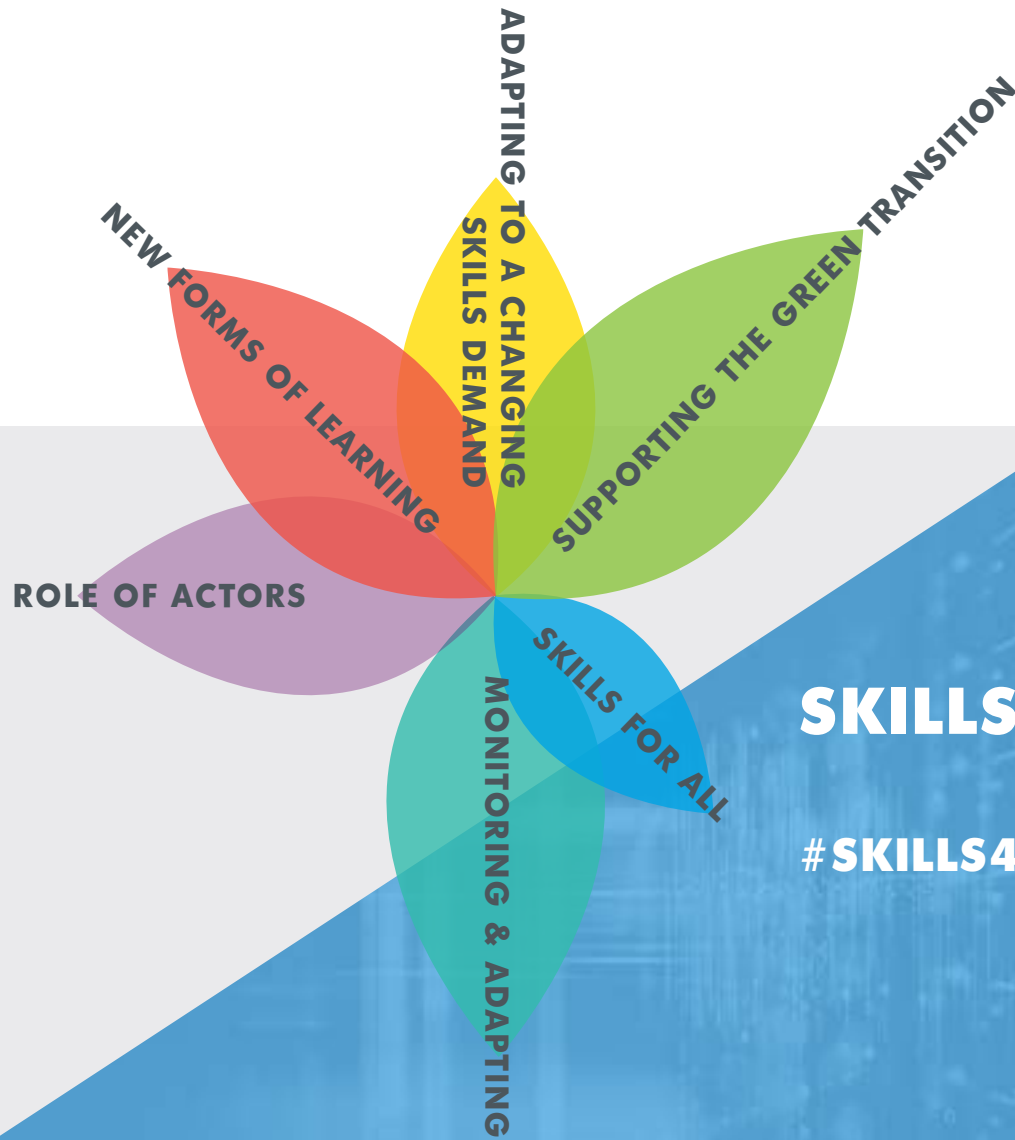




BUILDING LIFELONG LEARNING SYSTEMS

Green Inclusive Digital



SKILLS FOR ALL

#SKILLS4CHANGE

Thematic session 5:

Skills for all

The central topic of skills for all workshop is building lifelong learning systems that are inclusive by design. Such systems foster opportunities for learning and gaining new skills that are accessible and beneficial to all potential learners¹.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has combined with pre-existing transformations, especially digitalisation, to test the resilience of people, companies and governments alike. Inclusive and well-performing education and training systems are required to cope effectively with such transformations and the vulnerabilities emerging in the post Covid-19 era. Such systems must be able to meet the expectations of learners and businesses and enable a successful twin transition to greener and digital societies in which no one and nowhere is left behind.

