



## Commission kick-starts work on the European Year of Skills

Brussels, 12 October 2022

Following the announcement by President Ursula **von der Leyen** in her [2022 State of the Union address](#), the Commission has adopted today its [proposal](#) to make 2023 the European Year of Skills.

The green and digital transitions are opening up new opportunities for people and the EU economy. Having the relevant skills empowers people to successfully navigate labour market changes and to fully engage in society and democracy. This will ensure that nobody is left behind and the economic recovery as well as the green and digital transitions are socially fair and just. A workforce with the skills that are in demand also contributes to sustainable growth, leads to more innovation and improves companies' competitiveness.

However, currently more than three quarters of companies in the EU report difficulties in finding workers with the necessary skills, and latest figures from Eurostat suggest that only 37% of adults undertake training on a regular basis. The [Digital Economy and Society Index](#) shows that 4 out of 10 adults and every third person who works in Europe lack basic digital skills. In addition, already in 2021, 28 occupations ranging from construction and healthcare to engineering and IT had shortages, showing a growing demand for both high and low-skilled workers. There is also low representation of women in tech-related professions and studies, with only 1 in 6 IT specialists and 1 in 3 STEM graduates being women.

To encourage lifelong learning, Member States have endorsed the EU 2030 social targets that at least 60% of adults should participate in training every year, already presenting their national contribution to meeting this target. This is also important to reach the employment rate target of at least 78% by 2030. The [2030 Digital Compass](#) sets the EU target that by 2030, at least 80% of all adults should have at least basic digital skills, and there should be 20 million employed ICT specialists in the EU, while more women should be encouraged to take up such jobs.

### **The European Year of Skills – boosting competitiveness, participation and talent**

With the European Year of Skills, in cooperation with the European Parliament, Member States, social partners, public and private employment services, chambers of commerce and industry, education and training providers, and workers and companies all together, the Commission proposes to give a fresh impetus to lifelong learning by:

- Promoting increased, and more effective and inclusive **investment in training and upskilling** to harness the full potential of the European workforce, and to support people in changing from one job to another.
- Making sure that **skills are relevant** for labour market needs, by also cooperating with social partners and companies.
- **Matching people's aspirations and skill sets with opportunities on the job market**, especially for the green and digital transition and the economic recovery. A special focus will be given to activate more people for the labour market, in particular women and young people, especially those not in education, employment or training.
- **Attracting people from third countries with the skills needed** by the EU, including by strengthening learning opportunities and mobility and facilitating the recognition of qualifications.

To meet these objectives, the Commission will promote upskilling and reskilling opportunities, for instance by highlighting relevant EU initiatives, including EU funding possibilities, to support their take-up, implementation and delivery on the ground. Events and awareness-raising campaigns will also be organised across the EU to support mutual learning of partners in up- and reskilling. The proposed Year also aims to help to further develop skills intelligence tools and promote tools and instruments for increased transparency and easier recognition of qualifications, including qualifications awarded outside the EU.

To ensure the coordination of relevant activities at national level, the Commission calls on Member

States to appoint a national coordinator for the European Year of Skills.

## **EU initiatives to support skills development**

For the European Year of Skills, we can build on the many EU initiatives already ongoing to support skills and increase their take-up, including:

- The [European Skills Agenda](#) is the framework for EU skills policy cooperation and will continue to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and to apply them.
- As part of the Skills Agenda, under the [Pact for Skills](#) so far, more than 700 organisations have signed up and 12 large-scale partnerships in strategic sectors have been set up with pledges to help upskill up to 6 million people.
- The [Structured Dialogue](#) with the Member States on Digital Education and Skills.
- The Commission has also proposed new initiatives to address EU skills shortages and improve migration cooperation. The roll-out of an [EU Talent Pool](#) and of [Talent Partnerships](#) with selected third partners will help match the skills of candidates to work in Europe with labour market needs. This is a key deliverable under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.
- The [New European Innovation Agenda](#), adopted in July, proposes a flagship initiative and set of actions to create the right framework conditions for our talents.
- The [European strategy for universities](#), adopted in January, proposes a series of 50 actions that are key to develop high level and future-proof skills for a wide range of learners, including lifelong learners, for them to become creative and critical thinkers, problem solvers and active and responsible citizens.
- The European [Digital Skills and Jobs Platform](#) is an initiative launched under the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) Programme. It offers information and resources on digital skills such as a digital skills self-assessment tool, as well as training and funding opportunities.
- The EU [Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition](#) tackles the digital skills gap by bringing together Member States, social partners, companies, non-profit organisations and education providers to raise awareness and encourage organisations to take different actions to encourage digital skills training such as taking a pledge to boost digital skills.

