

Ten actions to help equip people in Europe with better skills

Make skills more visible

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USPA NEWS - European Commission has adopted a new and comprehensive Skills Agenda for Europe. The aim is to ensure that people develop a broad set of skills from early on in life and to make the most of Europe's human capital, which will ultimately boost employability, competitiveness and growth in Europe.

The new Skills Agenda for Europe adopted Friday calls on Member States and stakeholders to improve the quality of skills and their relevance for the labour market. According to studies, 70 million Europeans lack adequate reading and writing skills, and even more have poor numeracy and digital skills. This puts them at risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

On the other hand, a large number of Europeans, particularly high-qualified young people, work in jobs that do not match their talents and aspirations. At the same time, 40% of European employers report that they cannot find people with the right skills to grow and innovate. Finally, too few people have the entrepreneurial mindset and competences to start their own business and keep adapting to evolving requirements of the labour market.

Increasing skills levels, promoting transversal skills and finding ways to better anticipate the labour market's needs, including based on dialogue with the industry, are therefore essential to improve people's chances in life, and support fair, inclusive and sustainable growth as well as cohesive societies. To help tackle skills challenges, the Commission will launch 10 actions which will address these issues and make skills more visible and improve their recognition at local, national and EU levels, from schools and universities to the labour market.

Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Valdis Dombrovskis, said: "With millions of people in the EU currently out of work, we need to do all we can to help equip them with the right skills for the evolving labour market. Today's 10-point action plan sets out areas where the EU can help make a difference, from ensuring better recognition of qualifications across EU borders, to a Skills Guarantee that helps low-skilled adults learn essential literacy, numeracy and digital skills."

Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki Katainen, commented: "In this fast-changing world we need to invest in Europe's greatest asset: our people. People need a broad set of skills to fulfil their potential both as active citizens and at work. Skills are vital for prosperity, jobs, growth and sustainable well-being. Our new Skills Agenda aims both to make sure that no-one is left behind, and that Europe nurtures the high-end skills that drive competitiveness and innovation."

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, said: "We need to invest more in skills in Europe. The most competitive countries in the EU, and in the world, are those that invest most in skills and 70 million Europeans are at the risk of falling behind. Stronger investment in skills is vital for strengthening competitiveness and boosting growth. And most of all, it is crucial to help people to realise their professional dreams and goals and reach their potential. I invite Member States, social partners and businesses to work together with us and make this New Skills Agenda for Europe a success."

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, said: "Taking a long-term approach will be crucial to make the Skills Agenda a success. Beyond fixing current mismatches, we must prevent new gaps from opening up in the future. I am therefore glad to see that the Skills Agenda defines skills broadly and seeks to promote the full range of transversal skills that help people succeed in our fast-changing economies and become engaged citizens leading independent, fulfilling lives."

10 actions

Concretely, the Commission proposes 10 actions to be taken forward over the next two years, some of which will be launched today: A Skills Guarantee to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification, and a review of the European Qualifications Framework for a better understanding of qualifications and to make better use of all available skills in the European labour market.

Also, the "Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition" bringing together Member States and education, employment and industry stakeholders to develop a large digital talent pool and ensure that individuals and the labour force in Europe are equipped with adequate digital skills. And the "Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills" to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages in specific economic sectors.

Other actions will be launched later this year and in 2017 are: A "Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals" to support early identification and profiling of skills and qualifications of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants; a revision of the Europa's Framework, offering people better and easier-to-use tools to present their skills and get useful real-time information on skills needs and trends which can help with career and learning choices.

Also Making Vocational Education and Training (VET) a first choice by enhancing opportunities for VET learners to undertake a work based learning experience and promoting greater visibility of good labour market outcomes of VET; a review of the Recommendation on Key Competences to help more people acquire the core set of skills necessary to work and live in the 21st century with a special focus on promoting entrepreneurial and innovation-oriented mind-sets and skills; an initiative on graduate tracking to improve information on how graduates progress in the labour market, and finally a proposal to further analyse and exchange best practices on effective ways to address brain drain.

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