

# Skills and jobs for future labour markets

## European policies and Skills Agendas 2010 - 2020

### KEY FINDINGS

Given changing and increasing skills requirements of labour markets, the EU is facing a number of challenges: a rather low participation of (low-skilled) adults in education and learning, despite progress, a considerable number of early school leavers; lack of quality and attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and skills mismatches, in particular considerable overqualification and skills shortages in several occupations. The COVID-19 pandemic has added urgency to skills development in Europe.

There are indications for an emerging European and international consensus on key elements of skills strategies for the future: to increase investments, to build whole-government partnerships and to promote medium-level qualifications allowing for upward mobility. In EU key policy strategies (European Pillar of Social Rights, Digital Agenda and Green New Deal), skills policies are acknowledged as an important factor for competitiveness and citizens' wellbeing. The European Parliament underlines in particular the need for coordinated investment plans to ensure the implementation of skills policies.

An analysis of the three European Skills Agendas (2010, 2016, 2020) shows a continuous build-up process in a number of areas (e.g. skills alliances or councils, skills intelligence, increasing the quality and flexibility of VET; ways to strengthen adult learning, tools to make skills better visible).

The latest Skills Agenda issued by the Commission in July 2020 is well connected with key EU policy initiatives including the digital and the green transitions as well as the Social Pillar. Many skills initiatives have been significantly scaled up. Examples are the introduction of skills pacts, modernisation of skills intelligence and VET, scaling up Europass, the EU platform for career development, and finally, the provision of comprehensive guidance for using EU funds.

Future implementation may require considerable political efforts given a dilemmatic context of increasing needs for skills adjustment under tightening economic and fiscal conditions. Finally, Future Skills Agendas could benefit from a systematic presentation of achievements and gaps under the previous skills agenda (-s) in addition to reporting under the European Semester.

This briefing is an updated and extended version of an earlier note prepared for the [European Parliamentary Week 2020](#), co-organised by the European Parliament and the Croatian Presidency in February 2020. It takes account of the COVID-19 crisis. The paper complements a [workshop](#) on the Skills Agenda 2016 for the EMPL Committee and further research on some elements ([quality of apprenticeships, internships and volunteering](#); [EU policies for VET and upskilling](#); [Europass](#); [career management skills](#); [encouraging STEM studies for the labour market](#)).



## Changing labour markets - skills challenges for the EU

Changing labour markets require continuous adjustment of skills and effective lifelong learning strategies. Digitalisation, globalisation and ecological transformation imply structural changes resulting in job creation, job losses and changing job profiles. Due to the demographic change and pension reforms, people work longer making training for older workers a necessity.

**Employment forecasts** predict that the occupational employment structure of the economy is changing in favour of skilled non-manual occupations. The analysis also highlights a shift towards more autonomy, less routine, more information and communication technology (ICT), fewer physical tasks, and more social and intellectual tasks over the forecast period to 2030. Looking at trends in wage levels, continued polarisation within the labour market can be expected driven by strong growth at the bottom and at the top of the wage distribution<sup>1</sup>. Jobs at the medium wage level are projected to see slow growth or even decline in the number of jobs due to automation and offshoring. To draw conclusions on skills polarisation from these data may, however, be misleading as in practice, overqualification is significant (see below). Moreover, the [OECD Employment outlook](#) (2020; 20) finds<sup>2</sup> that the decline in the share of middle-skill employment is due primarily to fewer younger workers entering middle-skill occupations given changes in education and demographic features of the cohort. [Oesch and Piccitto](#) (2020)<sup>3</sup> find that Europe's job structure is upgrading, and therefore call the polarisation thesis a myth.

