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#### NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee
No. prev. doc.:	13365/22 + COR 1
Subject:	Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a European Year of Skills 2023 - Mandate for negotiation with the European Parliament

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 12 October 2022, the Commission submitted to the Council its proposal for a Decision on a European Year of Skills 2023, based on Article 149 TFEU. The overall aim is to promote a mindset of skilling and upskilling in the context of the rapidly evolving needs of the labour-market and the related skill shortages. More adequate and better matched skills are crucial for ensuring socially fair and just green and digital transitions, for strengthening competitiveness and resilience of the Union's economy, as well as for empowering individuals in their participation in the labour-market, society and democracy.

2. In terms of activities to achieve the objectives of the European Year, the Commission is proposing conferences, events, working groups and technical meetings, information, and promotion campaigns at European, national, regional and local levels. The proposal also foresees that Member States designate a national coordinator or coordinating body to coordinate in a holistic manner activities of the European Year of Skills at national and regional level. At international level, cooperation will be sought in particular with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
3. The Commission proposal identifies the European Social fund Plus (ESF+) as the main EU funding tool among the various relevant EU funding supporting reskilling and upskilling. The proposal indicates that the necessary financial allocation for the implementation of this Decision at Union level would be identified within the budget of the contributing programs in accordance with the Multiannual Financial Frameworks 2014-2020 and 2021-2027.
4. Given the very short time between the submission of the proposal and the start of the proposed European Year of Skills 2023, the Council has worked intensively in order to have a mandate for negotiations with the European Parliament adopted as soon as possible.
5. The European Parliament has appointed Mr Loucas Foulas (CY - EPP), Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as rapporteur.
6. On 21 October 2022, the Council consulted the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee on the Commission proposal and their opinions are expected to be adopted in their respective upcoming December Plenaries.

## **II. WORK IN THE COUNCIL**

7. The proposal was discussed in the Social Questions Working Party on 18 and 28 October and on 22 November. The discussions were followed also by education delegates of several Member States. The final compromise text of the proposal, as set out in the Annex of this document, was supported by a broad majority of Member States.

The main changes to the proposal of the Commission, made in the light of these discussions and set out in the Annex, are the following in the operative part of the text:

- Article 2 (heading): adding a reference to national law and competences as well as the fact that the overall objective of the European Year of Skills will contribute to promoting equal access to skill development and reducing inequalities and segregation in education and training.
- Article 2(3): widening the focus of European Year on additional groups, beyond women and young people (in particular those not in employment, education or training - NEETS), and namely low-skilled persons, older workers, persons with disabilities and displaced people from Ukraine.
- Article 2(4): in the context of attracting people from third countries with the skills needed in the Member States, widening the promotion of learning opportunities to include where necessary language education and training and skills development.
- Article 4: providing for the possibility that Member States can designate a national coordinator or coordinating body which would coordinate European Year of Skills activities and be contact point for cooperation at EU level.

- Article 5(3): adding a reference to representatives of the coordinating bodies, in order to align with the changes in Article 4.
- Article 7: the report of the Commission shall cover initiatives provided for in the Decision and implemented in the Member States and the Union as a whole and shall include ideas for further endeavours in the field of skills in order to create a long-lasting legacy of the European Year.

8. The main changes in the recitals include :

- Recital (2): increasing access to education and training opportunities for the disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities and low-skilled persons, and fighting against stereotypes in education and training
- Recital (6): referring to more groups which are currently under-represented in the labour market, including low skilled, young people, older workers and persons with disabilities.
- Recital (10a): adding a new recital on the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European Cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).
- Recital (26): making clear that the financial support for the European year of Skills, should be provided by relevant Union Programmes and instruments, subject to availability and that the financing of the European Year should not be in the detriment of the financial projects in current Union programmes and should aim at securing a long-lasting legacy of the European Year of Skills.

### III. CONCLUSION

9. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to authorise the Presidency to start informal first reading negotiations with the European Parliament on the draft Decision on a European Year of Skills 2023, on the basis of the text as set out in Annex.
10. In accordance with the approach to legislative transparency endorsed by Coreper on 14 July 2020<sup>1</sup>, and in full consistency with Regulation 1049/2001 and the Council's Rules of Procedure, the mandate thus agreed will be made public.

