EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 2.10.2025
COM(2025) 583 final

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Skills

{SWD(2025) 283 final}

1. Introduction

The European Year of Skills (the 'Year') was announced by the President of the European Commission in her 2022 State of the Union Address as a response to the critical labour and skills shortages in Europe: '*The lack of staff is a challenge for Europe's companies. We must invest much more in training and further education.* ***This is why I am proposing to make 2023 the European Year of Skills.***'

Nearly three quarters (74%) of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack skilled workers ([1]) and the Commission has identified 42 occupations that are experiencing such shortages across various sectors of the economy ([2]). It is estimated that 90% of jobs will demand digital skills ([3]). However, over one third of the labour force lacks the necessary digital skills required for most jobs. These shortages are combined with a widening gap in training, as only 39.5% of adults participate in training annually ([4]). Despite these challenges, there are opportunities, with substantial job growth anticipated in green and digital sectors, with 3.5 million new jobs expected ([5]). There is also significant untapped potential among underrepresented groups, such as women, young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), low-skilled workers, older workers and persons with disabilities.

This report provides an overview of the implementation and results of the Year, in line with Article 7 of Decision (EU) 2023/936 (the EYS Decision). This report is accompanied by a staff working document (SWD), which details the implementation, results and future actions of the Year.

2. Policy outcomes and emerging ideas

The overall objective of the Year was to **promote a mindset of upskilling and reskilling**. To achieve this, the Year aimed to promote investment, increase the relevance of skills through cooperation, match people with opportunities, and attract talent.

The Year comprised a **comprehensive year-long policy discussion** with stakeholders on the role of skills and skills policies. The debate showed that **European countries are facing very similar challenges** due to rapid technological change, demographic ageing and a shrinking EU workforce, combined with the need for resilient industrial ecosystems and supply chains. There is broad consensus that these trends amplify the **need for a better skilled workforce in Europe**, capable of responding to the rapid shifts in skills needs.

2.1 Skills for Europe's competitiveness

The year-long conversation highlighted that skills are a **strategic asset for Europe's productivity and an essential cross-cutting enabler that underpins competitiveness** across all economic sectors, including for the green and digital transitions, as reflected in the Competitiveness Compass for the EU ([6]). This message was consistently repeated during the Year, generating momentum to integrate skills into a wide range of policies in **over 190 new initiatives** ([7]), delivered through strong cooperation across EU institutions.

([1]) Eurobarometer
([2]) Action plan
([3]) Digital literacy
([4]) Policy context - Education and training - Eurostat
([5]) COM/2023/652
([6]) COM(2025) 30
([7]) EU legislative and non-legislative actions, calls for proposals, events, projects and publications.

The Year brought skills to the forefront of the EU's political agenda. Skills featured in all but one of the tabled initiatives in the 2024 Commission work programme ([8]) and the Political Guidelines for the 2024-2029 Commission mandate.

The **transversal character of skills** was reaffirmed at ministerial level, with the Competitiveness Council adopting conclusions on 'a competitive European industry driving our green, digital and resilient future' and 'a single market for the benefit of all' in May 2024.

During the Year, stakeholders highlighted the urgent need to boost **skills for the green and digital transitions**. The Commission presented the **Green Deal Industrial Plan** and adopted the Net-Zero Industry Act, providing for the launch of **net-zero industry academies** to upskill and reskill workers in strategic technologies such as batteries, solar energy, hydrogen, raw materials and wind energy. Each academy aims to upskill and reskill 100 000 workers within three years of its launch.

The announcement of the Year paved the way for the adoption of a **Digital Education and Skills Package** in April 2023. It included proposals for **Council Recommendations** on the key enabling factors for successful education and training and on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training, adopted by the Council in November 2023. **Digital skills academies** were set up as part of the Year to improve the coordination of training provision in cybersecurity, high performance computing and semiconductors.

Closely linked to the EU industrial strategy, the **Pact for Skills** has helped to upskill and reskill workers across Europe in response to the growing needs of industries. The Pact grew to 20 large-scale partnerships across 14 industrial ecosystems. Since 2022, it has helped train 3.5 million people, with pledges to upskill and reskill 25 million by 2030.

