



*skill*set AND *MATCH*

CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE
PROMOTING
LEARNING FOR WORK



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MAIN STORY:
SUITING VET TO TIMES
OF TRANSITION

FEATURES ON:
EUROPEAN COMPANY SURVEY
SECOND OPINION SURVEY ON VET

INTERVIEWS:
JUAN MENÉNDEZ-VALDÉS
JÜRGEN SIEBEL

**EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL
SKILLS WEEK AND
#CEDEFOPPHOTOAWARD 2020**

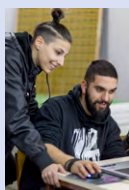
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We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.



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VET learners from 2nd VET
School of Thessaloniki – OAED

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CEDEFOP'S MAGAZINE
PROMOTING
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INTERVIEW

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION: MULTIPLYING BENEFITS

Juan Menéndez-Valdés and Jürgen Siebel

4

#EUROPEANCOMPANYSURVEY

WORKPLACE PRACTICES THAT UNLOCK EMPLOYEE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

6

ARTICLE

TOO MANY ADULTS SEE NO NEED FOR LEARNING AND TRAINING

8

#UPSKILLINGPATHWAYS

SKILLS 'SURVIVAL KIT' NEEDED FOR WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS

10

MAIN STORY

SUITING VET TO TIMES OF TRANSITION

12

#EUVOCAATIONALSILLS

EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK GOES GREEN AND DIGITAL

14

#CEDEFOPPHOTOAWARD

#CEDEFOPPHOTOAWARD DEFYING CORONAVIRUS

16

OCCUPATION IN FOCUS

PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS

20

MEMBER STATES

ADULT QUALIFICATIONS INCREASE TARGETED IN PORTUGAL

21

NEW CEDEFOP PUBLICATIONS

22

COMING UP

23

Why offer VET?

Why choose it?

JÜRGEN SIEBEL

CEDEFOP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Investments in
skills development
translate into
superior company
performance*



You cannot be a thought leader in vocational education and training (VET), as Cedefop strives to be, unless you stay in touch with the people and organisations that demand and supply the VET programmes on the ground. A focus of this issue is how we ask questions in relevant areas and how we make sense of the answers.

Read about the European company survey (ECS) that collected information on corporate practices and strategies on work organisation and skills development, hearing from almost 22 000 HR managers and more than 3 000 employee representatives. One of its key findings is that investments in skills development translate into superior company performance. Find out how few companies make use of such investments; or better, how much could be achieved by embracing it more.

This potential is mirrored for the individual, where adults clearly ask policy-makers to prioritise investment in skills development. Read about Cedefop's second opinion survey on VET, confirming the potential demand for continuing learning from a public well aware of its importance and benefits. But you will also read that it remains a challenge to translate these needs into actual demand; or again, how much more could be achieved.

We also look back at the European vocational skills week 2020, the #CedefopPhotoAward and the new policy framework for European VET (notably the skills agenda, the VET recommendation and the Osnabrück declaration). We are happy to see that Cedefop findings have helped inform this framework.

In closing, I must come back to the ECS, specifically to the related interview on pp. 4-5. For me, it is a special honour to appear as the joint interviewee, as someone like the sidekick to Eurofound Executive Director Juan Menéndez-Valdés, who, by the time this issue is published, will have retired from his post. Juan has been an invaluable partner and will always remain a role model for me. Witness his wisdom in the next few pages.

Interagency cooperation: multiplying benefits



The European company survey is a great example of how agencies in complementary fields can realise synergies and add value through collaboration

Cedefop and Eurofound, the first two EU agencies, both established in 1975, worked together on the fourth edition of the European company survey (see pp. 6-7). Eurofound's mission is the improvement of living and working conditions, while Cedefop focuses on developing vocational training. Alongside this large-scale project, the two agencies have cooperated in several areas of shared interest through the years. We asked their executive directors, Juan Menéndez-Valdés (Eurofound) and Jürgen Siebel (Cedefop), about this relationship

The fourth edition of Eurofound's European company survey was carried out jointly with Cedefop. What are the benefits for the two agencies in cooperating on projects like this?

JMV: There are real synergies between the areas of expertise

of both agencies. By joining forces, we can take on bigger projects that are difficult to tackle individually. Surveys are a key source of comparative data, but they are demanding and expensive exercises. Collaboration helps overcome these challenges and also allows us to produce a deeper analysis, with more useful results for stakeholders. It's a perfect example of the synergies and efficiency gains expected from EU-agency cooperation.

JS: For Cedefop the key benefit is that we have learned a lot about the context in which much skills development takes place – the workplace. Joining forces with Eurofound has helped us address issues at the heart of the European policy agenda for vocational education and training (VET) and skills. How to shape workplaces to help staff learn and use their skills to their full potential? Which workplace and skills practices help an organisation thrive, and not just survive? This survey is a great example of how agencies

in complementary fields can realise synergies and add value through collaboration.

A key finding of the survey is that only one in five companies in the EU appear to succeed in providing an optimal workplace environment. How much of a problem is that and how can it be addressed?

JMV: To compete on the global stage, companies need to be agile and innovative. Competitiveness depends on a motivated and competent workforce, making best use of their skills and knowledge and being actively engaged in business improvements and innovation. While there might be limitations linked to company size or specific economic activity, the low share of companies creating such an environment suggests a great loss of potential. A further fifth of companies hardly make any attempt to engage their staff, suggesting a sizeable proportion of poor-quality jobs. The survey results might raise awareness of the business case for a more



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Juan Menéndez-Valdés (second right) and Jürgen Siebel (third right) present their agencies' work at the European Parliament in 2020.

people-centred management approach; managers should also be equipped to implement it. The social partners can help, and education and training should play a key role. We need to place the human element more centrally on the curriculum of entrepreneurial programmes and business schools.

