REFERNET VETNEWS INTERNATIONAL

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Europe

European Commission

Lifelong career guidance for changing labour markets

A new study by the European Network of Public Employment Services examines how lifelong career guidance can support people through labour-market transitions and continuing skills development. It finds that public employment services increasingly combine hybrid guidance, skills assessment and labour-market intelligence with targeted training pathways, linking career guidance more closely to upskilling and reskilling over the course of working life.

https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/lifelong-career-guidance-new-world-work-2026-09-29_en

Cedefop

New comparative analysis on apprenticeship quality

Cedefop has published a comparative analysis of the quality of 34 apprenticeship schemes in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway, assessed against the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The study identifies progress as well as areas for further improvement and highlights the importance of involving key actors in governance, decision-making and coordination to strengthen apprenticeship quality.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5626

Stronger partnerships between VET and businesses

This publication examines how EU Member States, Iceland and Norway are strengthening cooperation between vocational education and training and businesses. It finds that cooperation is increasingly moving beyond the provision of work placements towards strategic partnerships supporting skills development, lifelong learning and regional development. Cedefop highlights Centres of Vocational Excellence, sectoral skills councils

and regional consortia as emerging partnership models and stresses the role of chambers and sector bodies in helping SMEs participate.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/7107

European Training Foundation

ETF highlights growing professional development needs for VET teachers and trainers

In a World Teachers' Day article published on 5 October, the European Training Foundation highlights the continuing need for professional development as digitalisation, artificial intelligence and the green transition reshape skills demand. It draws in part on its 2021 study Listening to Vocational Teachers and Principals, based on the views of more than 10,000 vocational teachers and 750 school principals across nine partner countries, and stresses continuous learning for educators as technologies, skills needs and labour-market requirements change.

https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/why-investing-teachers-and-trainers-essential-skills-learning-and-workforce

Interpreting evidence for education and skills policy

A new ETF report examines how accurate education and employment statistics can still lead to misleading policy conclusions. Drawing on discussions at the ETF Monitoring Forum, it highlights the importance of context, transparent comparisons and documented choices when communicating evidence on education and labour-market outcomes.

https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/data-misinterpretation-policy-when-accurate-data-still-misleads

European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET)

EfVET highlights future skills priorities at WorldSkills Shanghai

At WorldSkills Shanghai 2026, EfVET highlighted the need for closer structural cooperation between employers and VET providers, extending beyond training to skills identification, assessment, recognition and portability. It also pointed to growing skills needs in sectors such as semiconductors, advanced transport, maritime industries, water management and construction.

https://efvet.org/message-from-worldskills-in-shanghai-skills-are-the-new-societal-wealth/

Eurochambres

Eurochambres calls for outcome-focused evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts

Eurochambres has contributed to the European Commission’s evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts, calling for their effectiveness to be assessed through outcomes rather

than participation alone. The chamber organisation argues that ILA-supported training should respond to labour-market needs, lead to recognised learning outcomes and complement existing national training systems. It also stresses the need for guidance, skills assessment and validation, while avoiding additional administrative or financial burdens for SMEs.

https://www.eurochambres.eu/publication/input-reskilling-and-upskilling-evaluation-of-individual-learning-accounts-call-for-evidence/

International

OECD

Education at a Glance 2026

Education at a Glance 2026 provides new comparative evidence on education systems, with a particular focus on teacher shortages. Chapter B3 examines entry into upper secondary education, completion and subsequent transitions. It finds that men are more likely than women to leave without a qualification, with the gender gap wider in vocational programmes. The report also highlights recruitment challenges in upper secondary VET: qualification pathways for vocational teachers are often more flexible, allowing experienced professionals from industry to enter teaching and helping education systems respond to shortages while strengthening links between VET and the labour market.

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2026/09/education-at-a-glance-2026_3bce4131/full-report/how-do-students-transition-into-upper-secondary-education-and-what-are-their-outcomes-afterwards_e8c58fae.html

UNESCO

China–Africa cooperation on digital learning in TVET

UNESCO and SNAEIA have outlined cooperation on vocational education, digital learning and skills development following a dialogue in Beijing. Their China–Africa MOOC Platform is intended to support TVET learners and instructors through digital resources and online training. Planned cooperation also covers curriculum development, teacher training and closer links between institutions and industry.

https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/china-africa-partnership-advances-tvet-transformation-through-digital-learning

WorldSkills

Shanghai Declaration puts skills on the international agenda

The WorldSkills Conference 2026 concluded with the presentation of the Shanghai Declaration, endorsed by WorldSkills Members at their General Assembly. Entitled “Skills for an empowered future: Building an inclusive development landscape”, it sets out a commitment to skills and sustainable human development, including investment in people and greater visibility for vocational skills.

