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# SOCIAL *AGENDA*



The **skills**  
**imperative**

I focus on

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**BEYOND THE EU**

ETF Director  
Madlen Serban



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**INSIDE THE EU**

CEDEFOP Director  
Joachim James Calleja



## EDITORIAL



*Youth unemployment is low in countries where vocational education and training is strong. This is why the issue of skills is becoming so prominent at EU level since the European elections of June 2014.*

*There is now a European Commissioner for skills, Marianne Thyssen, who is also in charge of Employment, Social Affairs and Labour Mobility. Her mandate includes contributing to growth and investment by strengthening skills through the further development of vocational education and training, and implementing the EU Youth Guarantee scheme.*

*Just after the European elections, the European Council set as a priority to “help develop skills and unlock talents and life chances for all (...) by promoting the right skills for a modern economy and life-long learning and by facilitating the mobility of workers, especially in fields with persistent vacancies and skills mismatches”. The newly-elected European parliament called for further improvement of the transparency and recognition of qualifications within the EU. And in November 2014, the new European Commission launched an Investment Plan for Europe which will translate over the next three years into up-grading jobs and investing in people.*

*As the EU emerges from the 2008 economic crisis, the issue of skills offers a new angle under which the challenges facing the EU can be addressed in a pragmatic way: an ageing workforce, a mismatch of skills supply and demand, technological change, global competition, as well as a post-crisis legacy of youth and long-term unemployment.*

## *“Drawing up a comprehensive skills strategy”*

*Drawing up a comprehensive skills strategy requires building synergies: at national level, between the education, labour, economic and social affairs ministries; between the education and employment stakeholders, including the social partners; and at European level, starting with connecting the work carried out by the departments of the European*

*Commission covering the numerous policy areas involved. They now work together in a single Skills inter-service group.*

*Such a strategy will be proposed by the European Commission in 2016 and its first task will be to streamline the EU tools and networks which already exist, so that they may respond ever more effectively to the EU, national governments and people's needs.*

### **Michel Servoz**

*Director General of the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion department*

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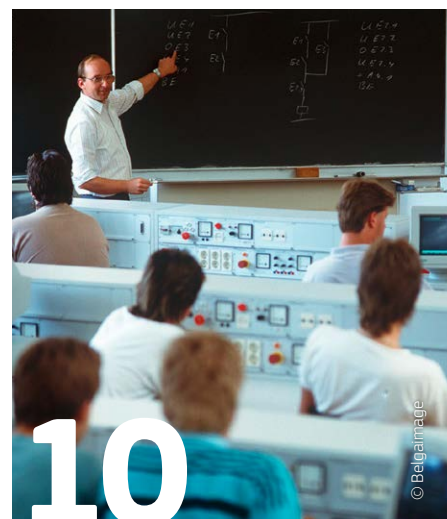
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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 22 June: Vocational education and training

The ministers in charge of vocational education and training (VET), European Social Partners and the European Commission met in Riga to further deepen European cooperation in VET and to identify the key priorities until 2020. On this occasion, the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers and the European Commission organised a high-level event on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, which was launched two years ago in Leipzig. A number of new companies and organisations joined the Alliance by making new pledges on developing and providing quality apprenticeships in cooperation between the world of education and the world of work (see in particular article p.10 and the special feature page 14 onwards).



**New lease of life:** Ministers and the European Commission gave a boost to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships when they met in June 2015.

### 18 May: Innovating practices

The European Commission published a report in which it monitors good practices across Europe, as part of the EU's programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). Through this programme, it finances projects which enable

administrations and other partners to develop new services, assess new policies and exchange good practices. The report collects 16 examples in the area of employment and 3 in the field of social protection and inclusion.

### 13 May: Economic governance recommendations



**Boosting investment:** The EU's 2015 recommendations reflect the priorities of Jean-Claude Juncker's investment plan.

The European Commission put forward recommendations for 2015 as part of the European Semester process of EU economic policy coordination, in view of having them adopted by the European Council (Heads of State and government) in July. These recommendations have to do with boosting investment to support future growth (removing barriers to financing and launching investment projects and swiftly implementing the Commission's €315 billion Investment Plan for Europe), delivering ambitious structural reforms in product, service and labour markets that raise productivity, competitiveness and investment, pursuing responsible fiscal policies that strike a balance between short-term stabilisation and long-term sustainability and improving employment policy and social protection.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## 29 April: Integrated social services

The European Commission published a first overview of one-stop shops for several social services such as training, social work and care services in the EU, identifying best practices in the process. Duplication and gaps are avoided, information

and knowledge sharing is facilitated, needs and responses are easily identified and the services' costs are reduced. Integrated service delivery facilitates the enforcement of, for example, mandatory participation in activation measures.

## 23 April: Social protection systems

A report commissioned by the European Commission to the European Social Service policy network of independent experts shows that EU countries have made progress in implementing reforms towards social investment. However, there is still a lot to be done for the modernisation of the social protection systems across the EU. Many countries have well-established social investment approaches to their social welfare systems, which they have been maintaining and strengthening over the years. However the crisis and fiscal constraints have, at times, complicated some countries' reform efforts. The report shows that combining unemployment benefits, job-search assistance and quality services such as childcare is very effective in reducing people's risk of poverty and improving their job prospects.



**Childcare:** Combining services such as childcare with unemployment benefits, job-search assistance and quality services reduces poverty.

## 10 April: Worker information and consultation

The European Commission started a consultation with the EU level social partners in order to obtain their views on the possible direction of EU action aimed at strengthening the coherence and effectiveness of the existing EU legislation on worker information and consultation at national level, i.e. the directives on collective redundancies, transfers of

undertakings and on a general framework for the information and consultation of workers. Definitions of the concepts of "information" and "consultation" could be more particularly looked at, as well as the possibility to include public administration in the directives' personal scope of application.

## 19 March: Tripartite social summit



**Social dialogue:** EU economic policy coordination, investment and the energy union on the agenda.

During the first Tripartite Social Summit since the new European Commission took office in November 2014, EU leaders and social partners discussed the Commission's analysis of EU countries' economic situation and the next steps in the European Semester of economic policy coordination. The Social Summit also discussed progress with the Investment Plan for Europe and other major EU policy initiatives such as the Energy Union. The tripartite Social Summit meets twice a year, ahead of the spring and autumn European Council (heads of State and government) meetings.

## EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

# Portugal and the Czech Republic – Education

Further insight into some of the 2014-2020 ESF programmes agreed by the European Commission



**Reaching out:** A teacher welcomes children from the Roma community who live in a camp, prior to a class in a bus here, in France.

Education, training and qualifications are the focus of the European Social Fund (ESF) operational programme for human capital in Portugal. With nearly 85% of its funding coming from the EU budget, this programme amounts to € 3.642 billion. It seeks to improve the quality of school education and reduce early school leaving rates to 10%. It supports secondary vocational courses and gives marginalised groups better access to good quality education at pre-school, primary and secondary levels, reducing their risk of social exclusion.

Grants will be delivered to 124 000 diploma-level students and 4 300 PhD students, while new short professional courses will open up higher education to 23 000 students. Around 30 000 people are expected to complete training courses that lead to certified skills, and vocational education, apprenticeships and specialised artistic education will give young people the opportunity to earn qualifications.