JS: This headline statistic illustrates a huge loss of potential: how much better could we do if many more workplaces would also be learning places? EU-level policy should encourage companies to tap this potential. Stimulating worker autonomy and encouraging commitment to skills development are crucial. That can only happen with strong support from social partners, company HR and training practitioners. Together they can establish networks to exchange information, provide advice and actively support workplace change. The recently launched Pact for skills is an excellent tool to organise this in practice.

The survey also shows that business performance and workplace wellbeing improve

if companies engage with workers, support their continued learning and participate in dialogue. How does the work of the two agencies help achieve these goals?

JMV: Both agencies offer a wealth of expertise on job quality, workplace practices, learning strategies and social dialogue; this is such a useful resource and can inform the debate. The tripartite nature of both agencies ensures that, along with the EU level, the information we produce meets the needs of national governments and social partners at all levels and helps to reach these audiences.

JS: All Cedefop's work emphasises how important it is to see training and skills development as a shared responsibility, delivering benefits to be shared by individuals, companies and society. We provide insight into how that principle takes shape in VET and skills governance systems and practices across the EU. We also support Member States in strengthening their governance setups.

Mr Menéndez-Valdés, you have just completed two five-year terms at the helm of Eurofound. What are the main changes in Europeans' living and working conditions you have witnessed during this time?

JMV: The decade started in the middle of the great recession and, when we hadn't fully recovered, ended with the Covid-19 outbreak. It has covered times of great uncertainty. In addition to the structural changes demanded by the transitions to digital and carbon-neutral economies, as well as those from demographic change and globalisation, we need to cope with the deepest GDP drop since World War II. Unemployment and deterioration in working conditions, employment security and optimism are behind a loss of trust in institutions, including in the EU project, and growing polarisation and tensions. But, despite all this, I like to think that there is still room to react together, as we face the new decade with the most ambitious investment programme since the after-war period. ■

Workplace practices that unlock employee skills and knowledge



Companies that combine training and learning with practices facilitating employee involvement are most likely to generate win-win outcomes

Companies can design their workplace practices in a way that generates outcomes benefitting both workers and employers. Practices that increase employee autonomy, facilitate employee voice and promote training and learning, can boost business performance while improving job quality for workers. This is the key finding of the fourth European company survey (ECS 2019).

The survey was designed to cover two broad concepts:

- people possess skills and knowledge; employees must have the motivation and opportunity to use them;
- the employment relationship is much broader than the written labour contract; skills and knowledge affect performance through voluntary behaviours that are not covered by contractual provisions.

This implies that organisations need to have adequate motivational levers in place to induce voluntary behaviours from their workers.

A WIN-WIN SITUATION

Employees have knowledge about improvements in production processes or service delivery. A skilled and knowledgeable workforce is important to job performance but also offers the capacity to contribute to addressing workplace problems. Skills utilisation in the workplace is about having a supporting environment that provides incentives, autonomy and opportunities. When this happens, the result is a win-win situation, in which improved financial performance is accompanied by enhanced workplace well-being.

The ECS 2019 showed that management plays a key role in shaping the organisational context that might help or hinder effort and skills utilisation. Managers need to support worker autonomy and participation in developmental activities. For the latter, managers should be aware of the connection between skills development and organisational goals such as suggestions for improvements, morale, skills provision, and career and job rotation.

EXERTING INFLUENCE

The ECS 2019 highlighted the connection between skills deployment and development and employee involvement. Employees having a voice implies exerting real influence over a broad range of workplace issues, either directly or through their representatives. Employee involvement unlocks their tacit knowledge when management and workers trust each other. The survey shows the importance of managerial support for this involvement; managers recognising the competitive advantage offered by that involvement are over-represented in the group of companies in which employee involvement leads to win-win outcomes.

Combining forms of direct and indirect participation might support the development of trust in the workplace. For example, delegating formal bargaining over distributive issues to the social partners, and separating it from shop floor discussions about workplace issues, can allow managers and employees (and their representation) to focus on finding effective solutions to workplace problems. Management and employees could devote fewer resources to the issue of how to split



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the pie and instead focus their efforts on increasing the pie's size.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Companies that combine training and learning with practices facilitating employee involvement are most likely to generate win-win outcomes. The ECS 2019 shows that around one in five establishments have such a combination of practices in place. Another fifth does not invest in employment relationships conducive to skills deployment and development and does very little to involve workers in decision-making. This group, on average, attains the worst outcomes. Most EU companies are somewhere in between, doing well in some respects, but leaving room for improvement in others.

Significant gains could be made by improvements in organisational practices, which would not require large financial investment. That said, interventions would likely require multiple measures cutting across various domains: job design, motivation, involvement.

Managerial attitudes, styles and skills play a key role in the adoption of organisational practices. Managers need to be supported in redesigning their workplaces. Increasing their awareness of how employees can contribute to the success of the organisation could help the current generation of managers to change their approach. Employer associations might be involved in supporting managers in identifying and implementing suitable organisational practices. Attention should also be paid to educating the next generation of managers, possibly enlisting the cooperation of business schools.

The coronavirus crisis has tended to increase worker autonomy; this could be used as a start for the sort of changes identified as beneficial. Managers could reflect on the extent to which their current set of workplace practices support or hinder sustainable win-win outcomes. ■

THE SURVEY

The **ECS 2019** was carried out jointly by **Eurofound** and **Cedefop**.

It collected information on workplace practices, human resource management, skills utilisation and development, employee participation and social dialogue.

Almost **22 000** managers and over **3 000** employee representatives took part in the **27 EU** Member States and the United Kingdom.

1st large-scale international business survey to use a push-to-web methodology: companies were approached by phone and, after having obtained the cooperation of the respondent, an email with a link to the online survey was sent to the HR manager.