Several other initiatives **boosted sector-specific skills.** The revision of the directives on renewable energy and energy efficiency has expanded support for certified **clean energy** skills. The BUILD UP Skills initiative upskilled professionals to improve the **energy efficiency** of buildings in 15 Member States. To increase the number of **ICT specialists,** the Digital Europe Programme is funding specialised training. **EU4Health programme** provides training for health workers focused on digital skills. **ComPAct** supports the EU public administrations to become more skilled. Skills was a key focus area for the **44 EU sectoral social dialogue committees** who implemented actions, issued statements or discussed the wider sectoral needs for skills development in response to evolving industry landscapes.

Central to addressing labour and skills gaps in strategic sectors, as well as driving the green and digital transitions, **vocational education and training (VET)** received a boost through Erasmus+ calls in 2023 and 2024. These calls were focused on VET attractiveness, increased apprentice mobility, worker reskilling, women in GreenTech, micro-credentials and labour market registries.

2.2 Investing in skills

A common view emerged during the Year that **skills are a key determinant of growth**, empowering individuals and increasing businesses' productivity. The EU is investing over **EUR 150 billion** in education

([8]) Compared to under half in 2022 and 2023.

and skills ([9]). **EU investment in skills is projected to boost employment and gross domestic product** (GDP). A 0.1 percentage point increase in skills investment for young workers will potentially raise overall employment by 0.25% and increase GDP by about 0.18% in the long run, exceeding the initial investment ([10]).

The Year triggered reflection on **how funding is invested in skills**, and it was recognised that **skills should be seen as an investment rather than a cost**. Strategies to maximise the **impact of skills investments** were central to these discussions. To better understand the role that skills investment plays in driving productivity, it was agreed that **improved cost-based measurement** of its impact is needed ([11]). Attention was also given to **improving access to funding**, particularly for SMEs. In May 2023, a flash Eurobarometer revealed that SMEs are significantly affected by skills shortages, highlighting the **need for targeted support**. Following this, in September 2023 the SME Relief Package was adopted.

It was also confirmed that EU funding acts as a **catalyst**, attracting other sources of funding and facilitating the testing of new, innovative approaches in financing skills development, including public-private partnerships. Throughout the Year, **public-private partnerships** such as the Pact for Skills, Blueprint Alliances, Centres of Vocational Excellence, and Skills Academies, continued to promote **joint investment in upskilling**. Some 15 new **Centres of Vocational Excellence** were launched in 2024 and the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** experienced significant growth, with over 450 pledges, 40 national commitments, and 2.5 million apprenticeship offers.

2.3 Joint action for skills

The debate throughout the Year exposed the complexity of skills governance, and the need for **effective coordination and cooperation across industrial, labour market, education and other policy domains**.

The Year fostered cooperation at different levels ([12]). **National coordinators** played a key role at national level promoting **whole-of-government approaches** to skills governance. **New or improved governance and stakeholder bodies were created** in several countries ([13]). The Year facilitated closer collaboration between countries, with, for example, Greece and Cyprus ([14]) signing a Memorandum of Understanding. The Joint Statement of EYS National Coordinators serves as a powerful testament to the commitment of national coordinators to continue working closely on skills, ensuring the momentum generated by the Year is sustained and built upon in the future.

The Year also highlighted the central role of **social dialogue** in skills development and in supporting workers and companies to navigate the twin green and digital transitions ([15]). Initiated by the Spanish Presidency, the Barcelona Tripartite Joint Statement was signed by the Presidencies of the Council of the EU ([16]), the Commission, and EU social partners ([17]) on 19 October 2023 promoting tripartite partnership

([9]) Under the European Social Fund +, Recovery and Resilience Facility, Erasmus+, InvestEU, Just Transition Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Digital Europe and other funds – see SWD.
([10]) ESDE review
([11]) A guide outlines a framework for a satellite account on education and training expenditure.
([12]) 76% of post-EYS survey respondents agreed the Year forged cooperation.
([13]) Denmark, Ireland, Spain, France, Cyprus, Malta, Austria, Poland, Slovakia and Finland.
([14]) Greek Public Employment Service and Cypriot Human Resource Development Authority.
([15]) Opinion
([16]) Belgium, Spain, Sweden.
([17]) ETUC, Business Europe, SGI Europe and SMEUnited.

in implementing the Year and enabling broader skills development. **Tripartite partnership** was also at the heart of the Year's implementation in many countries ([18]).

