

The Union of Skills VET strategy

23rd ReferNet annual plenary meeting
22 October 2025

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Europe needs a **radical step change in ambition and action** – for all skill levels and for all types of training and education. This is as important for people's careers and prospects as it is for our competitiveness.

To do so, **we will establish a Union of Skills** – focusing on investment, adult and lifelong learning, skill retention and the recognition of different types of training to enable people to work across our Union.

*Political Guidelines for the next
European Commission 2024 – 2029*



In a Union of Skills



**Everyone in Europe is
empowered to
develop skills**

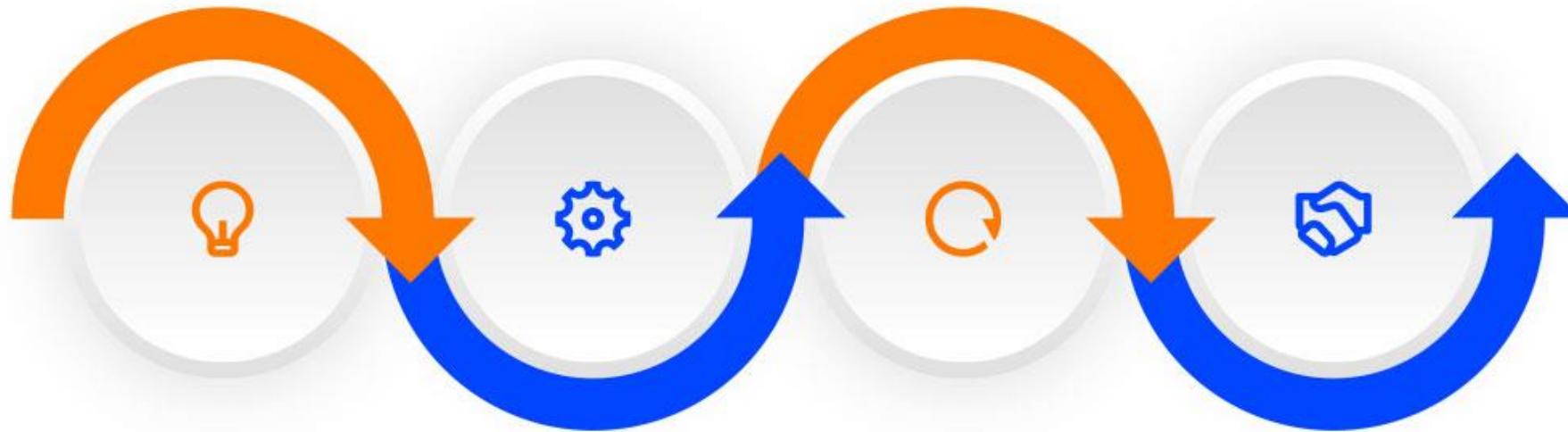


**Competitive
companies can find
people with the right
skills**



**Skills and
qualifications are
transparent, trusted
and recognised**

Union of Skills



Build skills
for quality
lives and jobs

**Upskill and
reskills**
for the digital &
green transition

Circulate skills
across the EU for
competitiveness

**Attract, develop
and retain talent**
for Europe's
future

INVESTMENT

GOVERNANCE

The European VET Strategy – political context:

VET at the heart of competitiveness and resilience

EC Political Guidelines 2024-2029

VET strategy -
Explicit call for VET to
be “given the
prominence it deserves”

2024 Draghi Report

Investment in skills -
particularly vocational
and technical skills -is
fundamental to
achieving strategic
autonomy, innovation,
and social cohesion in
Europe.

European VET policy 2026-30

Union of Skills

**VET Recommendation
2025 Herning
Declaration**



The Herning Declaration: A Renewed Commitment for 2026–2030

Endorsed on 12 September 2025 by

- Ministers responsible for VET from
 - EU Member States
 - EU Candidate Countries
 - EEA countries
- the European Commission
- European social partners

Supported by

- European level VET providers' associations (VET4EU2)
- Eurochambres
- Learners' representatives

Reaffirms the
commitment to

- [2020 VET Recommendation](#)
- [The Osnabrück Declaration](#)

Takes into consideration
the objectives of the
Union of Skills and its
initiatives

Acknowledges emerging
challenges such as

- demographic shifts
- labour and skills shortages
- and the rise of AI

Outlines 17 concrete
actions—13 at national
level, 4 at European
level—for 2026–2030.



Focus of the Herning Declaration

Enhancing the attractiveness, quality, and inclusiveness of VET, promoting parity of esteem with general and academic education.

Aligning VET with labour market demands, addressing skills shortages, and fostering social fairness and lifelong learning.

Supporting digital and green transitions through targeted skills development and inclusive apprenticeships.

Promoting innovation, excellence, and wellbeing in VET learning environments, including the responsible use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Promoting mobility, cooperation, and supporting international dimensions of VET across Europe.



VET in the EU – challenges:

A systemic underutilisation of VET's potential...

- Persistent **VET skills shortages and mismatches** across Member States, in particular in green, digital, and care sectors
- **Low attractiveness of VET** and perception as a 'second-choice' pathway
- Gender **stereotypes** and imbalanced participation
- **Weak cooperation with industry** and **limited innovation capacity**
- **Low mobility rates** (5.4% vs 12% 2030 target)



Threaten competitiveness, resilience and social inclusion

European VET strategy

Aim: increase the attractiveness, excellence and inclusiveness of VET, make VET equally valued pathway as higher education, address gender and other stereotypes

Focus on:

- the role of VET in supporting EU competitiveness and innovation
- addressing skills shortages and mismatches
- enhancing the attractiveness, quality and labour market relevance of VET and
- supporting mobility and internationalisation

Timing: planned for Q2/2026 (June 2026)

Format: tbc (possibly Commission Communication)



VET strategy – consultation strategy

Evidence gathering (Q3/2025 – Q2/2026)

- Commission report on the implementation of the VET Recommendation
- Attractiveness study (Cedefop)
- Citizenship competence in VET (Cedefop)
- Projects on AI (JRC, OECD)

General public/stakeholders views (Q4/2025 – Q1/2026)

- Eurobarometer on attractiveness of VET (results early 2026)
- Call for evidence – planned for January 2026)

Targeted stakeholders' consultation (Q4/2025 – Q1/2026)

- Dedicated webinars + discussions at
- regular meetings of DGVT, ACVT,
- VET providers,
- PES network,
- Social Partners hearing and
- Other relevant stakeholders



Links with other initiatives

- STEM Strategic Plan
- Basic Skills Action Plan
- Teachers and Trainers Agenda – planned for end 2026

Thank you!



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