

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan includes Education, training and life-long learning

March 2022

A Summary related to Education and training
EDDIE Consortium

The European Commission launched in 2021 [The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) with the intension to repeat the successful strong national and EU-level policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic in limiting its employment and social consequences. As stated, the same unity, coordination and solidarity will be needed also in the years ahead to bounce forward towards a greener and more digital decade in which Europeans can thrive. Europe needs to strive for a new 'social rulebook' that ensures solidarity between generations and creates opportunities for all, rewards entrepreneurs who take care of their employees, focuses on jobs and promotes better living and working conditions, invests in high-quality and inclusive education, training, skills and innovation, and ensures adequate social protection for all.

The European Council, in the “New strategic agenda for the EU 2019—2024” was stating that the change towards a greener, fairer and more inclusive future will entail short term costs and challenges. That is why it is so important to accompany the change and to help communities and individuals adjust to the new world. This requires keen attention to social issues. The 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights are the beacon guiding Europeans towards a strong Social Europe and set the vision for new 'social rulebook'. EU-level actions can complement national actions and this Action Plan is the Commission's contribution to the implementation of the Social Pillar principles, in line with the calls from European Leaders and the European Parliament.

As the first out the 20 principles in the list of the European Pillar of Social Rights is: “Education, training and life-long learning”. We will further explore this principle as the one directly related to EDDIE project scope and activities.

Skills and equality: The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan dedicates a section on Investing in skills and education to unlock new opportunities for all. As perceived by the Commission, skilled workforce is the motor of a prosperous green and digital economy, powered by innovative ideas and products, and technological developments. Education and training systems play a key role in laying the foundations for lifelong learning, employability and participation in society. Investment in learning needs to be pursued since any learning losses will have long-term negative consequences on productivity and GDP growth.

The green and digital transitions further amplify the need for continuous investment in education and training systems. Initial education and training, including early childhood education and care, provide the foundations on which to build the basic and transversal skills needed in fast-changing societies; they also form the basis for any further learning and skills development. An important success factor to ensure that children, youngsters and adults alike have access to modern education and training is that schools and vocational and training centres themselves are modernised. The promotion of environmental sustainability starts at an early age. The Commission will propose a Council Recommendation to help integrate biodiversity and ecosystems in education and training. Furthermore, the Green Deal flagships under the RRF such as “Power up”, “Renovate” and “Recharge and Refuel” will support the acquisition of new green skills and open new job opportunities related to green technologies.

Moreover, the Digital Education Action Plan 2021—27, including the forthcoming European Digital Education Hub, aims at supporting the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem in Europe and at enhancing digital skills and competences to address the digital transformation for all.

Higher Education institutions and vocational education and training (VET) ensure that our current and future workforce has the appropriate skills and can contribute to the recovery. The European Education Area, the 2020 Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan and the Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience support Member States in addressing these challenges. The European Research Area is also a cornerstone to making Europe competitive and sustainable and unlocking opportunities through innovation.

In order to reach the 2030 skill target of 60% of adults participating in learning every year, sustained public and private investment is needed to facilitate access to training for people of working age. The reinforced EU funding provides unprecedented opportunities: the ESF+, with a EUR 88 billion budget, will remain an important funding source for skills, education and training; and Erasmus+, with a dedicated budget of more than EUR 26 billion, will contribute to skills development and investments in education and training systems, including projects such as European Universities and Centres of Vocational Excellence. Member States will also benefit from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support training infrastructure and equipment and from the Technical Support Instrument to set up inclusive strategies for up- and re-skilling of adults, to design certification and validation systems as well as to foster learning continuity and mobility across VET providers.

The RRF, as illustrated in the “reskill and upskill” flagship component proposed by the Commission and in the Commission Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE) presented together with this action plan, can also facilitate investment and reforms in this area. New private investments from both big and small companies also need to be encouraged. Part of the new Skills Agenda, the Pact for Skills launched in November 2020 is a shared engagement model across regions, sectors and value chains, for companies committed to skilling their workforce. An expert group on investing in education and training will support Member States in designing efficient and effective funding.

More emphasis on training in collective agreements between social partners can improve access to quality training opportunities at the workplace, including for apprenticeships.

Europe’s recovery also requires attracting new talent. Europe’s ageing and shrinking population puts a structural pressure on the labour market, with skill shortages in different regions and sectors. As outlined in its New Pact on Asylum and Migration, the Commission aims to ensure that the EU legal migration framework benefits European societies and economies, by attracting talent and facilitating the admission of workers of different skills levels the EU needs and the intra-EU mobility of third-country workers already in the EU. The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion promotes among other things employment opportunities and skills recognition of people with a migrant background.

The Commission encourages: In the spirit of the Pact for Skills, regions and companies, including SMEs, within industrial eco-systems and value-chains, to cooperate, share information and develop joined skills intelligence and tailored up-skilling solutions.

Member States to work towards implementing the VET policy and EU-level objectives set out in the Council Recommendation on VET and deploy relevant actions and investments.

Member States to develop comprehensive policies to provide access to quality education for all in line with the relevant Council Recommendations and provide targeted support to disadvantaged learners to compensate for the negative impact of the crisis.