## **EU funding and assistance to invest into skills**

Significant EU funding and technical support is available to support Member States' investment in up- and reskilling, including:

- The [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#) with a budget of more than €99 billion for 2021-2027 is the EU's main instrument for investing in people.
- The [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) can support Member States' reforms and investments, including in the area of skills and jobs. In the national recovery and resilience plans endorsed by the Commission and the Council so far, around 20% of the social expenditure is dedicated to "employment and skills".
- The [Digital Europe Programme's](#) €580 million for development of advanced digital skills. It provides strategic funding and, among others, it supports the development of a skilled talent pool of digital experts, while at the same time enhancing cooperation between EU Member States and stakeholders in digital skills and jobs.
- [Horizon Europe](#) underpins skills for researchers, entrepreneurs and innovators notably through its [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#), the [European Innovation Council](#) and the [European Institute for Technology](#).
- [Erasmus+](#) with a budget €26.2 billion supports, amongst others, the personal and professional development of learners, staff and institutions in vocational education and training through funding mobility activities and partnerships for cooperation across Europe. It also funds European Universities which are pioneering the development of micro-credentials for training, up-skilling and re-skilling.

Additional programmes that can support skills development include the [InvestEU programme](#), the [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund](#) for displaced workers, the [European Regional Development Fund](#), the [Just Transition Fund](#), the [European Solidarity Corps](#), the [Programme for Environment and climate action](#) (LIFE), the [Modernisation Fund](#), the [Technical Support Instrument](#), and the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument](#).

## **Members of the College said:**

Executive Vice-President for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age, Margrethe **Vestager**, said: "*Skills are*

*an essential if we are to do what we want with technology. Managing digital life - like paying bills, asking for parking permits etc. - takes knowledge for us as citizens. Creating solutions for the society with technology that helps us in our daily life's takes expertise. We have decided on goals, now is the time to take action. The European Year of Skills will help us focus our efforts on enabling people to learn."*

Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinias**, said: *"Our Union is an area of freedom, values, opportunities and solidarity unique in the world. Attracting the people with the skills needed for the EU, including by facilitating the recognition of their qualifications, will be a key priority for the European Year of Skills. Furthermore, skills acquired in Europe can be transferred to other countries, and Europe can play a strong role in transferring knowledge and new knowledge to where they are needed most."*

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicholas **Schmit**, said: *"Skills mean jobs – quality jobs. During the European Year of Skills, we have an opportunity to connect the dots between labour market-oriented training and labour shortages. To make sure that the transition to a carbon-neutral economy is truly fair and inclusive, we need massive and immediate investment in people's skills. I am confident that having 2023 as the European Year of Skills will have a significant effect in pushing forward the skills revolution we need in Europe."*

Commissioner for Research, Innovation, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"Building on the successes of the 2022 European Year of Youth, next year will be about equipping people with the relevant skills to match the labour market needs. This goes hand in hand with training. With the European Year of Skills, we will support increased, more efficient and more inclusive funding for re- and upskilling as well as training, with the aim to ensure our talents develop their full potential."*

Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: *"Europe's strength resides in its talent, including engineers, researchers and entrepreneurs. To achieve our Digital Decade and Green Deal goals, we want to support our companies, in particular SMEs, in hiring, training and keeping talent. We are creating partnerships for skills in the industrial ecosystems, from the automotive, aerospace and defence, to tourism. The European Year of Skills will make the European skills offensive even stronger."*

## **Next steps**

The European Parliament and the Council will now discuss the Commission's proposal, with the opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions taken into account.

## **Background**

President **von der Leyen** proposed in her [2022 State of the Union address](#) to make 2023 the European Year of Skills to strengthen our competitiveness, better focus our investments, cooperate with companies and match these needs with people's aspirations as well as attract talents to our continent. The proposal for a European Year of Skills is also listed in the [State of the Union Letter of Intent](#) as an initiative for 2023.

## **For More Information**

[Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Skills 2023](#)

[Website – Skills and qualifications](#)

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