policy-making on VET teacher and trainer professional development. It is essential that teachers and trainers have opportunities to develop and keep their technical, pedagogical and transversal skills (e.g. digital, intercultural communication) to the highest standards, especially as the pandemic has been challenging for most learning contexts, including VET, in both school and work-based settings. Cedefop's ReferNet, a network of institutions which provides information on national VET systems and policies in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway, has been preparing thematic articles on Teachers and trainers in a changing world. These will report on national policies aiming to making VET more inclusive and beneficial for learners. Also under way is Cedefop's feasibility study for a future pan-European opinion survey of principals, teachers, trainers and learners aiming to improve the quality of initial VET. This new survey will give voice to all key actors in initial VET, especially to learners.

Objective 2: Encourage all young people, especially those vulnerable and with fewer opportunities, to acquire relevant knowledge and competences to become active and engaged citizens.

In 2017, Cedefop developed the VET toolkit for tackling early leaving to encourage lifelong learning and social inclusion by helping learners at risk remain in education and training, and early leavers to reintegrate. In the same year, the European community of ambassadors for tackling early leaving from VET was established, with representatives from across Europe. Five years later, the success of this work inspired the creation of the VET toolkit for empowering NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training) to support all socially excluded young people. European policy-makers and practitioners may use Cedefop's interactive tools to monitor and empower their policies for inclusive VET systems, also supporting the integration of refugees, minorities and disadvantaged groups. Tailored intervention approaches designed by Cedefop may support learners with health issues or caring responsibilities in finding apprenticeship placements in inclusive work-based learning environments, or help learners with a migrant background overcome different learning barriers through individually designed learning pathways.

Objective 3: Promote opportunities provided by EU policies to support young people's personal, social and professional development.

It is precisely Cedefop's intent to strengthen the link between education, training and the labour market in Europe. Our research aims to showcase good practices and key characteristics that make a policy or practice successful. This allows policy-makers and VET practitioners to learn from experience and design effective policies for learners. Cedefop's approach celebrates the diversity of VET systems in Europe and still cares for common European standards for quality, promoting mobility of learners and workers across the continent.

Objective 4: Draw inspiration from the vision, insights and actions of young people and encourage a youth perspective in policy-making at all levels.

Another aim of Cedefop's toolkits is to offer guidance and promote reflection and dialogue among policy-makers and practitioners on current strategies for tackling early leaving and promoting inclusion. Our reflection tools support decision-making through the development of targeted action plans. Successful learning practices and learners' perspectives are highlighted during Cedefop's policy learning forums to understand their needs, difficulties and aspirations, and seek efficient ways to address them.

Cedefop's work and aspiration is underpinned by the European youth goals, such as the right to quality learning, moving young people from rural environments forward, creating space and participation for all, and accessing quality employment. In this context, we continue to foster sustainable and proactive ways to empower young citizens and engage them in Europe's society through valuable VET programmes.



Cedefop theme: VET for youth – Teachers and trainers



Cedefop's VET toolkit for tackling early leaving



Cedefop's VET toolkit for empowering NEETs



European skills systems: supporting the twin transitions

“ In the midst of the digital and green transitions, skills are a necessity

The European Union’s initial plans to meet the challenges of the digital and green transitions have also had to contend with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the way societies, economies and individuals function.

The green transition across the various sectors of the economy is demanding investments in the creation and adoption of green technologies, often with new job positions where new skills are required to develop and operate the technologies. Even in existing occupations, green technologies can require new and refined skills.

Europe’s skills systems face the challenge of transforming the skills of the population to meet the needs of the switch to a carbon-neutral economy. A solid skills system can support the journey towards faster and easier transition to a greener economy.

With regards to the digital transition, especially during the pandemic, the potential to work from home remains at the centre of discussions. Jobs where such potential is restricted (e.g. those entailing physical tasks or operating machines) have not been able to change to the same degree. On the other hand, economies with a high share of jobs that can

be performed remotely have been more flexible and may prove more resilient.

