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From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
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To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

Subject:	Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a European Year of Skills 2023 - Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions
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Delegations will find attached the abovementioned resolution. Please note that other language versions should be available at: <https://dmsearch.cor.europa.eu/search/opinion>



RESOL-VII/026

152nd plenary session, 30 November-1 December 2022

RESOLUTION

on the European year of skills 2023

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EN

Resolution on the European year of skills 2023

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR),

HAVING REGARD TO:

- the proposal from the European Commission for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on a European Year of Skills 2023¹.
- 1. Welcomes the European Commission's proposal to designate the year 2023 as the European Year of Skills (EYS), and supports the overall objectives of the proposal as a timely and valuable input to strengthen social, economic and territorial resilience, including in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis and against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, and to meet the new skills requirements, especially those related to the green and digital transition;
- 2. Recommends closely involving youth and youth organisations in the planning, implementation and assessment of the European Year of Skills, as a legacy of the European Year of Youth and in the spirit of youth mainstreaming;
- 3. Stresses that, because it is difficult to predict future labour market trends and the subsequent pace of required changes in education and training, a profound transformation in the mind-set and behaviour of all stakeholders is of paramount importance. In this context, expects the EYS to be the occasion to create, in cooperation with all levels of governance, a vibrant and creative ecosystem where people, and especially young people, can discuss and co-design education and training responses aiming to help this transition;
- 4. Emphasises that the EYS should be an opportunity to invest in the future-proofing of skills policy. This, together with the increasing digitalised dimension of professional life, requires a paradigm shift in skill sets. In this regard, highlights the need for the right skills to be encouraged and promoted for the green and digital transition, while preserving traditional skills and know-how;
- 5. Expects the EYS to boost the implementation of the European Skills Agenda of 2021 and to become a milestone for meeting the EU headline targets set by the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan of at least 60% of adults participating in training every year, and an employment rate of at least 78% by 2030, and for enabling and supporting women and young people to (re)enter the labour market. Hopes, by the same token, that by giving individuals incentives to improve their skills, and therefore their employability, the EYS will also contribute towards the attainment of the third headline target of the EPSR Action Plan, that is, a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion;

¹ (COM(2022) 526 final).

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6. Expects the implementation of the EYS to contribute to delivering on the UN 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
7. Expects the EYS to be the occasion for assessing the progress made in the different EU territories concerning the specific provisions of NextGenerationEU under its flagship initiative "Reskill and upskill", together with the adaptation of education and training systems to support digital skills and vocational education and training at all ages;
8. Points out that the COVID-19 crisis and the consequences of the on-going war in Ukraine caused considerable setbacks in the fields of education, employment, mental health and disposable income. In this regard, calls for the EYS to promote measures in order to fight unemployment, including long-term unemployment and underemployment, and to address the crucial issues of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), as well as of future-proof skills;
9. Points out that mentorship can be an invaluable tool for reducing training and skill gaps, as well as unemployment rates, and ultimately social inequalities, while fostering intergenerational solidarity. Calls in this sense for the development of a European mentorship framework;
10. Stresses that the problem of skills shortages, including for remote or scarcely populated communities, should be addressed through upskilling and reskilling, lifelong learning, digital education, training and investing in new technologies. Believes that including basic skills, which are transversal and complementary to green and other life skills, in all training and Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes will lead to greater social resilience and lifelong employability and an empowered workforce with a sense of meaningful contribution to the green transition;
11. Warns also of the fact that in order to make the green and digital transitions happen, investments into capacity building of persons employed in the public sector is a must;
12. Recalls that in accordance to the principle of subsidiarity and from a multilevel governance perspective, in most Member States, local and regional authorities have key responsibilities for education and training policies, and they play a strategic role in the fields of employment policies. Stresses therefore that cities and regions represent the level of governance where operational links between education and training institutions and the labour market are the strongest and therefore, should be financed, implemented and followed up;
13. Emphasises, besides the key role of LRAs, that other actors, including the private sector and third-sector bodies should be involved in the delivery of measures to ensure people's (re)integration into the labour market. Believes that skills and training systems should better match competencies across generations with the rapidly evolving needs of the labour market;
14. Calls for appropriate measures to further recognise the competences learned through non-formal education and informal learning, and to ensure that these competences can be validated when entering or re-entering formal educational paths or employment, as well as to encourage transversal skills fit with the changing nature of employment and to promote language skills;