From skills development to fully fledged lifelong learning systems

Where we are? What lies ahead?

In the education and training systems of the ETF's partner countries, as in those of many other countries around the world, there are gaps in providing relevant skills for all potential beneficiaries as well as areas of excellence. The groups most affected by school disengagement or limited access to further training opportunities are (a) learners from disadvantaged communities, such as ethnic minorities, rural or remote areas or low income households; (b) learners with special educational needs; (c) young people not in

employment, education or training; (d) young people and adults with low educational attainment; and (e) children, young people and adults with migrant backgrounds. In addition, socio-economic transformations render many professional qualifications and skills obsolete, leading to higher risks of long-term unemployment.

The results of the ETF's Torino Process³ indicate that the ETF's partner countries have managed to narrow gaps in access and improve retention in education, particularly at primary and secondary levels. However, the quality of skills development remains a matter of concern in most transition and developing countries, and elsewhere. In addition, early school leaving and limited engagement of adults in education and training are important challenges in several ETF partner countries, as well as in some EU Member States. Early childhood education is underdeveloped, lack of which can lead to weak performance in initial education, while incomplete attainment of upper secondary education is a major barrier for access to and participation in further learning opportunities.

So far, the countries of the EU Neighbourhood and Central Asia have made efforts to address the fragmentation of education pathways and provide more opportunities for learning. Such efforts include further developing national qualifications systems, establishing quality assurance and accreditation procedures, and strengthening social partnerships covering both initial and continuing education. Several countries have also boosted upskilling and reskilling opportunities for jobseekers and workers.

¹ As reflected in the principles, priorities and targets set out in the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030](#) and the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), in particular providing lifelong learning opportunities to all and tackling inequalities in access to education and training

² European Training Foundation, [Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment 2020](#), ETF, 2020

³ [Torino Process country assessments](#)

However, continuing education and training remains on the whole under-resourced.

The substantial changes in skills demand brought about by the pandemic and the digital transition call for a clear prioritisation of skills development targeting a greater proportion of young people and adults. It also calls for solutions to help young people who have lost out on education during the lockdown, as well as students and recent graduates who have missed practical training, on-the-job learning and work experience.

The main challenge ahead is how education and training systems can encompass the growing multiplicity of learners and learning needs. A further challenge is how to make sure that the expansion and diversification of learning contexts is accompanied by efforts to make people's skills visible through validation and certification, while providing timely and relevant career guidance and other support services⁴.

How to build inclusive lifelong learning systems?

More encompassing education systems must make the shift from ad hoc remedial interventions to holistic and timely ones fit for the needs of all learners. A fully fledged lifelong learning system means no dead-end educational pathways or barriers of access to and progress from one education level or profile to another. Successful lifelong learning strategies require support systems and social services, as well as wage-setting mechanisms that reward continuing development of skills, leading to upward labour market transitions. A lifelong learning system that is inclusive by design entails policy coherence and carefully crafted coordination of various action strands. It also means closing loopholes in

regulations or eligibility criteria that can prevent those most in need from benefitting from learning opportunities.

The pandemic has accelerated and intensified the transformation of societies and economies. Education and training systems must not lag behind. Several challenges lie ahead for all ETF partner countries:

- Reaching all potential learners through a multi-actor policy design and delivery;
- Making learning pathways more flexible;
- Establishing well-defined skills certification and recognition procedures regardless of the modality or place of delivery;
- Motivating and guiding learners to engage in and complete skills programmes;
- Putting skills at the heart of recovery efforts in the post-pandemic period.

Issues to be discussed

The workshop will explore the key ingredients to improving the inclusiveness and relevance of education and training in a learner-centric and lifelong perspective. Key questions for reflection are:

- What are the main challenges to effective and inclusive skills development today?
- What instruments should be in place to ensure that we do not leave anyone behind, with particular emphasis on the early identification of vulnerabilities and support measures?
- How should education and training systems adapt to ensure

⁴ As per the priorities and instruments set out in the [European Skills Agenda](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration 2020](#) on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies.

flexible learning pathways and visibility of skills for all, with particular emphasis on young people and vulnerable adults?

Objectives

By sharing experience and practice from ETF partner countries, EU Member States and internationally, the workshop aims to:

- Identify **key challenges and emerging risks** for inclusive lifelong learning systems in context of demographic, socio-economic and technological change;
- Clarify the **preconditions for and features** of education and training systems that ensure full access to and participation of all potential beneficiaries with a positive impact on employability, career progression and social inclusion;
- Select **key messages** to inform policies and action to support the shift towards learner-centric lifelong learning systems that are inclusive by design.





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