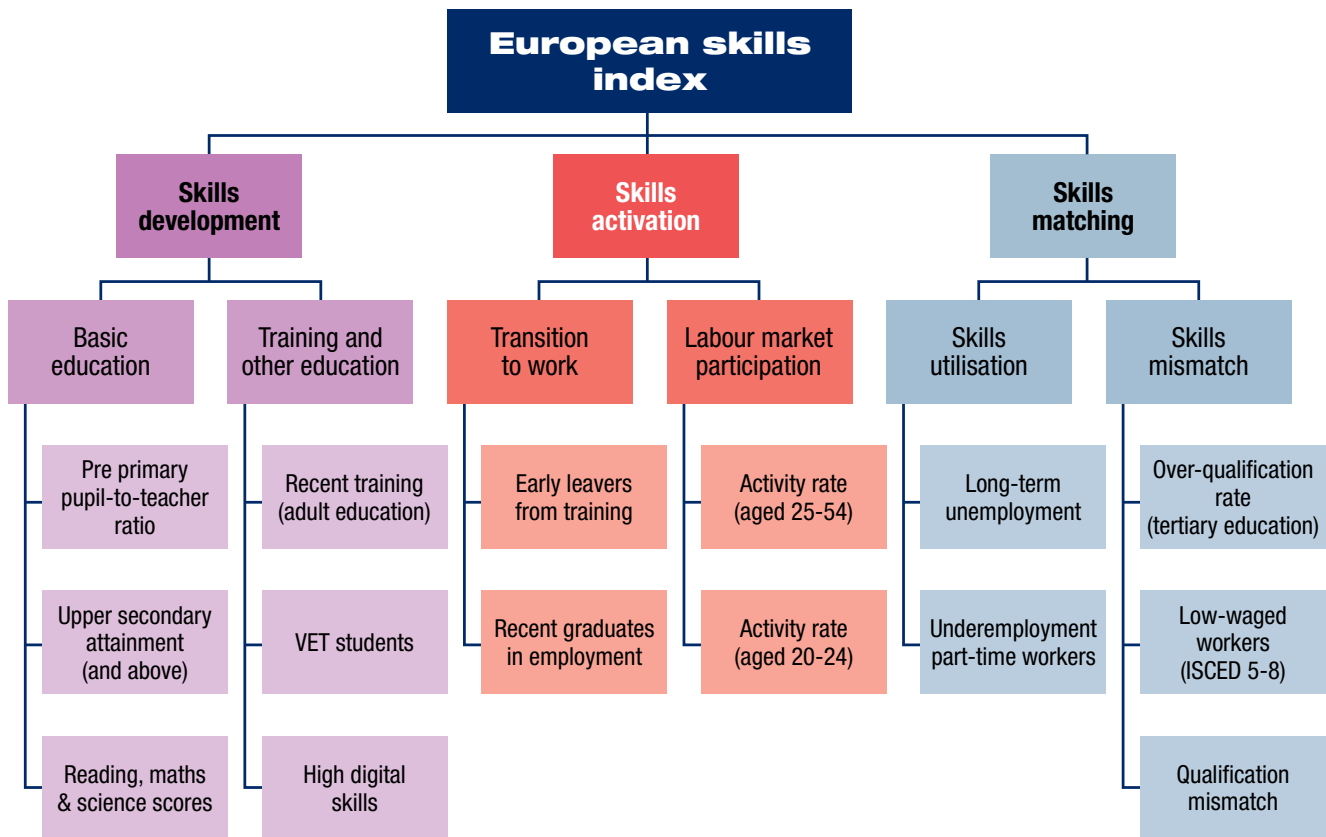
In the words of European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit, ‘in the midst of the digital and green transitions, skills are a necessity.’ The key point is that skills have now become an overarching policy priority, a route to faster recovery and an enabler of the twin transitions.