Research has detected a number of **skills challenges in the EU** to adequately react to these requirements:

- **Early school leaving:** Despite a declining trend, 10,2% of those aged 18-24 in the EU in 2019 were early school leavers, i.e. they had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training according to [Eurostat](#)<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, this means that the European Union may still achieve its target as set in the [Europe 2020 strategy](#)<sup>5</sup> to bring the rate of early school leavers down to a value below 10% (down from 14.7% in 2014);
- **Participation of adults in education and training** remains low and decreases with age. The EU average stood at 11,1% in 2018, with Member states ranging from Sweden and Finland close to 30% to Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania under 3%. Only 1 out of 25 low-skilled workers benefits from lifelong learning, though low-skilled workers have the highest risk of unemployment, non-standard work and in-work poverty. Further, only 1 out of 10 unemployed adults has a recent learning experience ([Commission 2020](#)<sup>6</sup>);
- **VET and structural change:** Given that many middle-skilled jobs face a risk of automation, and that for many young people (and their parents) tertiary education is the first choice, research identifies a need for adjustment and flexibility, in particular more permeability towards higher education ([OECD 2020](#)<sup>7</sup>; [European Parliament 2017](#)<sup>8</sup>, [2019](#)<sup>9</sup>);
- **Skills mismatches: Youth unemployment** is rising, up to 16.8% in June 2020, ranging from a low of 5.6% in Germany to a high of 40.8% in Spain, demonstrating a dramatic skills mismatch in some regions ([eurostat](#)<sup>10</sup>; [OECD 2020](#)<sup>11</sup>); 16,4% of the 20-34 year-olds in the EU [in 2019](#)<sup>12</sup> were neither in employment nor in education and training ('NEETs');
- **Overqualification:** A considerable proportion of young adult employees (about 25% of tertiary graduates) are [overqualified](#)<sup>13</sup> for their job, thus contributing to polarisation of the labour market biased towards lower-wage jobs; and
- **Shortages:** In many regions and countries, [labour force shortages](#)<sup>14</sup> are a problem in certain occupations including a number of ICT-occupations (e.g. truck drivers, skilled trades, nurses, doctors, software developers or certain engineers) due to changing occupational preferences, labour mobility or emigration.

## Impact of the COVID-pandemic on demand for skills and jobs

In addition to long-term trends, the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded its worldwide shock effect on labour markets. Large-scale restructuring is taking place in manufacturing, transport, retail and hospitality/leisure. A survey carried out in April by Eurofound reveals that 50% of workers report a decrease in working hours and 16% think that it is likely that they will lose their jobs in the near future ([Eurofound 2020](#)<sup>15</sup>, see also: [Eurofound COVID webpage](#)<sup>16</sup>). The economic downturn affects in particular the low skilled, youth and migrants as well as women ([OECD Employment outlook 2020](#); 19). At the same time, COVID-19 pushed the demand for digital skills in education, administration and business as it became necessary to establish and manage telework and to serve more clients online.

## Skills policies gaining momentum at European and at international level

### 1. European Commission - Empowering people through education and skills

The new Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, when presenting her candidacy to the European Parliament in July 2019, announced in her Political Guidelines her will to 'empower people through education and skills' (as) '*the best investment in our future is the investment in our people. Skills and education drives Europe's competitiveness and innovation.*' [...] '*We need to bring down barriers to learning and improve access to quality education.*' [...] '*We need to enable learners to move more easily between education systems in different countries. And we need to change the culture of education towards lifelong learning that enriches us all.*'

### 2. European Council - lifelong learning policies are key for strong economies

On 24 October 2019, the Council issued its [Conclusions](#) on *The key role of lifelong learning policies in empowering societies to address the technological and green transition in support of inclusive and sustainable growth*<sup>17</sup>. In the same vein as the Commission's recent [Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy](#)<sup>18</sup> published in autumn 2019, the Conclusions highlight the commitment of the Member States to the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its [Sustainable Development Goals](#)<sup>19</sup>. With regard to policies for skills development, the Conclusions emphasise the need to give a strong boost to lifelong learning policies and provision, to intensify efforts to implement the [Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways](#)<sup>20</sup> (2016) and to further develop the European Education Area in order to make Europe the leading learning society in the world.

During the Finnish Presidency, the Council embarked on a new path in order to promote reflections on financing skills policies: On 7 November 2019, ministers of finance and education of the EU held a first-ever joint Council with the aim of discussing the importance of education for a strong economy.

