Shaping a digital, green and inclusive recovery – the urgent need for strong cooperation

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- COVID-19 exposed existing structural weaknesses in education and social systems, the lack of public administration efficiency;
- accelerated digitalization - the lack of digital skills, access and digital infrastructure - inequality dynamics;
- lack of quality job creation;
- increased risk of unemployment and bankruptcies, scarring effects on youth, and the aggravation of physical and mental health of the vulnerable;
- Large-scale investment and support foreseen in recovery packages provide an opportunity to enhance resilience, inclusiveness and address environmental sustainability challenges.

European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience

By 2025:

- raising the upskilling and reskilling of adult people by 32 per cent (120 million adults/year);

- raising the number of low-qualified adults participating in learning activities by 67 per cent per year;

- raising the number of jobseekers with recent learning experience by 82 per cent;

- raising the number of adults with basic digital skills by a quarter.

European Economic
and Social Committee

The loss in on-the-job learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Participation in informal learning due to widespread shutdowns of economic activities is estimated to have decreased by 25%. In the case of non-formal learning the estimate corresponds to 18%;

- Workers employed in administrative and support service activities; in the arts, entertainment and recreation, are expected to lose, on average, nearly three-quarters of informal and non formal learning opportunities per week;

- fewer learning opportunities for disadvantaged and low-skilled workers who, in turn, are most likely going to need retraining.

Our way out of this crisis

- Co-operation is the key to a transformative (green and digital) and inclusive recovery;

- lessons learned during the 2008 financial crisis - gathering and analysing data, facts and viewpoints, and by learning from each other, supporting;

- the COVID-19 pandemic has made international co-operation among all countries and regions more important than ever.

Encourage a more participatory culture

- It is important for policy makers to consider how to build trust between stakeholders and a positive and the right attitude towards a digital, green and inclusive recovery development;

- Attention to 'mediating' actors who are leading, facilitating, or linking in the middle within the system; for example between education and training providers, social partners, NGOs and local authorities.

Key question(s)

- Which stakeholders should be (more) actively involved in reviewing existing, or developing new, action?

- What competences are needed for actors to effectively and efficiently

a) implement change and b) achieve feedback and evaluate results?

Recommendations of the EESC Opinion: *Towards an EU strategy for enhancing green skills and competences for all*

- The EESC emphasises that **environmental responsibility is an obligation of everyone**. Sustainable environmental development requires a drastic social change, including individual and collective changes to **our mentality, behaviour, lifestyles,** as well as in the social, political and economic organisation of our countries and societies.

- The EESC believes that green skills, environmental responsibility and sustainable development should be **integrated transversally within the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) of the formal, informal and non-formal learning** of all age learners in every educational sector, in apprenticeships, and in employee training schemes within and beyond the green sectors.

- The EESC calls for a **comprehensive EU level strategy**, such as a Council recommendation, on improving education and training on green skills and competences, **developing green school strategies**, and providing upskilling and reskilling to adults at and beyond the workplace in the skills needed for protecting the environment, for society and for greening the economy.

- We suggest that such a **Council recommendation** could follow up the suggestions of the new **European Skills Agenda** to focus on how to develop green attitude of everyone, making environmental responsibility as a transversal competence within education and training within the European Education Area.

- The EESC reminds the EC and MS to better **connect environmental policies to employment and education policies.** This should also help to focus on the skills anticipation and skills development of the unemployed or of people in work whose training should cover environmental responsibility and have a specific focus on green skills.

- Thus it is essential to ensure that climate change in learning and teaching is aligned with **democratic school culture** and with a learning environment of "green culture" that is experiencing the **creation of green schools**, which by having adequate climate-aware and environment-preserving infrastructure, are run sustainably in partnership with all school stakeholders and **prepare pupils for combating climate change as active citizens and in their future jobs.**

In SOC 633, the EESC:

• recommends, in order to achieve high-quality and inclusive education and training and lifelong learning for all, **establishing achievable long-term goals and a constant monitoring system** within the European Education Area (EEA) for each Member State;

• indicates that **democratic governance of education and training systems needs to be strengthened** and secured and involve meaningful consultation with organised civil society;

• calls for the effective **implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights**, with the involvement of the relevant social partners, civil society organisations and with the support of sustainable public investment and the Recovery and Resilience Facility;

• points at the importance of taking a **holistic approach to the implementation of recent EU initiatives** on education, vocational education and training, skills, youth education and digital skills;

- calls for the implementation of the **Council Recommendation on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning and the Lisbon Recognition Convention;** reiterates that micro-credentials should not be overregulated to preserve their flexibility to the needs of the labour market;
- welcomes the fact that the **Digital Education Action Plan 2021-27 focuses on equal access to digital tools, the internet, and digital competence and skills development**; underlines that its implementation needs to ensure amongst others, effective social dialogue and consultation with stakeholders;
- calls for the **efficient and consistent use of the Recovery Plan, the Next Generation EU and other EU funds, such as ESF+** for the support of education and training policies;
- points at the importance of teaching key competences, such as **social sensitivity, empathy, intercultural dialogue and citizenship skills**, across the whole education and training process.

Related EESC opinions

- [EU Competence Framework for Green Skills](#)

- [Updated skills agenda](#)

- [Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee](#)

- [Promoting skills for a more just, cohesive, sustainable, digital and resilient society](#)

- [Sustainable funding for lifelong learning and development of skills](#)