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Too many adults see no need for learning and training

“ *It must be of concern to the EU, which has been trying to increase participation by adults in learning and training for more than 20 years, that in many Member States it remains below the desired range*

It is a paradox. Across the EU, according to Cedefop's latest opinion survey, 88% of adults say that their job requires them to keep their skills constantly up to date. The figure is at least 90% in countries such as Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Sweden. In Luxembourg and Portugal more than 40% of adults say that they lack either technical or general skills to carry out their job at the required level.

However, the most common reason for not participating in learning and training, given by 36% of adults, and the number one reason in 22 out of 30 countries surveyed, is that they have no need.

Adults cite other reasons for not participating in learning and training, such as lack of time (cited by 32%) and costs (15%). The countries surveyed have various measures to help people overcome such barriers, including flexible working hours, support with finances or childcare, certification and recognition of learning, adapting of training to needs and better information and guidance. These measures are popular, but there is no measure to address adults seeing no need to participate in learning and training, or that they feel too old; this last reason is cited by 28% of adults and is the main

one for not taking part in learning and training in France and Romania.

CONCERNING FINDING

The survey's finding of 'no need' as the most important reason for non-participation is consistent with other surveys, such as the Adult education survey and the Continuing vocational training survey. It must be of concern to the EU, which has been trying to increase participation by adults in learning and training for more than 20 years, that in many Member States it remains below the desired range.

However, the survey makes very clear that adults seeing 'no need' for learning and training is not because they are negative about such activity. Around 90% of over 40 000 interviewees agree that their continuing to learn is important to finding a job, progressing in a career and better pay. In each country surveyed, at least two-thirds see adult learning and training as important as school or university. In countries such as Germany, France and Spain, at least 75% see adult learning and training as a way of obtaining the equivalent of a university degree. Across all countries, 69% think that the quality of adult learning and training in their country is



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good; only in Italy do more people say that provision is bad (48%) rather than good (43%). Overall, 72% of adults agree that there are many learning and training opportunities in their country; this ranges from, for example, 90% in Austria to 54% in Italy.

LACK OF INCENTIVE

Given that adults are positive about learning and training, what they may lack is incentive to participate, despite the need to keep up with changing skill needs. It may be that adults recognise the need for learning and training in abstract terms; as being important generally, but not necessarily needed by 'me', at least not right now.

This may be linked to who has control over realising the benefits of learning and training. Adults have incentive to participate in learning for personal development as they define the benefits and control the outcomes. In the labour market or at work, decisions on who benefits from learning and training rest more with employers than individuals. Government measures can encourage people who already want to learn to participate but they cannot guarantee the benefits of participation, such as a job, a pay rise or promotion.

THE EMPLOYER ROLE

Participation in learning and training is not only about incentives for adults, but also employers' willingness to invest. Employer-sponsored training has increased in recent years, but employers still say that they have difficulties finding the skills they need. More opportunities for work-based learning for adults may help increase participation and address skill mismatch.

If the EU is to meet its ambitious targets to increase participation in adult learning and training by 2025, then perceptions of a lack of need in a labour market characterised by change must be addressed. The insights the survey brings can help. ■

Cedefop's second opinion survey: Perceptions on adult learning and continuing vocational education and training in Europe – Volume 1: Member States

Cedefop briefing note: Adult learning and continuing vocational education and training valued by Europeans

European skills agenda objectives



Skills

'survival kit'

needed for

workers and employers



*We ought to shape oncoming transformations,
rather than being shaped by them*

The coronavirus crisis has dramatically escalated the need for an urgent and coordinated response to low skill levels in Europe, according to views expressed at a recent Cedefop-European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) forum. The Third policy learning forum on upskilling pathways was held virtually in November 2020 and aimed to explore lessons learned about the implementation of upskilling pathways.

Participants, who included social partners, government and civil society representatives and experts in the field, stressed the need for upskilling pathways, especially in the face of the current pandemic. This is already having a disruptive impact on Europe's labour markets and threatens to accelerate the changes in the world of work already introduced by digital revolution.

According to Cedefop research, almost half of Europe's population (a total of 128 million

adults in the EU-27, Iceland, Norway and the UK) will have to update their skills or gain new ones to be able to keep or get a job that corresponds to their competences and skills level.

'Business will not be back as usual. Strong skills are a driver for competitiveness at EU level but also for personal and professional fulfilment of the individual,' said Laurentiu Plosceanu, EESC member and President of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, (SOC).

Such disruptive events for labour markets will be further aggravated by negative demographic changes in Europe. These will require economies to reconcile sustained productivity and adequate distribution of the benefits of growth across social groups and European societies.

'This will be a tremendous challenge, which translates into the need to support all people in preparing for and keeping pace with change,' said Cedefop Executive Director Jürgen Siebel.

He recalled that many of the EU's recent legislative proposals in this area, such as the skills agenda or the European pillar of social rights, already build on the principle that 'the best investment is in our people.'

Upskilling pathways

is a legislative proposal which aims to equip all Europeans with adequate skills required for their participation in the labour market and for unlocking their full potential.

**A VISION
FOR THE FUTURE**

#UpskillingPathways



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Mr Siebel went on to stress that ‘There is a need for a coherent strategy for upskilling and reskilling for all adults, employed or jobless, irrespective of their qualifications or economic backgrounds; at the same time, we must address the needs of enterprises with our ambitious thoughts.’

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Turning to the critical question of preparedness ahead of societal and economic disruptions, predicted and unforeseen, he noted: ‘Further social dialogue and involvement of stakeholders and civil society in designing upskilling pathways is crucial to ensure that our societies and economies are prepared to face the challenges and transformation ahead. They will help us to shape these transformations, rather than being shaped by them.’

Lech Pilawski, the President of the EESC Labour Market Observatory, confirmed the EESC’s readiness to cooperate in key areas, including changing qualifications and an unstable labour market. These are due

not only to Covid-19 but also to demographic changes, technological challenges, digitalisation, robotisation, development of artificial intelligence and labour market inequalities.’

