



European Committee
of the Regions

SEDEC



Investing in Skills in Europe's regions and cities

25.04.2024 | 14:30

EUROPEAN
YEAR OF
SKILLS

Investing in Skills in Europe's regions and cities

Thursday, 25 April 2024–14:30-18:30 – JDE 51, CoR

Bridging the Skills Gap: A Call for Collaboration

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Committee and
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Regions ' SEDEC Commission.

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and evolving global challenges, the significance of a skilled workforce remains more critical than ever. It is the backbone of a thriving economy, driving innovation, productivity, and social progress. Against this backdrop, a collaborative approach is urgently needed to address Europe's growing skills gap, emphasizing the necessity of equipping our workforce for future demands.

To make the green and digital transitions happen and face demographic changes, Europe must learn to swiftly adapt through continuous upskilling and reskilling. Without the contribution of those 44% of Europeans citizens that today lack basic digital skills, our collective digital transformation efforts cannot succeed. This is why we need comprehensive digital education and training across all age groups and professional backgrounds. In the same way, the green transition, central to the EU's objectives, requires a workforce skilled in sustainable practices and technologies. It is estimated that the green economy could create over 1 million new jobs by 2030, contingent upon the upskilling and reskilling of the current workforce to meet these emerging demands. Aligning with the European Pillar of Social Rights, our ambition extends beyond current achievements, targeting a future where 60% of adults participate in training yearly by 2030.

On 25 April 2024, we co-hosted the event "Investing in Skills in Europe's Regions and Cities" in collaboration with the European Commission's DG for Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion. This event, part of the European Year of Skills, served as a vital platform to discuss the pivotal role of skills development in regional and city-level growth. The discussions highlighted that skills intelligence must be translated into actionable strategies that benefit local and regional players, improving the quality of services and alignment with the labour market and that public-private partnerships are crucial in developing

innovative and inclusive skills through collaboration between governments, educational institutions, and industry leaders.

In this context we need to recognise that one-size-fits-all solutions are insufficient. Education and vocational training programs must align with local economic drivers and sector-specific needs. This approach not only nurtures smart specialization strategies but also supports regional development, fostering a diverse and resilient European economy and addresses regional disparities that often exacerbate the skills gap, leading to economic and social inequalities. Targeted investments and promoting local entrepreneurship as a potent means of stimulating economic growth and job creation can help narrow this gap. Equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with necessary skills and resources can energize local economies and foster a culture of innovation. While promoting skills development, it's vital to preserve local culture and identity, ensuring skills enhance regional uniqueness without erasing it. With the European elections approaching we are reminded of the continuous need to innovate and adapt our skill development strategies. The elections present a pivotal opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to skills development, ensuring it remains at the forefront of the policy agenda for the next years. The new mandate must continue to drive the momentum, prioritizing investments in education and vocational training that cater to the evolving needs of our economy and society. To truly bridge the skills gap, we must also promote cross-border mobility and encourage Europeans to explore opportunities in neighboring regions. Such collaborative efforts are essential for creating a more cohesive and socially inclusive European workforce.

As Chairs of the SEDEC Commission and EMPL Committee, we are dedicated to leading this charge. We call upon the European Commission, member states, and local and regional authorities to join us in this critical endeavor.

Together, we can ensure that Europe's workforce is well-prepared to meet the challenges of today and thrive in the global economy of tomorrow. Time is with us, as the European Year of Skills has set the ground for a true skills revolution in which investing in people becomes the added value of our economy.

