

## Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Skills

The 2023 European Year of Skills is an excellent opportunity to work with EU level instruments to respond to labour market needs, such as mobility schemes, upgrading Vocational Educational Training (VET) and forecasting tools. Chambers of commerce and industry play a key and hybrid role, developing and upgrading skills, representing businesses and the “users” of these skills, while also developing and delivering VET policies. Well-targeted EU funding can support the upskilling/reskilling of the workforce to keep competitiveness and to address the transformations related to the green and digital goals.

### 1. Executive summary

In the 2022 State of the Union address, the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen proposed to make 2023 the European Year of Skills, to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness, better focus on investments, support companies and match their needs with people’s aspirations, and attract talent to the continent. Following the announcement, the European Commission adopted its proposal and sent it to the European Parliament and the Council, making it clear that this an opportunity to connect the dots between labour market-oriented training and labour shortages.

The results of the 30th annual [Eurochambres Economic Survey](#), based on feedback from over 42,000 entrepreneurs in 25 European countries, highlighted strong concerns regarding a shortage of skilled workers. Companies’ negative expectations related to the levels of employment in 2023 are heightened by growing skill mismatches and become clearer when companies embark on green and digital projects. The return on investment in education must be reassessed throughout Europe.

Europe’s need for migrants may also increase as a response to projected labour and skills shortages. Many chambers of commerce and industry are attempting to

facilitate the reception of Ukrainian refugees to aid their integration into local labour markets. Indeed, refugees can help address skill mismatches if they are provided with proper training, support, and advice.

Eurochambres and its chamber network look forward to contributing actively to the 2023 European Year of Skills, building on the members’ active role in strengthening the provision of VET, promoting entrepreneurship, and tackling skill shortages.

Eurochambres is committed to further promoting the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme, a cross-border exchange programme that gives new or aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced ones. The main objective is to reinforce entrepreneurial attitudes, equip individuals with skills and competences invaluable for their future or newly established businesses, to allow SMEs to reach new markets and develop their enterprises thanks to innovative ideas and techniques that can be materialized into new products or services. Eurochambres will also contribute through the two new Erasmus+ projects, the European Learning Experience Platform (EULEP) and EntreComp4Transition.

## 2. Why the chamber network considers the 2023 European Year of Skills relevant

Eurochambres' and the chamber network's initiatives will be conducted in diverse ways across Europe, from the national level down to the regional and local ones. Eurochambres will contribute through dialogue with the European Commission in the frame of the different committees/expert groups it is a member of and via the projects (see ANNEX II – European projects) it is implementing together with its members.

It is salutary to see in the European Commission's proposal the acknowledgement of the role the Chambers play as partners who will support in providing fresh impetus to lifelong learning. The events of the past few years (the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, to name only two) have really highlighted the importance of continuous learning. During this time, European Chambers and businesses have worked tirelessly to secure jobs and develop innovative solutions that better reflect the rapidly changing labour market needs.

Chambers support lifelong learning initiatives that span all stages including college education, professional and career development, adult education, and more. For example, EULEP will bring together twenty organizations from eight countries to make continuing VET(C-VET) more attractive and will offer businesses new and tailor-made training modules that address their skills needs in innovation-oriented subjects (artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and social innovation). The partners will establish or reinforce knowledge triangles at regional and national level thanks to the triangle of "Business–VET provider–European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH)." They will embed VET in regional economic development strategies and reinforce its governance, putting it on a sustainable path.

Chambers of commerce and industry play a key and hybrid role, especially in developing and upgrading skills, representing businesses, the "users" of these skills, while also developing and delivering VET policies. At the national level, Chambers' roles and involvement in VET and apprenticeship systems vary significantly. They function as business representatives, as intermediary organizations between companies and schools/apprentices, or via sectoral organisations (e.g., in Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, and Serbia) and, in fewer cases, as VET providers (e.g., in France or Luxembourg). Moreover, in countries such as Germany, Austria, or Spain, the Chambers are responsible for the administration of apprenticeship trainings and parts of the VET system.

The activities in which chambers are involved (see ANNEX I - Examples of National Chamber VET activities in numbers) include, but are not limited to:

- a. Career guidance, orientation and information targeting both students and companies (e.g., organization of events such as career days, orientation fairs, workshops, or seminars)
- b. Skills forecasting (e.g., Excelsior in Italy or Fachkräfte-Monitor in Germany) and skills assessments
- c. "Talent check" in Austria, Luxembourg and Flanders, which analyses the skills of 13- and 14-year-olds to provide tailored guidance
- d. Training courses and certification of transversal skills in various sectors (e.g., digital, tourism, fashion and textile, mechatronics, agrifood)
- e. Various functions in relation to VET and apprenticeships (the Official Chamber of

Commerce, Industry, Services and Shipping of Spain and the National Public Employment Service (SEPE) signed in 2021 a new collaboration agreement for the development of the Dual Vocational Training Programme and CCI France is responsible for the administration of apprenticeship training).