### Social inclusion

Young people and those in danger of exclusion and poverty are at the centre of another of Portugal's programmes: the ESF

programme for social inclusion, which amounts to € 2.5 billion in funding, of which half is dedicated to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination.

Over 950 000 jobseekers and long-term unemployed are expected to acquire new skills and qualifications through this programme. Some 44 000 young people will also receive support to help them find jobs or enter professional traineeships through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI, see box page 7).

Around 30 000 people working in the social economy will benefit from capacity-building actions, such as training, in order to make the sector more professional and modern. Some 40 000 people with disabilities will get vocational training for suitable job opportunities, and the ongoing 'Programa Escolhas' schools programme will support 46 000 children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Research and education

The European Commission has also adopted the Czech "Research, Development and Education" programme, which



**Special needs:** 40 000 people with disabilities will benefit from vocational training in Portugal.

combines funds from the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It aims to invest over € 2.76 billion from the EU budget – over 1.2 billion from the ESF and 1.5 billion from the ERDF – to address key challenges in research and education. The funding will also support social inclusion, in particular the integration of marginalised Roma children into mainstream education.

Most of the EU funding will be used to promote inclusive education at all levels, facilitating equal access to high-quality pre-school, elementary and secondary school. It seeks to improve students' results in key competencies such as foreign languages, maths, sciences or information technology. It will also pursue the relevance of education and training for the needs of employers, as well as the reinforcement of training for future and novice teachers, among others. Around 47 000 education professionals will receive targeted training.

More students with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds will have access to university studies and to enhanced lifelong learning. Investments in this area will benefit more than 14 000 researchers and academic workers and 130 000 students.

Measures to help Czech research achieve international excellence will also be funded by the programme. About 50 research centres and higher education institutions will be modernised.

### Young people

Up to 230 000 people are expected to benefit from projects targeting better skills and more job opportunities, in particular young people through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI, see box). A range of measures are helping the most disadvantaged social groups to improve their quality of life and gain skills and work, such as in the Carlsbad region.

Women with young children are benefiting from more child-care opportunities – allowing them to pick up their careers. Marginalised and rural communities are getting better access to health and social services as well as training and work opportunities, as in the Ostrava and Karviná region.

In addition, the ESF is helping to improve the professionalism and transparency of public administration.

### More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=737&langId=en&pubId=7755&type=1&furtherPubs=otherissues>

#### *On the ESF:*

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp>

#### *On youth employment:*

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036&langId=en>

### **Directly and indirectly to young people**

*The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) was created in 2013 to focus EU funding on regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25% and on young people neither in employment, education or training. Its aim is to work directly with individuals and place them within or close to the labour market.*

*Other ESF funds can be used to carry out the complementary structural changes needed to implement the EU Youth Guarantee, which ensures that young people up to the age of 25 receive an offer for a quality job or quality education or a quality apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of leaving school or losing a job. For example, setting up a framework for apprenticeships or developing employment services to effectively deliver the youth guarantee.*

*In addition, the ESF Regulation for the years 2014-2020 contains a specific investment priority on the sustainable integration of young people neither in employment, education or training into the labour market.*



## INTERNATIONAL

# The skills dimension of migration

The European Training Foundation is organising a conference in September



**ETF director Madlen Serban:** "We need to turn the traditional way of looking at education, training and employment on its head".

Never has there been a greater need for effective policy measures to support managed migration. The European Training Foundation (ETF) is organising a conference on the Skills Dimension of Migration on 15-16 September 2015 in Brussels. It will bring together representatives of 11 ETF partner countries from Eastern Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean with representatives from the EU Member States, the EU institutions and international organisations. They will discuss successful policy measures and good practices for the employment and skills development of migrants and returnees.

The ETF is a specialised agency of the European Union that helps 30 countries around the periphery of the EU to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policies. Its vision is to make vocational education and training (VET)

in the partner countries a driver for lifelong learning and sustainable development, with a focus on competitiveness and social cohesion.

At the Brussels conference, an inventory of migrant support measures and country case studies will be the starting point for discussions, with a particular focus on the role of countries of origin in pre-departure preparation and reintegration of returnees and the transparency and portability of skills. The conference will be a unique opportunity to share experience on the link between skills development and migration among all the European neighbourhood countries in their implementation of the Mobility Partnership.

## Torino Process

On 3 and 4 June 2015 the ETF hosted the Torino Process conference, bringing together leading figures in education,





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training, and employment from international agencies, EU member states, and many of the ETF's 30 partner countries.

The Torino process is a biennial, evidence-based process that reviews transformations of, and reforms in vocational education and training (VET) across most of the ETF's partner countries against an agreed analytical framework and related set of indicators. However, it is not just about tracking progress. It is also a policy learning facility and tool and, crucially, is owned by participating countries, with the ETF facilitating the growing number who conduct the public policy progress analysis themselves.

The ETF provides differentiated support, based on countries' respective interests in these areas. Established in 2010, the Torino Process is producing intriguing results that could challenge established thinking about VET, general education, and the labour market.

### Upside down

In the future everyone will learn faster and more flexibly to gain skills for jobs that might last months, not years. Most will work later into their lives, sometimes for an employer and sometimes for themselves. They will exploit their talents productively whether they spend their life in one village, or live and work in different countries. In this future, policy support for education, training, and employment systems will, more than ever, determine success in delivering social cohesion and competitiveness.

If this sounds challenging for the economically powerful countries of the European Union, it is even more so for those in the EU's neighbourhood, some of whom are coping with conflict, political instability, and the legacy of past ideologies.

"What we need to do in this context is turn the traditional way of looking at education, training, and employment on its head," says ETF Director Madlen Serban. "In any given country we need to see the structure of the education system as being a result of the human capital – the knowledge,

skills, talents, and behaviours – that the country needs. Not the other way around."

### Emancipation

For years VET has been considered only as remedial education, aimed at bringing back those who are economically and educationally marginalised. This is both an institutional and a reputational issue, but is changing. "I think this is why in many countries where they exclusively work with VET from this perspective, VET has been considered by the learners, and their families, as being the second, if not the last choice," says Madlen Serban.

Yet in countries with positive mid-term prospects for economic development, evidence shows that VET is guiding the human capital development agenda. Not only can these countries report prosperity, they can also demonstrate a positive human capital development perspective in which people take control of their careers – if there are no local jobs, they take their talents elsewhere. "But it's an informed decision," Serban adds, "and enabling people to make informed decisions is the central purpose of everything that we do."

This sense of VET's emancipation from an out-dated legacy is not new. But the Torino Process is showing that skills achievement, skills formation, and skills use are becoming greater priorities. Madlen Serban points out that "unless we create a chance for citizens to do something with their learning we are going to be confronted with a lot of social problems. So the public policies in skills development have to be considered from the perspective of social consequences, not exclusively from the perspective of economic impact. However, we can't pretend that VET alone can perform miracles. There has to be proper economic governance."