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<sup>1</sup> 9493/20

Proposal for a

**DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL**

**on a European Year of Skills 2023**

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 149 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>2</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions<sup>3</sup>,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure,

Whereas:

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<sup>2</sup> OJ C , , p. .

<sup>3</sup> OJ C , , p. .

- (1) A skilled workforce is crucial to ensuring socially fair and just green and digital transitions, and to strengthening the Union's sustainable competitiveness and resilience in the face of adverse external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the fallout of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. More adequate and better matched skills open up new opportunities and empower individuals to fully participate in the labour market, society and democracy, to harness and benefit from the opportunities of the green and digital transitions and to exercise their rights.
- (2) Across the Union, companies report difficulties to find workers with the necessary skills. In 2021, 28 occupations were classified as having shortages, including the healthcare, hospitality, construction and service sectors, in addition to shortages of IT and security specialists, in particular cybersecurity experts, and workers with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) background.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, the biggest constraint to successful digital and green transitions is the lack of workers with the right skills. In many Member States, demographic ageing is expected to accelerate over the coming decade as "baby boom" cohorts retire, reinforcing the need to make use of the full potential of all working-age adults through continuous investments in their skills as well as activating more people, in particular, low skilled, women and young people especially those not in employment, education, or training (NEETs). Increasing the access to education and training opportunities of disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities and low-skilled persons, and fighting against stereotypes in education and training, in particular gender stereotypes, would help increase employment and reduce skills shortage.

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<sup>4</sup> European Labour Authority, Report on labour shortages and surpluses 2021 and ENISA, Cybersecurity skills development in the EU, March 2020. The ENISA studies identify that there is a gap of 291,000 professionals in cybersecurity.

- (3) The availability of skilled staff or experienced managers also remains the most important problem for a quarter of Union's 25 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)<sup>5</sup>, constituting the backbone of Union's economy, representing 99% of all businesses and employing 83 million people. The Commission Communication "An SME strategy for sustainable Europe"<sup>6</sup> recognises the essential role of SMEs to Europe's competitiveness and prosperity.
- (4) Low and inadequate skills of working-age adults remain a significant challenge for the Union, pointing to considerable untapped potential of upskilling and reskilling to help mitigate increasing labour shortages in sectors such as manufacturing and services, and in particular in economic activities related to hospitality and manufacturing of computer and electronic equipment, and the care sector.<sup>7</sup> However, participation in adult learning in the Union has stagnated over the last decade and 21 Member States fell short of the 2020 EU-level target. For many adults, such as those in atypical forms of work, employees of small and medium-sized enterprises, the unemployed, the inactive and the low-qualified, skills development opportunities are too often out of reach. Increasing the upskilling and reskilling opportunities for these groups and for all working-age adults, also contributes to reaching the EU employment target of 78%, with employment rate in the EU in 2021 being at 73.1%.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Eurostat, [Key Figures on European Businesses](#), 2022 Edition, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions "An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe" ([COM/2020/103 final](#))

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, 2021 Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe, p. 26

<sup>8</sup> Eurostat, Employment (as % of the population aged 20 to 64), ([LFSI\\_EMP\\_A](#))



- (5) The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>9</sup> states that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market. Principle 4 touches on active support for employment, to uphold everyone's right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve their employment or self-employment prospects, including the right to receive support for training and re-qualification. Principle 5 on secure and adaptable employment emphasises that, regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers should enjoy fair and equal treatment with respect to working conditions, access to social protection and training. Article 14(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the 'Charter')<sup>10</sup> states that everyone has the right to education and access to vocational and continuing training.
- (6) Principle 3 of the European Pillar of Social Rights underlines that regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities, and this includes employment and education. The European Year of Skills should be carried out in a way that is inclusive and actively promotes equality for all. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan<sup>11</sup> points out that by increasing participation of groups which are currently under-represented in the labour market, including low skilled, young people, in particular NEETs, older workers and persons with disabilities, we can achieve a more inclusive employment growth.