### 3. European Parliament - Need for market relevant skills and a coordinated investment plan

In several resolutions of the previous and the current legislative term, the European Parliament makes the case for skills. Like the Council, it links skills policies with financial policies, pointing to the need to **ensure sufficient financing**.

In order to encourage smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and job creations, on 10 October 2015 the Parliament adopted a [resolution](#)<sup>21</sup> on creating a competitive labour market for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, followed by its 14 September 2017 [resolution](#)<sup>22</sup> on the New Skills Agenda for Europe issued by the Commission in 2016. Both resolutions stress the need to develop or upgrade skills for life and jobs, highlighting the role of education (including vocational education and training) and lifelong learning. Moreover, in July 2015, the Parliament adopted a [resolution](#)<sup>23</sup> on the Green Employment Initiative, in response to a [Commission communication of 2014](#)<sup>24</sup>, stressing the need for skills for green employment (e.g. new skills needed for the circular economy, a European data bank listing training courses related to green employment)

In its resolution of 10 October 2019 on employment and social policies, the [European Parliament](#)<sup>25</sup> is stressing the need to transform education and training systems to make full use of the opportunities offered by digitalisation and the greening of the economy. Mismatch and shortage of necessary skills can be a major obstacle for investment and can hamper job creation and economic growth, therefore, it is crucial to improve the quality, accessibility and inclusiveness of education and training, and improve mutual recognition of qualifications.

Reacting to the Corona crisis, the European Parliament adopted on 17 April 2020 a [resolution](#)<sup>26</sup> on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, in which it highlights that '*the current crisis has shown that our education systems are not as resilient as they should be and therefore considers it to be essential that educational infrastructure, online and offline, be significantly upgraded, and that educators and pupils be provided with the necessary skills and equipment for home schooling situations.*' The European Parliament welcomes in that regard the Commission's initiative to revise and update the **Digital Education Action Plan**; considers this to be insufficient, however, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to come up with a **coordinated investment plan** in order to improve our education systems.

#### 4. ILO and OECD propose comprehensive policy strategies, partnerships and sufficient investments

In its [Centenary Declaration](#)<sup>27</sup> inspired by the report of the Global Commission for the Future of Work, the ILO adopts **A human-centred approach** focusing on three axes: (1) Increasing investment in people's capabilities; (2) Increasing investment in the institutions of work; (3) Increasing investment in decent and sustainable work. The ILO's work will be directed to promoting the acquisition of skills, competencies and qualifications for all workers throughout their working lives as a joint responsibility of governments and social partners in order to address existing and anticipated skills gaps.

The OECD highlights in its [Employment Outlook 2019](#)<sup>28</sup> that **training participation is lowest among those who need training the most**, including the low-skilled, older adults, unemployed as well as non-standard workers. These face several barriers to training participation, such as poor training choices, and a lack of motivation, time, money or employer support. In its [Skills outlook 2019](#)<sup>29</sup>, the OECD supports a better integration of ICT in the classroom to support teaching and learning practices. Moreover, many countries should revisit the way technology, in particular Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), are integrated into the curriculum and into pedagogical practices. To make the future of work inclusive and rewarding, the OECD suggests a '*a whole-of-government approach that targets interventions to those who need them most*'.

### European key policy strategies - right skills as essential ingredient

Skills policies have been gaining momentum in European policies. In recent strategic policy documents, they are acknowledged as an important factor to maintain and strengthen Europe's international competitiveness and citizen's wellbeing, as an essential ingredient for effective digital, ecological and social policies. In the same vein, European policies for recovery include funding opportunities for skills development.

Proclaimed by all three European institutions in November 2017, the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#)<sup>30</sup> presents a comprehensive policy programme covering employment, social inclusion and education. It is worth noting that the 20-point programme starts with education, which also appears in two other principles. In a nutshell, the Social Pillar anchors the right to quality education and training in a lifelong perspective for all including compensation for social disadvantage, the right of unemployed to receive training, and the right of workers to training regardless of their type of contract.

