



REX/622

Skills, employability and labour market inclusion

PRELIMINARY DRAFT OPINION

Section for External Relations

Skills, employability and labour market inclusion – Contributing to a successful Pact for the Mediterranean

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For the attention of the study group members

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 Conflict and instability across the Mediterranean region fuel humanitarian crises, undermine development, education, investment and employment, and obstruct the Pact's objectives. Context-sensitive approaches are therefore essential. The EESC calls for an end to hostilities and just peace to be built under UN auspices, respecting human rights and international humanitarian law.
- 1.2 The EESC welcomes the proposal by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in September 2026, of a Mediterranean Youth Skills and Jobs Initiative, and calls for the recommendations included in this opinion to help shape this future initiative.
- 1.3 The EESC calls for permanent involvement of organised civil society (OCS - trade unions, employers, civil society, youth and social economy organisations) and local communities from the EU and the Southern Mediterranean in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating skills and employability policies. The Pact for the Mediterranean should replace ad-hoc consultations with institutionalised participation, structured civil dialogue and effective social dialogue¹.
- 1.4 **Youth Guarantee**-inspired schemes in the Southern Mediterranean should adapt the EU model to local conditions, based on analyses of youth unemployment, inactivity, exclusion and labour markets, complemented by OCS knowledge. Tailored profiling, outreach and support for NEETs should address barriers to accessing and remaining in education, training or quality employment^{2,3}. These schemes should combine early identification, dedicated counselling, skills development, work-based learning and engagement of trade unions and employers.
- 1.5 Effective youth employment measures depend on close cooperation between public employment services, OCS, including youth organisations and community actors.
- 1.6 Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should provide life skills, counter gender stereotypes, ensure equal access to jobs and lead to quality jobs. Employability should be assessed through sustainable job outcomes, including retention, fair pay, career progression, social protection and lifelong learning.
- 1.7 **TVET** should modernise occupational profiles through modular specialisations aligned with labour market needs rather than create a slew of narrowly defined occupations. Priority areas include renewable energy, resource efficiency, the circular economy, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable mobility, digital technologies and environmental services.

¹ [EuroMeSCo/IEMed](#), p. 16–18.

² [ETF](#).

³ [Education and vocational training in the Euromed region \(IR\)](#).

- 1.8 **Dual apprenticeships** in Germany, Austria and Denmark provide useful models for Southern Mediterranean partners⁴ and should also support adult upskilling and reskilling, including workers over 30.
- 1.9 **Social economy enterprises** (SEE) foster inclusive entrepreneurship, women's economic empowerment and local development, particularly in rural, remote and underserved areas. The Pact should build on the EU Social Economy Action Plan to support their development.
- 1.10 Quality green-transition training requires sustained investment in teachers' and trainers' green, digital and sustainability skills. The **T-MED skills agenda** should link renewable energy, clean-tech and climate-resilience investments to local skills, quality jobs and women's and youth participation⁵.
- 1.11 The [MED Skills Tracker](#)⁶ should record skills gained through EU-funded projects, volunteering, community engagement and non-formal learning, facilitating their recognition, validation and portability. Procedures must be accessible, timely and transparent, even with incomplete documentation, and build on existing European and national instruments to avoid duplication.
- 1.12 In the context of "**Fair Labour Mobility**" we expressly refer to the recommendations set out in the EESC opinion on 'Legal labour migration'⁷.
- 1.13 **Labour mobility** should be considered separately from security policy and be guided by human rights, human dignity and the principle of equal treatment balancing opportunities and risks for origin and destination countries. Visa policy should facilitate educational, professional and civil society cooperation, particularly for young people.
- 1.14 **Circular labour mobility** must benefit origin and destination countries and safeguard migrant workers' rights. It presents crucial opportunities, but it is important to learn from the experiences and challenges of the past – e.g. guest workers in Austria⁸ –, as it cannot be reduced to a simple temporary exchange of labour.
- 1.15 **Training centres** in partner countries should be strengthened to meet domestic and EU labour market needs while prioritising local capacity and employment rather than emigration, especially for marginalised groups such as NEETs⁹.

⁴ OJ C, C/2026/11, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/11/oj>, 3.2 and 3.6.

⁵ OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/19/oj>, 1.5.

⁶ OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/19/oj>, p. 6.

⁷ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>.

⁸ [Vienna Democracy Center](#), "[Labor Migration to Austria in the Second Republic](#)," section 1974–1976: Recession, reduction in foreign employment, negative net migration, and the increasingly apparent failure of the rotation principle.

⁹ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>, 1.2.2.

- 1.16 The EESC is looking forward with great interest to the Commission's announced [Fair Labour Mobility Package](#). In this context, there are four key issues that must be taken into account: the protection of mobile and posted workers; improved cross-border enforcement of labour and social rights; the recognition of qualifications without lowering training standards; and the question of how the recruitment of qualified third-country nationals can be reconciled with fair recruitment and the prevention of brain drain.

2. **Scope/background**

- 2.1 The EU's Southern Neighbourhood faces high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, unequal access to quality jobs and decent work, and growing demand for green and digital skills. The Pact for the Mediterranean seeks to strengthen economic integration, mobility and prosperity. Skills development, employability and labour market inclusion are essential to ensure young people, women and disadvantaged groups benefit from new opportunities.
- 2.2 The Mediterranean needs integrated approaches, as skills policies alone cannot address youth unemployment, precarious and informal work, low female labour market participation, territorial disparities, climate vulnerability and migration pressures. Skills development must foster quality jobs, social cohesion and territorial resilience, reflecting labour market needs in rural, remote, coastal, island and peripheral areas.
- 2.3 Modernising TVET, including apprenticeships, is essential. Youth Guarantee-inspired schemes should facilitate employment transitions, especially for those furthest from the labour market. The MED Skills Tracker should ensure recognition and portability of skills gained through funded programmes, non-formal learning, mentoring, volunteering and community engagement, including for young people without formal qualifications.
- 2.4 Pact initiatives on connectivity, energy, digitalisation, economic development and higher education should create local jobs, transfer knowledge and technology, develop skills and retain talent. Pact-funded investments should include measurable commitments to local hiring, upskilling and youth inclusion¹⁰.

3. **General comments**

- 3.1 Wars and conflicts in Palestine and Lebanon and instability in Syria and Libya are causing humanitarian crises and undermine development, education and training, investment and employment, and hinder the Pact's objectives. Approaches adapted to fragile and conflict-affected contexts must therefore prevail. The EESC calls nevertheless for a cessation of hostilities and a just peace under UN auspices, respecting human rights and international humanitarian law.

¹⁰ [EuroMeSCo/IEMed](#), p. 16–18.