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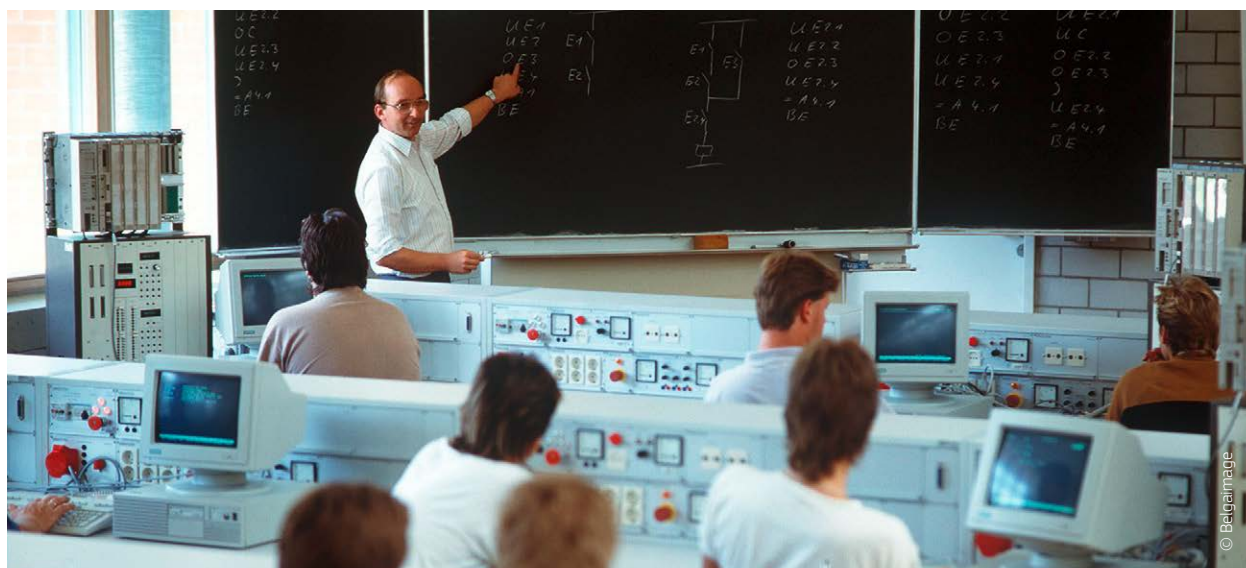
### More information:

<http://www.etf.europa.eu>

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

# Renewed impulse

Vocational education and training modernisation is crucial for European jobs and growth



**Teachers and trainers too:** Professionals working in vocational education and training also need to up-date their skills and competences.

A much more prominent role is being attributed to vocational education and training (VET) in the EU growth and jobs agenda. Quality VET is key to addressing the economic and social challenges facing Europe: very high youth unemployment, an ageing workforce, technological changes and a mismatch of skills supply and demand.

On 22 June 2015, the ministers in charge of VET in the EU Member states and candidate countries as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, met in Riga, Latvia. Together with the EU-level social partners and the European Commission, they endorsed a series of conclusions for modernising VET over the next five years by increasing its overall quality and making it more attractive.

VET is often regarded as a second choice learning pathway, for less talented young people. Yet there is a huge demand for skilled workers, there are skills shortages in vocational professions and VET has a very good record in terms of employment and wages.

The focus is now on “medium-term deliverables” (see box page 11) addressing work-based learning, quality assurance, access to training and qualifications for all, key competences and the continuing development of VET professionals.

### Work-based learning

The approach on which the five deliverables is based gives priority to work-based learning: apprenticeship; school-based VET, which includes on-the-job training periods in companies; and work-based learning which is integrated in a school-based programme, e.g. on-site labs, workshops, junior and practice firms or simulations.

The countries involved will boost the share of work-based learning in both school-based and company-based VET programmes. They will create a clear regulatory framework for work-based learning and set up support structures to help companies manage the administrative aspects. They will also assist VET providers in finding training places in enterprises for both trainees and VET teachers and trainers, and encourage small and medium-size enterprises to provide apprenticeship places.

### Quality assurance

In this context, quality assurance is becoming increasingly important. Feedback from labour markets – e.g. on the

employment rate of VET graduates and the transitions they go through – is particularly crucial. This requires combining data on learning, labour market entry and career.

Coherent systems must be established for data collection and analysis. Mechanisms must be created to actually feed the results of the monitoring back to the VET providers. In turn, this means developing the capacities of the VET providers, as well as of the local and regional authorities, to use this information when they design curricula. One way of responding rapidly to emerging skills requirements is to expand the modularised offer of continuous VET.

Employers can also contribute to up-skilling people by creating learning-conducive environments at the work place. Enhancing access to VET and qualifications is crucial for people to keep up with technological developments. The focus here is put on flexible learning pathways. This calls for efficient and integrated guidance services which take people to the right training offer.

### Key competences

The mission of VET is to equip learners with concrete skills for occupations. At the same time, VET also needs to develop competences which will enable them to stay employable throughout life: basic skills such as numeracy, literacy, foreign languages and digital skills; and transversal competences such as learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression.

### Inter-linked deliverables

*The five deliverables adopted in June 2015 to modernise Vocational Education and Training (VET) by 2020 are all inter-linked, complementary and mutually supportive.*

*Work-based learning – deliverable 1 – caters for labour market relevant / job-specific skills, while key competences – deliverable 4 – are there to enable long-term employability. This combination ensures a balance between, on one hand, the need to equip learners with job specific skills to find a job “tomorrow”, and, on the other, ensuring a sufficient level of key competences that give people the foundations for remaining employable and managing career transitions over a lifetime.*

*Skills for employability, in turn, will be supported through a greater training offer and better access to training for all, particularly through continuing vocational education and training – deliverable 3. Quality ultimately depends on governments setting the right conditions for quality assurance in VET – deliverable 2 – and the quality of teaching – deliverable 5. In this respect, the professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors is crucial: excellent and well-funded reforms will fail without qualified and motivated staff to implement the reforms on a day to day basis.*



**A priority:** Work-based learning is a priority for the EU between now and 2020.





**Falling even in Germany:** The number of new apprenticeships is falling in the EU, hence the need for EU-wide re-boosting.

## Excellence and inclusion

*A Vocational Education and training (VET) modernisation agenda was first launched at EU level in 2002: The Copenhagen process, covering all EU Member State and candidate countries, plus the European Economic Area countries. National and EU level social partners are important stakeholders in this process.*

*Among the most important results achieved since 2002 are the Recommendations on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) the European Quality Assurance reference framework for VET (EQAVET), the single framework for transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass), the Council Resolution on Guidance and the Council Conclusions on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.*

*Following the adoption of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the Copenhagen process was reviewed in 2010 with the adoption of the Bruges Communiqué. It set out a vision of excellence and social inclusion, with long term objectives and some short-term deliverables to be carried out between 2011 and 2014.*

It is crucial to further strengthen them in the VET curricula, e.g. by assessing the place of key competences in VET curricula, improving the level of basic skills of VET students, strengthening the provision of key competencies particularly in work-related training and promoting innovative approaches to providing combined key competencies and work-specific skills.

People very often possess skills which are not visible to employers. Mechanisms are required to validate skills acquired in non-formal and informal settings (see box page 19).

Professionals working in VET also need to be up-to-date with their skills and competences. Approaches to their continuous development need to be customised: teachers in VET institutions need more practical experience in companies, while trainers and mentors in work-based learning need to acquire pedagogical skills. This entails developing policies addressing VET teachers and trainers' competence development, and empowering and supporting the bodies responsible for the professional development of VET teachers and trainers.

## Boosting apprenticeship

In Riga, the ministers also took part in a high-level conference specifically dedicated to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA). It marked the two years of EAfA's existence and highlighted the importance of apprenticeship as a successful form of work-based learning.