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<sup>9</sup> Interinstitutional proclamation on the "European Pillar of Social Rights", OJ C-428, 13 November 2017, p.10-15.)

<sup>10</sup> Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01)

<sup>11</sup> The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (europa.eu)

- (7) The European Skills Agenda<sup>12</sup>, adopted by the European Commission in July 2020, calls for a skills revolution to ensure the recovery of our economy, strengthen Europe's global competitiveness and turn the green and digital transitions into opportunities for all. It aims to foster collective action on skills, ensure that training content is aligned with the evolving labour market needs, and better match training opportunities with people's aspirations to incentivise their uptake across the working-age population. The European Parliament welcomed the objectives and actions of the European Skills Agenda in its Resolution of 11 February 2021.<sup>13</sup>
- (8) On 25 June 2021, the European Council welcomed the EU headline targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, in line with the Porto Declaration<sup>14</sup>, thereby welcoming the ambition of ensuring, by 2030, an employment rate of at least 78% and that at least 60% of all adults participate in training every year.

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<sup>12</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience ([COM\(2021\)274 final](#))

<sup>13</sup> European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience ([2020/2818\(RSP\)](#))

<sup>14</sup> [European Council Conclusions](#), 24-25 June 2021. This follows up on the [Porto Declaration](#) of 8 May 2021

- (9) On 14 September 2022, President of the European Commission announced in her State of the European Union Address<sup>15</sup> that the European Commission would propose to make 2023 the European Year of Skills. The President pointed to the problem of labour shortages in certain sectors and underlined the importance of investments in professional education and upskilling. She also underlined that attracting the right skills to Europe has to be part of the solution, supported by speeding up and facilitating the recognition of qualification also of third country nationals. In bringing the European Year of Skills to life, the Commission seeks to increase momentum and foster implementation of the many actions it has already taken to strengthen reskilling and upskilling in the Union to address labour market shortages and support the sustainable growth of the EU social market economy.
- (9a) On 15 September 2021, President of the European Commission announced in her State of the European Union Address<sup>16</sup> the launch of a structured dialogue at top-level to strengthen commitments on digital skills and education, also discussed in the Education Council on 29 November 2021. Member States appointed national coordinators for this process. The European Year of Skills 2023 will build on the structured dialogue process, expanding its focus in line with the objectives of this Decision.
- (9b) The Year of Skills follows the 2022 European Year of Youth which sought to empower, honour, support and engage with young people, including those with fewer opportunities, in a post-COVID-19 pandemic perspective with a view to having a long-term positive impact for young people. The European Year of Youth also emphasised the importance of skills to find good quality employment for young people.

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<sup>15</sup> State of the Union Address 2022, online at: [https://state-of-the-union.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://state-of-the-union.ec.europa.eu/index_en)

<sup>16</sup> State of the Union Address 2021, online at: [State of the Union 2021 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://state-of-the-union.ec.europa.eu/state-of-the-union-2021_en)

(10) As companies and other stakeholders know best what skills are needed in their industrial ecosystems, strengthening their collective action on skills development has to be part of the solution. For example the Pact for Skills<sup>17</sup> brings together companies, social partners, education and training providers, public employment services and other key skills stakeholders, both private and public. So far, more than 700 organisations have signed up and 12 large scale partnerships in strategic sectors have been set up, with pledges to promote 6 million training opportunities. The regional dimension is also important, including in border regions, where finding workers with the right skills requires targeted measures to support effective cross-border labour markets. Similarly, disadvantaged and remote regions, including the outermost, face particular challenges as access to the labour market and upskilling and reskilling opportunities are limited.

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<sup>17</sup> Pact for Skills official website: [https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en)

- (10a) The Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)<sup>18</sup>, adopted in February 2021, establishes as one of the strategic priorities of the framework “Making lifelong learning a reality for all”, as well as concrete actions aimed to update or acquire skills (upskilling and reskilling) throughout the working life.
- (11) The Council Recommendations on Individual Learning Accounts<sup>19</sup> and Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability<sup>20</sup> help people to update or complete their skill-sets, also in response to emerging skills needs in the labour market, in a more flexible and targeted way. The Council Resolution from December 2021 on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030<sup>21</sup> promotes upskilling and reskilling that can reduce skills mismatches and labour shortages. Skills guidance and skills self-assessment opportunities are among the measures which support people in their up- and reskilling.
- (12) The strengthened active labour market policies advocated for in the Commission Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment <sup>22</sup> (EASE) aim to support transitions into new employment amid the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and the better matching of skills in the labour market, supported by employment services with a sufficient administrative capacity.

