

# Mind the gaps

Skills and learning in a changing world of work

12 October 2023  
Brussels



## PROGRAMME

Venue: Bedford Hotel (Salle Armstrong), 135-137 Rue du Midi, 1000 Brussels

### THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2023 (indicated times are CET)

- 9.30-10.00**      **Registration and welcome coffee**  
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- 10.00-10.25**      **Welcome address and introduction**  
Dialogue moderated by **Mara Brugia**, *Cedefop Deputy Director*
- **Oliver Röpke**, *President of EESC*
  - **Jürgen Siebel**, *Cedefop Executive Director*
- .....
- 10.25-10.55**      **High-level motivational speeches**  
High-profile speakers on the importance of skills and VET
- **Dragoş Pişlaru**, *MEP, Chair of the EMPL committee*
  - **Riikka Heikinheimo**, *BusinessEurope*
  - **Ludovic Voet**, *ETUC*
- .....
- 10.55-11.10**      **Scene setting**  
Scene setting focusing on the conference key themes  
Presented by **Antonio Ranieri**, *Cedefop*
- .....
- 11.10-11.40**      **Coffee break**  
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- 11.40-12.25**      **Session 1. The gap between skill demand and supply**  
Panel discussion moderated by **Jasper van Loo**, *Cedefop*:
- **Skills demand and supply aspects of tensions and imbalances**
  - **Linking evidence to skills policy**
- Panellists:
- **Cécile Hanoune**, *DG CLIMA*
  - **Seamus McGuinness**, *Economic and Social Research Institute, Ireland*
  - **Manuel Souto-Otero**, *School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, UK*
  - **Ilias Livanos**, *Cedefop*
  - **Gonzalo Capriolo**, *Government of Slovenia*
- .....
- 12.25-13.10**      **Session 2. The gap between people and employer needs**  
Panel discussion moderated by **Ramona David**, *Cedefop*:
- **Attractiveness of IVET for young people**
  - **Systematic employer-driven continuing VET**
- Panellists:
- **Gina Ebner**, *European Association for the Education of Adults, Belgium*
  - **Frank Pot**, *Nijmegen School of Management, Radboud University, Netherlands*
  - **Jacqueline Tanzer**, *Worldskills Champions Trust, Austria*
  - **Lidia Salvatore**, *Cedefop*
- .....
- 13.10-13.25**      **Keynote by Margaritis Schinas**, *European Commission Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life*  
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- 13.25-14.25**      **Light lunch**  
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- 14.25-15.25**      **Session 3. The gap between training policies/provision and needs**  
Panel discussion moderated by **Loukas Zahilas**, *Cedefop*:
- **Delivering lifelong learning; the changing relationship between IVET and CVET**
  - **Time for action: implementing national plans for flexible and learner-centred VET provision**
- Panellists:
- **Slavica Alojzija Černoša**, *Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenia*
  - **Maarit Virolainen**, *Institute for Educational Research, Finland*
  - **El Iza Mohamedou**, *OECD*
  - **George Kostakis**, *Cedefop*
  - **Giulia Meschino**, *EVTA*
- Discussant:
- Anastasia Pouliou**, *Cedefop*
- .....
- 15.25-16.25**      **Panel discussion – Beyond the Year of Skills**  
Moderated by **Mara Brugia**, *Cedefop Deputy Director*
- **Ann Branch**, *European Commission*
  - **Robert Plummer**, *BusinessEurope*
  - **Patricia Velicu**, *IndustriALL*
  - **Bavo Meert**, *Flemish Government (Belgium)*
- .....
- 16.25**              **Conclusions**

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### WHAT ARE SKILL GAPS AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THEM

Promote the acquisition of skills needed to cope with changes in the labour market, contribute to sustainable growth, increase technological and digital innovation and support business competitiveness. These are, in a nutshell, the objectives of the [European Year of Skills](#), in order to highlight the need to strengthen skills and training systems, and to integrate them into labour and economic policies in all EU Member States.

All across Europe, different industries and regions are experiencing recruitment difficulties for various reasons, including: lack of suitable candidates to fill jobs available in particular sectors or professions (*skill shortages*); a skills deficit which may affect workers employed by companies (*skill gaps*); and misalignment between labour demand and supply due to various causes that make efficient allocation of existing skills in the labour market difficult (*skill mismatch*).

The roots of the 'skills' challenge are well known. Transformative forces, such as the digital revolution and the urgency of climate change, are re-defining jobs, tasks and occupations, and transforming the skill profiles people need in order to be and remain employable. At the same time, the labour market continues evolving in response to long-term trends, such as globalisation, ageing population, economic shifts, and the recurrent economic, health and geopolitical crises Europe has faced since 2008.

While many employers across Europe claim that they have difficulties in finding the skills they need, a large share of the EU population, young people and adults, currently find themselves on the margins or out of the labour market, or trapped in poor-quality jobs. In the face of this paradox, the 'skills challenge' is as much about people not matching jobs as jobs not matching people. Giving learners and workers opportunities to acquire the right skills, needs to be part of a broader approach to reconciling skills and jobs. Vocational education and training systems and policies play a major role in closing the gaps and are expected to deliver positive results. Against this background, addressing skill shortages, skill gaps, and improving the skill mismatch is an enormous, as well as highly complex, task.

There are no simple solutions. To unleash the full power of an inclusive skills revolution, policy design and implementation need to target skill supply, skill demand, and their interlinkages with VET, skills and qualifications. This is the core of Cedefop's mandate.

### WHY THIS CONFERENCE

With this flagship conference, Cedefop contributes to the European Year of Skills by offering a platform to stimulate dialogue and reflect on how to match VET, skills and qualifications better with the evolving needs of the workforce and wider society.

Building on Cedefop's evidence and policy findings, the conference addresses the 'skills' issue from three different perspectives: the growing mismatch between skill supply and demand in the labour market; the discrepancies between the needs and expectations of individuals and employers; and the opportunities and challenges of implementing responsive VET policies and programmes to bridge these gaps.

While there are no definitive answers or solutions, the conference aspires to shed light on areas of the VET, skills and qualifications landscape that are currently not the centre of attention. With the engagement and contribution of a broad range of Cedefop stakeholders, this event will offer insights into the considerable shifts occurring in the worlds of work and learning, and make a case for continuous focus on implementing policy for attractive, inclusive, innovative and adaptable European VET systems.