A RARE OPPORTUNITY

The funds made available to Member States as part of the Covid-19 support and recovery package offer a unique opportunity, according to Chiara Riondino, European Commission’s Head of Unit DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: ‘We have an unprecedented occasion to use a massive amount of EU funding: we have EUR 40 billion available in grants and loans to finance national reforms supporting recovery. We are pushing to encourage Member States to put a chunk of this money into skills; into reforms to adult learning, and opportunities and instruments to increase the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships.’

Early feedback from the national level is encouraging, she said, predicting that large chunks of the funds will be used in these fields.

WORKING TOGETHER ON UPSKILLING PATHWAYS

Mr Siebel defined the ultimate goal as ensuring that every person, at any time, has opportunities to thrive in life and their careers and to unlock fully their potential and talent. He also pledged that Cedefop will continue to provide platforms for stakeholders to work together on this and exchange inspiring ideas and experiences.

Four years since the upskilling pathways recommendation was adopted, Mr Plosceanu believes that it has helped to highlight the fact that reskilling and upskilling is important not only for current labour market integration but also for creating future learning pathways towards sustainable careers and life transitions. ■

Cedefop project: Adult learning: empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling



Cedefop study: Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways, Vol. 1



Cedefop study: Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways, Vol. 2



Suiting VET to times of transition

“ *How revised EU policy aims to ensure vocational training can play its pivotal role* ”

The year 2020 will be memorable mainly for the wrong reasons, but it also marked a turning point for Europe's vocational education and training (VET). We need a skills revolution to overcome the crisis caused by the pandemic through an even speedier shift than planned towards a green, digital and fair economy and society. VET, particularly continuing VET (CVET), will be pivotal in making it happen: we need to unleash its full potential and make it better suited to new goals and tasks.

For almost 20 years, the so-called Copenhagen process has helped modernise VET and also contributed to the EU's overarching goals. In 2020, the start of a new VET policy cycle was due. It coincided with the launch of the EU's policy and funding package to boost recovery and transition, an opportunity for an approach with strong interlinkages.

ENABLING ROLE

As is evident from the new industrial and SME strategies, VET's enabling role is reflected across the board. It is seen as a means to safeguard access to quality education and training and lifelong learning for all, in line with the EU's social rights, and help tackle gender stereotypes in occupations. VET policy has been embedded in the renewed skills agenda, with close links to the recently reinforced youth guarantee and the efforts to build a European education area.

Concurrently, initiatives within the Green deal policy areas and the updated digital education

action plan aim to support VET, and education and training more generally, in providing the required skills and competences and turning green and digital themselves.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON VET FOR SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS, SOCIAL FAIRNESS AND RESILIENCE

- Agile in adapting to labour market changes
- Flexible, with progression opportunities at its core
- Driving innovation and preparing for the digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand
- Attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills
- Promoting equality of opportunities
- Underpinned by a culture of quality assurance in all types and forms of VET

AMBITIOUS POLICY

Against this backdrop, EU-level policy and governance for VET have undergone a relaunch. The first ever Council recommendation on VET outlines the vision and principles supporting the renewed policy. It is underpinned by elements of the quality assurance reference framework (EQAVET) and the credit system (ECVET). While it takes a longer-term perspective, it sets specific targets for the next five years when progress will be reported.

The recommendation is accompanied by the Osnabrück declaration, which defines concrete objectives and actions to assist countries in their work to translate intentions into practice. These were agreed jointly by the ministers of the EU-27, the EU social partners and the European Commission, as well as EEA partner and candidate countries, and supported by EU-level VET provider associations and learner representatives. This gives a new impetus to the Copenhagen process which acts as a tripartite cooperation platform stretching beyond the EU's borders.

Cedefop Executive Director Jürgen Siebel commented on the declaration during the meeting of the Directors General for VET, in the context of the German EU Presidency, in November: 'We appreciate the Osnabrück declaration and we are grateful that Cedefop was asked to contribute, providing scientific evidence and expertise. We are also proud that our conference in June/July, co-hosted with our sister agency ETF, was one cornerstone of the discussions leading to the final draft.'

WHAT IT MEANS

The renewed VET policy aims to:

- help young people and adults acquire skills and competences to manage the transitions to a green and digital economy and thrive in evolving labour markets and society;
- contribute to social fairness, resilience and prosperity for all;
- make European VET systems a worldwide reference.

This means making VET more agile, innovative, inclusive and quality assured. EU level measures, the stepped-up Erasmus+ programme and several EU funds will assist countries in this endeavour. Member States are asked to define an implementation plan and dedicated resources, guided by the recommendation principles and the Osnabrück declaration.

Balancing continuity and new elements, both policy documents reflect VET's capacity to empower people and enterprises to drive and not just to adapt to change. They focus on:

- upscaling CVET and future-proofing IVET based on skills intelligence and interlinking them better;
- more and better apprenticeships and work-based learning, also in CVET;
- inclusiveness as well as excellence, considering also the increasing relevance of VET at EQF levels 5 and above (higher VET);
- VET as the linchpin of skills ecosystems and in establishing centres of vocational excellence;
- making VET green and digital and providing the relevant skills to learners, teaching, training and guidance staff;
- increasing mobility and strategic approaches to international activities.

Both documents send a clear message: to succeed, it will take a joint effort with social partners and other stakeholders and strong, sustainable and broad partnerships of public and private actors supporting VET governance.