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15. Notes that the skilling and re-skilling uptake across the Union varies widely, leading to skills gaps and skills mismatches across European regions. In this regard, asks the European Commission to further involve local and regional authorities and all relevant actors, as a "one size fits all" approach is not effective;
16. Stresses the need for a permanent dialogue between European, national, regional and local partners in order to identify specific local and regional needs on skills. Reiterates its demand for a more territorial focus when monitoring and assessing the progress of the implementation of the EYS;
17. Recognises the greater impact that EU Cohesion Policy can have on skills, especially through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), helping to identify and strengthen strategic areas of action, promoting social cohesion, helping all citizens to reach their potential as well as meet their professional expectations, and overall ensuring a long-term positive impact on EU competitiveness;
18. Considers that, in order to ensure a long-lasting legacy of the European Year of Skills, and in recognition of the cross-sectoral nature of skills policy, an additional objective of the EYS should be to minimise brain drain and optimise brain gain in order to contribute towards greater territorial cohesion. Recalls, by the same token, the need to create additional ways to attract work force from third countries to fill job vacancies in sectors of need, such as care and health, as well as people with talent and much-needed skills, which is necessary for Europe to stay competitive;
19. Welcomes the importance given to inclusivity and recognises that the objectives of the EYS can only be fulfilled by taking into account the needs and aspirations of all people in their diversity. This includes rural, peripheral and less developed regions, ensuring nobody is left behind;
20. Welcomes the proposal of setting up meetings of national coordinators to organise the running of the EYS, while ensuring that local and regional authorities have a say in the framing, implementation and assessment of the Year; proposes that the CoR be included, as observer, to the national coordinators' meetings;
21. Stresses that local and regional authorities should have access to EU funding opportunities aimed at supporting local and regional skills initiatives throughout 2023 and beyond;
22. Calls for entrepreneurs and the self-employed to be included in upskilling and reskilling initiatives, as they play a significant role in boosting innovation, creating jobs and contributing to sustainable growth;
23. Calls on local and regional authorities to collaborate closely with educational establishments and industry in order to help identify local and regional labour market needs and contribute towards addressing them, thus enhancing young people's opportunities to acquire skills leading to decent, future-proof jobs;

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24. Highlights that the changing realities in the world of work as a result of the pandemic and the digital and green transitions have impacted women in particular. Therefore, the inclusion of a gender equality dimension in this dual transition, the promotion of future-proof skills and access to digital skills should be an intrinsic part of all lifelong learning efforts. Furthermore, the gender dimension needs to be taken into account and the gender bias be addressed when it comes to the design and implementation of training programmes;
25. Expects the EYS to help speed up the completion of a European Education Area in order to guarantee high-quality education for all. The EU should increase cooperation between education and training systems and different curricula, based on citizens' needs, and the requirements of the labour market;
26. Calls for the EYS to pay due attention to citizenship skills through appropriate civic education with a view to empowering people of all ages to be or become active citizens, fully participate in democratic life and be resilient to media manipulation, disinformation and hate speech, including online;
27. Underlines the urgency for reform actions in making VET and apprenticeships fit for future challenges, as mentioned in the EYS proposal. Regional ecosystems and existing one-stop-shops must be encouraged in order to enhance access to quality vocational education and training. Enhancing such ecosystems can ensure the necessary continuity of successful policy initiatives and create better links to the available financial support through the ESF+ programme;
28. Highlights that education, training and VET should be continuously updated and framed by a future-oriented skills perspective. LRAs can help establish monitoring systems as well as skills anticipation and matching mechanisms at local and regional level. Believes in this respect that continuing training and VET is made resilient by being integrated into economic, industrial and innovation strategies, including those linked to sustainable recovery, the green and digital transitions, as well as smart specialisation;
29. Underlines that, bearing in mind the urgency of improving the energy performance of buildings within the framework of the green transition and the evolving energy crisis, there is an acute need to focus on re- and up-skilling the existing work force active in the construction sector;
30. Points out that the transition towards zero-emission and digitalised vehicles will heavily impact regional automotive eco-systems and socio-economic structures. Underlines by the same token that the decarbonisation of road transport will have a profound effect on the specialised workforce in the automotive and supply industries, which calls for urgent upskilling and retraining of 2.4 million workers by 2030. It therefore urges for a European framework to anticipate and manage the changes in this sector in order to guarantee a just and fair transition for the regions with automotive and supply industries. Regional transformation plans need to be elaborated in close cooperation between LRAs;
31. Notes that, while increasing digitalisation and automation of the rail sector will result in an increasing demand for ICT and cybersecurity professionals, the existing significant skills gap

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and changing skills requirements need to be effectively addressed through, inter alia, structured rail-sector trainee schemes and the promotion of education in rail-related careers;

32. Recalls that Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) act as catalysts for local business investment by creating skills ecosystems. They support sustainable recovery, green and digital transitions, regional innovation and technology innovation for SMEs. In this regard, stresses the importance of involving local and regional authorities in the CoVEs as multipliers of the said ecosystems;
33. Emphasises the need for increased agility of VET in response to rapid societal and world of work changes; for acceleration of digitalisation of VET, for modern and innovative learning approaches and for more investments in skills and competences of teachers and trainers. Underlines the importance of investing more on up- and re-skilling and training especially after the COVID-19 crisis, which accelerated exponentially the digital transition in education but also the changes in work patterns, and in light of the overall skills policy at European level;
34. Hopes that the Decision on the European Year of Skills 2023 is adopted swiftly so as to allow for a rollout of activities already from the beginning of 2023;
35. Commits, in view of the above, to contributing to the attainment of the objectives of the EYS, including through the implementation of the Committee's Action Plan dedicated to the Year;
36. Instructs its President to forward this Resolution to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Swedish and Spanish Presidencies of the Council of the EU and the President of the European Council.

Brussels, 1 December 2022

The president
of the European Committee of the Regions

Vasco Alves Cordeiro

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