- f. Involvement in national advisory bodies for skills development and/or education and training and collaboration with national education and economy ministries and other relevant institutions
- g. Organization of competitions and awards
- h. Entrepreneurship education and support provision for entrepreneurs. (Chamber of Commerce Luxembourg - Relations Ecole-Entreprise (REE) with 598 pupils in secondary schools to raise awareness among students on entrepreneurship)
- i. Comprehensive qualification and employment program (Programme PICE).
- j. Mobility Plan (Throughout 2021, almost 270 mobilities have been initiated in Spanish and international companies in the European Union with a total allocation of 660,000 euros in scholarships)

Chambers also play a key role in supporting the labour integration of migrant and refugee groups (see ANNEX III- List of projects on Labour migration); they may, for instance, provide technical assistance in skills assessment and validation schemes, provide VET and or professional training, inform companies on the opportunities of employing refugees, support companies in managing the administrative procedures, organise training and support for self-employment and migrant entrepreneurship, assist in the matching of refugees and companies.

### 3. Summary of Eurochambres' main priorities / recommendations

Eurochambres welcomes the Commission Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Skills and provides its priorities in four main areas:

- I. **Strengthening apprenticeship, entrepreneurship and further facilitating labour mobility in Europe**
  - Eurochambres welcomes several European Commission initiatives included in the Skills Agenda. The Pact for skills, the European approach to micro-credentials and a European Action on Entrepreneurship Skills all correspond to proposals that are tabled by Eurochambres that can help narrow the skills gap.
  - Eurochambres stresses the need to accelerate the recognition of qualifications and improve the transfer of learning from apprenticeship for the vocational path (through better application of the European system of credits for apprenticeship for VET). The year of 2023 should therefore be an opportunity to recognize apprenticeship as a common priority for strengthening EU companies' competitiveness, by developing a common training curriculum, coordinating approaches, and strengthening mobility programs for all groups.
  - The use of European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp) should be fostered at European level to offer added value in supporting sustainable growth in the private sector, considering EntreComp competences as key for building resilience and surpassing future challenges. The already ongoing project EntreComp Europe which explores best practices regarding entrepreneurial skills, can also offer ideas for further implementation of the framework and for assessing and recognizing

entrepreneurial competences.

- The European Commission should advocate for, and monitor, the meaningful involvement of national chambers of commerce and industry in the programming, monitoring and implementation of EU funding streams that aim to support the up and re-skilling of the workforce. This particularly concerns the European Social Fund+, Just Transition Fund, structural funds in the Region (ERDF/ESF), the Recovery and Resilience Facility, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.

### II. **Coordinating vocational education for twin (digital and green) transition pathways**

- Higher vocational education has an enormous potential for individual professional development and for companies training and retaining competent workers. Eurochambres believes that the higher vocational education should be in line with the Osnabruck Declaration, developed on Essential Qualification Requirement (EQR) levels 5–8 and aim to be an integral part of the national education systems of all member states.
- The growing demand for skilled employees within the Artificial Intelligence (AI) cannot be met by current education and training programmes. Eurochambres supports the 2030 Digital Compass Europe that can fast-track the upskilling and of the EU's workforce to meet this ever-increasing demand. Eurochambres welcomes the commitment of the European Commission to support Digital Innovation Hubs so that they can educate and train on innovative technologies such as AI among all companies – big or small, advanced, or traditional. These hubs, often initiated by local Chambers, already played a critical role in innovating and testing innovative technologies, especially for smaller companies that did not have the means to finance their own research labs.
- Eurochambres believes that the Green Deal's significant impact on employment and skill demand should be addressed by providing targeted assistance to businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. As a result of the green transition, European businesses will face significant skills shortages and will be forced to invest in employee training. These challenges will necessitate substantial support from the EU and member states in the form of funds for reskilling and upskilling, as well as entrepreneurship promotion. The green transition will succeed only if job creation, support for job redefinition, and positive entrepreneurial attitudes toward establishment of new sustainable businesses are prioritized. Incentives for green (sustainable) entrepreneurship will be especially effective in areas where jobs are at risk of being lost or where there is an opportunity for job creation through the establishment of new businesses. Tax incentives, access to finance, entrepreneurial education at all levels of education and training, and access to facilities for entrepreneurs should all be encouraged to foster entrepreneurial attitudes.

