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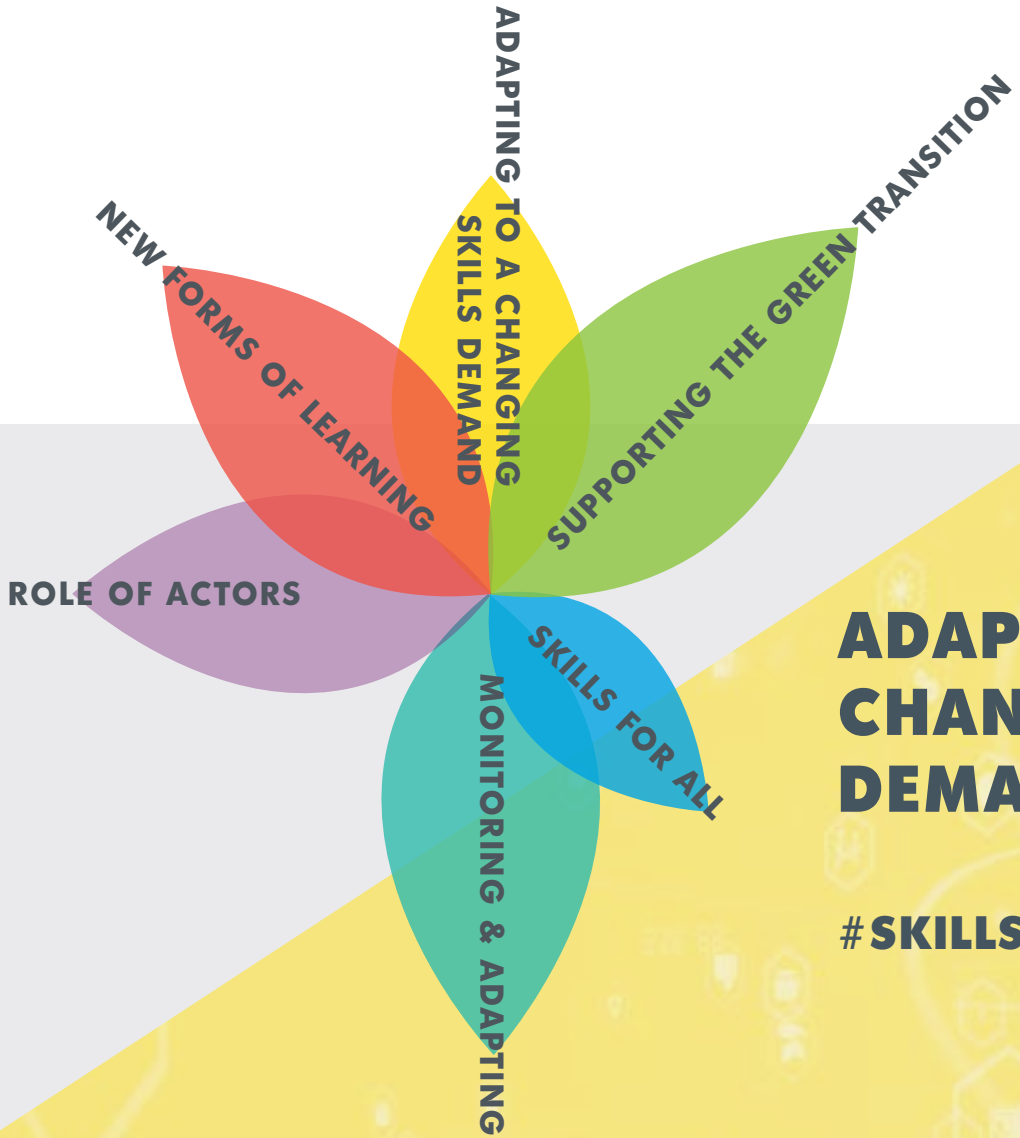


# BUILDING LIFELONG LEARNING SYSTEMS

Green Inclusive Digital

## ADAPTING TO A CHANGING SKILLS DEMAND

#SKILLS4CHANGE

# Thematic session 1:
## Adapting to a changing skills demand

**What skills do we need to cope with, manage and actively direct change? How can education and training systems support the development of new skills sets?**

All countries in the world are affected by global trends that are transforming their societies, economies and labour markets. However, the nature and intensity of this tranformation differs from country to country, region to region and sector to sector. Working environments also differ substantially, depending on the technologies used, production processes and employment relations. How we shape the future will depend on where we stand now, but even more on the choices we make and the capacity we have to adapt, innovate and make best use of emerging opportunities while mitigating risks. The EU political agenda focuses on a fair transition to a digital and green economy, while enhancing economic resilience and ensuring social justice. Investing in people's skills stands out as the best safeguard in this transition, which requires greater flexibility, resilience and agility.