In December 2019, the new Commission published the [European Green New Deal](#)<sup>31</sup> which dedicates a specific section to education and training and another one to research. It calls for activating schools, training institutions and universities to promote knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable development. The Commission plans to support this development by a European competence framework, as well as by using the EU networks of teacher training programmes. Further, the European Social Fund + shall help to provide retraining for staff in declining sectors towards sectors with growing demand, and for skills adjustment due to changing job profiles and processes. With regards to research, the Commission commits itself to promote collaboration among higher education institutions, research organisations and companies ([Commission 2019](#)<sup>32</sup>; 18f).



In February 2020, the Commission issued the [European strategy for digital transformation](#) 'Shaping Europe's digital future'<sup>33</sup> putting investment in digital competences as first policy point in the first of its three pillars 'Technology that works for people' (the other two pillars being 'A fair and competitive digital economy' and 'An open, democratic and sustainable society'). This is also reflected in the composite indicator, the Digital and Economic Society Index ([DESI](#))<sup>34</sup> to measure Europe's digital performance and the evolution of EU Member States in digital competitiveness. One of its dimensions is [Human Capital/Digital skills](#).

Given the relevance attributed to education and skills, it will be important to set up **sufficient policy and financial support together with long-term monitoring** at European level in order to ensure that policies for recovery in the Member States balance support for labour demand and supply, for companies and for citizens. This is even more relevant in times of economic downturn as budgets will be tightening due to decreasing tax revenues and rising welfare costs, with policy attention directed towards support for companies.

## European Skills Agendas 2010-2020: Continuity and change

Since 2010, the European Commission has elaborated three Skills Agendas as part of the political work programme for the Commission, one in 2010, the second in 2016 and the latest one in July 2020. While the Agenda for new skills and jobs of 2010 integrates employment and education aspects (Better functioning of labour markets, skilling for a job, better job quality and working conditions), the other two agendas are dedicated exclusively to skills development with a view to the labour market.

In general, the Skills Agendas show **continuity** in terms of policy priorities, the areas and content of key actions as well as the related governance and reporting mechanism. All three Skills Agendas:

- are labour-market oriented, aiming to promote **skills for jobs, economic growth and competitiveness** of the European Union in a global context. If not expressed directly in the title, this becomes obvious from the rationale, e.g. the 2010 Agenda setting out in the introduction that '*a skilled labour force is an essential asset to develop a competitive, sustainable and innovative economy*'. The agendas support both sides, labour supply and labour demand. Measures shall strengthen the workforce in its position on the market and ensure that companies have adequate labour supply for innovation;
- faster **partnerships and skills alliances** at European, national and regional levels in a field (2010,

2016) or at a larger scale in the Skills Agenda 2020, where Skills Pacts become an overarching strategic governance tool;

- develop tools to continuously improve **skills intelligence** at European and at national level to monitor trends in labour demand and skills shortages;
- promote **lifelong learning**, in particular adult learning and **upskilling of the workforce** including the unemployed and inactive;
- present initiatives to **strengthen qualification at universities** in various dimensions (centres of excellence, new academic qualifications, tracking graduates, upskilling scientists);
- promote digital skills, STEM studies (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and entrepreneurship;
- strengthen transversal skills and key competences;
- develop **tools for skills transparency and matching** (skills profiler, Europass platform, validation and recognition); and
- advise on how best to **use EU funding programmes** for skills strategies and projects in the Member States.

The development was less continuous as regards green skills. Following a rise in the context of the [Green Employment Initiative](#)<sup>35</sup> (2014), pre-empted in the Skills Agenda of 2010 (e.g. note on [Public Employment Services and Green Jobs](#)<sup>36</sup> in 2013), the topic was not included in the Skills Agenda 2016, only to appear again in the Skills agenda 2020 when policies for climate change became one of the key policy priorities.

