



## FACT SHEET SESSION 4 - SKILLS

### Question 1: Should work-based learning be integral to all initial vocational education & training programmes?

#### What's at stake?

There is a strong evidence that work-based learning helps to equip young people / adults with the skills that can improve their employability and ease the transition from school, or other learning, to work.

Despite its compelling advantages for the trainees/apprentices and the companies, work-based learning is still varies considerably across the EU and **only 1 in 4 EU vocational training (VET) students are enrolled in vocational programmes that combine school and company-based learning.** The comparable figure in Germany is 9 in 10.

Increasing the attractiveness and visibility of work-based learning is one of the priorities of the “**New Skills Agenda for Europe**” published last June by the European Commission.

#### The business perspective

Acquiring practical and work-related skills in the workplace equips students for work and can help to reduce the skills mismatch. A Study published in 2014 found out that the skills mismatch is particularly high in those countries where the youth unemployment is also high. Increasing the share of quality work-based learning in countries with high youth unemployment would help young people there to better find a job and help employers to find employees with the right skills set.

EUROCHAMBRES has suggested since 2014 to the EU policy makers to set a quantifiable target for work-based learning in VET: 50% among VET programmes to by 2020.

#### For more information (links to websites/on-line articles, documents)

- \* EUROCHAMBRES' position on the New Skills Agenda, August 2016: [http://www.eurochambres.eu/DocShare/docs/2/EGODICOCIABGHDDGDANNBMPM59VC5I38RJ5A4EH3G4Q1/EUROCHAMBRES/docs/DLS/EUROCHAMBRES\\_NewSkillsAgenda2016-2016-00170-01.pdf](http://www.eurochambres.eu/DocShare/docs/2/EGODICOCIABGHDDGDANNBMPM59VC5I38RJ5A4EH3G4Q1/EUROCHAMBRES/docs/DLS/EUROCHAMBRES_NewSkillsAgenda2016-2016-00170-01.pdf)
- \* European Commission Communication on “ a New Skills Agenda for Europe” COM (2016) 381, June 2016 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>
- \* EUROCHAMBRES brochure “Great apprenticeships in small business”: <http://www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=6216>
- \* McKinsey Report, 2014 “Education to Employment”: [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/social\\_sector/converting\\_education\\_to\\_employment\\_in\\_europe](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/social_sector/converting_education_to_employment_in_europe)
- \* OECD report, 2014 “skills beyond school”: [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/skills-beyond-school\\_9789264214682-en#page1%20](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/skills-beyond-school_9789264214682-en#page1%20)

This event is co-organised by EUROCHAMBRES and the European Parliament



## Question 2: Would you be willing to host a refugee in your business as a trainee or apprentice?

### What's at stake?

Since the refugee crisis started in 2013, the EU has received more than 2 million refugees. More than 1 million arrived in 2015 and another million are expected in 2016. This inflow of refugees will have a profound impact on Europe's society.

It is widely portrayed as a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. Refugees can contribute economically to the societies that welcome them in many ways. Integration of refugees may help to close demographic and labour supply gaps in the context of an ageing society.

A survey published by the European Commission in June 2016 confirms that the early and effective integration of refugees is key to making migration a benefit for the economy and cohesion of society. Employment and early integration into vocational training are core parts of this integration process. Conversely, it is often difficult for businesses to commit to recruiting a refugee for various reasons, not least relating to the assessment of competences.

### The business perspective

Several initiatives have recently been taken at EU level to support the labour market integration of refugees. But more must be done to deliver a coherent pan-European approach that will help to convert this challenge into an opportunity where possible.

Against this background, EUROCHAMBRES proposed a pan-European initiative to facilitate the economic integration of refugees. The scheme, in cooperation with other stakeholders such as local authorities, other business organisations, trade unions, employment agencies and NGOs, revolves around the early identification, classification and upgrading of refugees' skills, language training and vocational training and ultimately matching the refugees with relevant job/apprenticeship/traineeship opportunities around the EU.