- 3.2 The EESC reiterates the importance of the rule of law and legal certainty for businesses. Corruption must be fought and international labour and human rights conventions effectively implemented¹¹.
- 3.3 As stressed in REX/613, the Pact should build a balanced partnership between the EU, its Member States and its Southern Mediterranean partners. Cooperation must benefit both sides. Cooperation should be mutually beneficial where skills, employability and mobility are concerned.
- 3.4 The Pact should place social justice, decent work, sustainable growth and democratic participation at the centre of EU-Mediterranean cooperation. Social protection, quality public services and support for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) should be complemented by labour rights, social dialogue and the meaningful participation of organised civil society (OCS). Effective implementation will require clear targets, monitoring and reporting mechanisms and the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations (CSOs).
- 3.5 Furthermore, the EESC welcomes the proposal by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, during her State of the Union address in September 2026, of a **Mediterranean Youth Skills and Jobs Initiative**, and calls for the recommendations included in this opinion to help shape this future initiative.
- 3.6 Education and lifelong learning are fundamental rights¹² and must be accessible to all, particularly to people with low qualifications, those facing labour market barriers and vulnerable groups, including refugees, displaced persons and persons with disabilities.
- 3.7 Women, young people and groups facing labour market barriers should have equal access to rights, employment, non-discriminatory conditions, leadership and decision-making. Although the proportion of female graduates and female students has risen very sharply in the Mediterranean region in recent years, gender stereotypes in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)¹³ subjects and in green and digital professions should be challenged¹⁴. Targeted support should help overcome barriers to representation and labour market access¹⁵. Safe, independent spaces should support inclusion in decision-making¹⁶.

¹¹ OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/19/oj>.

¹² OJ C 228, 29.6.2023, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023AE0118>.

¹³ OJ C, C/2025/5159, 28.10.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5159/oj>.

¹⁴ OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/19/oj>, 1.5.

¹⁵ OJ C, C/2025/1189, 21.3.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/1189/oj>.

¹⁶ OJ C, C/2026/28, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/28/oj>.

- 3.8 Informal, atypical and precarious work should be progressively transformed into legal, decent employment through labour market reforms and social partner action plans¹⁷, including International Labour Organization (ILO) [Recommendation No 204](#).

4. Specific comments

Involvement of organised civil society (OCS: trade unions, employers organisations and civil society organisations)

- 4.1 The EESC calls for permanent involvement of OCS, including youth organisations, social economy actors and local communities from the EU and Southern Mediterranean, in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating skills and employability policies. As governance partners, they can promote rights-based approaches, identify barriers, reach underserved groups and connect them with education, training and jobs. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, they can strengthen social cohesion, resilience and peacebuilding through trust, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence.
- 4.2 The Pact should replace ad-hoc consultations with institutionalised participation, structured civil dialogue and effective social dialogue. A formal mechanism should enable OCS to contribute to strategy, implementation and oversight at Euro-Mediterranean, national, regional and local levels, strengthening ownership and accountability¹⁸.
- 4.3 OCS needs institutional recognition, sustainable funding, networking and capacity-building opportunities, and should be involved in programme implementation and monitoring.
- 4.4 Clear governance arrangements and transparent monitoring should identify lead institutions, participating OCS, financing frameworks and measurable indicators for outreach, participation, completion, skills recognition, transition to quality employment and retention. Data should be disaggregated by gender, age and territory and complemented by qualitative evidence from organisations working with target groups.
- 4.5 Local and regional multi-stakeholder skills partnerships involving employment services, education and training providers, employers, trade unions, public authorities, social economy actors and employer organisations can support skills anticipation, curriculum development, outreach and inclusive employment transitions, provided responsibilities, resources and participation are clearly defined.

Youth Guarantee-inspired schemes and support for NEETs

- 4.6 The European Council Recommendation ‘A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee’ provides a useful framework for quality offers of employment, continued education, apprenticeships and traineeships. The EESC welcomes the commitment in the pact's action plan

¹⁷ OJ C, C/2025/1189, 21.3.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/1189/oj>.

¹⁸ [EuroMeSCo/IEMed](#), p. 16–18.

to support schemes modelled on Youth Guarantee national plans. It calls for such schemes to be adapted to the conditions, institutional capacities and barriers faced by young people in each Southern Mediterranean partner country.

- 4.7 Youth Guarantee-inspired schemes should be based on an analysis of youth unemployment, inactivity and exclusion, and on a reliable mapping of target groups and local labour markets that is complemented by OCS knowledge. As stressed by the [European Training Foundation \(ETF\)](#), the EU model should inform – not be replicated in – the Southern Mediterranean. Locally adapted profiling, outreach and special services for young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) must address barriers to entering and remaining in education, training or quality employment and be supported by stronger public employment services and monitoring¹⁹.
- 4.8 Young people, particularly NEETs, need accessible information and personalised guidance linking them to education, training, apprenticeships and career pathways, including green and digital occupations, rather than one-off information events. Basic skills remain essential, while apprenticeships combining learning and practical occupational experiences can be particularly beneficial for those facing serious barriers²⁰. Guidance and support should also take account of mental health and psychosocial well-being, particularly for young people affected by conflict, displacement, poverty or prolonged unemployment.
- 4.9 Social partners should help identify sectoral and regional labour and skills needs, complementing data from labour market authorities, while Youth Guarantee-inspired schemes should address territorial inequalities through reliable infrastructure, affordable services and accessible learning opportunities in rural and underserved areas²¹.
- 4.10 A Youth Guarantee-inspired framework should combine early identification and outreach, profiling, a dedicated counsellor, skills development, work-based learning and employer engagement. Inspired by the strengthened EU Youth Guarantee, partner-country schemes should aim to provide people under 30, where possible within four months of unemployment or completing formal education, with quality employment, further education, vocational training or an internship.
- 4.11 The EU Youth Guarantee shows that effective youth employment measures require cooperation between public employment services, OCS, youth organisations and community actors to reach young people outside formal support systems and overcome participation barriers. These organisations should be supported as partners in outreach, mentoring, guidance, referrals and follow-up. Civil society job clubs, the Mediterranean New Chance Network and the ILO's Y-NEET initiative (see Annex, point 1) demonstrate how community-based and second-chance support can complement public employment and training systems.

¹⁹ [Education and vocational training in the Euromed region \(IR\)](#).

²⁰ OJ C, C/2026/11, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/11/oj>.

²¹ OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/1189/oj>, 4.2.2.

Relevant practices from EU Youth Guarantee national action plans

- 4.12 A reliable mapping of target groups is essential where data is weak. Early-warning systems in France and Austria (see Annex, point 2) identify young people at risk of dropping out, while compulsory education or training until 18 (see Annex, point 3) can prevent NEET status where the necessary structural conditions exist. Subject to data protection requirements, Southern Mediterranean schools could refer young people at risk of dropping out to youth transition services.
- 4.13 France Travail and Missions Locales provide education and training information, while the [Contrat d'engagement jeune \(CEJ\) – jeunes en rupture](#) (see Annex, point 4) uses proactive outreach to vulnerable young adults.
- 4.14 The Brussels-Capital Region's [Actiris partnership](#) model shows how public employment services can work with civil-society and community organisations on outreach, guidance, training and inclusion for people not reached by mainstream services.
- 4.15 The ETF manual [Outreach to Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training](#) (see Annex, point 5) offers practical guidance for reaching NEETs. A comparable monitoring and quality assurance tool should support employment services and outreach actors in the Southern Mediterranean partner countries.
- 4.16 France's [CEJ](#) and Austria's [Jugendcoaching](#) demonstrate the value of personalised support, dedicated advisors and structured follow-up. Southern Mediterranean partner countries could combine these elements with targeted transport, childcare, meals, the internet or attendance support where universal allowances are not financially feasible.
- 4.17 Germany's Jugendberufsagenturen (see Annex, point 6) coordinate services across legal and administrative systems to ease the school-to-work transition.
- 4.18 Southern Mediterranean countries could establish joint youth-service teams with common referral protocols, linking employment services, TVET providers, schools, social services and local government, so that young people don't have to navigate ministerial responsibilities.
- 4.19 Germany's Assistierte Ausbildung (see Annex, point 7) supports young people and MSMEs before and during training through placement assistance, tutoring, language support, conflict resolution and transition to work²².
- 4.20 A Mediterranean Youth Guarantee could similarly fund intermediary organisations working with trainees and MSMEs, reducing business risks and administrative burdens.
- 4.21 Austria's [Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung](#) (see Annex, point 8) provides training pathways where no company apprenticeship is available. Participants attend vocational school and can

²² German Federal Employment Agency, '[Assistierte Ausbildung](#)' (AsA) and [information for employers on assisted training](#).

transfer to a company apprenticeship or complete training and take the final examination within the scheme²³.

