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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee
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Subject:	Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a European Year of Skills 2023 - Analysis of the final compromise text with a view to agreement

Delegations will find attached the provisional agreement on the above proposal, subject to the agreement by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with a view to reaching a first-reading agreement with the European Parliament.

Changes compared to the Commission's proposal are marked in bold and deletions in **■**.

The lawyer-linguists are expected to carry out the legal-linguist revision of the document.

Proposal for a

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on a European Year of Skills

(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 Committee¹,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions²,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure,

Whereas:

- (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.

¹ OJ C , , p. .

² OJ C , , p. .

- (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.³ Increasingly, the biggest constraint to a successful digital and green transition is the lack of workers with the right skills. ***Labour shortages can also be the result of unattractive jobs and poor working conditions in some cases. Tackling these issues, through quality job offers and retention policies, is important for a well-functioning labour market.*** 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, ***whatever their origin***, through continuous investments in their skills as well as activating more people, in particular women and young people especially those not in ***employment***, education or training (NEETs) ***as these groups face specific challenges that hinder their participation in the labour market. Efficient and comprehensive skills strategies and increased access to education and training opportunities of disadvantaged groups and fighting against stereotypes, in particular gender stereotypes, would help increase employment and reduce skills shortages. For a socially fair and inclusive transition, this can be complemented with solutions for persons not able to reskill and upskill.***

³ 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, ***who play an essential role in the Union's sustainable growth***, also remains the most important problem for a quarter of Union's 25 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)⁴, constituting the backbone of Union's economy, ***and prosperity***, representing 99% of all businesses and employing 83 million people. The Commission Communication "An SME strategy for sustainable Europe"⁵ recognises the essential role of SMEs to Europe's competitiveness and prosperity.
- (4) ***The lack of an adequately skilled workforce and the low participation in training activities*** of working-age adults ***reduce their opportunities in the labour market, which result in social and economic inequalities that represent*** a significant challenge for the Union. ***They also point*** 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.⁶ 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%.⁷ ***Further efforts are needed to provide effective support to adults with a low level of skills and the unemployed in line with the Council recommendations of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults and of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.***

⁴ Eurostat, Key Figures on European Businesses, 2022 Edition, p. 10.

⁵ 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)

⁶ European Commission, 2021 Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe, p. 26

⁷ Eurostat, Employment (as % of the population aged 20 to 64), (LFSI_EMP_A)

- (5) The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights⁸ 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')⁹ 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 ■ opportunities, and this includes employment *education and training*. ■ 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 Plan¹⁰ points out that by increasing participation of groups which are currently ■ *underrepresented, it is possible to* achieve a more inclusive employment growth.

⁸ ■ *Interinstitutional proclamation on the "European Pillar of Social Rights", OJ C-428, 13 November 2017, p.10-15.)*

⁹ Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01)

¹⁰ The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (europa.eu)

- (7) The European Skills Agenda¹¹, 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 social fairness* 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 2021.¹²
- (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 Declaration¹³, 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.

¹¹ 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)

¹² 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))

¹³ European Council Conclusions, 24-25 June 2021. This follows up on the Porto Declaration of 8 May 2021

(9) On 14 September 2022, *the President* ■ *of the European Commission* announced in her State of the European Union Address¹⁴ 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. *By doing so, the Year should* ■ *support the sustainable growth of the EU social market economy and aim to boost its competitiveness and quality job creation*

(9a) On 15 September 2021, *the President* ■ *of the European Commission* announced in her State of the European Union Address¹⁵ the launch of a structured dialogue at top-level to strengthen commitments on digital skills and education. 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 *and to expand their employment opportunities.*

¹⁴ State of the Union Address 2022, online at: https://state-of-the-union.ec.europa.eu/index_en

¹⁵ State of the Union Address 2021, online at: State of the Union 2021 | European Commission (europa.eu)