## Youth and adults

*In 2013, the EU launched a series of initiatives in favour of youth employment which all confirm the crucial role of initial Vocational Education and Training (VET) in increasing the employability of young people:*

- *the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (see article),*
- *the Youth Guarantee, which ensures that all young people up to age 25 receive a good-quality offer for a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed,*
- *and the Youth Employment Initiative, which focuses EU funding on regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25% and on young people neither in employment, education or training.*

*But VET also has a crucial role to play in re-training and up-skilling adults. The potential of continuing VET to improve people's competitiveness and enterprises' performance is not yet fully used.*

The aim of EAfA is to increase the supply, quality and image of apprenticeship throughout Europe. It provides an informal platform which brings together the Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the national authorities together with other relevant stakeholders, such as the social partners, companies, VET providers, chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, regions and other non-for-profit and youth organisations.

EAfA has raised awareness of the crucial importance of apprenticeship. Before the Riga event, it had led to 24 individual commitments from EU countries and triggered some 50 pledges from companies, social partners, chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and VET providers to carry out concrete actions. Thanks to EAfA, all EU countries have included apprenticeship in the way they implement the EU Youth Guarantee.

However, the number of new apprenticeships in the EU is actually decreasing. It fell by 8.1 % in France from 2012 and 2013 (by 12 % in the first semester of 2014) and by 3.7 % in Germany. Those two countries have reacted: France by confirming its aim to increase the number of apprenticeships to 500 000 by 2017 and Germany by signing a new Alliance 2015-2018 which brings together all the stakeholders, including the trade unions. Germany also introduced a new concept: assisted apprenticeships in SMEs for low achievers, with a target of 10 000 new opportunities for 2015-16.

The Riga event has given EAfA a new boost. At the time of printing, it had led to 25 new commitments. The European Commission presented a set of new initiatives, including strengthened support by Cedefop and a commitment to further engage with companies, EU social partners and other relevant stakeholders. It will provide targeted financial support for projects to involve SMEs, and a Cedefop conference will be organised on this issue in November 2015.

The Commission will organise regular EAfA meetings and launch a study to assess progress, while the EU funding mechanisms for apprenticeship will be more clearly earmarked and streamlined.

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### More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=737&langId=en&pubId=7755&type=1&furtherPubs=otherissues>

### *EU cooperation on Vocational Education and Training:*

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/index_en.htm)

### *European Alliance for Apprenticeship:*

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/alliance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/alliance_en.htm)

### *A re-designed webpage with real-time opportunities, linked to the new Drop'pin@Eures website:*

<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/droppin/>

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### Video:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1188&langId=en&videoId=2670&vl=en>

## SPECIAL FEATURE

# The skills imperative

## A skills policy is key to raising productivity and preserving the European social model

For the first time, skills are part of the portfolio of a European Commissioner: Marianne Thyssen, who is also responsible for employment, social affairs and labour mobility.

An inter-service group has been created by the European Commission's Employment department to coordinate all that the Commission does in the areas of skills and vocational education and training (VET). The first task of this group is to clinch the review of existing tools and networks which the Education and Culture department had started under the previous Commission.

It is not just this special feature which is devoted to skills. It is in fact the whole of this issue of *Social Agenda*, with articles on the way Portugal and the Czech republic are focusing European Social Fund (ESF) co-funding on education, training, qualifications and research (page 6); how the EU and neighbouring

countries are tackling the issue of migration from a skills angle (page 8); how ministers agreed on 22 June to focus on work-based learning and re-boost the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (page 10); and what EU-wide VET tools and networks are already available (page 15).

Beyond the special feature, this issue also contains a testimony from Birgit, who became paraplegic after a health accident and found a permanent position again through a programme co-funded by the ESF (page 24); a plea from the director of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, for European countries to commit themselves to raising the VET profile and strengthening VET ties with the world of employment (page 26); and an interview with the head of the European Commission's Skills and Qualifications service, who has worked in both the Employment and the Education departments of the Commission (page 27).



**First to have skills in her portfolio:** European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen (left), with German Minister Andrea Nahles in a Siemens training centre.





**Non-formal education:** Where or when one has learnt something, e.g. in a non-governmental organisation, should not matter.

# Creating synergies

## A review of existing EU skills-related tools and networks is underway

During the past decades, a large number of European tools were set up to enhance learning and working mobility by making skills and qualifications more transparent.

They are now being reviewed to integrate them better, bridge the gap between the world of education and the world of work and address people's needs more effectively.

### Comparing qualifications

Of all the existing EU tools and networks, perhaps the most emblematic is the European Qualifications Network (EQF) for lifelong learning. It provides an overarching framework which EU countries implement by relating their national qualification levels to a set of European reference levels.

The EQF focuses on qualifications rather than on the education and/or training that are required to get them. It should not matter where or when one has learnt something. One should be able to move easily between learning institutions, different types of education systems, learn things in life, go back to school after having worked for a while...

Supporting the EQF are the EU Member States' national coordination points that are partly funded through Erasmus +. They are developing national databases of available qualifications which associate each qualification to a specific EQF level – from level 8, corresponding to a PhD or a very specialised

Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification, to level 1, which concerns elementary education (primary school in most European countries). Thanks to the EQF, it will therefore be possible to see how a certain qualification in one country can be compared to one in another country.

### Classifying skills

Another promising tool is ESCO – the classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. It identifies, categorises and inter-links skills, competences, qualifications and occupations, using standard terminology in all EU languages. It is developed in an open format and is therefore easy to use by third parties' software ("semantic interoperability").

ESCO will help users exchange CVs and job vacancies stored in different Information technology (IT) systems. Crucially, it will provide a common "language" for job hunters, employers, educators and employment services. This will make it easier for them to communicate. The ultimate goal is that all involved parties can cooperate to improve the employability of job-seekers and to match people to jobs across language barriers and borders.

A pilot version of ESCO was published in October 2013 and the European Commission is now testing it together with public employment services. By the end of 2016, the Commission will

# SPECIAL FEATURE

release a full-scale version of ESCO. It will include terminology for the labour market and the education and training sector, covering the entire economy - more than 500 000 terms, in 24 languages.

## Mutual recognition

Both the EQF and ESCO are strategic for breaking divides, promoting lifelong learning and bridging the gap between education and employment. They promote the "learning outcomes" approach, which entails having flexible pathways and permeability between systems.

This in turn requires transparency, mutual understanding of qualifications and therefore trust – between countries and, within countries; between education systems and between labour markets, on one hand, and the world of education and training on the other.

Trust is crucial for mutual recognition. At present, automatic recognition only applies to the medical professions and to architects ("the regulated professions"). However, groups of EU countries have agreed on rules to grant permission to work on each other's territory for another 800 professions. The aim of the EU is to create a high degree of transparency so that such rules will no longer be necessary.

## Europass

Over one million visitors a month check the website of a tool called Europass: a single framework for the transparency of

qualifications and competences. It consists of five documents which make skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood throughout Europe.

Two of these documents are to be completed by the individuals themselves: the Europass CV and the Language Passport, a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications. The other three (Europass mobility, the Certificate Supplement and the Diploma Supplement) are used by education and training authorities. The European Commission intends to develop Europass further and make it even more flexible and adapted to current IT.