- 4.22 Southern Mediterranean countries could use publicly funded sectoral training centres linked to employer consortia and trade unions to provide a comparable safety net, applying the same recognised standards as company-based pathways.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

- 4.23 As stated in [SOC/661](#)²⁴, TVET should provide life skills, counter gender stereotypes, ensure equal access to jobs and lead to quality jobs. Employability should be assessed through sustainable job outcomes, including retention, fair pay, career progression, social protection and lifelong learning. MSMEs and social economy organisations should receive support for workforce planning, needs analyses, job design, training and recognition of in-company learning²⁵.
- 4.24 The status of TVET should be raised by demonstrating its contribution to the green transition. Austria's [Klimaschutz-Ausbildungszentrum für technische Berufe](#) in Sigmundsherberg (see Annex, point 9) illustrates this link.
- 4.25 Effective TVET policies require robust skills anticipation and governance mechanisms. Employment services, authorities, businesses, social partners and TVET providers should cooperate on skills needs and curricula, and involve social economy actors and OCS where they add knowledge, outreach or support for disadvantaged groups. Denmark's Disruptionrådet (see Annex, point 10) illustrates institutionalised multi-stakeholder cooperation; further examples are presented in the Annex²⁶.
- 4.26 TVET should modernise occupational profiles through modular specialisations aligned with labour market needs rather than create a slew of narrowly defined occupations. Priority areas include renewable energy, resource efficiency, the circular economy, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable mobility, digital technologies and environmental services. [ILO](#) and ETF evidence also points to demand for plumbers, welders and solar and wind technicians, as well as environmental specialists.
- 4.27 [Union for the Mediterranean \(UfM\) programmes](#) and [World Bank job-advertisement analyses](#) confirm growing demand for green, digital and entrepreneurial skills, while provision in many Mediterranean countries remains fragmented, project-funded or outdated. A green-skills

²³ Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS), 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung' (supra-company apprenticeship training), updated on 3 February 2026.

²⁴ Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS), 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung' (supra-company apprenticeship training), updated on 3 February 2026, 1.8.

²⁵ OJ C, C/2025/5159, 28.10.2025, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5159/oj>, 3.14 and 5.4.

²⁶ OJ C, C/2026/11, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/11/oj>.

monitoring system with regular reporting and benchmarks, as advocated in [SOC/833](#)²⁷ for EU Member States, should guide modular programmes, micro-credentials, guidance and active labour market measures while complementing comprehensive qualifications in Southern Mediterranean partner countries.

- 4.28 Green-transition pathways should be flexible and accessible through modular programmes, micro-credentials, guidance and active labour market measures, complementing comprehensive qualifications and remaining accessible to low-qualified and vulnerable groups. The [SOC/833](#)²⁸ recommendations for EU Member States are also relevant to Southern Mediterranean partners.
- 4.29 Rather than creating a slew of narrow occupations, VET should modernise technical occupational groups through modular specialisations. Priority profiles include renewable energy and storage; energy efficiency / heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC); water and smart irrigation; the circular economy; climate-smart agriculture; EV infrastructure; automation / programmable logic controllers (PLCs) / smart grids; and cybersecurity/cloud/data. [ILO](#) and ETF evidence also points to demand for plumbers, welders, solar and wind technicians, PLC/sensor/server skills and environmental specialists.
- 4.30 Dual apprenticeships in Germany, Austria and Denmark (see Annex, point 11) combine workplace and classroom learning, foster technological, green and digital skills, and support MSMEs. They offer models for Southern Mediterranean partners²⁹ and should extend to adult upskilling and reskilling, including workers over 30. Companies, especially MSMEs, are key to labour market relevance.
- 4.31 Social economy enterprises (SEE) can create jobs and support local development, workforce integration and skills, and act as innovation partners, training providers and employers for young people, women and groups facing labour market barriers. They play a particularly important role in fostering inclusive entrepreneurship, women's economic empowerment and community-based economic development, including in rural, remote and underserved areas. In this regard, the Pact should build on the EU Social Economy Action Plan and its measures to support social economy development- as well as UfM Social Economy cooperation programmes. SEE's role should be reflected in Pact-funded programmes.
- 4.32 Employment services, authorities, businesses, social partners and VET providers should cooperate on skills needs and curricula, and involve local authorities, social economy actors and OCS where they add knowledge, outreach or support for disadvantaged groups.
- 4.33 Better skills-job matching can reduce underemployment, overqualification and recruitment difficulties, but persistent vacancies may also stem from working conditions, location, job quality, pay, or career prospects that affect employers' ability to recruit and retain workers.

²⁷ OJ C, C/2026/11, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/11/oj>, 4.5.

²⁸ Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS), 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung' (supra-company apprenticeship training), updated on 3 February 2026.

²⁹ OJ C, C/2026/11, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/11/oj>, 3.2 and 3.6.

- 4.34 Quality green-transition training requires sustained investment in teachers and trainers, particularly in green, digital and sustainable technologies and environmental responsibility. The T-MED skills agenda should link renewable energy, clean tech and climate resilience investments to local skills, quality jobs and the inclusion of women and youth³⁰. Skills development should prioritise climate adaptation, ecosystem restoration, nature-based solutions and coastal resilience. Programmes must address territorial vulnerabilities, involve local communities, OCS and social economy actors, and ensure digital infrastructure, affordable connectivity and accessible learning to prevent widening inequalities^{31, 32}.

MED Skills Tracker and recognition of skills

- 4.35 The [MED Skills Tracker](#) should document skills acquired through EU-funded projects and facilitate their recognition, validation and portability, including competences gained through volunteering, community engagement and non-formal learning. Procedures should be accessible, timely and transparent, including where documentation is incomplete, and should build on existing European and national instruments to avoid parallel systems³³.
- 4.36 National qualification frameworks should improve recognition, transparency and portability through comparable rules, the involvement of social partners and education institutions, and alignment (where appropriate) with regional and European frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)³⁴.
- 4.37 [Youthpass](#) offers a useful model for documenting transversal competences acquired through non-formal learning, volunteering, community engagement and mobility.
- 4.38 Skills portability and the permeability between education pathways across UfM members should be strengthened, while respecting the roles of ministries, social partners and stakeholders with regard to qualifications and in regulated and non-regulated professions³⁵.
- 4.39 Extending the reach and scope of Erasmus+ (see Annex, point 12) across the Mediterranean would support labour mobility, cross-border cooperation, curriculum innovation and the exchange of best practices.