Despite commonalities mentioned above, the Skills Agenda 2020 reaches a new dimension:

**Skills policies are well anchored in key European policy strategies** for transformation and also in the programmes for recovery from the COVID-19 crisis (see [Agenda 2020](#) and comparative table below). This demonstrates that effective use has been made of the **window of opportunities** provided by a strong impetus at European level for structural reforms to promote Europe's competitiveness in the global competition and greening economies. As the Skills Agenda and examples above show, the skills dimension is well embedded in key policy initiatives demonstrating good coordination at European level. The Green New Deal, the Digital Agenda, but also the recovery programmes in response to the COVID-19 crisis have dedicated sections or funding opportunities for skills policies and projects. It will be important in the future to keep this momentum going, turning programme items into concrete projects and actions. This may require additional strategic efforts to assure the allocation of sufficient financial and human resources at European and at national level) as implementation will take place in a less favourable context than before the Corona crisis. Increasing budget constraints due to falling tax revenues and rising welfare costs, but also the difficult situation of many companies may pose challenges.

The Agenda **provides a clear working structure** building on three strands: governance through Skills Pacts, strategy development (right skills for jobs) and very operational support for financing concepts (unlocking investments). Given the complexity of the landscape of Member State working groups in education and employment policies, it will be key to develop effective coordination mechanisms and targeted pacts and projects.

**Most of the initiatives proposed have been significantly scaled up.** This can be interpreted as a political upscaling of skills policies at European level. In practice, it was possible due to continuous development work over the last decade as well as to the window of opportunities created by the "twin transformation" triggered by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, continuous work under the previous Skills Agendas has provided a good basis to go further (see the synoptic table below). Examples are the Skills Pacts as systematic, overarching governance tool for awareness raising, strategy development, implementation and financing. Another example is the application of a "whole of government approach" in cooperation with the

OECD to promote adult learning involving also more systematically Public Employment Services, active labour market policies and the assessment of a relevant new supporting tools (individual learning account).

However, **three initiatives did not see any follow-up within the Skills Agenda**: Brain Drain and Brain Gain in Europe, the Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving and the revised European Qualifications Framework.

For the first time, **skills-related objectives have been integrated into the Skills Agenda** itself. Even if this may be due to the fact that the current Commission has put forward a [number of key policy initiatives](#)<sup>37</sup> and not an umbrella strategy like Europe2020, this can bear advantages for the implementation including a targeted reporting.

#### Synopsis of Skills Agendas 2010, 2016 and 2020

Skills Agenda 2020 <i>For sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience</i>	Skills Agenda 2016 <i>Working together to strengthen human capital, employability, competitiveness</i>	Agenda for new skills and jobs 2010 <i>A European contribution towards full employment</i>
12 Key actions	10 Key actions	5 skills key actions (out of 13) + accompanying actions*
<b>Join forces</b> Skills Pact (Skills Alliances at European, national, regional levels for lifelong learning, investments, Skills Charter, work with sectors, dissemination of skills intelligence, bridges between (pre-)existing EU initiatives, November 2020)	(see below: VET - Alliance for Apprenticeships)	<i>Support knowledge alliances for curriculum development (innovation skills gaps, labour market needs) 2011*</i>
<b>Strategic actions - Right skills for jobs</b> Skills intelligence (Online tool with 'real-time' information on skills demand, level, big data analysis of job vacancies)	Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages at national, regional level (e.g. health, green technologies and renewable energies)	EU Skills Panorama, 2012 (top growth occupations, top in-demand occupations); European Vacancy Monitor; analysis of skills mismatches, skills shortages, use of skills in the workplace; sectoral foresight analysis (EU Sector Councils), projections
		Action plan to address the gap in the supply of health workers, 2012
	Analysis of brain drain and peer learning in 2019 (brain drain and brain gain, policy strategies to retain, attract and integrate skilled people)	
EU support for national whole-of-government upskilling strategies (building upon OECD work; involving national public employment services for implementation; coupled with legal migration)	Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, 2016 (basic skills, upper secondary qualification of low-skilled, implementation plans MS)	Communication on implementing lifelong learning strategies and competence development (2011) + European policy handbook for implementation