## EURES

The European Commission is also turning EURES, a cooperation network set up in 1993 between the European Commission and the public employment services of EU countries plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, into a more pro-active cross-EU job placement online portal (see *Social Agenda* n°37)

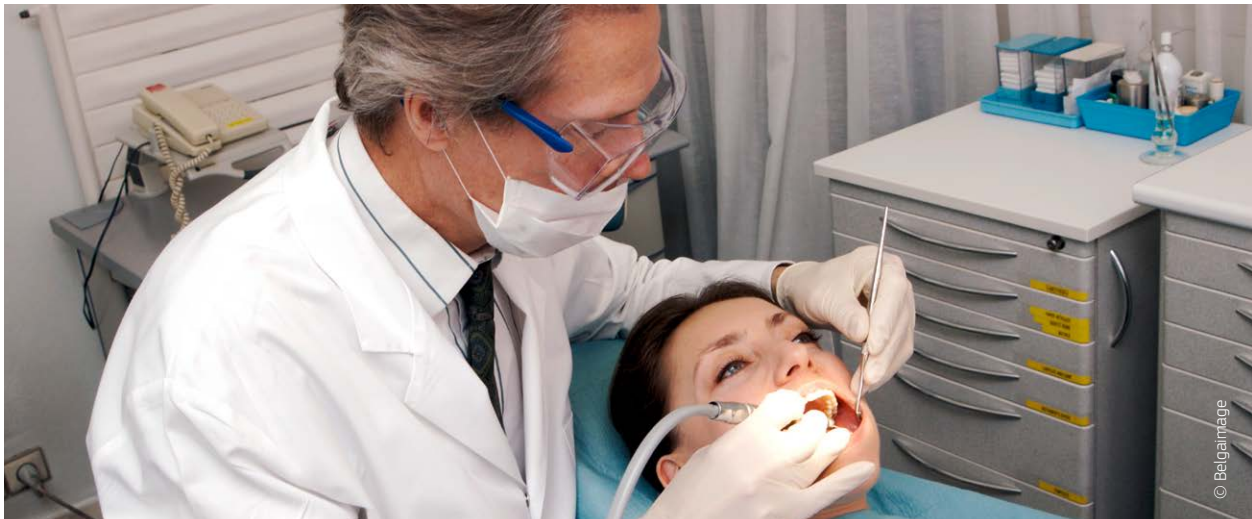
## Skills panorama

Another portal, the European skills Panorama, gives access to data, information and evidence on trends in skills and jobs across Europe. It provides an overview of the skills in demand and on offer in each EU country, as well as the short and medium term skill trends in a number of sectors and occupations. It allows users to compare this information with the EU average and with other EU countries.



**Common language:** The EU's ESCO tool will help users exchange CVs and provide a common "language" for job hunters, employers, educators and employment services across Europe.

## SPECIAL FEATURE



**Regulated profession:** Presently, automatic recognition of qualifications by EU countries only applies to the medical professions and architects.

The Panorama also contains an in-depth analysis of the top growing and bottleneck occupations, as well as of skills that are key for Europe's competitiveness – digital skills of course, but also STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), entrepreneurship, literacy and numeracy, and environmental awareness.

For the time being, the Panorama is mainly intended for policy-makers, researchers, recruitment and guidance services and practitioners. In the future, it will further develop to meet the needs of jobseekers, employers and students, and inform career choices.

#### More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=737&langId=en&pubId=7755&type=1&furtherPubs=otherissues>

#### *European Qualifications Network:*

[http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5B0%5D=im\\_field\\_entity\\_type%3A97](http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5B0%5D=im_field_entity_type%3A97)

#### *ESCO:*

<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/home>

#### *Europass:*

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>

#### *Eures:*

<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage>

#### *European Skills Panorama:*

<http://euskillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/>

### **Focusing on what people actually know**

*Today, the EU is promoting a "learning outcomes" approach which focuses on what people actually know, understand and are able to do, no matter where and how they acquired their knowledge, skills and competences, or how long they have studied.*

*Indeed, one can acquire knowledge, skills and competences through:*

- *formal general education or vocational education and training,*
- *non-formal education (voluntarily, with the assistance of other people and in a planned way, e.g. as a member of a non-governmental organisation, including to acquire digital skills),*
- *or even through informal education (knowledge that is acquired spontaneously in daily life, especially at work).*

*By focusing on what people can actually do, the learning outcomes approach breaks down the divide between the world of education and the world of work, a divide that has been so detrimental to youth employment in particular.*



## SPECIAL FEATURE

# The building blocks of a skills policy

Anticipation, quality, teacher training, validation of non-formal and informal learning...



**Trainee watching an apprentice:** Anticipating skills needs is crucial to get more young people and, specifically, more women into the labour market.

In 2016, the European Commission will propose a comprehensive skills strategy that will help the EU countries deliver the right skills to underpin growth and competitiveness and to increase employment levels. It will bring together labour market actors, education and training institutions and national authorities.

The strategy will aim to better anticipate future skills needs, as EU countries need to get more people into the labour market – young people, women, older people, low-skilled and long-term unemployed. It will also seek to develop and upgrade skills more effectively and to make better use of the skills already available in the labour market – including

through better recognition of skills and qualifications and more geographical and occupational mobility.

## Partnership

Fighting against skills mismatches requires closer and more systematic cooperation between labour market actors, education and training providers and public authorities – both within EU countries and at European level. These actors need to be involved in a constant dialogue, both on short term issues (ad hoc requalification and skill upgrading courses, vocational training modules and validation of non-formal and informal learning) and on long term ones (revising and

# SPECIAL FEATURE

redesigning education and training curricula). Business in particular could gain much by improving recruitment and human resources policies – placing greater value on people's potential and investing in their professional development.

Although education and training fall within the competence of Member States, the European Commission provides the framework for coordinated action, guidance when needed and common tools – a common reference for skills and related proficiency levels that can be understood across Europe, both by the labour market and by the education and training institutions. For example, the EU digital competence framework contains detailed descriptions of competences that are necessary to be proficient in digital environments.

Another way for the EU to provide guidance is through the annual European Semester economic policy coordination process. The European Commission assesses each Member State's performance in spring each year, when it presents country reports which pave the way for a set of recommendations for the following year (see *Social Agenda* n°40).

For 2015, the Commission proposals for European Semester country-specific Recommendations highlight the fact that “there is a need to improve the dynamics of the labour market and to tackle high levels of unemployment. (...) Efficient and effective vocational education and training programmes play a key role in improving the chances of employment”.

The European Commission also provides financial support, mainly through Erasmus +, the European Social Fund (see article page 6) and the European Regional Development Fund.

## Investment in skills

Lowering investment in education and training is particularly dangerous in times of crisis, as it does not take into account the fact that education and training policies display their effects in the longer term. On the contrary, investment in skills should be preserved, if not increased, so as to be prepared to respond to the needs of a recovering economy.

For people to seize new opportunities – such as those that will arise from the EU's €315 billion Investment Plan put forward by the European Commission in November 2014 – other initiatives must be undertaken especially for the long-term unemployed and youth, geared to investing in knowledge and skills.

In parallel, structural reforms should continue. This includes investing in people and better connecting education and training systems to the labour market.

## Skills intelligence

It is crucial to improve “skills intelligence”, i.e. the monitoring and forecasting of skill needs, understanding where skills mismatches are occurring and improving feedback from the labour market to the education and training providers.

Even though skills needs due to technological, societal, education, environmental and business-related developments are difficult to predict, EU countries need to invest in skills analysis and anticipation, and devise flexible and responsive skill policies and governance systems.