30 OJ C 228, 29.6.2023, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023AE0118>.

31 OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/19/oj>, 3.10.

32 [Education and vocational training in the Euromed region \(IR\)](#).

33 OJ C, C/2026/19, 16.1.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/19/oj>, p. 6.

34 [REX/506](#), Education and vocational training in the Euromed region (IR).

35 OJ C, C/2025/5159, 28.10.2025, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5159/oj>, 1.8.

Fair labour mobility

- 4.40 In this context, we expressly refer to the recommendations set out in the EESC opinion [SOC/824](#) on ‘Legal labour migration’³⁶ (see Annex, point 13).
- 4.41 Labour mobility should be considered separately from security policy and be guided by human rights, human dignity and the principle of equal treatment balancing opportunities and risks for origin and destination countries. Visa policy should facilitate educational, professional and civil society cooperation, particularly for young people.
- 4.42 Visa procedures for students, trainees, apprentices, researchers, academic staff and workers in legal mobility schemes should be faster, transparent, predictable and digitalised. Talent partnerships (see Annex, point 14) and multipurpose legal gateway offices should cover more skill levels and sectors while fully protecting migrant workers’ rights.
- 4.43 Mobility frameworks should promote skills circulation rather than one-way migration by supporting return, knowledge transfer, institutional cooperation and local development. South-South mobility and skills exchanges should also be promoted. Social partners on both sides should participate in monitoring labour-migration agreements and their labour market effects³⁷. Circular labour mobility must benefit origin and destination countries and safeguard migrant workers’ rights, in line with the recast EU Single Permit Directive and its national implementation.
- 4.44 While circular labour migration should present crucial opportunities, it is important to learn from the experiences and problems of the past. The example concerning the ‘guest workers’ brought to Austria in the 1960s and 1970s (see Annex, point 15) shows that migration cannot be reduced to a temporary exchange of labour and often leads to long-lasting social relationships and settlement processes³⁸.
- 4.45 [HOMERe](#) illustrates how mobility and work placements linking higher education and employers can support education-to-work transitions and Mediterranean professional networks.
- 4.46 Pre- and post-departure VET can support social and occupational integration and reduce brain drain. In line with point 2.4, pact initiatives should strengthen local jobs, knowledge transfer and talent retention.
- 4.47 Training centres in partner countries should be strengthened to meet domestic and EU labour market needs while prioritising local capacity and employment rather than emigration, especially for marginalised groups such as NEETs³⁹. Existing partnerships, such as the

³⁶ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>.

³⁷ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>, 1.2.

³⁸ [Vienna Democracy Center](#), “Labor Migration to Austria in the Second Republic,” section 1974–1976: Recession, reduction in foreign employment, negative net migration, and the increasingly apparent failure of the rotation principle.

³⁹ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>, 1.2.2.

collaboration between Portugal and Mozambique at the 'Centro de Formação Profissional da Metalomecânica' ([CFPM](#)) in Maputo (see Annex, point 16), or the Talent Partnership between Italy and Egypt (see Annex, point 13), can be regarded as models for successful vocational training centres in a cross-border context.

- 4.48 By establishing and investing in training centres, companies can also make an important contribution to strengthening vocational training structures in the southern Mediterranean region, which can help both with local training and in meeting the demand for skilled workers in the EU. Existing projects, such as the [Egyptian German Technical Academy \(EGT Academy\)](#) – a collaboration between Siemens and the German GIZ – or the [ACCES Academy](#) in Casablanca, in which the Volvo Group is involved, highlight the role that companies can play in vocational training (see Annex, point 17).
- 4.49 Given lengthy EU procedures for recognising third-country qualifications, Southern Mediterranean VET centres could offer EU curricula leading to local and EU qualifications, facilitating migrant workers' integration into EU labour markets, potentially funded by EU Talent Partnerships. To also meet the needs of young people wishing to remain, at least one person should be trained for the home labour market for every person trained for the EU, thereby upholding the 'right not to have to leave'.
- 4.50 OCS and social partners can make mobility schemes more inclusive through outreach, mentoring, preparation and follow-up, and help returning participants transfer acquired knowledge, skills and networks to local employers and communities. Labour market intelligence and the availability and accessibility of more information regarding the EU labour markets needs and gaps in the South are also called for.
- 4.51 Third-country nationals should receive coordinated, accessible information and practical assistance on legal mobility pathways and recognition of qualifications before departure and in destination countries.
- 4.52 Migrant workers must enjoy equal treatment and effective protection, including information, advice, remedies, freedom of association, collective bargaining, healthcare, housing, education and training. Monitoring and enforcement should prevent exploitation, discrimination and abusive recruitment. Fair mobility should complement efforts to remove domestic labour market participation barriers⁴⁰.
- 4.53 Alongside migration policy, the EU should mobilise its existing labour potential, particularly young people, persons with disabilities, women, refugees and migrants, to address long-term labour needs and shortages⁴¹. Despite Youth Employment Policy efforts reducing the NEET rate among 15–29-year-olds from 15.2% in 2015 to 11% in 2025, several million remain outside education, employment or training, requiring stronger integration measures.

⁴⁰ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>, 1.4.

⁴¹ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj>, 3.3.

- 4.54 The EESC welcomes the Commission's announced [Fair Labour Mobility Package](#), particularly proposals for common minimum rules, faster procedures and automatic recognition of certain third-country qualifications. Reducing bureaucracy would benefit Southern Mediterranean workers and employers. Key priorities include protecting mobile and posted workers, strengthening cross-border enforcement of labour and social rights, recognising qualifications without lowering training standards, and ensuring fair recruitment while preventing brain drain.

Annex

1 Y-NEET

The Y-NEET project aims to improve the situation of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training by making public policies, practices and services in eight countries in the Southern Mediterranean region (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia) more effective and better tailored to their needs. As part of the Y-NEET initiative, the ILO supports public service providers and their partners in developing the awareness, knowledge and strategies required to reach young NEETs more effectively. To this end, it provides a package of tools and training delivered through a Technical Assistance Facility (TAF). The initiative is characterised by a demand-driven and gender-sensitive approach and focuses on green and digital economic pathways and local jobs in rural areas as potential areas for future employment opportunities⁴².

5. Early-warning systems to prevent early leaving from education and training

5.1 **Austria** combines its statutory education and training up to 18 (AusBildung bis 18) with a preventive **early-warning, reporting and support system** designed to identify young people at risk of dropping out of school or vocational training. Schools play an important role in early detection: teachers can identify pupils showing indicators such as declining performance, frequent absence or an intention to leave school, and refer them to **youth coaching (Jugendcoaching)**⁴³. Youth coaches provide individual counselling, guidance and case management, and, where necessary, develop an individual education or support plan together with the young person⁴⁴. This preventive approach is complemented by a nationwide monitoring system. Schools, the public employment service (AMS), apprenticeship offices and other institutions report relevant education and training data to Statistics Austria. By matching this data, young people who are no longer participating in education or training can be identified and referred, via the Social Ministry Service, to the regional coordination offices, which initiate appropriate support measures⁴⁵. The system thus combines **early intervention within schools with the systematic follow-up of young people who have already dropped out**.