THE 2022 EUROPEAN SKILLS INDEX

To help the implementation of the European skills agenda, Cedefop built the European skills index (ESI), whose 2022 release has just been announced. ESI is a composite indicator that measures the performance of European skills systems covering three key dimensions; skills development, activation and matching (see diagram on p. 15).

Using a single measurement allows capture of a skills system performance in a holistic manner, which is essential as neglecting one of the dimensions only provides a partial view that can be misleading. The way ESI is constructed favours a balanced system against a system that may excel in one dimension but lag significantly in another.

Looking at the ESI, each Member State can identify areas of its skills system that have room for improvement, calling for policy attention, and monitor progress made. At the same time, best practices can be located by looking at the performances of other countries. It is important to note, however, that ESI



Source: Cedefop 2022 European skills index.

only provides a tool for starting the investigation and asking the right questions. It cannot itself provide answers and its investigation must be coupled with local knowledge of a skills system.

TRENDS IN EUROPEAN SKILLS SYSTEMS

Having estimated ESI scores using data from three consecutive years (2018-20) allows capturing progress over time but also assessing the COVID-19 immediate impact. Starting with skills development, it is observed that skills systems are converging over time. Those with the lower scores are improving fast (e.g. Greece, Spain), the ones in the middle (Poland, Austria) have improved at a slower pace and the leading ones (Estonia, Finland) remained at the same level.

With regards to the pandemic, it is too soon to observe any notable immediate impact, though this may be captured in forthcoming releases. Nevertheless, as the consecutive lockdowns made many people turn/return to education to strengthen their skills, this may have a positive impact on skills supply. However, skills activation is the area hit hardest by the pandemic: the scores for almost all countries have gone down, even those with the strongest skills systems. The low-achieving countries (e.g. Italy, Spain) seem to have been affected the most.

Within the area, there was notable deterioration over the period examined for recent graduates in employment and activity rates for the young. This suggests that the new entrants to the labour market are more vulnerable to external shocks in the economy and, consequently, in greatest need of support. Given the challenge Europe is facing with population ageing, it is essential to safeguard young entrants’ access to the labour market to avoid creating a ‘lost’ generation, a generation that Europe needs so much now.

As for skills matching, most countries saw improvements, indicating that policies are in the right direction. Similar to skills development, strongest has been the improvement for those countries with the weakest overall performance (e.g. Ireland, Cyprus). As for the pandemic impact, even though it is not possible to capture its full extent in this ESI release, it can be noted that the measures put in place during 2020 in response to COVID-19 helped to maintain employment, as shown by a relative stable performance in skills utilisation.



Cedefop's European skills index

Sales workers

Representing over 13 million jobs, sales workers are one of the most populous occupations in the EU. The role was also one of those hit hardest by COVID-19, with over a million jobs lost between 2019 and 2020.

But not all sales workers were equally affected by the pandemic. Given the focus and scope of social distancing measures, demand for sales workers in stores selling essential goods, such as groceries or pharmacies, increased. Sales workers employed in other retail sectors, such as clothes, electronics or household goods, were hit particularly hard.

While the average employment decline across the EU amounted to 7%, in six EU countries over 10% of sales jobs were lost in a single year. Sales workers' jobs appear to be more resilient in central and south-eastern Europe than in western or northern Europe (where employment in retail declined much more).

There were fears that the pandemic would accelerate digitalisation in retail and that the trend towards online or contactless shopping would render many sales workers' jobs obsolete. Cedefop's skills OVATE does not yet confirm such a trend.

Although employers posted far fewer job advertisements, especially at the peak of the pandemic in the second quarter of 2020, the job market for sales workers has been recovering since.

As the number of job ads published online in the last quarter of 2021 was almost three times the volume recorded in the worst period of the pandemic, for sales workers the worst appears to be over. But the demand for skills upgrade of sales workers will be growing, as technology adoption in retail is likely to transform sales jobs.