As in the past, Cedefop will continue to support this joint effort through its research, analyses and monitoring in line with the mandates given in the documents and through its activities more generally. ■



OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION ON VET AS AN ENABLER OF RECOVERY AND JUST TRANSITIONS TO DIGITAL AND GREEN ECONOMIES

- Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET
- Establishing a new lifelong learning culture: relevance of CVET and digitalisation
- Sustainability: a green link in VET
- European education and training area and international dimension of VET

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EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK 2020

goes **green** and **digital**

“ *An array of initiatives in support were presented in the second half of 2020, including the updated European skills agenda, a proposal for a VET recommendation, the Osnabrück declaration and the Pact for skills*

‘We will recover from this crisis and prepare for the future through vocational education and training (VET),’ stated European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit at the launch of the 2020 European vocational skills week (EVSU), in November. He went on to argue for the need of skilled people to master Europe’s digital and green transitions and for VET having an integral role.

According to Eurostat, 8.5 million pupils were enrolled in VET programmes in 2018; this is almost half of all pupils in the EU. The European Commission is keen to add to that number and also to boost continuing VET (CVET), with a focus on green and digital skills. An array of initiatives in support were presented in the second half of 2020, including the updated European skills agenda, a VET recommendation, the Osnabrück declaration and the Pact for skills.

The pact’s launch (see box) was one of the highlights of the fifth edition of the EVSU, which is organised by the Commission with Cedefop as a partner. This edition had a different feel as, due to the coronavirus pandemic, most activities were virtual, but it still managed to make an impact on learners and other stakeholders. The twin transitions were at the heart of the over 1 100 events in 38 countries in Europe and beyond, reaching over 3.5 million people.

CEDEFOP’S INPUT

Cedefop experts contributed as speakers or moderators in various sessions, including validation of non-formal and informal learning, apprenticeships and green skills, higher VET and future skill needs.

The agency’s Executive Director Jürgen Siebel reflected these aspects at the main conference on VET excellence for green and digital transitions: ‘VET, and especially continuing VET, should be responsive to changing labour market needs, but also be much more an essential enabler of innovation, proactivity and resilience. The next decade will also be a decade of VET.’

At the same conference, German Federal Minister for Education and Research Anja Karliczek, co-host of the week as part of the German EU Presidency, referred to the Osnabrück declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies: ‘We want to use the declaration to develop an innovative and flexible European vocational training sector and a new culture of continuing education.’

A VET graduate herself, Ms Karliczek argued that ‘good vocational training offers people a stable outlook for the future. At the same time, businesses have access to an urgently needed skilled workforce. This is the reason why I have made VET and CVET a



policy focus in my remit for the German EU Council Presidency.'

European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas added that 'the VET sector is closest to the labour market and will play a key role in delivering the green and digital transitions', with VET programmes becoming 'agile and future-proof'.

AWARD WINNERS

The week's celebrations closed with the VET excellence award ceremony. Commissioner Schmit praised participants for having

demonstrated that VET can be innovative and a bridge to the new digital and green world of work: 'Together, we will keep working to promote VET, and to make it more agile, digital and accessible to workers of all ages and throughout their life. We will keep making clear that VET is a unique path to employment.'

The Commissioner announced the award winners, including for #CedefopPhotoAward 2020. A team from Greece scooped the top prize, following an online vote, with their 'notion of green' (see pp. 16-19). ■

PACT FOR SKILLS

The pact is a key initiative of the updated European skills agenda, aiming to mobilise resources and give incentives to stakeholders to act to upskill and reskill the workforce. At the launch event, Commissioner Schmit and his counterpart for Internal Market, Thierry Breton, announced the first European skills partnerships in key industrial ecosystems:

- **AUTOMOTIVE:** the ambition to upskill **5%** of the workforce each year would result in around **700 000** people being upskilled throughout the ecosystem, representing a potential overall private and public investment of **EUR 7 billion**.
- **MICROELECTRONICS:** initiatives represent an overall public and private investment of **EUR 2 billion**, providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities for more than **250 000**

workers and students **(2021-25)** in Europe's electronics clusters.

- **AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE:** the ambition is to upskill around **6%** of the workforce each year, reaching **200 000** people, and to reskill **300 000** people to enter the ecosystem, representing a public and private investment of **EUR 1 billion** over the next **10 years**.

Commissioner Schmit maintained that the pact will gather and inspire commitments from companies large and small, employment agencies, social partners, VET providers and other partners to create large-scale industrial partnerships. Commissioner Breton noted that 'the pact is about investing today in our people to serve the industry of tomorrow; it is just the beginning of our European skills offensive.'



#CedefopPhotoAward

defying coronavirus



Cedefop is delighted that, ultimately, numerous students decided to defy the obstacles and present their passion to Europe

Almost 200 people involved in vocational education and training (VET) took part in the 2020 #CedefopPhotoAward despite the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 emergency. The pandemic led to closed schools and hindered the competition's potential; but, in Cedefop Executive Director Jürgen Siebel's words, 'Cedefop is delighted that, ultimately, numerous students decided to defy the obstacles and present their passion to Europe.'

The contest's fifth edition had the theme Vocational education and training: your green or digital skills story. It attracted teams consisting of 143 VET learners and 39 teachers/trainers, representing 34 learning providers from 13 countries.

The entry that won the first prize, the Digital & green waves team from Greece (from the 2nd VET School of Thessaloniki – OAED), was decided by a combination of popular and jury votes. The award was presented to the winners during the virtual VET excellence awards ceremony at the European vocational skills week 2020 (9-13 November). The public had been invited to choose between the two strongest

contestants in an online ballot organised by the European Commission. The other nominee for the top award was the NTZDZOpatow team from Poland (the Niepubliczne Technikum im. gen. W. Andersa w Opatowie).

The *Prix du jury* for 2020 went to the ZALA team from the College of Nursing and Secondary Medical School in Ústí nad Labem, in Czechia.