5.2 **France** operates a coordinated system for the **prevention, identification and follow-up of early school leavers**, which supports the statutory *obligation de formation* for young people

⁴² International Labour Organization (ILO), Project Factsheet ‘Empowering Youth NEETs in the Southern Mediterranean Region (Y-NEET) Project’: [YNEET ILO Brief A4 RGB EN FINAL WEB.pdf](#).

⁴³ Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, *AusBildung bis 18 für alle! Wie Schulen einen wesentlichen Beitrag dazu leisten können*, Vienna, pp. 103 ff.; the guidance explicitly emphasises an effective early-warning system in schools and the role of teachers in identifying pupils at risk of early school leaving.

⁴⁴ Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz (NEBA), ‘Jugendcoaching’, Social Ministry Service, Austria; youth coaching uses counselling, individual support and case management to prevent premature education and training drop-out.

⁴⁵ Federal Coordination Office AusBildung bis 18, ‘AusBildung bis 18, For Schools – How does the reporting system work?’; schools and other institutions report data to Statistics Austria; young people identified as not participating in education or training are referred to the responsible coordination office for intervention.

aged 16–18⁴⁶. Within the education system, the Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire (MLDS) works with schools and other actors to identify pupils at risk, assess their needs and provide personalised measures intended to prevent disengagement or facilitate a return to education or training⁴⁷. Young people who have already left initial education without an adequate qualification are identified through a national data-collection and transmission mechanism: secondary schools and apprenticeship training centres transmit information on former pupils or apprentices who are no longer enrolled⁴⁸. At local level, the **platforms for monitoring and supporting early school leavers (Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs – PSAD)** coordinate education, guidance, training and employment actors. For 16–18-year-olds, Missions Locales monitor compliance with the training obligation and help young people access appropriate solutions, including education, apprenticeships, vocational training, employment or integration programmes⁴⁹.

6. Compulsory education or training until the age of 18 in Austria and France

- 6.1 **Austria** has established an explicit **compulsory education or training requirement until the age of 18 (AusBildung bis 18)**. Following the completion of nine years of compulsory schooling, young people who are permanently resident in Austria must remain in education or training until their 18th birthday, unless they have already successfully completed a qualifying programme specified by law⁵⁰. The obligation can be fulfilled through different pathways, including continued upper-secondary education, an apprenticeship within the dual VET system, vocational or health-related training, preparatory programmes or recognised labour market measures⁵¹. Introduced through the Ausbildungspflichtgesetz (Compulsory Training Act) in 2016, the measure aims to prevent young people from leaving education without further qualifications, improve their employment prospects and facilitate a sustainable transition from school to working life. It therefore complements Austria's dual apprenticeship system and forms an important element of its broader strategy to reduce early school leaving and youth unemployment.
- 6.2 **France** introduced a statutory **training obligation (*obligation de formation*) for all young people between the ages of 16 and 18**, which has applied since the beginning of the 2020 school year⁵². After the end of compulsory schooling at 16, young people must remain engaged in education, training or another recognised pathway until they reach the age of 18. The

⁴⁶ France, Code de l'éducation, Article L114-1; Loi n° 2019-791 du 26 juillet 2019; the training obligation for young people aged 16–18 has applied since September 2020.

⁴⁷ Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire (MLDS); MLDS personnel contribute to drop-out prevention, personalised remediation and the return of early school leavers to education or qualification pathways.

⁴⁸ France, Code de l'éducation, Article L313-7; secondary schools and apprenticeship training centres transmit information concerning young people who have left initial education without the required qualification.

⁴⁹ Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 'L'obligation de formation des 16–18 ans'; Éduscol, 'L'obligation de formation'; follow-up is coordinated through the PSAD, while Missions Locales are responsible for monitoring compliance with the training obligations.

⁵⁰ Republic of Austria, Ausbildungspflichtgesetz (APfG), BGBl. I No. 62/2016, as amended, sections 3–4.

⁵¹ Austrian Federal Government, 'AusBildung bis 18 – Education up to the age of 18': oesterreich.gv.at.

⁵² France, Loi n° 2019-791 du 26 juillet 2019 pour une école de la confiance, Article 15; Code de l'éducation, Article L114-1; the obligation entered into force at the beginning of the 2020 school year.

obligation may be fulfilled by continuing education in a public or private school, undertaking an apprenticeship or vocational training, being employed, performing civic service (*service civique*) or participating in a programme supporting social and professional integration⁵³. Local youth employment and integration services (Missions Locales) are responsible for monitoring compliance with this obligation and supporting young people aged 16–18 who are at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment⁵⁴. The French approach is therefore broader than compulsory schooling alone and seeks to ensure that no young person under 18 remains without education, training, employment or structured support for social and labour market integration.

7. France: CEJ – Jeunes en rupture

CEJ – Jeunes en rupture is a specific strand of the French Contrat d’Engagement Jeune (CEJ – Youth Engagement Contract), introduced in 2022 to reach particularly vulnerable young people who are disconnected from employment and from mainstream public employment services⁵⁵. The general CEJ targets young people aged **16–25** – extended to 29 for persons officially recognised as workers with disabilities – who are neither studying nor participating in training and who face difficulties in accessing sustainable employment⁵⁶. The Jeunes en rupture strand focuses specifically on young people with **no income and little or no contact with public employment services who face multiple barriers to social and labour market integration**. These barriers may include homelessness or unstable housing, very low levels of qualification, illiteracy or digital exclusion, physical or mental health problems, or particularly vulnerable situations such as leaving child protection, juvenile justice or prison⁵⁷.

A distinctive feature of the programme is its **outreach (*aller-vers*) approach**: rather than waiting for vulnerable young people to approach employment services themselves, specialised organisations actively identify, contact and gradually re-engage them⁵⁸. The young person is subsequently connected with a local Mission Locale and supported in entering the CEJ. Support is **intensive, personalised and holistic**, combining employment and training measures with assistance that addresses barriers such as housing, healthcare and mobility. Cooperation between Missions Locales, social services and specialised organisations is therefore central to

⁵³ France, Code de l’éducation, Article L114-1.

⁵⁴ France, Code de l’éducation, Article L114-1; responsibility for monitoring the training obligations of 16–18-year-olds is assigned to Missions Locales for the professional and social integration of young people.

⁵⁵ French Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, ‘Le volet « jeunes en rupture » du contrat d’engagement jeune (CEJ)’, originally published on 28 June 2022, and updated on 25 September 2024.

⁵⁶ French Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, ‘Le contrat d’engagement jeune (CEJ)’, updated on 1 April 2025; the CEJ has been in force since 1 March 2022 and is implemented by France Travail and Missions Locales.

⁵⁷ French Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, ‘Le volet « jeunes en rupture » du contrat d’engagement jeune (CEJ)’, section ‘À qui s’adresse le volet Jeunes en rupture’; the target groups include young people without stable accommodation, care leavers, young people involved with juvenile justice, prison leavers, unaccompanied minors and beneficiaries of international protection, as well as young people facing low qualifications, illiteracy or digital or health-related barriers.