### III. **Strengthening multistakeholder partnerships on skills development**

- National skill development policies must be conceived within a framework that has both a short-term and a longer-term perspective. Such development should be founded on social partnerships, in particular, on the involvement of Chambers of commerce and industry and Industry. It should be the outcome of a consultative and inclusive approach, driven by leadership, locally grounded and relevant, and underpinned by the usage of skills forecasting intelligences to guarantee an adequate understanding of labor market demands.
- Eurochambres believes that the Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) initiative should consider the variety of tools and systems already existing in the member states and

further promote the need to act at the national/regional level to foster upskilling and reskilling instead of creating a general European entitlement. Peer learning activities among different member states should be encouraged by the European Union. ILAs should be intricately linked to national and regional instruments for skills forecasting to determine the selection of critical training opportunities, with significant involvement of business organizations, like the Chambers, which are aware of such demands.

- Eurochambres is one of the signatories of the Pact for Skills. We agree that such large partnerships, are a promising idea that can broaden the scope of learning opportunities for adult workers. Large-scale partnerships for skills development will function only once they are followed by substantial financial support. Additionally, these partnerships should also be established at regional levels to encourage local stakeholders to cooperate more closely and invest more in building the skills they find missing for their businesses. The Pact for Skills implementation needs to be connected to recovery and resilience plans implementation.

#### IV. **Supporting the integration of migrants into the labour market**

- Considering the skill shortages Europe is facing, new talents from outside of the European Union are needed. While different EU programs have been earmarked for the integration of refugees/migrants into the labor market, how these can be accessed is not transparent and sometimes cumbersome. Eurochambres proposes better information provision on access to funding streams and more lenient processes for obtaining the right to live and work in the EU member states.
- Eurochambres welcomes the Skills and Talent package under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Faster and easier procedures for obtaining the right to live and work in the EU member states are a sine qua non condition for attracting skilled talents from abroad.
- Eurochambres welcomes the launch of the European Commission Pilot Talent Pool focused on the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market and asks for the pilot phase to undergo a thorough evaluation before the next phase is launched and the usage of the tool is opened to migrants from other parts of the world.
- Easier recognition of qualifications, especially nonformal and informal ones, should be the goal of all member states. Apart from ensuring appropriate professional qualification pathways, this would contribute to mitigating the lack of skilled workforce by attracting qualified third-country nationals to Europe.

### 4. **Detailed comments on the proposal**

#### I. **Strengthening Entrepreneurship and apprenticeship**

We are content to see a **European Action on Entrepreneurship Skills** that is a response to long-time advocacy of the chambers' community. Sharing experience between entrepreneurs and the ones aspiring to run businesses has been proved successful by the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, a program that can contribute to this action. We are satisfied that one of the points of the European Action on Entrepreneurship Skills, aims to assist young female entrepreneurs. Some chambers of commerce and industry have developed effective programs that connect experienced female entrepreneurs with their aspiring counterparts. Regional chambers of commerce and industry launched programs such as **Austria's Female Factor, Germany's TwoWomenWin, and Ireland's Female Entrepreneur Mentoring Programme**. They brought together entrepreneurs from similar

regions and shared crucial experiences.

European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp) creates a shared understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that make up what it means to be entrepreneurial – discovering and acting upon opportunities and ideas, and transforming them into social, cultural, or financial value or others. EntreComp recognises the opportunity to be entrepreneurial in any situation: from curricula at school to innovation in the workplace, from community initiatives to applied learning at university.

Apart from including the framework in national curricula (both VET and HEIs), the use of the EntreComp Framework has also proved to help migrants and unemployed people to discover new potential and new opportunities to find a job (Chèque Formation à la Création d'Entreprise (CFCE) in the region of Wallonia, Belgium & Intersect project (Türkiye), to be an effective tool to foster intrapreneurship and help workers and employees to evolve and adapt to changing context as mentioned in the “Entrepreneurial employee in the public and private sector”<sup>1</sup>.

The use of EntreComp framework should be fostered at European level to offer added value to support sustainable growth in the private sector, considering EntreComp competences as key enabling competences to be more resilient and surpass future challenges.

### **Learning Mobility for the development of skills**

EU-wide mobility for all audiences is a privileged way of developing skills while strengthening the feeling of European belonging. However, obstacles remain. These include: an increased need for SMEs to be made aware of the advantages of mobility for their apprentices, the understanding of foreign languages, or the lack of mutual recognition of qualifications and learning from one state to another.

Programmes supporting the mobility of entrepreneurs (such as the Erasmus programme for Young Entrepreneurs) and employees (such as the Mobilise SME programme) help develop the skills of professionals, improve their knowledge of markets and technologies, and expand their network of European partners. Currently, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme counts on 185 Intermediary Organisations across thirty-six of the forty-five participating countries (some of them are Chambers), while Eurochambres, being the Support Office of the programme, provides guidance and support to the Intermediary Organisations and entrepreneurs for more than 10 years. In addition, chambers all over Europe have a wide range of initiatives in place to support aspiring and new entrepreneurs in the stand up and start-up phase and targeting specifically young people.