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<sup>18</sup> Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) (OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1)

<sup>19</sup> Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts ([OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 26](#))

<sup>20</sup> Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability ([OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 10](#))

<sup>21</sup> Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030 ([OJ C 504, 14.12.2021, p. 9](#))

<sup>22</sup> Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/402 of 4 March 2021 on an effective active support to employment following the COVID-19 crisis (EASE) ([OJ L 80, 8.3.2021, p. 1](#)).

- (13) The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET)<sup>23</sup> supports modernisation of VET systems to equip young people and adults with the knowledge, skills and competences they need to thrive in the evolving labour market and society, to manage the recovery and the just transitions to the green and digital economy, in times of demographic change and throughout all economic cycles. It promotes VET as a driver for innovation and growth, which is agile in adapting to labour market changes, providing skills for occupations in high demand and fostering inclusiveness and equal opportunities.
- (14) Skills for the green transition and the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce will be needed in the context of the shift to a modern, resource-efficient, inclusive and competitive economy, as laid out under the European Green Deal<sup>24</sup>, adopted by the European Commission, setting the path towards EU climate neutrality by 2050. The Commission Communication “Fit for 55”<sup>25</sup> recognises that the green transition can only succeed if the Union has the skilled workforce it needs to stay competitive and points to the flagship actions of the Skills Agenda to equip people with the skills that are needed for the green and digital transitions.

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<sup>23</sup> Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience ([OJ C 417 2.12.2020, p. 1](#)).

<sup>24</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The European Green Deal ([COM/2019/640 final](#)).

<sup>25</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Fit for 55: delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality ([COM\(2021\) 550 final](#)).

- (15) In its Communications on the 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade<sup>26</sup>, the European Commission reiterates the objective of ensuring that at least 80% of the EU population have at least basic digital skills by 2030, and sets the target of 20 million employed ICT specialists, with the aim of achieving gender convergence, by 2030. [...] The Communication on the Digital Decade also stresses the lack of capacity of specialised education and training programmes to train additional ICT experts. Moreover, in its Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027<sup>27</sup>, the Commission emphasises that technological means should be used to ease accessibility and strengthen flexibility of learning opportunities, including upskilling and reskilling.
- (16) The Commission Communication on An Updated Industrial Strategy<sup>28</sup> calls for decisive action to make lifelong learning a reality for all and ensure that education and training keep pace with and help deliver the digital and green transitions. It underlines that a skilled workforce is key in ensuring successful transitions, supporting the competitiveness of the European industry, its digital and green transition and quality job creation. It also recognises the importance of strong partnerships between the EU, Member States, social partners and other relevant stakeholders and cooperation between and within industrial ecosystems. The social economy can play a decisive role as it is an important proponent of socially fair and inclusive digital and green transitions and a key driver of social innovation, including in the field of reskilling and upskilling.

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<sup>26</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions; 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade ([COM \(2021\)118 final](#))

<sup>27</sup> [Communication from the Commission](#) to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Digital Education Action Plan (COM/2018/022 final)

<sup>28</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy: Building a stronger Single Market for Europe's recovery ([COM\(2021\) 350 final](#))

(17) Attracting skilled third-country nationals can contribute to tackling the Union's skills and labour shortages. In October 2021, the revised EU Blue Card Directive<sup>29</sup> entered into force, a key achievement for attracting highly skilled talent into the labour market. In its Communication on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>30</sup> the European Commission also places a strong emphasis on labour migration and on integration of third country nationals. Against this background, the Commission adopted a Skills and Talent Package<sup>31</sup> in April 2022 to reinforce the legal framework and Union action in this area. Proposals to recast the Long-Term Residents Directive and the Single Permit Directive will allow to simplify the procedures for the admission of workers of all skill levels to the Union. The Commission will also continue to roll out an EU Talent Pool to facilitate labour matching with non-EU nationals. The Commission is also working towards the launch of tailor-made Talent Partnerships with specific key partner countries to boost international labour mobility and development of talent in a mutually beneficial and circular way. In addition, the Union continues to be the leading contributor to global funding for education focusing especially on teacher training, girls education and vocational education and training. This work, under the umbrella of the Global Gateway strategy<sup>32</sup>, is complementary to the objectives of this proposal.