During conversations with social partners and other stakeholders, it was stressed that action was needed to tackle the **broader drivers of labour and skills shortages**, such as poor working conditions in certain sectors, poor human resource management ([19]) or lack of affordable early childhood care. Following the Val Duchesse Social Partners Summit, the Commission presented **an action plan to address labour and skills shortages** in March 2024, prepared in consultation with the EU social partners. The Commission also made a proposal for a Directive on improving and enforcing working conditions for trainees and a proposal to revise the 2014 Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships to address issues of quality and inclusiveness.

Stakeholders were vocal on the need to **better anticipate skills needs** and underlined that **local and sectoral approaches**, as well as strong stakeholder cooperation, are crucial to ensure that **skills intelligence** is relevant and actionable. The Commission launched the **Europass** job and skills trend tool during the Year and published a new version of the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations and the European Cybersecurity Skills Framework. ResearchComp, the European Competence Framework for Researchers, was launched in July 2023. Several countries worked on skills intelligence during the Year ([20]).

The Commission, in collaboration with the Committee of Regions, placed a strong emphasis on **local approaches** to skills development ([21]). In January 2023, the **Communication on Harnessing Talent in Europe's Regions** was adopted. To help regions attract, train, and retain talent, the Commission further launched **the Talent Booster Mechanism** and its **Harnessing Talent Platform**.

The Year attracted global interest, highlighting shared challenges and the need for international cooperation. The European Commission has assumed a prominent role in advancing education and skills in the EU's external relations. These areas are key investment priorities in the EU's Global Gateway investment. The Year was featured at high-level events like COP28 and inspired the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to launch a Year of Skills in 2025. The Trade and Technology Council Talent for Growth Task Force encouraged collaboration between the EU and the US on skills for economic growth; it presented a joint final statement. Several international organisations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and WorldSkills were actively involved during the Year.

2.4 Empowering individuals

Empowering individuals through promoting a **mindset of upskilling and reskilling** was at the heart of the Year, enabling everyone to reach their full potential in the labour market and society.

([18]) Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, Norway and Ukraine.
([19]) ESDE review
([20]) Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia.
([21]) Resolution

Some 14 Member States ([22]) started using EU funding to develop and implement **individual learning accounts**. ILAs can help to make the right to training a reality in practice.

VET emerged as another central topic. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the need to increase its attractiveness, quality and recognition.

Throughout the Year, stakeholders were vocal about empowerment increasing **motivation** and improving **access to quality training** in workplaces and beyond. Beyond job-specific skills, equipping individuals with **digital, transversal and life skills** such as resilience, critical thinking, financial, media and democracy literacy were considered important. This is particularly relevant due to the geopolitical and climate trends, the rise of AI-generated content and information manipulation. The Council approved conclusions on financial literacy in May 2024. The urgency of investing in **basic skills** was highlighted ([23]).

During the Year, a recurring point was that **no one should be left behind**, therefore tailor**-made solutions** and guidance are needed to support individuals. The Year's discussions revealed gaps in the provision of guidance services, although they also highlighted good practices in several countries ([24]).

Women, NEETs, persons with disabilities, and people from disadvantaged backgrounds were specifically targeted in various initiatives. These included: i) the Commission's call for proposals for social innovations for the upskilling of vulnerable young people; ii) the 'Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve' (ALMA) initiative, which helps over 800 vulnerable young NEETs reintegrate into the job market or find education and training opportunities; and iii) youth-led projects under the Youth4OutermostRegions scheme.

In a context where increasing productivity is pivotal to the EU's future, **all skills should be valued** in labour markets. The Year put **skills-based approaches** to recruitment and staff development (also referred to as '**skills-first'**) in the spotlight as an enabler for employers to tap into a broader talent pool and for people to fulfil their potential. These approaches can be complemented by opportunities for **skills validation**, making non-formal and informal learning visible.