https://worldskillsconference2026.com/news/worldskills-conference-2026-shanghai-declaration/

ILO

Practical guidance on next generation sector skills bodies

Published on 9 September, the ILO guide draws on comparative evidence from more than 20 countries to help establish or strengthen sector skills bodies. It covers governance, financing, labour-market intelligence and operations, with a focus on involving employers, workers and governments in identifying skills priorities and connecting training provision with industry needs.

https://www.ilo.org/publications/next-generation-sector-skills-bodies

Countries

Austria

Promoting further education – new funding scheme

Austria introduced a new further education leave and part-time leave funding scheme in 2026, replacing the previous Bildungskarenz model. Applications for funding have been open since June 2026. ReferNet Austria concludes that this scheme aims to target support more closely at labour-market-relevant qualifications, employability and professional development.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/austria-promoting-further-education-new-funding-scheme

Bulgaria

AI support for company mentors in work-based learning

An Erasmus+ project coordinated by the Bulgarian Industrial Association explores how AI can support company mentors in preparing tasks, explanations and feedback. A practical guide addresses everyday mentoring needs alongside data protection and checking AI-generated

content. A report from ReferNet Bulgaria describes pilot activities in Bulgaria, Belgium and Spain, with mentors retaining responsibility for learners' support.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/bulgaria-erasmus-project-assists-mentors-work-based-learning-using-ai

Belgium

VET qualifications extended to adult education

Flanders plans to introduce level 3 and 4 educational qualifications into secondary adult education, aligning adult pathways with the modernised secondary education system. In its advice on the draft decree, the Flemish Education Council (Vlor) supports the reform but calls for flexible and workable learning pathways, sufficient transition periods and scope to combine smaller certificate programmes with general education towards a secondary education diploma.

https://www.vlor.be/adviezen/onderwijskwalificaties-het-secundair-volwassenenonderwijs-haalbaar-flexibel-en

Denmark

New principles for regulating VET admissions

The Danish government, social partners and VET school sector have agreed on five principles for a new model for regulating admissions to vocational education and training. The model is intended to better align VET student intake with opportunities for company-based training and subsequent employment, particularly in sectors facing shortages of skilled workers. It will use transition rates into company-based training and graduate unemployment as key parameters. The model will be finalised after consultation with the REU and decided by the Minister for Education.

https://uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/2026/oktober/20260210-fem-nye-principper-skal-danne-ramme-for-ny-model-for-dimensionering-paa-erhvervsuddannelserne/

France

University apprenticeships linked to better labour-market entry but high public cost

France has sharply expanded apprenticeship contracts since the 2018 reform, particularly in higher education, where more than 635,000 apprentices were enrolled in 2023/24. A ZEW study reports better employment and wage outcomes for graduates with apprenticeship contracts, with much of the advantage associated with retention by their training companies. Public spending rose from EUR 5.5 billion in 2018 to at least EUR 16 billion in 2023, while early contract terminations also increased. The authors argue for more targeted funding and stronger matching between companies and apprentices.

https://www.zew.de/das-zew/aktuelles/abschluesse-verbessern-berufseinstieg-verursachen-aber-hohe-kosten

Iceland

Regional investment expands planned VET capacity

According to ReferNet Iceland, vocational training facilities are being expanded across several regions to improve access and respond to demand for vocational skills. In south-west Iceland, construction is planned to begin in early 2027, with teaching in the new facilities expected from autumn 2028.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/iceland-vet-infrastructure-investment-moves-towards-implementation

Ireland

Report calls for stronger work-based learning in digital skills

The new report by Ireland's Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, "Skills for Digital Specialists: An Assessment of the Future Skills Needs of Ireland's Digital Specialists to 2030", projects growing demand for digital specialists in areas including AI, cybersecurity, data and cloud technologies. It calls for closer cooperation between employers and education and training providers to keep curricula aligned with technological change and labour-market needs, while strengthening practical experience and work-readiness. The report recommends expanding apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities as well as flexible upskilling and reskilling through modular courses, microcredentials and industry-recognised qualifications.

https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/news-and-events/department-news/2026/september/new-egfsn-report-highlights-growing-demand-for-digital-specialist-skills-and-warns-of-widening-talent-gap-by-2030.html

Simplified process for new apprenticeship proposals

SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority have launched a new call for consortia-led apprenticeship proposals, replacing the previous ten-stage development process with a streamlined five-stage model. Proposals must demonstrate current or future labour-market demand and address employer engagement, accessibility, quality assurance, progression and inclusion.

https://www.solas.ie/latest-news/new-call-launched-for-consortia-led-apprenticeship-proposals/