Cedefop forecasts that almost 1 in 3 future job openings for sales workers until 2030 will require high-level qualifications. The shift to a green transition may also create new employment opportunities, for example as solar or waste management salesperson.

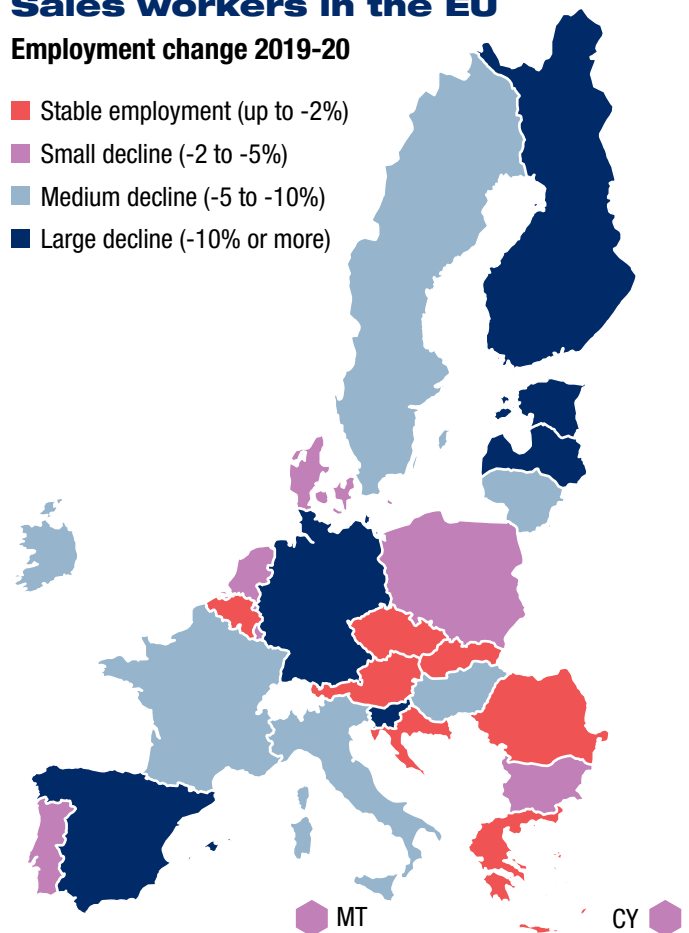
SALES WORKERS

- > **13.1** million in the EU (2020)
- > **67%** female
- > **8 million** job openings forecast until 2030
- > **1 in 3** job openings requires a high-level qualification

Sales workers in the EU

Employment change 2019-20

- Stable employment (up to -2%)
- Small decline (-2 to -5%)
- Medium decline (-5 to -10%)
- Large decline (-10% or more)



Learn more about sales workers



More on Cedefop online job advertisement analysis and the skills OVATE webtool



More on Cedefop analysis on green employment and skills transformation



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New study-integrated training programmes in Germany

Many school leavers with a higher education entrance qualification in Germany are uncertain about their choice, start university studies and later drop out. At the same time, there is a growing number of trainees who have a school-leaving certificate with a higher education entrance qualification, bringing their own unique demands to vocational education and training (VET) curricula. Some programmes of the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences and the project Study-integrated training (SiA-NRW) are now bringing academic study content into the curricula of dual training programmes.

During training, learners get to know both training paths and then decide on one of the two degrees or even complete both. As a hybrid training programme, both models link the three learning locations of vocational school, company and university. While students in a dual study programme that integrates training commit to the double degree before they start their studies, the trainees in these programmes get a taste of both the training and the study programme before they decide.

The first students started at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences in autumn 2021. There are five courses to choose from, including three commercial apprenticeships interlinked with business studies (industrial clerks, bank clerks and marketing

communication clerks).