⁵⁸ French Government, Circulaire interministérielle n° DGEFP/MAJE/DIPLP/DIHAL/2022/117 du 22 avril 2022 relative à la mise en œuvre du contrat d’engagement pour les jeunes en rupture, section 2.1, ‘Repérage et remobilisation’.

the model⁵⁹. The ultimate objective is not merely to place young people in a training programme, but to **stabilise their personal situation, restore their engagement and progressively create a pathway towards sustainable employment**. Follow-up may continue after completion of the CEJ in order to reduce the risk of renewed disengagement⁶⁰. The CEJ – Jeunes en rupture can therefore be regarded as an example of an integrated approach to reaching and reintegrating **hard-to-reach NEETs and young people facing multiple disadvantages**.

8. ‘Outreach to Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training: A Practical Manual for Outreach’

The paper, published in 2025 by the ETF, is a practice-oriented handbook on engaging NEETs, intended to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans. It was developed from 2024 onwards in collaboration with research institutions and stakeholders from all six Western Balkan countries, based on literature reviews, focus groups and regional peer-learning processes. The aim is to provide policy-makers and organisations working on the ground with concrete guidelines and tools for high-quality, coordinated and verifiable outreach work. A key finding is that simply placing young people in work or training is not enough; successful outreach first requires building trust, providing voluntary and individually tailored support, and fostering social-emotional skills and career management skills. To achieve this, employment services, youth and social work organisations, NGOs and other bodies must work closely together and document the progress of young people systematically, while keeping the process as accessible as possible⁶¹.

9. Germany: youth employment agencies (Jugendberufsagenturen)

Germany’s **youth employment agencies (Jugendberufsagenturen – JBA)** provide an integrated approach to supporting young people in the transition from school to vocational education, training and employment. Their central feature is **cross-agency cooperation** between the three main public institutions responsible for young people: the Federal Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit – SGB III), the job centres (SGB II) and local youth welfare services (Jugendhilfe – SGB VIII)⁶². Rather than creating a new administrative authority, a JBA is a **cooperation framework** in which the participating institutions retain their respective legal responsibilities but coordinate their services, case management and support measures⁶³. Schools

⁵⁹ French Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, ‘Le volet « jeunes en rupture » du contrat d’engagement jeune (CEJ)’; the programme explicitly provides for comprehensive support covering, inter alia, housing, mobility and healthcare, in coordination *with* Mission Locale.

⁶⁰ French Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, ‘Le volet « jeunes en rupture » du contrat d’engagement jeune (CEJ)’, ‘Les appels à projets’; follow-up after leaving the CEJ may be provided in order to secure the young person’s pathway towards professional integration.

⁶¹ European Training Foundation (ETF), *Outreach to young people not in Employment, education or training*: [ETF Outreach Manual NEET final for piloting 0.pdf](#).

⁶² Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), ‘Jugendberufsagenturen’, Berlin, updated on 6 May 2026; the core cooperation brings together the institutions responsible under SGB II, SGB III and SGB VIII.

⁶³ Federal Employment Agency, ‘Jugendberufsagenturen: Arbeitsbündnis für bessere Integration Jugendlicher’; Jugendberufsagenturen are cooperative alliances rather than legally independent institutions; the participating organisations retain responsibility for their respective statutory tasks and costs.

and other local actors – including youth migration services, employer organisations and specialised social services – may also participate. The objective is to provide young people with easily accessible, individualised support **from a single source (*wie aus einer Hand*)**, thereby reducing fragmentation between different public services⁶⁴.

The services provided may include **career guidance, vocational orientation, apprenticeship placement, employment support and assistance with social or personal problems** that could prevent a young person from successfully completing education or training. This integrated approach is particularly important for young people with multiple support needs and those at risk of becoming NEETs. Cooperation can take different forms based on local circumstances and range from joint physical service centres and consultation hours in schools to shared digital services⁶⁵. Where appropriate, and subject to the young person's consent, the **YouConnect** IT system facilitates secure information exchanges between participating institutions and supports coordinated case management⁶⁶. Since 2026, the concept of the Jugendberufsagentur has also been explicitly defined in section 10 of the German Social Code III as cross-sectoral cooperation for the comprehensive support of young people in the transition from school to working life⁶⁷. The German JBA model can therefore be regarded as a **one-stop-shop approach to preventing young people from falling through institutional gaps and facilitating sustainable transitions into VET and employment**.

10. Germany: assisted apprenticeships (Assistierte Ausbildung – AsA flex)

Germany's **assisted apprenticeships (Assistierte Ausbildung – AsA flex)** support young people who, without additional assistance, would have difficulties entering, continuing or successfully completing a regular company-based apprenticeship⁶⁸. A specialised training provider acts as a **third partner alongside the apprentice and the company**, offering individual and continuous support⁶⁹. This may include tutoring, examination preparation, language support, social-pedagogical counselling and assistance in resolving problems at the workplace⁷⁰. Companies can also receive advice and support in organising and delivering the apprenticeship. Importantly, AsA flex is **not a separate training pathway**; participants remain in regular company-based vocational training, with the company retaining responsibility for the apprenticeship⁷¹. The programme can start with a preparatory phase and continue throughout

64 Federal Employment Agency, 'Jugendberufsagenturen'; the objective is to coordinate the expertise and services of the participating institutions so that young people receive integrated assistance from a single source.

65 Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), 'Jugendberufsagenturen', 2026; depending on regional conditions, cooperation may involve common contact points, joint online platforms, consultation hours or offices located in vocational schools.

66 Federal Employment Agency, 'YouConnect – IT-System zum Datenaustausch am Übergang Schule–Beruf'; YouConnect facilitates information exchanges between institutions operating under SGB II, SGB III and SGB VIII in cross-agency support for young people.

67 Germany, Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB) Drittes Buch (III) – Arbeitsförderung, section 10 'Jugendberufsagentur'; section 10 defines a *Jugendberufsagentur* as cross-jurisdictional cooperation for the comprehensive support of young people in the transition from school to work.

68 Germany, Social Code Book III (SGB III), sections 74(2)–(3), 'Assistierte Ausbildung'.

69 Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), 'Assistierte Ausbildung (AsA flex)'.

70 Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), 'Leistungen zur Ausbildungsförderung', section 'Assistierte Ausbildung'.

71 BIBB, Assistierte Ausbildung (AsA flex).

the apprenticeship, with the objective of **preventing drop-out and achieving a recognised vocational qualification**⁷².

11. **Austria: supra-company apprenticeship training (Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung – ÜBA)**

Austria's **supra-company apprenticeship training (Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung – ÜBA)** provides a recognised apprenticeship pathway for young people who have completed compulsory schooling but cannot find a regular company-based apprenticeship or have dropped out of one⁷³. Instead of signing an apprenticeship contract with a company, participants conclude a training agreement with an authorised training institution. Practical training takes place in the training institution and/or in cooperating companies, while apprentices attend the regular vocational school (*Berufsschule*)⁷⁴. The primary objective is to **transfer participants into a regular company-based apprenticeship as soon as possible**⁷⁵. If this is not achieved, they can complete the entire apprenticeship within the ÜBA and take the same final apprenticeship examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*) as company-based apprentices⁷⁶. ÜBA participants have the same legal status as regular apprentices and receive a training allowance financed by the Public Employment Service (AMS)⁷⁷. The ÜBA therefore functions as an important **safety net within Austria's dual VET system**, ensuring that the lack of a company training place does not prevent young people from obtaining a recognised vocational qualification⁷⁸.