Eurochambres stresses the need to accelerate the recognition of qualifications and improve the transfer of learning from apprenticeship for the vocational path (through better application of the European system of credits for apprenticeship for VET). The year of 2023 should therefore be an opportunity to recognize apprenticeship as a common priority for strengthening EU companies' competitiveness, by developing a common training curriculum, coordinating approaches, and strengthening mobility programs for all groups.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Lackéus, M., Lundqvist, M., Williams Middleton, K., et al., [The entrepreneurial employee in the public and private sector](#): what, why, how, Bacigalupo, M.(editor), Publications Office, 2020.

Among these, particularly remarkable is 'Bright and Young' (Bryo), an initiative of Voka, the Flemish Chamber of Commerce and Industry, designed to aid pre starter and starter projects. It includes three major programmes, each of which has a specific target group: Bryo Stand Up Students and Bryo Stand Up, Bryo Start Up and Bryo Scaleup.

CCI France has also launched in 2022 "the nights of orientation campaign" where they are organising more than thirty events in the regions to help young people choose their career path. The actions implemented by the CCI teams aim to raise awareness of the diversity of professions, to promote all training paths, including apprenticeships, and to overcome the self-censorship and stereotypes that young people and their parents may have about certain sectors such as industry.

### **The actions to be taken include:**

- Accelerate the recognition of qualifications and improve the transfer of learning from apprenticeship for the vocational path (through better application of the European system of credits for apprenticeship for VET)
- Provide substantial budgetary resources to develop the Erasmus Pro programme for people in vocational training,
- Develop specific tools to promote and facilitate mobility in cross-border regions, at the level of the Euro regions,
- Further professionalise the Erasmus + programme for young entrepreneurs in high added value sectors, the digital and green sectors,
- Develop mentoring practices, which are recognised as a suitable solution to respond quickly to the changing needs of the labour market,
- Support the skills development of employees and managers of SMEs through short-term mobility programmes in another European company,
- Bring together and coordinate the training policies of the Member States to facilitate mobility and partnerships at European level.

#### **a. Coordinate vocational education for twin transition pathways**

### **Green Pathways**

At European level, vocational education, and training (VET) must be promoted, coordinated, and resolutely aligned with the challenges of the green and digital transitions. Emphasis should also be placed on the development of transversal skills, such as entrepreneurship.

Eurochambres believes that the Green Deal's significant impact on employment and skills demand should be addressed by providing targeted assistance to businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Eurochambres launched a survey on the Twin transition in September 2022<sup>2</sup> which gathered feedback from national and regional chambers of commerce and industry and industry in nineteen countries across Europe. The survey's objective was to gather feedback on business barriers and incentives in relation to greening of their activities. According to the respondents, the lack of expertise in the fields of energy efficiency, waste sorting, reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and water treatment prevents the smooth implementation of green practices. The survey also identified that there is a lack of knowledge on the ongoing compliance with evolving environmental standards and policies because of unclear regulations and guidelines. As a

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<sup>2</sup> [Twin Transition Survey](#). Eurochambres, 23 September 2022.

result of the green transition, European businesses will face significant skills shortages and will be forced to invest in employee training. These challenges will necessitate substantial support from the EU and member states in the form of funds for reskilling and upskilling, as well as entrepreneurship promotion.

The green transition is a long-term goal for the entire economy and society that requires appropriately skilled workers. The up- and reskilling of workforce is a huge project, and the private sector will bear a sizeable portion of the cost of this transformation. To support businesses in that regard, public funding targeted particularly towards businesses must be increased, both from EU funds and from national programmes.

Eurochambres is a member of the European Commission Working Group on Vocational Training and the Green Transition, which examines how to prepare for labour-market-relevant education in the context of the green transition. Eurochambres will continue to contribute to the working group through its activities.

### **Digital Pathways**

A joint European Committee of the Regions and Eurochambres survey<sup>3</sup> in 2020 revealed that around 75% of businesses took decisive steps to digitalise their activities during the pandemic. The survey also highlighted the key role that Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Industry play in supporting digital transformation processes among businesses. The study investigated the main facilitators and the main barriers for the digitalisation of companies across Europe's regions. Companies identified the financing of their digital transformation as the main bottleneck, followed by a lack of digitally skilled employees and shortcomings in collaborative networks between academia, governments, and businesses.

The Digital Compass Europe provides the foundation for a holistic and long-term digital strategy, which enhances digital skills on all levels of education. Upskilling and reskilling the workforce is of particular importance and companies, particularly SMEs need to be encouraged and incentivized to do it. About innovation and the digital transformation, the potential of the creative and cultural industries must be maximised.