The SiA-NRW was launched at three locations in the 2021/22 training year. In the meantime, the study-integrated training has expanded to 11 locations in commercial and industrial-technical training occupations. The SiA-NRW project is part of the nationwide InnoVet project, an innovation competition for excellent VET, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research with a budget of EUR 5.4 million.

Participants start with dual vocational training (apprenticeship) and a bachelor degree programme in parallel. For up to 18 months, they go through essential parts of dual training at the learning locations of vocational school and company. They are also taught subject-related study content at a university. After the basic stage, the trainees decide, based on their experience, either to complete the dual vocational training, switch completely to the university and finish with a degree (bachelor) or complete a double degree within 4 years.



by REFERNET
GERMANY



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Green and digital in the post-COVID-19 era

“ *#CedefopPhotoAward setting the tone for the pandemic’s aftermath* ”

Nearly 300 vocational education and training (VET) learners shared their inspiration about their VET experience involving green or digital skills, by taking part in the #CedefopPhotoAward, which was organised for a sixth year running.

Despite the continuing problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, #CedefopPhotoAward 2021 managed to attract a large number of creative learners, who looked ahead to a post-pandemic world.

Eighty teams of VET learners from 13 European countries submitted contributions to the latest edition, which also featured a video competition. The teams consisted of 287 learners and 63 teachers/trainers, representing 62 learning providers.

The #CedefopPhotoAward 2021 winners come from Spain, Greece and Poland.

The two photostory winning teams, from Spain ('Climate MakeUp' team from the IES Ramón y Cajal) and Greece ('Cyclades' team from the 5th Evening Vocational High School of Patras), were also nominated for the top award, presented during the virtual VET excellence awards ceremony at the European vocational skills week 2022 (16-20 May). The top spot was decided via an online public vote, organised by the European Commission.

Poland's 'New Age School' team, from Niepubliczne Technikum im. gen. W. Andersa w Opatowie, are the winners of the video award.

They were invited to the opening of the #CedefopPhotoAward exhibition in the Thessaloniki Cinema Museum and joined via a video call. Speaking on behalf of the team, their teacher, Hubert Grześkiewicz, outlined how the school endeavours to provide more than conventional VET to its students, trying to enable them to familiarise themselves with a large array of knowledge and turn it into skills.

The exhibition, which ran for a month from 11 March, was part of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2022.



Check out the #CedefopPhotoAward 2021 exhibition



Watch the highlights of the exhibition opening



© ClimateMakeUp

PHOTOSTORY WINNER

**ClimateMakeUp, Spain,
IES RAMON Y CAJAL**

Raquel Herrero, Gonzalo Rios, Teresa Hernandez and Ana Arjona: 'Selfishness disables our empathy. It does not show what is really happening. Only understanding will give us the first step to get us out of where we are. We are a group of professional characterisation and makeup students, and this is our ode to the current situation. Plastics are a symbol of the pollution of the planet that we have, of how the planet is devastated, burned by deforestation, how it roars, explodes and finally falls. Let's not continue with our eyes closed.'



PHOTOSTORY WINNER

Cyclades, Greece, 5th Evening Vocational High School of Patras

Maria Diamantopoulou, Paraskevi Galani, Theodora Konstantopoulou, and Paraskevi Stavropoulou: 'Cyclades were nymphs that the God of the Sea transformed into islands, arrayed in a circle. Cyclades is our team's name, and our mission as students of the Department of Applied Arts is inspired by Aegean's divine light. Our project for this year motivates us to clean, collect, create and change: 4Cs for the sea! We remove and reuse marine litter from our region's coastline. By using natural pigments and tools, we not only give our findings a second chance at life, but also preserve ecological integrity.'