12. **Climate Protection Training Centre for Technical Professions – Sigmundsherberg, Austria**

The **Climate Protection Training Centre for Technical Professions (Klimaschutz-Ausbildungszentrum für technische Berufe)** in Sigmundsherberg, Lower Austria, represents an innovative approach to linking **VET, labour market policy and the green transition**. Established by the Public Employment Service of Lower Austria (AMS NÖ) in cooperation with BFI Lower Austria, the centre was officially opened in April 2024 as the **first European training centre specifically dedicated to climate-related technical qualifications**⁷⁹.

The centre provides vocational training, upskilling and reskilling for jobseekers and future skilled workers using modern technical facilities and practice-oriented training. Its programmes include key occupations and skills in **electrical engineering, metal technology, installation**

72 Germany, SGB III, sections 74–75a; Federal Employment Agency, Assistierte Ausbildung (AsA).

73 Austrian Federal Government, 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung', oesterreich.gv.at, updated on 1 January 2026.

74 Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung', updated on 3 February 2026.

75 Austria, Berufsausbildungsgesetz (BAG), section 30(1), which explicitly establishes the objective of transferring participants into a regular apprenticeship relationship.

76 Austrian Federal Government, 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung', 2026.

77 Ibid.; Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung', 2026.

78 AMS Austria, *Bundesrichtlinie zur Durchführung der überbetrieblichen Lehrausbildung durch das AMS (ÜBA)*, 2026.

79 AMS Niederösterreich, 'Eröffnung des 1. europäischen Klimaschutz-Ausbildungszentrums', 12 April 2024.

and building technology, refrigeration technology, automation and digital technologies⁸⁰. Particular attention is given to qualifications relevant to **renewable energy, environmentally sustainable building technology and modern energy-efficient building systems**⁸¹.

The centre therefore illustrates how VET can contribute directly to the **green and digital transitions** while simultaneously addressing shortages of technically qualified workers. By combining recognised vocational qualifications with emerging green and digital skills, the Sigmundsherberg model provides an example of how active labour market policies can support both employability and the transition towards a climate-neutral economy.

13. **Denmark's Disruptionrådet**

Denmark's Disruption Council (Disruptionrådet) was established by the Danish Government in 2017 as a broad partnership bringing together government ministers, social partners, businesses, experts and representatives of wider society. Chaired by the Prime Minister, it examined how Denmark could respond to technological change, digitalisation, automation and globalisation while maintaining a dynamic and socially balanced labour market. Particular emphasis was placed on lifelong learning, skills upgrading, flexicurity and decent working conditions. The council illustrates Denmark's tradition of addressing major labour market transformations through cooperation between the government, employers and trade unions. Its work contributed to policy initiatives, including a tripartite agreement on adult and continuous training⁸².

14. **Dual apprenticeship systems in Germany, Austria and Denmark**

14.1 **Germany, Austria and Denmark** have well-established dual VET systems that combine **work-based learning in companies with theoretical education in vocational schools**. A key characteristic of these systems is the close involvement of employers and social partners in the design, implementation and continuous adaptation of vocational qualifications to labour market needs.

14.2 In **Germany**, the dual system is a central pillar of vocational education and training. Apprentices conclude a training contract with a company and are simultaneously enrolled in a vocational school (*Berufsschule*). Training generally lasts between **two and three-and-a-half years** and leads to a nationally recognised vocational qualification. Companies provide practical occupational training, while vocational schools deliver theoretical, occupation-related and general education. The system is based on close cooperation between the Federal Government, the Länder, employers, chambers and trade unions⁸³.

14.3 In **Austria**, apprenticeship training follows a similar dual structure. Approximately **80% of the training takes place in a company and 20% in a part-time vocational school**

⁸⁰ BFI Niederösterreich, 'Klimaschutz-Ausbildungszentrum für technische Berufe, Sigmundsherberg'.

⁸¹ BFI Niederösterreich, 'Besuch im Klimaschutz-Ausbildungszentrum für technische Berufe', 26 June 2024.

⁸² Danish Ministry of Employment, 'Disruptionrådet – Partnerskab for Danmarks fremtid'; Danish Government, *Prepared for the Future of Work – Follow-up on the Danish Disruption Council*.

⁸³ Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), 'The Dual System', Germany.

(*Berufsschule*). Apprenticeships generally last between two and four years and conclude with the *Lehrabschlussprüfung* (final apprenticeship examination). Training regulations define occupational profiles and required competences. Employers, social partners, public authorities and vocational schools play important roles in the governance and continuous modernisation of the system. Particular attention is increasingly given to **digitalisation, sustainability, climate protection and energy efficiency**⁸⁴.

14.4 In **Denmark**, VET is also organised according to the dual principle, although its structure differs somewhat from the German and Austrian models. Programmes generally consist of a **school-based basic programme followed by a main programme**, during which students alternate between periods at a vocational college and practical apprenticeship training in an approved company. The majority of the main programme consists of workplace training, and students normally need a training agreement with a company. Danish VET covers more than 100 vocational programmes and specialisations. Social partners have considerable influence over the content and development of vocational qualifications⁸⁵.

14.5 Despite institutional differences, all three systems share a common principle: the **strong integration of education and employment**. The combination of practical experience, recognised qualifications and close employer and social partner involvement facilitates the school-to-work transition and enables VET systems to respond to changing skills requirements arising from the **green and digital transitions**.

15. **Erasmus+ international credit mobility**

Erasmus+ international credit mobility supports mobility between European and Southern Mediterranean institutions and facilitates the recognition of learning undertaken abroad. It illustrates how mobility can contribute to institutional cooperation, knowledge exchange and professional networks when designed as a reciprocal process.

16. **SOC/824 – Legal labour migration**⁸⁶

1.1 The EESC underlines that the promotion of legal and organised labour migration to the EU and related EU policies and instruments must be based on human rights, the rule of law, the integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) into the labour market and their role in meeting the EU's labour and skills needs, respect for the EU's common values and compliance with binding international legal instruments relevant to migration and human and labour rights⁸⁷.

1.2 The EESC calls for a balanced approach between the EU and the countries of origin (CoOs) in all current and future migration frameworks and stresses the importance of mitigating the risk of

⁸⁴ Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 'Apprenticeships and Vocational Training'; Austrian Government, 'Apprenticeship training procedure'.

⁸⁵ Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 'Vocational Education and Training in Denmark'.

⁸⁶ OJ C, C/2025/4204, 20.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4204/oj> (SOC/824, Conclusions and recommendations).

⁸⁷ [IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED GOVERNANCE OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION](#) (see page 15).

brain drain by creating enabling conditions for economic growth and decent jobs in CoOs, including through the role played by the EU's cohesion policy. The EESC calls for the institutionalised involvement of social partners on both sides, in line with national circumstances and practices, in order to identify opportunities, risks and challenges for domestic labour markets, and for them to become part of a robust monitoring framework for all bilateral labour migration agreements.