Stakeholders recognised the value of **digital and micro-credentials** in supporting these efforts and helping individuals in their careers more broadly. The March 2024 evaluations of the **European Qualifications Framework Recommendation** and the **Europass Decision ([25])** confirmed that the initiatives increase transparency and shared understanding of, and trust in, qualifications and skills.

2.5 Attracting talent

The Year's debate also recalled that the EU's competitiveness will be influenced by its capacity to **attract global talent** and it sparked conversations on how to: i) facilitate the recognition of qualifications and validation of skills gained abroad; ii) reduce the overregulation of professions at national level and administrative burdens; iii) create suitable conditions enabling recruitment and retention of talent from third

([22]) France and Lithuania focused on further improving ILA schemes. Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia are developing them.
([23]) PISA 2022 warned about a decline in basic skills.
([24]) Belgium (Flanders), Spain, France, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Ukraine.
([25]) Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass).

countries in shortage occupations; and iv) strengthen partnerships with third countries to create mutually beneficial labour mobility opportunities and establish legal pathways.

To make the EU more attractive to talent from abroad, and to simplify mobility within it, in November 2023 the Commission adopted the Skills and Talent Mobility Package comprising an overarching Communication on Skills and Talent Mobility with a proposal for a Regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool, and a Commission Recommendation on recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals. These paved the way for the adoption of a Council Recommendation on '"Europe on the Move" on learning mobility opportunities for everyone on 13 May 2024. Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh were also strengthened to boost mutually beneficial international mobility and skills development between the EU and partner countries.

3. Implementation

The Year was a conversation that took many forms – a communication campaign, thousands of events, and many wide-ranging engagement opportunities for stakeholders and citizens across Europe ([26]).

3.1 Governance

The Year was an interinstitutional effort at EU level by the Commission and its agencies, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the Committee of the Regions, and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) led its implementation in close cooperation with other Commission departments.

The Year was implemented in a decentralised and collaborative manner. A total of 38 countries, including all EU Member States, appointed a national coordinator. National coordinators played a key role.

3.2 Resources

The allocated resources were used for the communication campaign (EUR 6.75 million), organisation of flagship events, meetings with national coordinators and experts (EUR 0.935 million), and on relevant studies (EUR 0.106 million).

3.3 Communication campaign

The Commission organised a communication campaign at EU level, targeting employers (primarily SMEs), professionals, jobseekers, NEETs, policymakers, stakeholders and training providers.

The comprehensive communication material that was made available to all EU Member States in their respective languages included a visual identity, an interinstitutional **website**, and a communication toolkit, offering ready-to-use promotional materials, presentations, and social media assets. The **hashtag #EuropeanYearOfSkills** was promoted and used over 14 000 times ([27]).

([26]) The proposal for the EYS Decision set the number of events as a key performance indicator (KPI). Further KPIs were defined in the Year's communication strategy.
([27]) 14 200 mentions from 9 May 2023 to 8 May 2024.

Stakeholders were key multipliers. Their nearly 7 000 posts received 61 million views, indicating that the Year sparked public debate.

To promote upskilling and reskilling journeys, the 'Real People, Real Skills' project featured 200 individual stories from 30 countries, along with a video.



Real People Real Skills video

Communication efforts, carried out on different levels, brought the following results:

		in millions
	Viewers reached with TV advertisement in five countries ([28])	**41**
	Combined paid advertisement reach on social media, including Facebook (58 million), Instagram (10.2 million) and LinkedIn (860 000)	**69**
	Page views on the campaign website	**3.6**
	Campaign video views on YouTube	**69**

([28]) Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Italy and Romania identified as having the highest communication needs.

	Video views on the gaming platform Twitch	**21.4**
	Readers reached through 64 national media partnerships	**10.1**
	People reached by 32 paid social media influencers	**3.01**
	People exposed to outdoor ads in Brussels incl. airport	**4**



Citizens' survey results

3.4 Events

Throughout the Year, there were **over 2 100 events in 42 countries**, including all EU Member States. These demonstrated the amount of engagement undertaken to promote skills in a variety of contexts. These were organised by EU institutions, agencies, networks, national authorities, stakeholders and citizens.