Because high unemployment coexists in the EU with skill shortages at regional and sector level, Europe needs to address existing skills gaps: both shortages of “in-demand” skills (see box), as skills mismatch ultimately cause lower productivity and limit the potential for growth and innovation; and the fact that workers take up jobs below their qualifications due to high unemployment, which entails a significant human and economic cost for individuals and for society – through the waste of time and resources in education and training, reduced earnings for individuals and reduced tax revenues. Skills mismatches point to issues linked to access to, relevance and quality of education and training.

### *In-demand skills*

*At the core of people's ability to perform in most jobs are adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy. Also, as digital technology complements existing tasks in all organisations, the need for digital skills extends to nearly all occupations.*

*The demand for specialist skills is high, especially in areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.*

*Other skills are also called for:*

- *Entrepreneurial skills, including the ability to turn an idea into action, creativity, risk taking as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives,*
- *Transversal skills: e.g. language skills, problem-solving, communication, the ability and willingness to keep on learning throughout one's life – learning to learn – and the ability to work with others.*

# SPECIAL FEATURE

Proper counselling and guidance is also key to making sure that people are better informed and advised to make the right study and career choices.

## Vocational education

Work-based learning as well as lifelong learning mechanisms are critical to improve the functioning of labour markets. Countries with strong Vocational Education and Training (VET) and apprenticeship systems perform better in terms of youth employment, including for early school leavers and young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training. The employability of young people increases with high-quality apprenticeships, which foster skills acquisitions responding to the labour markets.

However, the issue is not only to enter the labour market but to remain in it and adapt to changing conditions, hence the need for up-skilling and re-skilling. Half of the low skilled adults are in employment, but are often caught in a “low skills trap” – in a low-paid job which does not offer them the chance to improve their skills and find a better job.

Continuous VET has a crucial role to play here, both in raising the skills levels of workers with low basic skills, but also

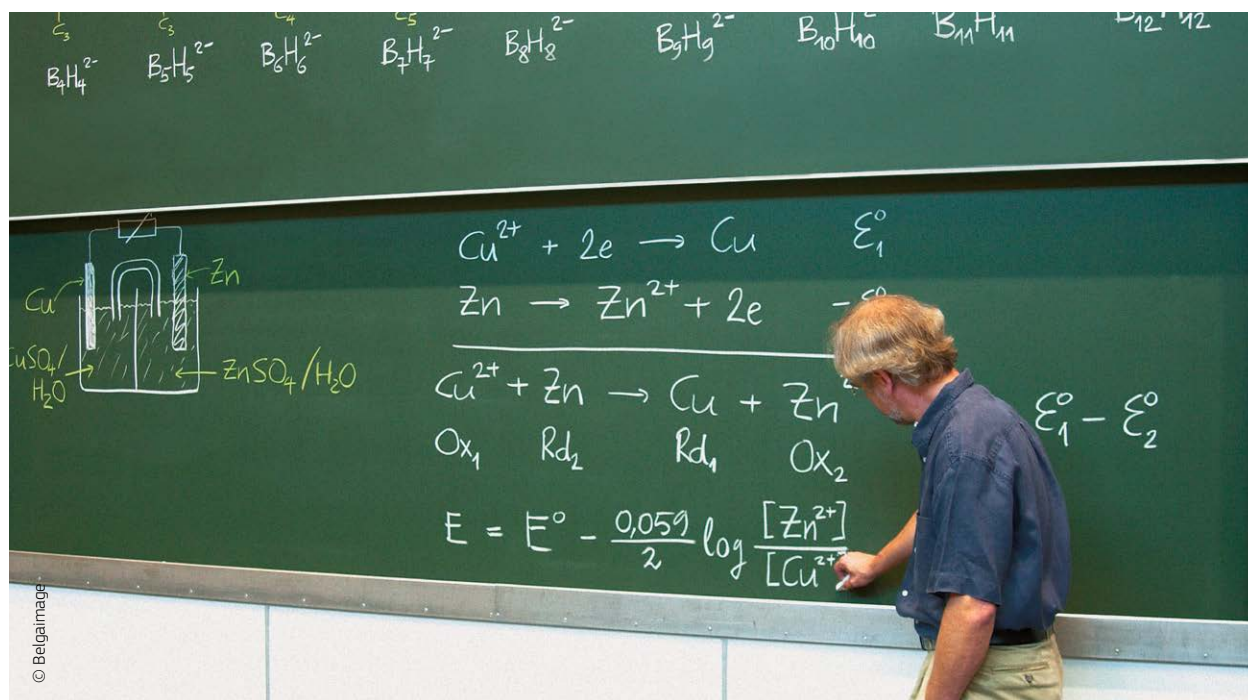
in enabling medium-skilled workers to improve their skills levels even further, and thereby boost productivity. However, in several EU countries, continuous VET is delivered by a wide range of organisations with different objectives, which makes it extremely diverse and fragmented.

## Recognising talent

The lack of relevant skills is one of the causes for low employability and skills mismatches. In many cases, skills exist in the labour market but are not identified, exploited or rewarded.

Skills and qualifications acquired in a given country and in a specific economic sector might not be recognised or even properly understood by prospective employers of other countries or even of other sectors in the same country. Skills acquired on the job or through other relevant experiences are not necessarily recorded in a qualification or otherwise documented. The problem is particularly acute for EU mobile workers.

More work needs to be done to enhance comparability and recognition of skills and qualifications at EU level, including by offering better services and information to people and companies.





## SPECIAL FEATURE

# Why skills have become so strategic

**Detlef Eckert, Director for Employment policies in the European Commission, explains why a skills policy is crucial for becoming crisis resistant and preserving the European social model**



**Detlef Eckert:** Skills development and training raise the issue of which world we would like to deploy.

***Skills policy has become strategic in dealing with all the challenges now facing the EU?***

It's the glue! Skills, innovation and service market reform are three key components to raise total factor productivity, i.e. not only labour market productivity but also the efficiency with which the EU employs its resources. It needs this in

order to become crisis resistant and to maintain its social model in the face of demographic ageing and global competition. A comprehensive skills policy would improve the EU's human capital, which is crucial for innovation.

***Promoting skills to a full scale policy area opens up new approaches to employment and social affairs?***

Skills development and training raise the issue of which world we would like to deploy. They offer a more positive and pragmatic angle to social dialogue than only talking about wages. We have significant challenges to address; yet at EU level, we do not have a huge amount of money, nor does the EU have much legislative power in this area. We therefore need to be innovative, produce to-the-point analyses and communicate well, also via the social media, to convince EU citizens and Member States that it is worth getting together at European level to deal with skills.

***Will it be easier for the EU to have an impact on vocational education and training now that it is explicitly connected to employment policy?***

Vocational education and training (VET) is a point in case. In some countries, it is under the responsibility of the Economic ministry, in other countries it is under the Labour one or clearly in the hands of the national or regional Education ministries. Labour ministries are particularly interested in having people who possess the right skills sets and this is where the two worlds meet: when a young person leaves the education system to move into the world of work. The link is still not fully established between the two worlds, with different institutions that often do not exchange data. Over the next five years, the European Commission will be addressing exactly that: pushing those two worlds towards each other in a pragmatic way.