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<sup>29</sup> Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC ([OJ L 382, 28.10.2021, p. 1](#)).

<sup>30</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum ([COM/2020/609 final](#)).

<sup>31</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Attracting skills and talent to the EU ([COM/2022/657 final](#)).

<sup>32</sup> Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank The Global Gateway (JOIN/2021/30 final).



- (18) Trust in and transparency of qualifications, whether acquired in Europe or beyond, is key in facilitating their recognition. EU transparency tools (European Qualifications Framework, Europass, ESCO, EU Skills Profile Tool for third country nationals, European Digital Credentials for Learning) are a starting point to help increase the transparency and comparability of qualifications. For well functioning labour markets, skills must be understood and valued, whether acquired in formal, non-formal or informal settings. Skills identification and documentation, as well as guidance to make skills visible, are crucial steps in this context.
- (19) In many Member States, public and private investments in upskilling and reskilling are insufficient. Many companies, in particular SMEs, do not provide or fund training for their staff, and individuals in atypical work have less or no access to employer-sponsored training. Such inequalities may undermine individuals' welfare and health, reduce economic competitiveness, result in missed opportunities and barriers to innovation and risk leaving people behind in the transition to more sustainable economic activities. An enabling framework unlocking and incentivising employers' financial investments in skills and giving visibility to the economic value of upskilling and reskilling is needed.
- (20) In the past, the Union witnessed significant increases in the public investments in initial education and training. However, so far, this has not been matched with corresponding increases in investments to support continuing skills development throughout the entire working life.<sup>33</sup> The Council Conclusions of 8 June 2020<sup>34</sup> invite Member States to “explore possible models for public and private financing of lifelong learning and the development of skills on an individual level”, and call on the Commission to support Member States in these efforts.

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<sup>33</sup> See for instance the increase in tertiary attainment, cf. [Education and Training Monitor 2021](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Council Conclusions of 8 June 2020](#) on reskilling and upskilling as a basis for increasing sustainability and employability, in the context of supporting economic recovery and social cohesion

(21) Significant EU funding support is available for reskilling and upskilling, for instance through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)<sup>35</sup>, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Just Transition Fund (JTF), the InvestEU programme, the Digital Europe Programme, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, the Programme for Environment and climate action (LIFE), the Modernisation Fund, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). The ESF+ remains the main EU funding tool to invest in more and better skills of the workforce, in particular by supporting institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and challenges, supporting reskilling and upskilling opportunities for workers offered by the public and private sectors. Reforms and investments included in Member States' national recovery and resilience plans have a prominent skills dimension, often linked with active labour market policies, in particular youth employment support. In the national recovery and resilience plans endorsed by the Commission and the Council so far, around 20% of the social expenditure is dedicated to "employment and skills"<sup>36</sup>. REACT-EU was the first instrument of NextGenerationEU to make payments for the recovery of Member States. It helped create jobs and invest in skills in the regions most in need. Workers that lose their jobs due to large-scale restructuring events, may also benefit from support through the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) to find new jobs, for instance through further education and training and tailored career guidance and advice.

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<sup>35</sup> Established by [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/241](#) of 12 February 2021.

<sup>36</sup> Social categories are defined and applied based on the methodology adopted by the Commission in consultation with the European Parliament and the Member States in the [Delegated Regulation 2021/2105](#). By 03/10/2022, 25 recovery and resilience plans have been endorsed by the Commission and the Council.