#CedefopPhotoAward 2020 also had a novelty. For the first time it had a separate section for best video. Winners of this new award were Slovakia's SUPSTARS team from Vocational Art School Jakobyho 15.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, with the resulting travel and movement restrictions, the advertised prizes had to be modified and all winners received travel vouchers to be used at a time when restrictions have been lifted.

Check out the
2020 winning
and runner-up
photostories



Watch the
winning video

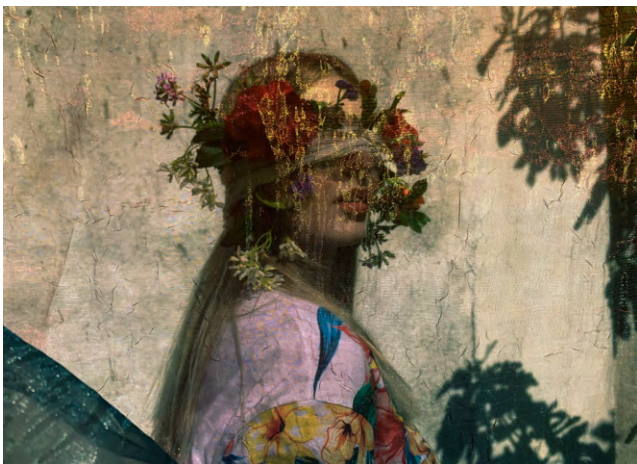




© DIGITAL & GREEN WAVES

FIRST PRIZE**GREECE: DIGITAL & GREEN WAVES (DIGITAL & GREEN WAVES TEAM)**

Eleni Fransizi, Eleftheria-Giannoula Sokolaki, Eleftheria Pigka and Sofia Tsochataridou, who are studying to become graphic designers, in their entry combine the four elements of nature: earth, air, water and fire: 'We focused on earth, presenting our own notion of 'green', which is not something ordinary. For us, 'green' is family and friends who give colour to our days; it's recalling precious moments and emotions; it's joy and dance, smiles and passions. It is a person, nostalgia, chaos and inaction. Our 'green' is Art. Our common stimulus is our interaction with nature. Mother nature inspires our life and is a major part of our reality.'

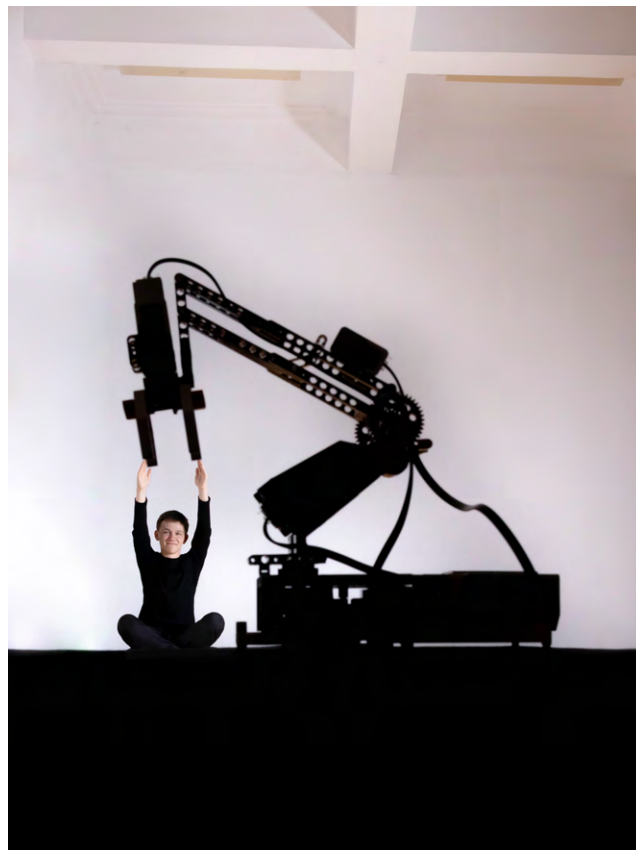
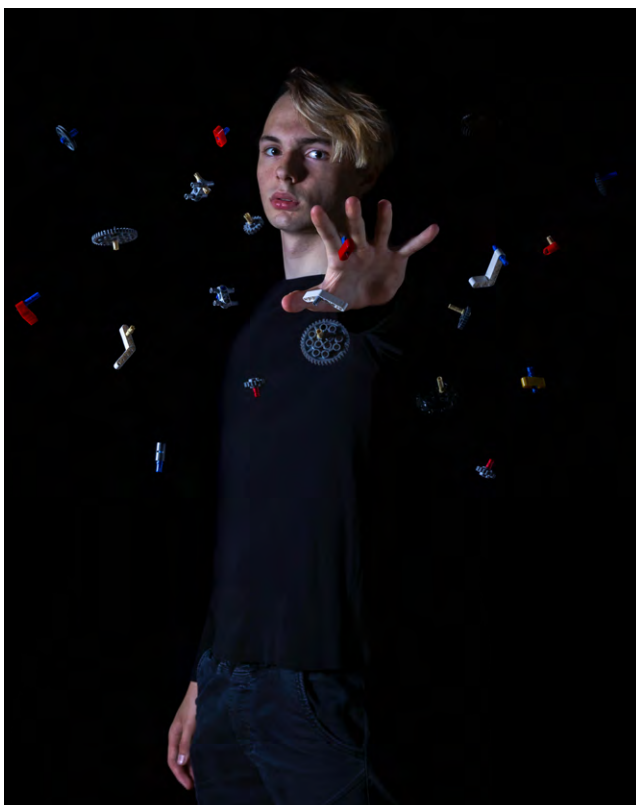




SECOND PRIZE

POLAND: DREAM, WORK HARD AND REACH FOR THE SKY (NTZDZOPATOW TEAM)

Jakub Kordyka, Maciej Gawron, Bartłomiej Kordos and Krystian Gawlik are studying to become IT technicians but they argue that their school is about more than that: 'The technical classes, although mandatory, are combined with education, passion, exercising initiative in IT, and the best apprenticeship to start our future! The photos, taken by students from the school photography club, present the results of programming, robotics and e-sport. These pictures depict the mission of maintaining your identity in a world of chameleons: always being yourself and not getting lost in the MATRIX. Computer science gives us power, it helps us learn and play, but it's the human mind that's always superior.'