In Spain, the 45+ Programme was launched at the end of 2020, with the participation of 35 chambers of commerce and industry and Industry throughout the national territory. The objective is to improve the employability, through digitalization and soft skills, of people over 45 who are unemployed or inactive, since it is a group that is especially suffering the consequences of the health crisis caused by COVID-19. During 2021, 4,196 orientations were carried out and 3,783 students completed their training in digital skills.

The Czech Chamber of Commerce contributes to the adaptation of the labour market to changes related to the introduction of Industry 4.0. Together with the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic and Trexima, it is completing a public contract within the COMPETENCE 4.0 project from the Operational programme Employment. Its aim was to create a tool for mapping future competencies in 10 selected sectors. The Chamber provided working groups for the ICT sector (focusing on cyber security), Creative Industry (focusing on the gaming industry), Wholesale, retail and e-commerce and Food industry). In addition to identifying competencies, the working groups participated in the creation of competency pyramids. Their use in initial vocational education can lead to innovation of

<sup>3</sup> EU CoR (2021). [The state of digital transformation at regional level and COVID-19](#) induced changes to economy and business models, and their consequences for regions. European Committee of the Regions. 26 July 2021.



the system of disciplines and modernization of educational content. Further education offers use in the creation of retraining programs and programs for re-skilling and up skilling in accordance with the European employment policy.

In Austria, the Coding Day is an offer for pupils and apprentices to get involved with programming in a low-threshold and playful way. With the WKÖ Coding Day we promote digital skills in all economic sectors, the WKÖ increases the IT affinity of apprentices throughout Austria. This is important because the Coding Day in conjunction with the WKÖ “Bildungsoffensive” puts the training opportunities in IT in front of the curtain and supports the idea that digital skills are necessary regardless of industry. At the 4th Coding Day in the fall of 2022, the award ceremony for MINTRON schools took place in Austrian Federal Economic Chamber where the best 3 MINTRON schools were awarded. In addition, the best apprentices of the apprentice hackathon 2022 were honoured for their innovative app ideas.

It is important to strengthen the role of VET to prepare the workforce for the new Industrial Revolution 4.0. The growing demand for skilled employees within the AI cannot be met by current education and training programmes. Europe supports the Digital Compass Europe that can fast-track the upskilling and of the EU’s workforce to meet this ever-increasing demand.

The European Commission have identified digital Innovation Hubs as decisive for company accessibility to AI. These hubs, often initiated by local and national Chambers, already played a critical role in innovating and testing innovative technologies, especially for smaller companies that did not have the means to finance their own research labs. Eurochambres welcomes the commitment of the European Commission to support Digital Innovation Hubs so that they can educate and train on innovative technologies such as AI among all companies – big or small, advanced, or traditional.

### **b. Strengthening multistakeholder partnerships on skills**

#### **National Skills Strategies**

National Skills Policy Strategies are launched across the EU member states, bringing together actively all social partners, including chambers of commerce and industry and industry. The common objective is to reduce skills gaps through the implementation of continuing educational vocational training plan. As skills requirements are evolving faster than ever before, the timely understanding and forecasting of entrepreneurs' needs is crucial. The curricula of school, university, and vocational training programmes must be reviewed to reflect the most recent findings of regional skills intelligence tools. Accordingly, skills intelligence tools should be used more effectively and consistently to update curricula and design policies. Programs reflecting real demands of the labour market should be promoted amongst member states and education institutions, e.g., by the Erasmus+ Program or European Semester’s recommendations.

An interesting example is the Luxembourg “Skillsdëschw” initiative. A study that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) prepared under the National Skills Strategy in Luxembourg. The study has been bringing together social partners to analyse skills needs, define and implement a training action plan to ensure the competitiveness and resilience of the Luxembourg economy. The objective is to close the skills gaps by implementing a long-term strategic approach in the field of continuing

vocational education and training.

The Czech Chamber of Commerce, together with other representatives of employers (Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic and Confederation of Employers and Entrepreneurs Associations of the Czech Republic), initiated the creation of a partnership management model of the lifelong learning system. The aim is to strengthen the coordination of a number of hitherto isolated activities: from predictions of the development of individual economic sectors, through the identification of competences, innovation of occupational standards and qualifications to their projection into further and initial professional/vocational education. The model of partnership management of the lifelong learning system, on which the state, employers and trade unions would cooperate, is a guarantee of effective use of funds intended for Active Employment Policy, re/up skilling in accordance with the needs of "Industry 4.0". The National Network of Sector Councils would play a key role here. The document based on partnership and shared responsibility of the State, employers and trade unions will be discussed at the national Economic and Social Council in January 2023. Its transformation into a legislative form is reflected in the Government Policy Statement.

National Skills policies must be conceived within a framework that has both a short-term and a longer-term perspective. National Skills development should be founded on social partner and in particular chambers of commerce and industry and Industry involvement, consultative and inclusive but with leadership, locally grounded and relevant, and underpinned by usage of skills intelligence's results to guarantee an adequate understanding of labour market demands.