- (22) Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Just Transition Fund<sup>37</sup> recognises that upskilling and reskilling of workers and jobseekers is an instrument needed to ensure a fair and inclusive green transition and to mitigate adverse consequences. The Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality<sup>38</sup> sets out specific guidance to help Member States devise and implement policy packages on relevant employment and social aspects, including upskilling and reskilling policies. Furthermore, the Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development<sup>39</sup> promotes policies and programmes to ensure that learners of all ages acquire the knowledge and skills to benefit from a changing labour market, live sustainably and take action for a sustainable future.
- (23) The InvestEU programme, under its Social investment and Skills window, supports demand for and supply of skills, improving final recipients' skills sets or skills utilisation and fostering skills-investment markets. InvestEU supports also general investments in education, training and related services. In addition, the Just Transition Scheme under the InvestEU supports investments, including those aimed at supporting upskilling and reskilling of workers, in regions having an approved just transition plan under the Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 or projects that benefit those regions, provided they are key to the transition of those territories.
- (24) Tailor-made expertise through the Commission's Technical Support Instrument (TSI) can help Member States undertake reforms linked to national or regional strategies on skills, translating temporary EU funding into durable improvements in the available reskilling and upskilling opportunities. Mutual learning, facilitated by the Commission, can also support the process.

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<sup>37</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund PE/5/2021/REV/1 ([OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 1](#))

<sup>38</sup> Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality ([OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 35](#))

<sup>39</sup> Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on learning for the green transition and sustainable development, OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 1.

- (25) The Communication from the Commission entitled "Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030"<sup>40</sup> aims to ensure their full participation in society, on an equal basis with others in the Union and beyond, supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Within the Strategy, the European Commission commits to make sure that persons with disabilities can take part in trainings and learn new skills, as a fundamental requisite for employment and independence.
- (26) At Union level, the necessary financial allocation for the implementation of this Decision would be identified within the budget of the contributing programmes in accordance with the Multiannual Financial Frameworks 2014-2020 and 2021-2027. Without prejudice to the powers of the budgetary authority, the aim should be to provide funding for the implementation of this Decision of at least 9.3 EUR million for operational expenses. The financial support to the European Year of Skills should be provided by relevant Union programmes and instruments, subject to the availability of funding, and in accordance with the applicable rules. The financing of the European Year of Skills should not be to the detriment of the financing of projects in current Union programmes and should aim at securing a long-lasting legacy of the European Year of Skills beyond 2023.

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<sup>40</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 ([COM/2021/101 final](#)).

- (27) Since the objectives of this Decision cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, but can rather by reason of the scale and effects of the proposed action be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on the European Union. In accordance with the principle of proportionality as set out in that Article, this Decision does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve those objectives.
- (28) In order to ensure swift implementation of the European Year of Skills, this Decision should enter into force as a matter of urgency on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

*Article 1*  
*Subject matter*

The year 2023 shall be designated as the ‘European Year of Skills 2023’ (hereinafter referred to as the ‘European Year’).

*Article 2*  
*Objectives*

In line with principles 1, 4 and 5 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, contributing to the objectives set out in the 2020 European Skills Agenda and the EU headline targets set by the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, in accordance with national competences, law and practices, the overall objective of the European Year shall be to further promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling thereby boosting competitiveness of European companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, realising the full potential of the digital and green transitions in a socially fair, inclusive and just manner, and thereby also promoting equal access to skills development and reducing inequalities and segregation in education and training. More specifically, the activities of the Year will promote skills policies and investments to ensure that nobody is left behind in the twin transition and the economic recovery, and to notably address labour shortages for a better skilled workforce in the Union that is able to seize the opportunities of this process, by:

1. Promoting increased, more effective and inclusive investment into education and training, reskilling and upskilling to harness the full potential of the European current and future workforce, including to support people in managing job-to-job transitions, active ageing and benefiting from the new opportunities brought by the ongoing economic transformation.
2. Strengthening skills relevance by closely cooperating with social partners (both cross-sectoral and sectoral), public and private employment services, companies, education and training providers and developing joined-up approaches with all branches of governments.