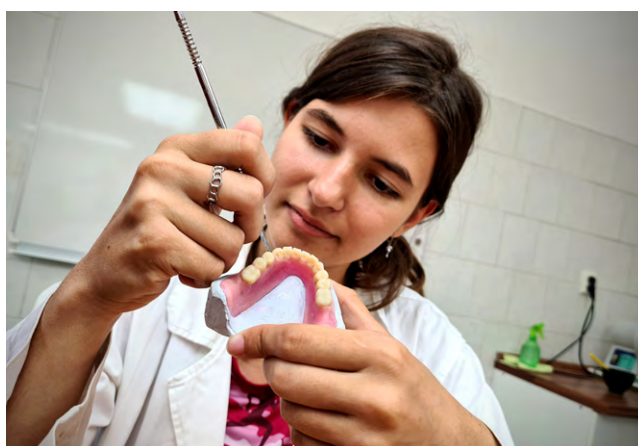




PRIX DU JURY

CZECHIA: TOGETHER AGAIN (ZALA TEAM)

Adela Malkova, Lucie Jaluskova, Adela Klabanova and Zdislava Kroupova are a group of friends who like to do creative things: 'This is why we chose to become dental technicians. During the situation with the coronavirus, however, we could not do what we enjoy. Not only was there no school, there were no workshops, lectures or events that we were looking forward to and which enrich the teaching at our school. We were so sad! We missed the digital technologies like the CAD/CAM system, which we use in our work and enjoy the most. But it is better now, and we can learn how to make people smile again.'



#CEDEFOPPHOTOAWARD

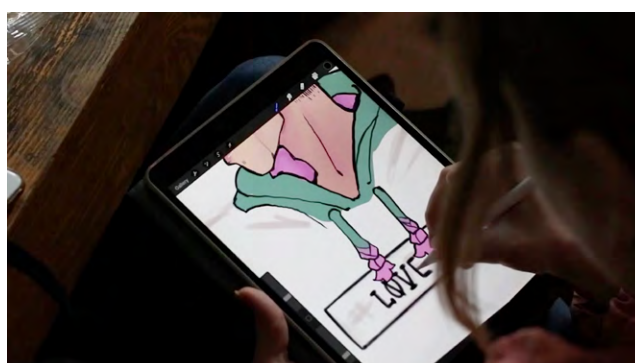


© ZALA

BEST VIDEO

SLOVAKIA: WE CAN CREATE A BETTER WORLD (SUPSTARS TEAM)

Matus Molnar, Adam Krizovensky and Alexander Pirsc narrate how young people in their school study traditional arts and crafts as well as modern digital technologies, with an emphasis on environment protection and nature enhancement: 'Students acquire complex knowledge, learn traditional artistic skills and craftsmanship. Digital technologies such as VR, 3D modelling or digital animation enrich the education process. With their creative artistic work, students also reflect on current trends of global environmental protection.'



© SUPSTARS

Personal service workers

Few occupations were hit by the coronavirus pandemic as hard as those in personal service: cooks, waiters, travel guides, hairdressers and beauticians and similar jobs. Their dependence on personal proximity while delivering their services, along with employment in highly affected sectors such as tourism and other jobs with seasonal and temporary contracts, made them particularly vulnerable.

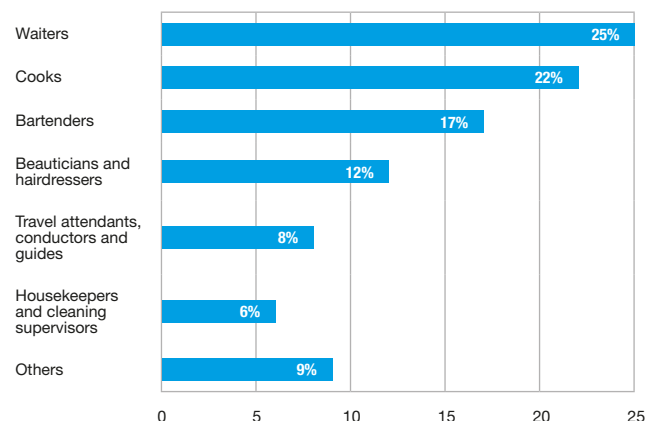
Personal service workers are a high proportion of the labour force in countries that rely heavily on tourism. Spain, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus and Austria have all suffered greatly in this respect.

Two thirds of personal service workers hold vocational education and training qualifications. A Cedefop analysis of online job ads shows that employers are interested more in their transversal skills, such as adaptability, teamwork or communication with clients. In contrast, digital skills are still rarely requested.

Two notable trends have affected demand for their skills during the pandemic. Maintaining hygiene and cleanliness at workplaces is a key weapon against coronavirus. Tourism and personal services, are, after healthcare, the key battleground in the fight against the virus. If hotels, restaurants, travel