However, a policy is only as effective as its implementation. Setting achievement targets, developing clear implementation plans and identifying a lead agency or ministry responsible for implementation are important. Advocacy and financial support for target groups will ensure that there is sufficient uptake of new programmes. Finally, a system allows the policy to be objectively assessed and provides feedback for future policy reforms.

### **Individual Learning Accounts**

The chamber network recognise that there are many ways to organise lifelong learning and consider that a European initiative on Individual Learning Accounts (ILA)'s should respect the variety of tools and systems existing in the Member states (that respond to the specific needs of different target groups). Therefore, the Commission should not develop a one-size-fits-all approach and respect the principle of subsidiarity.

Several chambers participate in skills forecasting at national level. A remarkable example is 'Excelsior,' managed by Unioncamere the association of Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicrafts and Agriculture. Based on a survey of Italian businesses, Excelsior provides in depth information on the current and projected labour demands in the country in terms of skills, educational qualifications, and professions within a five-year period. As skills requirements are evolving faster than ever before, timely understanding and correctly foreseeing the labour market's skills needs is crucial. However, to be truly effective in tackling skills mismatches, having comparable and high-quality information on skills demanded by employers across the EU is only part of the solution. This data must feed into the design and delivery of education and training curricula if improvements are to be made. To support delivery of PCTOs (Transversal skills and orientation pathways) Unioncamere has launched a platform and a gamification

tool which builds on data collected via Excelsior.

Eurochambres believes that the initiative on Individual Learning Accounts should respect the variety of tools and systems already existing in the Member States and further promote the need to act at national/regional level to foster upskilling and reskilling instead of creating a general European entitlement. Individual Learning account (ILAs) should be intricately linked to national and regional instruments for skill forecasting to determine the selection of critical training opportunities, with significant involvement of business organizations, such as chambers, which are aware of national and regional skill demands.

### **Pact for Skills**

The Pact builds on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU's compass for a social and inclusive recovery. It emphasises the promotion of lifelong learning for all, building strong skills partnerships, monitoring skills supply/demand and anticipating skills needs, and working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities.

Eurochambres is one of the signatories of the Pact for Skills. We agree that large partnerships, such as a Pact for Skills, are a promising idea that can broaden the scope of learning opportunities for adult workers. Nevertheless, to address skills shortages that companies struggle with, the business community needs to cocreate the Pact alongside other stakeholders. Large-scale partnerships for skills will function only once they are followed by substantial financial support. Additionally, these partnerships should also be established on regional levels to encourage local stakeholders to cooperate closer and invest more in the skills they find missing for their businesses.

We are continuing to consult with chambers about their potential commitments. So far, two members, Unioncamere from Italy and WKÖ from Austria, have formed two large scale skill partnerships (tourism sector and textiles sector respectively).

The development of quality training courses could be boosted by the creation of European skills networks, integrated into local ecosystems, in close connection with growth strategies at regional and cross-border level. The actions to be taken include:

- Getting more European funds (ERDF and ESF) involved to support SMEs in identifying their skills needs and in the continuing training of employees and business leaders,
- Strengthening entrepreneurship training actions, co-financed by structural funds in the Region (ERDF/ESF),
- Encouraging EU initiatives for the structuring of skills ecosystems at local level and connected at European level to develop innovative approaches,
- Promote exchanges within the EU enabling teachers to discover practices in countries whose education is more open to the professional world,
- Fully integrate the need to also meet the skills needs of enterprises in the implementation of the European Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts.

### **c. Supporting the integration of migrants into the labour market**

Considering the skills shortages Europe is facing, new talents from outside of the European Union are needed. While the Chamber network is clearly in favour of regulated and legal

labour migration paths, those arriving in Europe after perilous journeys need to be taken care of, and when adequate, integrated into the labour market.

Labour market integration is the first step in a wider integration process that should address issues linked to migrants/refugees' long-term integration into European societies.

Back in 2016 and as a direct consequence to the refugee's crisis Europe was facing at the time, the European chamber network developed its ERIAS programme (European Refugees Integration Action Programme). The programme calls for a rapid skills assessment of those arriving to the shores of Europe, followed by professional guidance and relevant training to make them fit for the European labour market and finally the matching with companies in search of talents. By organising a rapid labour market integration process, sectors suffering from skills shortages can be assisted and the refugees are given a new goal and purpose in life.

To attract skilled workers to Europe, the European Commission launched its "Skills and Talent Package" in April 2022 under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Eurochambres welcomes the initiative as it addresses to a certain extent the issues that employers face when recruiting from third countries. Faster and easier procedures for obtaining the right to live and work in the EU member states are a sine qua non conditions for attracting skilled talents from abroad. Employers cannot wait for months for the administrative procedures to be completed. It should also be easier for talented third country nationals to move from one EU member country to another for work, and the entitlement to work should also systematically be granted to family members.