# SPECIAL FEATURE

## *Youth employment is a good indicator for that?*

There are of course other aspects, such as the ability to remain employable in the long run, through lifelong learning, and having the right skills set for the labour market in place, in order to drive competitiveness. But when you look at the transition between education and the world of work, then definitely youth employment and the transition of young people are the key elements. The gap between the two worlds is probably the most important aspect of youth unemployment. Being young is, by definition, not having enough experience, both as a professional and as a person. This is why this transition is so important. New technologies are changing the labour market. Education systems, including VET systems, need to adjust not so much to teach people how to operate computers but how to communicate and become aware of what can be done by computers and Internet – how to use them to solve problems.

## *What about key competences, skills that can be transferred from one job to another?*

There we need to be very analytical and factual. Everyone could sit down and write a list of “soft” skills which are needed but what does it mean for the curricula? Who will decide to reduce the number of hours in History, for example, and increase the number of hours devoted to how to conduct a discussion? On what basis will the choices be made? This is more about education but the same issues will arise with VET. The Commission’s Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs will need to work closely with the Directorate

General for Education and Culture because this is all about assessing needs.

## *Work-based learning is the key EU priority for the next five years?*

As far as VET is concerned, there is consensus on increasing the share of work-based learning. In school-based VET, it is about the number of hours shared out between the workplace and the classroom. In a dual system, this is quite clear. Dual systems are getting more and more popular because they are also moving towards higher education, namely at a time when higher education systems are also trying to become more attractive and more relevant to the labour market without losing the educational spirit of preparing people for their lives as persons and citizens. Higher VET (h-VET) somehow brings both together. It is clear that you are still a student and that you are acquiring knowledge which you can apply in many jobs, as well as in your life in general, but at the same time you gain work experience. I am not sure where h-VET will find a place in some countries where, for example, you have polytechnics which are already close to the labour market but not to the same extent as dual systems. But the concept is clear: giving an alternative to a purely academic career, increasing the attractiveness of VET, having systems where you can start in VET and move your way up within the VET system right through to the highest level of education, without having to switch at some stage to general higher education. It is an emerging concept. We are not there yet but it is a very interesting development. The direction is the right one but we need to work out the details.



**Mind the gap:** The link is not yet fully established between the education systems and the world of work, a key aspect of youth unemployment.

## SPECIAL FEATURE



**Work-based learning:** I hope we get apprenticeship and more work-based learning well under way in 2016 and more private sector involvement in both systems.

### **What developments are you expecting to take place in 2016?**

I hope that we get apprenticeship and more work-based learning well under way, with more private sector involvement in both systems. We will have VET schools and work-based learning on one hand and h-VET on the other. I hope that we will see more permeability and mobility between the two. We will probably see the first good examples of h-VET emerging. That would be an excellent move. And together with our youth policy, we hope we can get EU youth unemployment down even further in 2016. If it continues like this, we should fall under 4 million and reach 3 million registered unemployed young people by that time. I think we should be that ambitious.

### **And as far as skills in general are concerned?**

What form the new strategy will take is still to be decided. We will definitely have a number of initiatives and the most important one will be to review the various tools and instruments that we have, not to bring them all under one umbrella but to create more synergy and coherence between them so that they have more impact: a seamless service offering, which makes people stay when they come across those tools on the web.

### **Inside the European Commission too**

*With the new college of European Commissioners which took office after the 2014 European elections, the coordinating role for skills and vocational education and training has been transferred from the Education and Culture directorate general (DG EAC) to the Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG (DG EMPL) of the European Commission. Two DG EAC services, one in charge of skills and qualifications and the other in charge of vocational training and adult education, have joined the Employment directorate of DG EMPL.*

*"They have brought with them new processes and institutions", comments Detlef Eckert, "as well as two agencies: CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, see page 26) and ETF, the European Training Foundation (see page 8). We can combine resources and create synergies. We are now looking forward to drawing up a new, more comprehensive skills strategy in coordination with all the other European Commission services. All these services work together in an inter-service group coordinated by DG EMPL".*



## ESF BENEFICIARY

# Birgit – A permanent position in a city council



**ESF face 2014:** With this article, Birgit is the laureate of "the ESF face 2014" competition (<https://www.esf-meine-geschichte.de>).

*The German ESF program "Citizens Work" ran from 2010 to 2014 with the aim of supporting long-term unemployed people on their way back to work. Starting with an "activation phase" of six months, the initial goal was to get unemployed people on benefits onto the labour market by way of an analysis of their potential and qualifications. In cases where these integration efforts did not work out, selected participants were placed in a "citizens*

*work" job in the next employment phase. This often led to new opportunities, for example for Birgit. She worked in the volunteer-led project "LernNet" which promotes media literacy for young people and the elderly, working together in an intergenerational context. From there she successfully applied for a permanent position in a city council.*

### *Over to Birgit:*

"My story began suddenly. I had a great job as a shipping agent when a surprising and life-threatening diagnosis turned everything upside down. Three days and eight hours of operation later I found myself in a new reality: that of a paraplegic in a wheelchair. Work and professional goals were suddenly very distant. After eight long months of rehab and getting used to my new life, I returned home for the first time - into a new life. I had a new apartment but no job. My previous company had been shut down. Despite all the obstacles in my way, I was sure that I wanted to work again! Unfortunately this didn't turn out to be as easy as I had hoped. My advisor at the employment office actually thought that in my mid-40s and with "such a disability" he would probably be unable to find me a job, and told me I should think about asking for a pension instead. No thanks! These and similar statements only reinforced my desire to want to work again.

After changing to the Job Centre, my new and competent case handler told me about the "Citizens work" program and with his help I immediately started the six-month activation phase. Unfortunately, this did not lead to any success in finding work on the labour market, and so the second employment phase began. I got the opportunity to be involved in the project "LernNet" in the city of Ahlen.

This project offers special training courses to familiarize older people with using computers. In addition, a group of volunteer editors maintains the website for senior citizens [www.senioren-ahlen.de](http://www.senioren-ahlen.de), offering information and entertainment for the elderly in Ahlen. This is complemented by lectures and information series on topics chosen by the



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**New reality:** A shipping agent, Birgit found herself in a new reality 3 days and 8 hours after a life-threatening diagnosis and an operation.

students, such as using mobile phones or smartphones. “LernNet” was embedded in the Ahlen flagship project “SINN – seniors in new networks”, which is still going now in a sustainable and innovative way with new projects and offers for, and with, seniors. My task was the organization and implementation of courses and events, which provided me and others with a lot of joy and was rewarded with success and recognition. Seeing the achievements and joy of the people always reaffirmed my decision not to have given up.

### Professional goals

One goal I have already realised is that after 16 months of “citizens work”, I applied for an advertised permanent position with the city council and was accepted. This means that in my case, the goal of the pilot project “citizen work” has been fully achieved. I would like to encourage other people, with or without disability, to never give up. But in particular I would like to campaign for people with disabilities. I would like to demonstrate the normality of disability to people with restricted mind sets or those who are scared of us, in particular in this age of inclusion. People with disabilities need to have equal rights and should be able to participate in society in a self-determined way. If through my story I can make a small contribution to dispel some prejudices that would be an additional, personal success.

Many people have impressed me on my way “back into (working) life”, especially those who have believed in me

and supported my project. Starting with my family, to the case handler in the Job Centre, to the many colleagues who have supported the transition into the job with expertise – all have helped me. Over and above all of these though, is seeing the joy of the elderly and their appreciation of my work. This remains my motivation today. Shaking hands with Mrs. Merkel at the German Senior Citizens Day 2012 really pales in comparison.

