

Vocational education and training

centre stage

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As one decade of policy-making in vocational education and training (VET) comes to a close, another is starting to take shape. And while it does, an ambitious EU agenda for transforming our economies and societies has suddenly been hit by an unprecedented crisis. But will the coronavirus pandemic prove a catalyst for achieving the agenda's ambitious goals? Can the opportunities outweigh the threats?

Demographic shifts, digitalisation and the future of work, the greening of the economy, and the post-Covid recovery: all these transitions put VET centre stage. VET is an enabler of successful transitions, so that makes it more important than ever. This notion also underpins the joint Cedefop-ETF discussion paper titled *The importance of being vocational*, which is presented in this special issue of *Skillset and match*.

The potential role of VET as an enabler of the recovery from the pandemic was also centre stage at the joint Cedefop-ETF conference *Looking back – planning ahead*, held virtually on 30 June and 1 July. To illustrate the spirit and dynamism of the conference, we interview three of its high-level speakers: read how Blaženka Divjak, Anja Karliczek and Niki Kerameus, the Education Ministers of Croatia, Germany and Greece, respectively, reflect on VET's role and on how their presidencies and national initiatives have, and will continue to, put VET centre stage.

Three themes emerged from the conference discussions. First, we need to foster continuous VET, not at the expense of initial VET but based on and linked to it. Second, we must advance skills intelligence to inform policy-makers and VET actors, making VET systems more agile and resilient. Finally, we must further boost cooperation within the vocational education and training community.

If you are part of this community, and as there will be ample need and opportunity for cooperation, please make use of it! ■