- 1.2.1 The introduction of pre and post-departure training, with social and professional integration and skills development programmes in CoOs accommodating a certain percentage of workers staying in their home countries in order to promote social and economic development, can be an effective way to mitigate the risk of brain drain. Such trainings should be a feature of the EU's Talent Partnerships (TP) initiative and mobility schemes. The EESC highlights the TP between Italy and Egypt.
- 1.2.2 The EESC calls for increased support for training centres in CoOs to deliver training aligned with labour market needs benefiting domestic and EU labour markets. To ensure sustainable development benefits and avoid ad hoc measures, such trainings should be integrated into national education systems. Recruitment also needs to take into account marginalised groups such as young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), which can alleviate pressure on CoOs while meeting EU labour market needs effectively.
- 1.3 A functioning reintegration system must be part of effective 'brain circulation' schemes. Circular migration⁸⁸ programmes have to secure the rights of migrant workers in the countries of destination (CoDs), taking into account the recently revised EU Single Permit Directive.
- 1.4 It is essential to promote equal rights for migrant workers from third countries across all skill levels. Measures should enhance their protection throughout the migration cycle, including accessible pre-departure and post-arrival information, orientation and training, and legal access for complaints and redress. Rights such as freedom of association, collective bargaining and access to healthcare, housing, education and training in the CoD, must be ensured. Employers must also receive adequate information when recruiting TCNs.
- 1.5 International skills and mobility partnerships can strengthen domestic labour markets, matching labour supply and demand, transferring skills at all levels and maximising 'brain gain', while addressing 'brain drain' and increasing competitiveness and growth for CoOs and CoDs.
 - 1.5.1 The EESC points out that, at present, a common framework and transparency in the negotiations for the Talent Partnerships⁸⁹ (TPs) is lacking. Subsequently, the EESC calls on the Commission to present an action plan outlining the next steps for the TPs, lessons learned from ongoing and past projects and policies to enhance coherence and facilitate smooth mobility. It also underlines the importance of robust, clear and binding identification, selection

⁸⁸ [Definition of circular migration.](#)

⁸⁹ [EC Talent Partnerships.](#)

and assessment criteria that support human and labour rights in the partner countries for current and future TPs.

- 1.6 The EESC welcomes the Communication on the Union of Skills⁹⁰, especially the launch of Multipurpose Legal Gateway Offices and the commitment to improve recognition of the qualifications of TCNs. The EESC urges the Commission to seize the opportunity to address all skill levels in the proposed presentation of the Visa Strategy and the revision of the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion.
- 1.7 To ensure that migrant workers are recruited fairly and ethically, procedures should be in line with the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment⁹¹ and the Fair Recruitment Initiative⁹². The EESC suggests assessing the need to strengthen the due diligence and joint liability mechanisms of private employment and recruitment agencies and notes that members of the World Employment Confederation subscribe to a code of conduct⁹³ that promotes ethical and professional standards in employment services. The EESC calls for strong protection for vulnerable groups (e.g. women, young workers, workers with disabilities) and suggests assessing the need for specific measures for fraud-sensitive sectors and sectors with a high risk of labour exploitation.
- 1.8 The EU needs to mobilise all available labour, while enhancing migration policy to attract and retain skilled workers in a complementary way. The EESC calls for prioritising the activation of the EU's domestic labour force to meet long-term labour market needs and shortages, focusing on under-mobilised groups such as young people, people with disabilities, women, refugees and migrants, while recognising that in specific cases the interests of companies to fill urgent vacancies with migrant workers must be respected.

17. Talent partnerships

Talent partnerships with Southern Mediterranean partner countries seek to combine skills development, vocational training, mobility and qualification recognition. Their relevance should be assessed against their contribution to mutual benefits, the protection of workers' rights, local employment opportunities and the prevention of brain drain. Successful examples include the Partnership between Italy and Egypt, facilitating projects such as the Italian-Egyptian Centre for Decent Employment and Mobility Opportunities (DEMO)⁹⁴ to foster institutional cooperation while connecting Egyptian youth with quality vocational training, career guidance, employment services, job placements opportunities, and legal migration opportunities.

90 [COM\(2025\) 90 final](#).

91 [ILO General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment](#).

92 [ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative](#).

93 [World Employment Confederation Code of Conduct](#).

94 AICS Cairo, „DEMO“.

18. **Guest Workers in Austria in the 1960s and 1970s**

In the 1960s and 70s, Austria recruited guest workers due to a shortage of labour caused by an economic boom. They were mainly recruited from Turkey and Yugoslavia, with the plan for them to stay for a few years before being replaced. However, companies wanted to retain their trained staff, and many guest workers put down roots and brought their families. Following the 1973 oil crisis, recruitment was curtailed, but many who had already immigrated remained. Politicians had underestimated the possibility that temporary employment could lead to permanent immigration, and had neglected integration issues⁹⁵.

19. **'Centro de Formação Profissional da Metalomecânica' (CFPM)**

The Centro de Formação Profissional da Metalomecânica (CFPM) in Maputo is a public vocational training centre in Mozambique. The institution provides practical training and further education for young people and working adults in a range of fields, including metalworking, welding, industrial electrical engineering and automation. The programme is designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully transition into the labour market. Since 1999, a cooperative programme with Portugal has been underway, with the aim of modernising the facilities and providing further training for local trainers. This programme has also involved the implementation of other initiatives⁹⁶.

20. **Training facilities in the southern Mediterranean region established or supported by companies**

16.1 **Egypt** has expressed strong ambitions to harness its energy resources and to export electricity to regional neighbours and Europe. Siemens Energy and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH are working together on workforce development. This has led to the **Egyptian German Technical (EGT) Academy** being set up in the Sokhna Industrial Zone, in the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE).

So far, the academy has trained over 6,000 professionals in various industry-specific areas. These include energy, industrial automation and welding. The academy also provides core training in mechanical, electrical and automation engineering. It also offers certifications in renewable energy, health and safety. The academy provides customisable courses. These cover the technical topics and skills needed to thrive in today's workplaces. Siemens Energy and GIZ are thus closing a gap in the growing energy industry. They are also creating career prospects for one of the youngest populations in the world⁹⁷.

16.2 In **Morocco**, there is a rapidly growing need for well-trained, certified truck drivers to strengthen its position as a regional transport hub. In this context, the country has emphasised the significance of implementing training programmes for truck and bus drivers. These

⁹⁵ Vienna Democracy Center, "Labor Migration to Austria in the Second Republic," section 1974–1976: Recession, reduction in foreign employment, negative net migration, and the increasingly apparent failure of the rotation principle.

⁹⁶ CFPM, 'O Acordo de Cooperacao', ([Acordo de Cooperação | CFPM - Moçambique & Portugal](#)).

⁹⁷ [Case study – Siemens Energy and GIZ in Egypt – develoPPP](#).

programmes are designed to impart not only the technical and professional competencies essential for ensuring responsible and safe driving practices, but also to address broader strategic considerations within the nation's overarching strategy.

ACCES (Académie de Conduite de Camions En Sécurité) was established in 2018 in response to this demand. Situated within an existing vocational training centre in the industrial capital of Casablanca, ACCES is a training hub that provides specialised training in the operation of buses and trucks to professional drivers, as well as Moroccan youth interested in pursuing a career in the road transport sector. The following period is to be considered: 2018-2022. The ACCES programme is designed to provide training in a range of critical subjects to approximately 500 professional drivers. These subjects include safe and fuel-efficient driving techniques for various categories of trucks and buses. Consequently, ACCES aims to contribute to the objectives of the Moroccan government by upgrading the skills of professional drivers while strengthening the employability of Moroccan youth in the transport sector⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ [ACCES, MOROCCO](#)