3. Matching people's aspirations, needs and skills-set with labour market needs and opportunities especially those offered by the green and digital transitions and the core sectors in need of recovery from the pandemic. A special focus will be given to integrate more people in the labour market, in particular, women and young people especially NEETs, low-skilled persons, older workers, persons with disabilities and displaced people from Ukraine.
4. Attracting people from third countries with the skills needed in the Member States, by promoting learning opportunities, including where necessary language education and training, skills development and mobility, and by facilitating the recognition of qualifications.

### *Article 3*

#### *Type of measures*

1. The measures to be taken to achieve the objectives set out in Article 2 shall include activities at European, and building on existing possibilities at national, regional or local level, and, where relevant, in cooperation with third countries, linked to the objectives of the European Year, such as:
  - (a) conferences, forum discussions and further events to promote debate on the role and contribution of skills policies to achieve competitive, sustainable and fair economic growth in light of the demographic change, the digital and green transitions and to mobilise relevant stakeholders to ensure access to education and training is a reality on the ground;
  - (b) working groups, technical meetings and events to promote discussion and mutual learning on the actions and approaches that public, private and third-sector stakeholders can take, including the preparation, publication and dissemination of good practice examples, guidelines and further supporting documents deriving from the events;

- (c) initiatives targeting *inter alia* individuals, companies, chambers of commerce and industry, social partners, public authorities, education and training providers to promote the provision, financing and uptake of upskilling and reskilling opportunities;
- (d) information, communication and awareness-raising campaigns on EU initiatives for upskilling and reskilling, promoting their implementation and delivery on the ground and also their uptake by potential beneficiaries;
- (e) increasing dialogue in existing stakeholder groups and networks, also via established online platforms;
- (f) implementing and as necessary developing further skills intelligence tools, while promoting and disseminating their application in identifying current and future skills needs, particularly linked to the green and digital transitions, the core sectors in need of recovery from the pandemic, energy crisis and the impact of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine;
- (g) promoting tools and instruments for increased transparency of qualifications, including qualifications awarded outside the Union;
- (h) promoting programmes, funding opportunities, projects, actions and networks of relevance to public, private and non-governmental stakeholders, involved in the design, dissemination and implementation of upskilling and reskilling opportunities and vocational training;

2. The Commission may identify other activities which could contribute to the objectives of the European Year and allow references to the European Year to be used in promoting those activities in so far as they contribute to achieving those objectives. Other Union institutions and Member States may also identify such other activities and suggest them to the Commission.



*Article 4*  
*Coordination at national level*

The organisation of participation in the European Year at national and regional level shall be a responsibility of the Member States. To that end, each Member State shall designate a national coordinator or coordinating body, in line with national circumstances and practices, with competence in the field of labour policies and skills. The national coordinator or coordinating body shall coordinate in a holistic manner activities of the European Year of Skills at national and regional level and shall be the contact point for cooperation at EU level.

*Article 5*  
*Coordination at Union level*

1. The coordination of the European Year at Union level shall have a transversal approach with a view to creating synergies between the various Union programmes and initiatives in the field of skills.
2. The Commission shall rely on the expertise and assistance of relevant Union Agencies in implementing the European Year.
3. The Commission shall convene meetings of the national coordinators or representatives of the coordinating bodies in order to coordinate the activities referred to in Article 3. These meetings shall also serve as opportunities to exchange information regarding the implementation of the European Year at national and Union level. Representatives of the European Parliament and relevant Union Agencies may participate in those meetings as observers.
4. The Commission shall engage with social partners, labour market bodies and representatives of relevant organisations or bodies, to assist in implementing the European Year at Union level.

## *Article 6*

### *Cooperation at international level*

For the purpose of the European Year, where necessary, the Commission shall cooperate with third countries and competent international organisations, in particular with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Unesco and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), while ensuring the visibility of the Union's participation.

## *Article 7*

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

By 31 December 2024, the Commission shall present a report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the initiatives provided for in this Decision and implemented in the Member States and the Union as a whole. That report shall include ideas for further common endeavours in the field of skills in order to create a long-lasting legacy of the European Year of Skills.

## *Article 8*

### *Entry into force*

This Decision shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels,

*For the European Parliament*

*For the Council*

*The President*

*The President*