The transition to the new world of work must be both human-centric and tech-centric. Jobs and their composition are changing, with routine tasks becoming automated or replaced by AI. New jobs and new forms of work are emerging and, together with them, new ways of living. New knowledge is being produced more rapidly, and there is continuous pressure to turn that knowledge into new skills, new career paths, new business models and new lifestyles.

Given the high degree of uncertainty, individuals, institutions and businesses need to develop the capacity to deal with greater complexity and learn to become inter-dependent. The set of skills needed to face the challenges of work and life today have become more complex, and they will become even more complex tomorrow. Empirical studies and foresight exercises suggest that we are shifting towards less predefined job categories with broader skill requirements and towards ones that tap into the unique potential of individuals. We move towards a world where people will need to become worker-learners in a rapidly evolving landscape. With multiple and longer careers, lifelong learning will be crucial to strengthen an individual's employability and to accompany social advancements.

Competence requirements are changing, as more jobs become subject to technological change and digitalisation assumes a bigger role in all areas of work and life. New jobs in the low-carbon economy will require heterogeneous skills portfolios and a wider set of skills, with multi-disciplinary profiles gaining attention. For example, 'T-shaped' skills profiles are emerging, requiring individuals to combine core transversal skills (the horizontal bar) with the specific skills needed for a job (the vertical bar). There is also talk of "comb-shaped" profiles combining deep knowledge in multiple vertical areas. The EU has established a key competences framework comprising higher-level cognitive and socio-emotional

skills[1], which aligns with a common set of so-called 21st century skills[2]. This indicates that we are moving towards a multidisciplinary range of skills combining technical skills and soft skills that people will need to succeed in the future.

Digital literacy and the ability to understand and apply technology to practical solutions is becoming a must across all jobs and all sectors, as well as life outside work. Environmental awareness will also need to become a core skill, alongside digital skills, as every workplace and job has the potential, and the need, to become greener. While people are being displaced by automation and artificial intelligence, they need to build on their ability to take advantage of uniquely human characteristics that cannot be replaced by technology. Common sense, problem solving, critical thinking, empathy and creativity will enable them to take advantage of technology and not lose out to it.

Rapid change creates a disconnect between the expertise that organisations need and that available in the labour market. It also generates skills gaps and fuels the growth of an alternative workforce, as businesses increasingly bridge the gap with short-term workers, freelancers, independent contractors, consultants, on-demand workers, and people working in side jobs. For this reason, learning to learn, entrepreneurial and career management skills are becoming increasingly important to boost resilience and the ability to adapt to volatility. At the same time, gathering information and monitoring skills demand help the adaptation to the new pace of change. This calls for gradudal adjustments of methodologies, but also new tools and new methods of instant data collection and processing. A more agile and accessible information system would definitely facilitate informed decision-making by institutions, businesses and individuals.

Bearing all this in mind, we take up the challenge to reach the following objectives:

- **Stimulate common reflection and discussion on how education and training systems can accompany individuals throughout their lives in this new diffuse and dynamic environment.**
- **Bring the perspective of individuals on how to make the multiplicity of new profiles and pathways visible, recognised and supported by the learning system.**

The reflection will be will be guided by the perspective of individuals (learners) and designed as a process of discovery leading from information sharing, through involvement, towards engagement. It will embrace the following issues:

**Global trends are transforming the way we work, learn and live. What does the continuous and often non-transparent changing skills demand mean for individuals? How can education and training systems accompany individuals in developing the 'right' skill sets throughout their lives?**

- What new skill sets can enable people to cope with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity?
- How can we make emerging skills demand and skills supply more transparent for better matching?
- What do individuals need from education and training systems to continuously update their skills?

1 The eight competences as defined by the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning are: literacy; multilingualism; numerical, scientific and engineering skills; digital and technology-based competences; interpersonal skills and the ability to adopt new competences; active citizenship; entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression.

2 21st century skills as defined by Unesco E2030: Education and Skills for the 21st Century are abilities and attributes that can be taught or learned in order to enhance ways of thinking, learning, working and living in the world. The skills include creativity and innovation, critical thinking/problem solving/decision making, learning to learn/metacognition, communication, collaboration (teamwork), information literacy, ICT literacy, citizenship (local and global), life and career skills, and personal and social responsibility (including cultural awareness and competence)

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