### For more information (links to websites/on-line articles, documents)

- \* Statement of economic and social partners to the Tripartite Social Summit on Refugees: [http://www.eurochambres.eu/custom/14\\_03\\_16\\_final\\_eco\\_soc\\_partners\\_message\\_refugee\\_crisis\\_002-2016-00048-01.pdf](http://www.eurochambres.eu/custom/14_03_16_final_eco_soc_partners_message_refugee_crisis_002-2016-00048-01.pdf)
- \* 2016 European Commission Action Plan on integration: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)
- \* 2016 European Parliament study on "Labour market integration of refugees": [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)578956\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU(2016)578956_EN.pdf)
- \* OECD articles: "Europe will win from integration" <http://www.oecd.org/migration/europe-will-win-from-integration.htm>; "refugees are not a burden but an opportunity" <http://www.oecd.org/forum/oecdyearbook/refugees-are-not-a-burden-but-an-opportunity.htm>

This event is co-organised by EUROCHAMBRES and the European Parliament



### Question 3: Is it harder to recruit staff with the right skills than five years ago?

#### What's at stake?

Even though the EU is struggling to overcome high levels of unemployment (21 million unemployed in June 2016), 2 million jobs are currently vacant and 40% of employers report difficulties in finding employees with the right skills. This figure is expected to increase due to adverse demographic trends in much of the EU.

Much of the responsibility for addressing this skills challenge lies with policy makers at national or even regional level. Nonetheless, the European Commission has developed several tools in an effort to match better people's skills with those needed on the labour market and to enhance mobility between EU member states. In its June 2016 "New Skills Agenda for Europe", the European Commission proposed a reinforced approach in relation to 6 sectors (automotive, maritime technology, space, defense, textile and tourism).

#### The business perspective

Different perceptions relating to qualifications and competences between education institutes and the business community are at the root of the frequent mismatch between skills supply and demand; educators believe that they are preparing students for the workplace, yet employers tend not to share this view. SMEs are largely overlooked by education institutes, although they are increasingly the primary source of graduate employment. This is not solely the fault of academia; SMEs also need to be proactive and establish partnerships with local universities and colleges. Greater efforts are required in particular to provide information on future skills needs.

While academia-business cooperation and skills forecasting are important, initiatives to bring future employees and employers together should start much earlier. Closer links should be fostered between schools and the local business community. Exposing young people to the world of business from an early stage is a critical element in bridging the skills gap.

Labour market participation should also be increased. Inclusive labour markets should draw on the skills of all, including the low-skilled and other vulnerable groups. Meanwhile, labour mobility around the EU should also be enhanced, enabling job seekers to move where work opportunities arise and employers to gauge accurately the skills and competence of candidates from other member states.

#### For more information (links to websites/on-line articles, documents)

- \* 2016 OECD report "getting skills right: assessing and anticipating skill needs , the EU Member States have received about : [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/employment/getting-skills-right-assessing-and-anticipating-changing-skill-needs\\_9789264252073-en#.V9f\\_lEkkqUk](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/employment/getting-skills-right-assessing-and-anticipating-changing-skill-needs_9789264252073-en#.V9f_lEkkqUk)
- \* 2014 EUROCHAMBRES' concept note: " A European Skills Forecasting Survey" [http://www.eurochambres.eu/custom/Concept\\_note\\_skills\\_forecasting-2014-00844-01.pdf](http://www.eurochambres.eu/custom/Concept_note_skills_forecasting-2014-00844-01.pdf)
- \* 2014 Cedefop' European skills and jobs survey: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3072>

This event is co-organised by EUROCHAMBRES and the European Parliament



## Question 4: Is a "skills guarantee" an efficient tool in reducing unemployment?

What's at stake?

Europe faces a basic skills challenge. Around a quarter of European adults struggle with reading and writing and have low levels of numeracy and digital skills. More than 65 million people in the EU have not achieved a qualification corresponding to upper secondary level. This rate varies across EU countries, reaching 50% or more in some.

As most jobs increasingly require complex skills, low-qualified people have fewer employment opportunities available for them. They are also more vulnerable to precarious jobs and are twice as likely as better qualified people to experience long-term unemployment.

The European Commission's June 2016 "New Skills Agenda for Europe" proposed to establish a **new Skills Guarantee** to reduce the high number of low-skilled adults in Europe and help them to improve their chances of securing and maintaining good jobs. This 'guarantee' aims to low-skilled adults to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and to allow more to acquire an upper secondary education qualification or equivalent. The Skills Guarantee will be established in cooperation with social partners, education and training providers.

### The business perspective

Many employers worry about employees' basic literacy and numeracy skills. Without the solid foundations of a good school education, individuals are at a disadvantage in meeting future work and social challenges.

However, the Skills Guarantee proposed by the European Commission does not seem the most appropriate tool to improve the employability of low-skilled adults. The use of the word guarantee is in itself misleading and creates false expectations. The levels set are too ambitious and more focus is required if the scheme is to be financially viable and effective.