Personal service workers in the EU

Detailed jobs offered in online advertisements

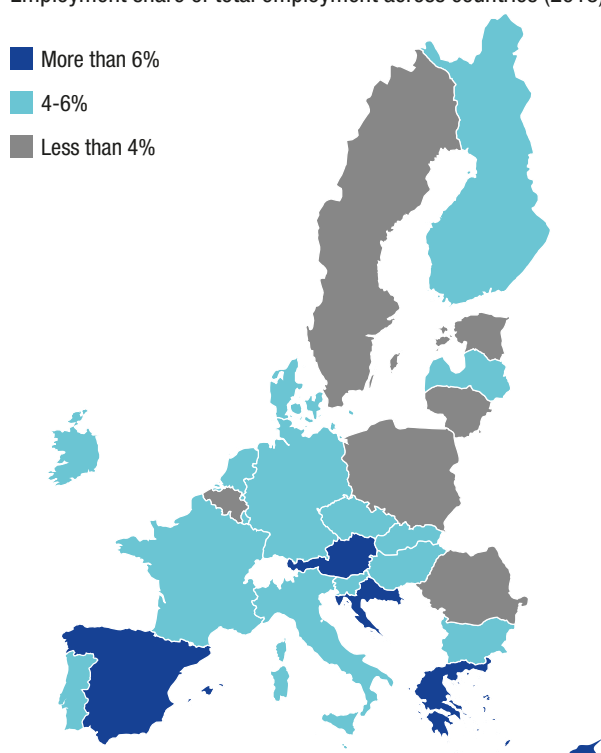


PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS

- 11 million employees in the EU (2018)
- 60% are women
- 1 in 4 has a temporary contract
- 1 in 5 is self-employed

Personal service workers in the EU

Employment share of total employment across countries (2018)



agencies and beauty salons want to survive, their staff must be thorough and comply with high health and safety standards.

To a lesser degree, the importance of ICT skills is also expected to rise. At least part of personal service workers' tasks is gradually moving to remote delivery, from digital orders in restaurants and providing information to clients to assisting and guiding tourists or e-promotion or e-sale of products.

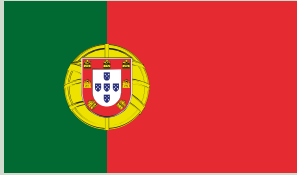
It is still unclear whether coronavirus has changed skill needs in tourism and personal services temporarily or permanently. But even when social distancing becomes a thing of the past thanks to vaccination, personal service workers' tasks and skills will need to adapt to the evolving needs of the population: this could cover servicing older citizens, people with disabilities or serving rapidly developing new areas of tourism, such as elderly tourism, ecotourism/agritourism or culinary tourism. ■

More on Cedefop's
skills in online job
vacancies analysis



Learn more about
personal service
workers





Vocational education and training (VET) in Portugal, the current holder of the rotating EU Presidency, has been occupying a place of political and strategic relevance during recent decades.

Important efforts have been made to improve the effectiveness of VET pathways. Widening the range of VET provision and opening it to general secondary schools, along with national plans to promote educational success, drastically reduced early leaving from education and training, from 44.9% in 2000 to 10.6% in 2019.

The government has taken specific steps to increase the status of VET through a range of initiatives to match its offer to labour market needs.

Adult
qualifications
increase
targeted in



Public policies struggle to increase adult qualifications; this has been a structural issue for a long time in Portugal and remains high on the political agenda. Revitalising adult education and training, especially after a steep decline in the funding of VET for adults during the period of the 2013 economic crisis, became a national flag and effort in recent years.

Launched in 2016, the *Qualifica* programme aims at reversing this trend; *Qualifica* centres were introduced as a key tool of the programme, regulating their organisation and set-up. The centres cover low- and very low-skilled adults, including the unemployed and NEETs (not in education, employment or training). Their roles include processes for recognition of prior learning acquired throughout life and referring adults to education and training to complete their qualification path.

Portugal's VET objectives also aim at modernising the education and training system to make it more attractive, flexible and better adapted to the digital and green economy. Also high on the political agenda are digital competences, which have become even more relevant due to the current pandemic.

An action plan for the digital transition was launched in April 2020. This plan is aligned with the National digital competences initiative e.2030; this aims at providing the population with the right competences for the effective use of digital technologies, investing in necessary training and qualification. Digital competences are also among the Portuguese EU Presidency priorities. ■

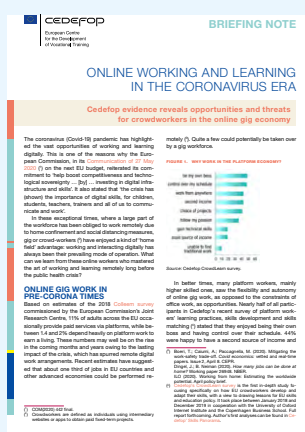


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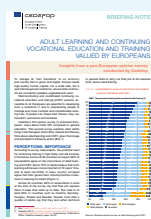
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IN FOCUS

BRIEFING NOTE: ONLINE WORKING AND LEARNING IN THE CORONAVIRUS ERA

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the vast opportunities for working and learning digitally. In these exceptional times, where a large part of the workforce has been obliged to work remotely due to home confinement and social distancing measures, gig or crowdworkers have enjoyed a kind of 'home field' advantage: working and interacting digitally has always been their prevailing mode of operation. What can we learn from these online workers who mastered the art of working and learning remotely long before the public health crisis?



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IN FOCUS

MAKING EXCELLENCE INCLUSIVE: TOWARDS A NEW CEDEFOP SURVEY OF VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS



3 FEBRUARY

WEBINAR

The webinar's purpose is to explore avenues for Cedefop to monitor the situation of vocational education and training (VET) teachers and trainers, as well as the learning conditions for pupils, and reflect on the added value, scope and methodology of a Cedefop-led European survey of these groups.

Participants will include European Brussels-based policy-makers and social partners. Also included are invited experts in professional development of VET teachers and trainers, survey design and implementation, and in the use of survey results to inform decision-making. They will discuss existing research and data gaps, as well as challenges that VET teachers and trainers face in:

- supporting learners at risk including marginalised learners (socioeconomically, ethnic minority groups and migrants) and creating inclusive learning and working environments;
- working in digital environments, as also imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, and making use of digital advancements (virtual reality, artificial intelligence) in teaching, learning and assessment processes.

The webinar's conclusions will support the preparation of a new Cedefop survey on VET teachers and trainers.

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