Skills Agenda 2020  For sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience  12 Key actions	Skills Agenda 2016  <i>Working together to strengthen human capital, employability, competitiveness</i>  10 Key actions	Agenda for new skills and jobs 2010  <i>A European contribution towards full employment</i>  5 skills key actions (out of 13) + accompanying actions*
		Council Recommendation on reducing early school leaving, 2011
VET: Council Recommendation for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (permeability, learning mobility, partnerships with employers and work-based learning, digital readiness of VET institutions)	Supporting VET modernisation to make VET a first choice (e.g. European Vocational Skills week since 2016); Council Recommendation - European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, 2018), European Alliance of Apprenticeships)	<i>(Use <a href="#">Copenhagen process</a><sup>38</sup> on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training to make VET more attractive)</i>
European Universities initiative and upskilling scientists (support initiative under Erasmus 2021-2017, long-term transnational alliances, cooperation academia-industry, EU competence framework and taxonomy of skills for researchers, open science and science management curricula)	Council Recommendation on Graduate Tracking in Member States 2017; European graduate survey 2019, Methodological framework - outcomes higher education, VET)	<i>European centres of excellence within new academic specialisations, 2012*</i>
Skills to support the green and digital twin transitions (e.g. taxonomy of skills for green transition, monitoring green skills, updating Digital Education Plan, supporting Digital Crash Courses for SMEs, support EU short-term intensive trainings 'ICT-Jump-Start')  Increasing STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and transversal skills (e.g. various actions to attract girls, teachers, foster sciences education in research)  Entrepreneurial skills (e.g. European Action on Entrepreneurship Skills using the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework)	(see above: Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages at national, regional level (e.g. health, green technologies and renewable energies)  Digital Skills and Jobs Coalitions in Member States	<i>(Green economy: Investment in green skills - ambition 3 million green-collar workers by 2020; re-skilling of unemployed towards green jobs by Public Employment Services)</i>  <i>EU-wide approach to integrate ICT competences and digital literacy (e-skills) into core lifelong learning policies, 2012*</i> Review of skills needs in Europe (see Skills Panorama)  Erasmus for young entrepreneurs (based upon preparatory action for European Parliament) Policy handbook: Entrepreneurship education: a guide for educators*

<p>Skills Agenda 2020</p> <p>For sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience</p> <p>12 Key actions</p>	<p>Skills Agenda 2016</p> <p><i>Working together to strengthen human capital, employability, competitiveness</i></p> <p>10 Key actions</p>	<p>Agenda for new skills and jobs 2010</p> <p><i>A European contribution towards full employment</i></p> <p>5 skills key actions (out of 13) + accompanying actions*</p>
<p>Transversal skills (e.g. strategic framework for the recognition of transversal skills, resources to support validation by employers such as EU-wide online courses, network of validation, pioneer organisations)</p> <p>Skills for life (e.g. develop in cooperation with Member States new priorities for the European Agenda for Adult learning)</p>	<p>Revised Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2018 (update of Framework, stronger focus on digital skills, learning to learn, citizenship, entrepreneurship)</p>	<p><i>Communication on European policy for multilingualism/European language benchmark</i></p>
<p><b>Supporting tools, initiatives</b></p> <p>Assessing the introduction of individual learning accounts to facilitate adult training, enabling services</p>		
<p>European approach to micro-credentials (e.g. development of European standards)</p>		<p><i>Council Recommendation on validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning, European Skills Passport, 2011*</i></p>
<p>New Europass platform (e.g. further develop job suggestions via EURES and EURAXESS portals, digital diplomas and certificates - Europass Digital Credentials, 'fast track' to recognition, link with European Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals)</p>	<p>Adoption of revised Europass Decision, 2018 (from a set of documents and CV to a EU platform for career management, includes ESCO)</p>	<p>ESCO - European Skills, Competences and Occupation Classification, 2012</p> <p>Skill profile for third country nationals, 2017 (multilingual online tool for use by national authorities)</p>
	<p>Revision of European Qualifications Framework, 2017</p>	
<p><b>Unlock investments</b></p> <p>Improving enabling framework for investments in skills (e.g. use of different instruments under the EU budget including the COVID recovery programme, engaging with national authorities and stakeholders; contribution of fiscal frameworks, reporting; statistics on investment, use of social impact bonds)</p> <p><i>Overview of financial instruments and a list of operations that can be supported with the future EU budget as part of the Skills Agenda</i></p>	<p><i>Dialogue with Member States on use of various EU funding programmes</i></p>	<p><i>Overview of EU financial instruments as part of the Skills Agenda*</i></p>