© Cyclades



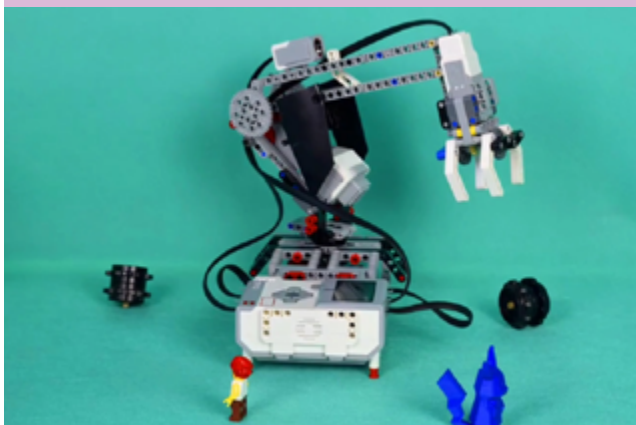


© NewAgeSchool

BEST VIDEO

**NewAgeSchool, Poland,
Niepubliczne Technikum
im. gen. W. Andersa w
Opatowie**

Łukasz Bełczowski, Karolina Mruk, Jakub Sajda, and Aleksandra Dulny: 'This is a story of two worlds that simply have nothing in common except school address; about students of IT and Stylist technical secondary school; about how we found the bridge allowing them to work together and learn from each other, and finally true bond was created. It's a story about a school that revealed the creativity of computer geeks and allowed creative souls to understand the digital world thanks to common creative photography and graphics editing classes.'



Watch the winning video



More on the CedefopPhotoAward

Cedefop publications

IN FOCUS

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN FRANCE - SHORT DESCRIPTION



This publication contributes to better understanding of vocational education and training in France and how it operates within the socioeconomic context. It provides an overview of key characteristics, system developments and challenges. A main feature is that State-issued vocational qualifications can be acquired in initial education but also in apprenticeship and through continuing training that makes it easier to progress at an individual pace. France's response to challenges, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, aims at more jobs for young people studying and working, and increased investment in education and training towards the digital and green transitions and social resilience.

Browse and/or download all Cedefop publications at www.cedefop.europa.eu/publications



OTHER



Spotlight on VET France



Briefing note – A fresh look at guidance



Briefing note – Championing the skills revolution



Briefing note – High esteem but low participation



Briefing note – An ally in the green transition



The green employment and skills transformation



Workplace learning: determinants and consequences



Relocation 2.0: tying adult refugee skills to labour market demand



Bridging lifelong guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning through ICT operationalisation



Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance and services

Coming up

OTHER

16-20 MAY

BRUSSELS (HYBRID) AND ACROSS EUROPE

6th European vocational skills week, including the VET excellence awards ceremony where the winners of #CedefopPhotoAward 2021 are announced

19-20 MAY

REYKJAVIK (HYBRID)

Validation of prior learning (VPL) for integrated approaches in lifelong learning – 4th VPL Biennale. Hosted by Iceland's Education and Training Service Centre, with Cedefop as joint organiser.

9 JUNE

VIRTUAL EVENT

Cedefop's Brussels seminar series with the French EU Presidency: Microcredentials – are they here to stay?

30 JUNE

VIRTUAL EVENT

2030 on the horizon: skills in the online platform economy – Cedefop webinar

IN FOCUS

4TH POLICY LEARNING FORUM ON LEARNING OUTCOMES

LESSONS FROM THE UPDATED EUROPEAN HANDBOOK ON LEARNING OUTCOMES

27-28 JUNE WORKSHOP

(THESSALONIKI, HYBRID)

Building on the three previous events in this series, this policy learning forum will bring together experts and stakeholders directly involved in the definition, writing and application of learning outcomes at the interface of education and training and the labour market. Reflecting on the 2022 update of the European handbook on learning outcomes, the forum will pay attention to the application of learning outcomes for curriculum development, taking into account results of recent Cedefop studies on comparing vocational education and training (VET) qualifications and on the future of VET.

For the latest information on what's coming up, go to www.cedefop.europa.eu/events





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