The Year's activities were centred on **six flagship events**, each with a focus on key audiences and objectives. These included:

- the European Year of Skills Festival on 9 May 2023 with 7 300 views;
- the 'Making Skills Count' Conference on 8-9 June 2023 with 1 300 participants;
- the Vocational Skills Week from 23-27 October 2023 with 500 national and regional events;
- the European Employment and Social Rights Forum on 16-17 November 2023 with 2 200 participants;
- the 'Meet the Champions of Excellence' event, co-organised with the EESC on 23 February 2024 with 800 participants; and
- 'The European Year of Skills – What Comes Next?' on 30 April 2024 with 1 400 participants.

A series of **five expert meetings** took place involving strategic discussions on skills financing, skills intelligence, skills-first approaches, skills at the regional level (co-organised with the Committee of the Regions), and exploring the future of a skilled Europe through a foresight exercise ([29]).

The importance of skills across all economic sectors was highlighted in, among others, the 2023-2024 editions of the EU Green Week, European Sustainable Energy Week, EU Code Week, European Migration Forum, European Week for Regions and Cities, European Youth Event, European Youth Week, as well as in a conference on skills development through reforms.

These efforts were strengthened by other EU institutions and agencies. The **European Parliament** collaborated with five **EU agencies** in hosting the event 'Skills, skills, skills!' on 20 September 2023. **Cedefop** organised 14 events and participated in more than 270 skills-related events, while the **European Training Foundation** organised 144 events. **Commission Representations and Delegations** organised over 270 events, meetings with relevant stakeholders, and communication activities under the Year's banner.

4. Future action on skills

As Mario Draghi sets out in his report on The Future of European Competitiveness, there is a crucial need to continue investing in the skills of the people in Europe, both to help them prosper and to ensure the competitiveness of the European economy on the global scale.

These key issues emerged from the Year's discussions, which will feed into future actions on skills:



On 18 July 2024, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the Political Guidelines for the 2024-2029 Commission mandate to the European Parliament. She stressed that:

([29]) Details in the SWD.



> **Europe needs a radical step change in ambition and action – for all skill levels and for all types of training and education.**
>
> **Ursula Von der Leyen**

On 5 March 2025, the Commission adopted the **Union of Skills** – a new overarching vision combining education, training and employment policies, at the heart of Europe's competitiveness. It aims to empower our people to build solid skills foundations and engage in lifelong upskilling and reskilling for a fulfilling life. This will enhance companies' competitiveness by helping them find the talent they need to create sustainable growth and quality jobs. Another objective is to make skills and qualifications transparent, trusted and recognised across the EU, independently of where they were acquired.

5. Conclusion

The Year was successful in promoting a mindset of upskilling and reskilling across Europe ([30]) and at national and regional levels ([31]). More Europeans are aware of skills policies ([32]) and are willing to train ([33]).

The year-long conversation on skills strongly confirmed the importance of embracing a culture of lifelong learning and transforming skills systems. This requires a strategic vision, backed by long-term political commitment, solid whole-of-government approaches, strong stakeholder engagement and adequate funding.

While stakeholders acknowledge that the Year is a significant starting point, there is a resounding call for sustained momentum, recognising the need for a permanent shift in mindset.

Looking ahead, the Commission will build on the outcomes of the Year to advance the implementation of initiatives that aim to close skills gaps and embrace a new era of continuous upskilling and reskilling, with a view to establishing a Union of Skills that supports the EU's competitiveness and preparedness. The Commission will work closely with Member States, partner countries, social partners, civil society and other stakeholders. While the Year may have ended, work to further promote skills development, strengthen Europe's labour market resilience and help people lead prosperous and fulfilling lives will continue.

([30]) June 2024 stakeholder survey (747 respondents): 84% agreed.
([31]) June 2024 National Coordinators' survey (33 respondents): 31 agreed.
([32]) June 2024 stakeholder survey: '91% of respondents believed the Year raised awareness about skills development.' December 2023 citizens survey: '53% are aware of EU skills policies, compared to 26% before the Year'.
([33]) December 2023 citizens survey: '64% of those exposed to the campaign were more willing to take a training course'.