Work on the EU Talent Pool and Talent Partnership initiatives need to be further deepened and businesses should be involved in the development and running from the outset. The initiatives will not yield the expected results if they are not based on businesses concrete labour needs. Eurochambres welcomes the launch of the European Commission Pilot Talent Pool focused on the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labour market and asks for the pilot phase to undergo a thorough evaluation before the next phase is launched and the usage of the tool is opened to migrants from other parts of the world.

Under the European Partnership for Integration, the European Commission and European Social and Economic Partners have worked together closely since 2017 to create opportunities for integrating refugees and other migrants into the EU labour market. On 19 December 2022, the commitment from both sides for integrating refugees / migrants into the labour market was reconfirmed with the publication of a renewed partnership statement. in which they explore how to extend their dialogue and future cooperation in labour migration.

Considering the skills shortages Europe is facing, new talents from outside of the European Union are needed. While different EU programmes have been earmarked for the integration of refugees/migrants into the labour market, access to these programmes is not transparent and sometimes cumbersome. Eurochambres proposes better information provision on access to funding streams and more lenient processes for obtaining the right to live and work in the EU member states.

Easier recognition of qualifications, especially nonformal and informal ones, should be the goal of all member states. Apart from ensuring appropriate professional qualification pathways, this would contribute to mitigating the lack of skilled workforce by attracting qualified third-country nationals to Europe.

As an example, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber is countering the shortage of skilled workers with a series of measures at home and abroad. While the main focus for making skilled labour potential available is on the domestic market (education/apprenticeships, labour market, health/pensions, reconciliation of work and family life/potential for women), demographic developments require targeted activities abroad to attract qualified skilled workers from third countries to Austria as a place to work. The International Recruiting Initiative (IFO) of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber is a project that attempts to improve the influx of qualified skilled workers and make recruitment from third countries accessible to Austrian companies and SMEs in particular by means of targeted measures. The fields of action concern education (e.g., competence assessment and capacity building), recruitment (cooperation with recruiters, events, business missions, industry-specific pilot projects), external appearance & communication (positioning Austria as an attractive work location, stakeholder involvement) and improving framework conditions.

5. ANNEX I – Examples of national chamber VET activities in numbers

Austrian Federal Economic Chamber	Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry	CCI France	Chamber of Commerce Luxembourg	Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Shipping of Spain
<p>Career counselling and vocational guidance for 250.000 young people and adults</p> <p>160 career pathways <a href="#">online</a> at with more than 72.000 users since 2020</p> <p>Around 150.000 apprentices, master craftsman-examinations, professional certifications</p> <p>20.000 students and pupils in Upper Secondary Vocational Schools (e.g. Economy, Tourism), at 4 Universities of Applied Sciences and 2 Private Universities</p> <p>Training, Upskilling and Reskilling for more than 325.000 adults in Continuing Vocational Training Courses</p> <p>3.000 pupils participating in entrepreneurship-activities</p> <p>4 Apprentice hackathons with around 600 apprentices from 160 companies</p> <p>Around 400 persons in “Dual Academy” (Apprenticeship for young adults) on EQR-Level 5</p>	<p>1.500 employees from more than 1.000 companies. This is done through the organization of 60 and more educational training programs per year, implemented with the approval and subsidy of the Human Resources Development Authority.</p>	<p>The French Chambers of Commerce Network is the second largest training provider in France after National Education with</p> <p>400 000 people trained per year</p> <p>80 000 students</p> <p>100 000 apprentices</p> <p>143 continuing vocational training institutions</p> <p>106 guidance points</p> <p>18 business schools</p> <p>16 management schools</p> <p>9 engineering schools</p>	<p>1.033 new apprenticeship contracts signed for the school year 2021/2022</p> <p>Certification courses offered by the "House of Training" 25.033 registrations, for its 1.069 training modules delivered by some 800 trainers and about 50 partners.</p> <p>Certification courses by Key Job: 10.381 registrations for the 1.656 training courses, delivered by 34 trainers. In total, 276 companies benefited from these trainings.</p> <p>Diploma courses by ISEC: 102 students enrolled in ISEC programs.</p>	<p>76.858 training actions/programmes</p> <p>36.018 youngsters assessed</p> <p>35.000 youngsters trained</p> <p>7.050 employment created</p>

## 6. ANNEX II – European Projects

### EULEP

[EULEP](#) is the European Learning Experience Platform that brings together twenty organisations from eight countries, working together to make C-VET more attractive for lifelong learning and offer businesses new and tailor-made training modules that correspond to their skills needs in innovation-oriented subjects (artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and social innovation). The partners establish or reinforce knowledge triangles at regional and national level thanks to the triangulation business - VET provider - European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH). They will embed VET in regional economic development strategies and reinforce its governance, putting it on a sustainable path. The project activities directly target VET providers, companies, potential VET learners from different horizons, EDIHs, public authorities and other stakeholders involved in the VET governance process or dealing with VET more widely.