Skills Agenda 2020  For sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience  12 Key actions	Skills Agenda 2016  <i>Working together to strengthen human capital, employability, competitiveness</i>  10 Key actions	<i>Agenda for new skills and jobs 2010</i>  <i>A European contribution towards full employment</i>  <i>5 skills key actions (out of 13) + accompanying actions*</i>
<b>Setting objectives/targets</b>  1. Participation of adults in learning during the last 12 month 50% (38% in 2016) 2. Participation of low-qualified adults in learning 30% (18% in 2016) 3. Share of unemployed adults with a recent learning experience 20% (11% in 2019) 4. Share of adults (16-74) having at least basic digital skills 70% (56% in 2019)	<i>Reference to EU2020 education headline targets:</i> 1. <i>Share of early school leavers to be reduced under 10%</i> 2. <i>At least 40% of 30 to 34 years old to have completed tertiary or equivalent education</i>	<i>Reference to the EU2020 employment target of 75%</i>

Sources: [Skills Agenda 2010](#)<sup>39</sup>; [Skills Agenda 2016](#)<sup>40</sup> - [Fact sheet 2019](#); [Skills Agenda 2020](#); [Fact Sheet Skills Agenda 2020](#)<sup>41</sup>, (*Italic*) = no dedicated action, \* = accompanying action.

Future implementation of the Skills Agenda may, however, require **particular political efforts joining forces** at European and at national level to make it happen under worsening economic and financial conditions. Further, the European skills and education agendas could benefit from a **coherent mainstreaming of the lifelong learning approach** having been successfully anchored in policy discourse and practice [since the 1990s](#)<sup>42</sup>. For example, the Skills Agenda 2020 does not refer systematically to Early Childhood Education and Care nor to Early School Leaving where important European initiatives have been launched. More generally, the Skills Agendas could **improve transparency of achievements** (and gaps) under the previous agenda(s) beyond the existing reporting under the European Semester. This would allow to present European added value and progress, but also potential need for further action in a more accessible way for citizens and policymakers including the European Parliament.

- <sup>1</sup> Cedefop, Eurofound (2018): *Skills forecast: trends and challenges to 2030*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop reference series; No 108. See: [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3077\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3077_en.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> OECD Employment Outlook 2020: *Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*, p. 20, available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/1686c758-en/index.html?iteMid=/content/publication/1686c758-en>.
- <sup>3</sup> Oesch, D. and Piccitto, G.: *The Polarization Myth: Occupational Upgrading in Germany, Spain, Sweden, and the UK, 1992–2015*. (2019), available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334998600\\_The\\_Polarization\\_Myth\\_Occupational\\_Upgrading\\_in\\_Germany\\_Spain\\_Sweden\\_and\\_the\\_UK\\_1992-2015](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334998600_The_Polarization_Myth_Occupational_Upgrading_in_Germany_Spain_Sweden_and_the_UK_1992-2015).
- <sup>4</sup> Eurostat (2020): *Early leavers from education and training*, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early\\_leavers\\_from\\_education\\_and\\_training](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_leavers_from_education_and_training).
- <sup>5</sup> Eurostat (2020): *Europe 2020 headline indicators*, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe\\_2020\\_headline\\_indicators#The\\_Europe\\_2020\\_strategy](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_headline_indicators#The_Europe_2020_strategy).
- <sup>6</sup> European Commission (2020): *European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience*, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=22832&langId=en>.
- <sup>7</sup> OECD (2020): *Facing the job crisis*, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2020/>.
- <sup>8</sup> European Parliament (2016): *Skills development and employment: New Skills Agenda for Europe*, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2020/>.
- <sup>9</sup> European Parliament (2019): *Skills for the labour market: EU policies for VET and upskilling*, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/638431/IPOL\\_BRI\(2019\)638431\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/638431/IPOL_BRI(2019)638431_EN.pdf).
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