While the business community recognise that they have a key role to play in skills upgrading, it should be clear that the responsibility and financing of the acquisition of basic skills for all citizens ultimately lies with national governments and their education systems, not employers.

### For more information (links to websites/on-line articles, documents)

- \* EUROCHAMBRES' Position Paper on the New Skills Agenda, August 2016: [http://www.eurochambres.eu/DocShare/docs/2/EGODICOCIABGHDDGDANNBMPM59VC5I38RJ5A4EH3G4Q1/EUROCHAMBRES/docs/DLS/EUROCHAMBRES\\_NewSkillsAgenda2016-2016-00170-01.pdf](http://www.eurochambres.eu/DocShare/docs/2/EGODICOCIABGHDDGDANNBMPM59VC5I38RJ5A4EH3G4Q1/EUROCHAMBRES/docs/DLS/EUROCHAMBRES_NewSkillsAgenda2016-2016-00170-01.pdf)
- \* European Commission Communication on " a New Skills Agenda for Europe" COM (2016) 381, June 2016 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>

This event is co-organised by EUROCHAMBRES and the European Parliament



## Question 5: Should entrepreneurship education be introduced at all levels of formal education?

### What's at stake?

Investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the most rewarding investments that Europe can make. Young people with entrepreneurship education are more likely to set up their own companies. Up to 20% of students who participate in a mini-company programme in secondary school will later start their own company. That is up to five times higher than in the general population.

Entrepreneurship is a skill that can be learnt. You don't have to be born an entrepreneur to run a successful business. You can become one by developing an entrepreneurial mindset and skills.

In 2014, EU heads of state highlighted the benefits of entrepreneurial skills and the need to teach them at all levels of education. Entrepreneurship is also one of eight 'key competences' defined at EU level for education at training. However, few countries have developed strategies on entrepreneurship education, with north European countries generally more advanced in this area.

### The business perspective

The business community needs a firm commitment from EU member states to introduce compulsory entrepreneurial skills training in the curricula of all forms of education and training. This does not mean just adding entrepreneurship-related content to Economics or Business courses. It means encouraging a sense of initiative and willingness to turn ideas into action from an early age, starting with primary school.

Intermediary organisations such as Chambers are strong partners in teaching entrepreneurial skills. 92% of all Chambers in Europe provide entrepreneurial skills training.

To overcome the reluctance of some schools / universities to introduce entrepreneurship education, initiatives such as the pan European Entrepreneurship Education Hub (EE-HUB) should be further developed to increase collaboration between academia and enterprises and bring knowledge from academia closer to the business world and vice-versa. Entrepreneurial skills training for teachers should also be enhanced .

### For more information (links to websites/on-line articles, documents)

- \* Entrepreneurship Education Hub (EE-HUB project): <http://www.ee-hub.eu/>
- \* The 2012 Communication from the Commission on Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan: Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0795&from=EN>

This event is co-organised by EUROCHAMBRES and the European Parliament



## Question 6: Does a lack of transparency between national qualification systems discourage you from employing staff from other Member States?

### What's at stake?

Differences between education and training systems in the EU make it difficult for employers to assess the knowledge and skills of people with a qualification from another country than their own. Insufficient understanding hampers 'trust' in the quality and content of qualifications acquired in another EU member state. This in turn restricts labour market mobility within the EU.

At EU level, the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning was established in 2008 to make it easier to understand and compare what people have actually learned while gaining their qualification.

### The business perspective

Improving transparency between national qualifications will contribute to increased mobility within the EU and improve the chance for employers to find the right-skilled people. It will thus also help address the co-existence of high levels unemployment in some parts of the EU with skills shortages in others.

A pre-requisite to this is that information on qualifications is easily accessible and understandable by employers. In some countries, Chambers are directly involved in the validation of formal, informal and non-formal competencies which helps to lighten the burden for smaller businesses trying to recruit the right staff.

EUROCHAMBRES supports efforts to improve the understanding and comparability of different qualifications, both general and vocational. The European Qualifications Framework must remain simple, pragmatic and easily understandable in order to enhance transparency and not create additional complexity.

### For more information (links to websites/on-line articles, documents)

- \* Proposal for a Council recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning" COM (2016) 383 final <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-383-EN-F1-1.PDF>
- \* CEDEFOP briefing note "Qualifications frameworks in Europe: an instrument for transparency and change" <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9071>

This event is co-organised by EUROCHAMBRES and the European Parliament