### ERIAS

The European Chamber (CCI) network, under Eurochambres' coordination, is committed to contribute to the economic integration of refugees through its action programme entitled "European Refugees Integration Action Scheme"- ERIAS. The ERIAS concept was developed and promoted in 2016, after the EU had seen massive waves of refugees arriving. With view to the complexity of the integration task, it is relevant for the Chamber network to join forces with other organizations to deliver better results. Stakeholders from different horizons such as local and regional authorities, other business organizations, unions organizations, social organizations, employment agencies, job centres, professional colleges, welfare associations, religious organisations, adult education centres, migrant organisations, and training providers, will all bring their specific expertise into the process. Integration is to happen at the grassroot level, and the first step will be to develop ERIAS local partnerships that will develop regional action plans for joint implementation. Sound framework conditions and local networks are decisive in determining the success of this commitment. Chambers will collaborate with their local partners in a structured manner and promote cooperation. The responsibilities of each partner will be clearly outlined in this context. The proposed action plans typically comprise the following steps

### EntreComp Europe

[EntreComp Europe](#) is a project co-funded by the COSME programme about supporting actors in all sectors of the lifelong learning system to enhance the development, validation and recognition of the entrepreneurship key competence across lifelong learning, by creating collaborative communities, piloting actions at national and regional level, supporting an EU-wide forum to provide guidance, collate tools, develop new practice, adapt and share existing practice, and connect those working on both the policy level and on practical implementation of EntreComp into youthwork, formal education, employment and enterprise settings.

### EntreComp4Transition

[EntreComp for Transition](#) is an Erasmus+ project which aims at developing new, innovative, multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning paving the way for the future 'Green Transition Facilitator' by fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, facilitating co-creation, and ensuring recognition of learning outcomes. It relies on country clusters forging innovative alliances to support teachers, trainers, businesses, and end users in the learning pathway. Activities include an in-depth analysis of skills gaps, the development a dual blended

methodology with innovative learning content delivered via a MOOC in line with ECVET and EQAVET frameworks, pilot sessions, a mobility scheme, and the creation of open badges to support HE/VET and enable businesses to verify acquired competences. The project will also produce a sustainable AI-based tool to support companies in identifying skill gaps and raise their competitiveness. More than 30.000 stakeholders across the EU ranging from businesses, HEIs, VET providers, public authorities, civil society, and students will be involved and directly benefit from the project in the short-term and/or long-term. Thanks to its well-defined governance at national level, the EntreComp for Transition project is designed to gather actors together in a strong alliance for innovation, the results of which will bring benefits to each of them, to different contexts and beyond in the long-term.



## 7. ANNEX III- Projects on Labour Migration

Country	Project title	Leadership and partnership
Austria	Mentoring for Migrants	Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in cooperation with its project partners: the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and the Labour Market Service (AMS)
	b. mobile - Fachkräftepotenzial nutzen	Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Austrian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs
Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands	Match Project	Voka - CCI West-Flanders and Voka - CCI East Flanders, VDAB, Agoria, Nabc, Unioncamere Piemonte, Eurochambres, IMS Luxembourg, IOM
Belgium	Palim-project - Project Addressing Labour Shortages Through Innovative Labour Migration Models	Enabel in partnerships with the Flemish and Moroccan government employment services (VDAB and ANAPEC), employers' federations, interested private businesses, universities, and the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil).
Germany	Hand in Hand for International Talents	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, DIHK, Bundesagentur für Arbeit
	Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung (UBA)	Federal Ministry of Education and Research, unternehmen berufsanerkennung, ZDH, DIHK, ZWH
	ProRecognition	Sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, implemented by DIHK Service GmbH
	Ankommen in Deutschland – Gemeinsam unterstützen wir Integration (Arriving in Germany - Together we support integration)	Own project of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK)
	NETZWERK Unternehmen integrieren Flüchtlinge	The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry have initiated the NETWORK
Italy, France, Greece, Spain, Bulgaria	ERIAS - European Refugees Integration Action Scheme	The European Chamber (CCI) network, under Eurochambres' coordination
Türkiye	Mahir Eller Project - Living and Working Together: Integrating SuTPs to the Turkish Economy	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye



Eurochambres, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over twenty million businesses in Europe through forty-five members (43 national associations of chambers of commerce and industry and two transnational chamber organisations) and a European network of 1700 regional and local chambers. More than 93% of these businesses are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

More info and previous positions on: <https://bit.ly/ECHPositions>

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