Quality assurance developments in IVET and CVET

A new QQI analysis of Ireland's Education and Training Boards highlights developments in quality assurance across vocational and further education and training. ETBs are strengthening learner feedback and support, digital and blended learning, accessibility and progression pathways, while challenges remain in areas including learner retention and recognition of prior learning.

https://www.qqi.ie/news/qqi-publishes-thematic-analysis-of-etb-interim-quality-reports-2026

Netherlands

Updated guidance on participation rights in annual budgeting

The Dutch MBO Raad, JOB mbo and Platform Medezeggenschap mbo have published updated guidance on participation rights concerning the main elements of the annual budget. The guidance supports executive boards, works councils and VET student councils in exercising their respective roles in the annual budget process and is designed to support constructive dialogue between them. It outlines the legal framework, roles and decision-making process and replaces an earlier version from 2017; a simplified edition for student councils is due to be published shortly.

https://www.mboraad.nl/nieuws/nieuwe-handreiking-instemmingsrecht-op-hoofdlijnen-van-de-jaarlijkse-begroting-beschikbaar

Teaching digital skills beyond everyday smartphone use

A MBO Raad practice feature describes how Summa Plus prepares vocational students for digital tasks in education and work. Lessons cover documents, email, cloud storage and other practical applications, alongside AI and privacy risks. Teaching is adapted to VET students' immediate learning needs and supports the optional basic digital skills module.

https://www.mboraad.nl/nieuws/week-van-de-digitalisering-digitaal-vaardig-zijn-meer-dan-handig-zijn-met-je-telefoon

Dutch VET sector highlights role in national Talent Strategy

The Dutch MBO Raad has outlined how vocational education and training can support the national Talent Strategy, with a focus on labour market participation, innovation, skilled workforce supply and international talent. The proposal also stresses the role of VET in lifelong learning and calls for closer cooperation between education, employers and government.

https://www.mboraad.nl/nieuws/mbo-raad-het-mbo-als-krachtige-partner-de-talentstrategie

Poland

New Sectoral Training School model to boost vocational teaching

Poland is developing a national model for Sectoral Training Schools (Branżowa Szkoła Ćwiczeń, BSĆ) to strengthen the pedagogical and practical skills of vocational teachers and trainers. The project 'Development and testing of the Sectoral Training School model' combines methodological development with practical sectoral expertise to strengthen the competences of teachers and in-company trainers and, as a result, improve the skills students acquire for the labour market.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/poland-new-sectoral-training-school-model-boost-vocational-teaching

Sweden

Adult vocational pilot reports early employment outcomes

Sweden's National Vocational Education for Adults pilot combines upper secondary vocational training with workplace learning and employer involvement. 78% of graduates reported being employed six months after completion. The pilot has been extended to 2028, and an inquiry appointed in September 2026 will examine options for making the provision permanent.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/sweden-vocational-pilot-connects-adults-jobs-shortage-occupations-0

Switzerland

New professional titles now in use

Since 1 October 2026, holders of Swiss higher vocational qualifications may use the supplementary titles "Professional Bachelor" or "Professional Master", including those who completed their qualification before the new rules entered into force. The reform also protects the designation "Höhere Fachschule" and introduces further changes to higher vocational education. The new titles are supplementary designations and do not constitute university degrees.

https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/de/massnahmenpaket-zur-staerkung-der-hoeheren-berufsbildung

United Kingdom (England)

Government announces new Vocational GCSEs

The Department for Education has announced new Vocational GCSEs – practical versions of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) – in England, designed to sit alongside traditional GCSEs and replace current Technical Awards. Their content will be nationally set and assessment and grading regulated by Ofqual; some subjects are expected to be available from September 2029. The announcement also calls on employers to provide an additional 200,000 work experience placements for 14- to 16-year-olds.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-vocational-gcses-unveiled-in-major-shake-up-to-hands-on-learning-for-teens

Save the Date

Cedefop

12–13/10/2026: Advancing research on adult learning

Reminder: This research seminar in Thessaloniki will bring together researchers, statisticians and analysts to discuss quantitative approaches to adult learning. Topics include participation, barriers and outcomes, survey design and comparative methods. Participation is by invitation only. The programme and abstracts are available on Cedefop's event page.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events/advancing-research-adult-learning

European Training Foundation

23–25/11/2026: Torino Global Skills Summit 2026

The ETF summit at OGR Torino will explore how skills contribute to competitiveness, inclusion and resilience. It will bring together policymakers, employers, training providers and young people from the EU and ETF partner regions. The announced tracks focus on people, business and society, with exchanges on lifelong learning and the green and digital transitions.

https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/torino-global-skills-summit-2026

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