### Taken from:

With the above text Birgit is laureate of the competition “The ESF face 2014”: <https://www.esf-meine-geschichte.de/>

### Video:

<https://www.esf-meine-geschichte.de/projekt/birgit-burian>

## Opportunities for long-term unemployed

*The program “Citizens work” was set up by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the period 2010 to 2014. With a total budget of € 1.3 billion (ESF contribution: € 600 million) around 50000 participants could be supported in all of Germany.*

OTHER  
VOICES

# When VET will be taken seriously

## Vocational education and training needs a strong commitment



**Joachim J. Calleja:** Attracting learners to both academic education and vocational training at all levels, including universities, is a recipe for economic success.

Pushing people into university education without a wider economic and social strategy is a recipe for unemployment, unrest and discontent. The 'lost generation' is a product of an education that is too remote from new labour market dynamics.

Attracting learners to both academic education and vocational training at all levels, including universities, is a recipe for economic success. Wise hands are what labour market needs today – people with practical intellectual skills, along with a variety of skills to create more and better jobs. In Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands and in Scandinavian countries, vocational education and training is a reliable route to employment. Universities of applied sciences, university colleges and apprenticeship programmes are excellent examples of a unified approach in learning. Youth unemployment is low in countries where VET is strong.

Learning by doing is older than learning by reading and writing. But, at some point during its development, humankind attributed learning by reading and writing a higher esteem than learning by doing. Over time, working conditions, social status and quality of life became determined by the type of learning one followed.

The students' revolution in Europe in the late 1960s and the early 1970s brought a new dimension to vocational education and training (VET). In several European states, VET gained better visibility, relevancy and flexibility. Employers view VET as a fast track to employability, production and capital, but the potential it provides is overlooked as academic university education remains a target for many European families, even though it may not lead to jobs.

### Wake-up call

The 2008 economic crisis was a wake-up call, not so much for those countries who have entrenched VET in their culture and invested seriously in it, but for those who persisted with the belief that only intellectual and conceptual competences bring economic growth. Unemployment was high and remains high in the latter. Growth, in countries where vocational training is weak, is also weak. Lack of foreign investment, quality jobs and the reskilling and retraining of an ageing workforce continues to hold Europe back.

### New chapter

At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Copenhagen process (2002, see box page 12) generated a new chapter in European VET. Council recommendations on the European qualifications framework, Europass, validation of informal and non-formal learning, European quality assurance in VET, European credit system for VET and other initiatives, laid a solid foundation for world-class vocational training in Europe. Use of information technology adds stature to VET programmes, increases apprenticeship programmes and narrows the artificial gap between jobs requiring practical skills and others that are essentially intellectual. Any truly creative and innovative work environment requires both.

Vocational education and training needs a strong commitment to raise its profile and strengthen its ties with the world of employment. This infers a bigger share of Erasmus+ funding, increased financial support to apprenticeship programmes and work-based learning at continuing and higher VET levels, and continuing professional development programmes for VET teachers, trainers and mentors.

It is time to take VET seriously.

**Joachim James Calleja**  
CEDEFOP Director



**Ana Carla Pereira:** Bringing skills into the picture makes it possible to connect the worlds of education and employment.

## INTERVIEW



Ana Carla Pereira is head of the Skills and Qualifications service which was transferred from the European Commission's Education department to the Employment and Social Affairs one in 2014

# Connecting education and employment

*You became head of the Education department's Skills and Qualifications service in February 2012, after ten years in the Employment department where you had already dealt with the issue of skills.*

Yes, I had coordinated the work on the New Skills and Jobs flagship initiative, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Previously, I had also touched upon education issues when I followed projects co-funded by EU structural funds in Romania, Portugal, Italy... in the Employment and Economic and Finance departments.

*What did your stint in Education bring you?*

I realised to what extent employment actors underestimate the cultural difference with the world of education, especially the importance of academic freedom and subsidiarity. The education people see their objective and function as passing on knowledge and values to the next generation. The employment people tend to understate the function of education and focus on preparing people for life at work, which for education people amounts to steering education away from human values towards economic ones. The education world also gives a lot of importance to qualifications. In the European social model, the State pays for education, although things are changing, and therefore takes on the responsibility of ensuring the quality of qualifications. This is crucial in countries where the labour market is highly regulated, such as Germany where you have the tradition of guilds and corporations: to have access to a profession, you need to have a certificate. At the other extreme, you

have the United Kingdom where it doesn't matter where you acquired your skill, so long as you can do the job.

*So where do you stand between the two worlds?*

Bringing skills into the picture makes it possible to connect the two worlds. In the language of the education people, skills are the learning outcomes: what do you actually know and are able to do after a learning experience? For the employment people, it is a matter of ensuring that everyone has access to the right opportunities so as to integrate the labour market: how best to invest in education and training - i.e. in people as "human capital" or "workforce" - in order to increase competitiveness and productivity? There is absolutely no contradiction: education empowers you as a citizen to figure out the choices you are facing, for example when you want to buy environmentally friendly products, and a job gives you the purchasing power to actually carry out those choices.

*So how will you go about connecting the education and employment people?*

The dialogue between them is very difficult: In spite of mass youth unemployment, public employment services and schools and universities still do not interact. But I am now much more aware of the education challenges and more familiar with the language used by the education community. I hope that we gradually manage to mainstream issues such as qualifications into the language and channels used by the employment actors.



## Apprenticeship – Good for youth, good for business

Work-based learning, in particular apprenticeships can enhance employability, notably of young people, and help to address the skills shortages to better match companies' needs. Of great benefit to learners and companies alike, these schemes also contribute to Europe's objective of ensuring sustainable growth and employment. This brochure focuses on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) launched in 2013 and addresses the challenges and possible answers of how to strengthen the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships. This is also in line with the new set of medium-term deliverables agreed at European level in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020. The brochure features examples of successful and inspiring apprenticeship and other work-based learning policy initiatives and projects across Europe.

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## Panorama magazine – An overview of EU regional policy

Published four times a year in 22 EU languages, *Panorama magazine* is the quarterly magazine for those involved or interested in regional development. It provides an overview of developments in Regional Policy, taking the form of a variety of articles in different formats, from Commissioner Crețu's editorial, to in-depth analysis of specific themes, to contributions from many stakeholders including representatives from the Regions, to profiles of EU-funded projects, to maps. Regional Policy targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens' quality of life. Regional Policy has a strong impact in many fields. Its investments help to deliver many EU policy objectives and complements EU policies such as those dealing with education, employment, energy, the environment, the single market, research and innovation. Almost the third of the EU budget (€351.8 billion) has been set aside for Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 (European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, as well as European Social Fund). Panorama is currently available in print in English, French and German. It will shortly be available as well in Spanish, Italian, Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian and Greek. The magazine is available on line in 22 EU languages on the Inforegio website: <http://europa.eu/!bK99pb>. To subscribe to print and/or online editions, please register here: <https://www.inforegiocodoc.eu/maillinglist/>

Catalogue No.: KN-LR-14-052-EN-N

## Useful websites

The website of Commissioner Thyssen: [http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/thyssen\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/thyssen_en)

The home page of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/>

The website of the European Social Fund: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf>

To download or to order these publications, please go to <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en>

To subscribe to the 'Social Agenda' magazine or to other publications of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, please fill in the registration form available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=740&langId=en>