- (9c) *By promoting a mindset of upskilling and reskilling throughout the Union, the European Year of Skills can have a broader positive impact on society and on democracy, as a better skilled workforce also means more active and engaged citizens. Upskilling and reskilling equips workers with the skills needed to benefit from better quality job opportunities, to enhance their well-being at work, to progress in their personal and professional development, whilst boosting the economy's competitiveness and creating new quality jobs.*
- (10) As **■** *employers, workers, and their representatives, national, European and international social partners, chambers of commerce 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. *Social dialogue plays an important role in anticipating skills needs of the labour market. For example, the Pact for Skills¹⁶ 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. Members of the Pact benefit from dedicated services to deliver tangible results.* The regional **■** *and local dimensions are* 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 **■** *areas, including the outermost regions, face particular challenges as access to the labour market and upskilling and reskilling opportunities are limited.*

¹⁶ *Pact for Skills official website: 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)*¹⁷, 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 Accounts¹⁸ and Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability¹⁹ help people to **embark on and continue** their **learning pathways** in a more flexible and targeted way. The Council Resolution from December 2021 on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030²⁰ promotes **formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities capable of providing all the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to create an inclusive, sustainable, socially just and more resilient Union. It emphasises adult learning as an important part of lifelong learning. Learning, quality career guidance and skills self-assessment opportunities are among the measures needed to support people on their learning pathways.**
- (12) The strengthened active labour market policies advocated **in the Commission Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE)**²¹ 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.

¹⁷ *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)*

¹⁸ Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts (OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 26)

¹⁹ 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)

²⁰ Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030 (OJ C 504, 14.12.2021, p. 9)

²¹ 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)²² 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 *in* 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 *potential* 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. Increasing the attractiveness of VET through communication and outreach campaigns, Centres of Vocational Excellence, special ecosystems for VET, and skills competitions, such as Euroskills, are essential.*
- (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, *circular, inclusive, resilient* and competitive economy, as laid out under the European Green Deal²³, *adopted by the European Commission*, setting the path towards EU climate neutrality by 2050. The Commission Communication "Fit for 55"²⁴ 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.

²² Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (OJ C417 2.12.2020, p. 1).

²³ 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).

²⁴ 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).

- (14a) *The ongoing transition of European industry and the related labour market needs require investment in developing strong VET systems across the Union, promoting problem solving competences and skills for new technologies, such as smart production and machinery, advanced robotics, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, data processing and the Internet of Things.*
- (15) *Use of digital tools and technologies is increasing in all parts of life and can create a digital divide. Digital skills are essential for participation in the labour market, but also for quality of life and active ageing. In the Union, more than 90 % of professional roles require a basic level of digital knowledge, while around 42 % of citizens in the Union, including 37 % of those in the workforce, lack basic digital skills²⁵. The Decision on the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030²⁶ , establishes 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 Education Action Plan also stresses the lack of capacity of specialised education and training programmes to train additional ICT experts. Moreover, in its Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027²⁷, the Commission emphasises that technological means should be used to ease accessibility and strengthen flexibility of learning opportunities, including upskilling and reskilling.*

²⁵ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Shaping Europe's future COM/2020/67 final)*

²⁶ *Decision (EU) 2022/2481 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 (OJ L 323 14.12.2022, p.4)*

²⁷ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade (COM(2021) 118 final)*

- (16) The Commission Communication on An Updated Industrial Strategy²⁸ 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 *Commission Communication on Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy*²⁹ stresses that 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.

²⁸ 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)

²⁹ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy*

- (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 Directive³⁰ 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 Asylum³¹ 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 Package³² 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, ***improving their rights and their protection from labour exploitation***. 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 strategy³³, is complementary to the objectives of this proposal.

³⁰ 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).

³¹ 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).

³² 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).

³³ 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 ■ tools (European Qualifications Framework, Europass, ESCO, EU Skills Profile Tool for third country nationals, European Digital Credentials for Learning, *the EURES portal and relevant European competences frameworks*) are a starting point to help increase the transparency and comparability of *skills and* qualifications. For well functioning labour markets, skills must be understood and valued, whether acquired in formal, non-formal or informal settings. *Further strengthening* skills identification and documentation, as well as guidance to make skills visible, are crucial steps ■ *towards better transparency and portability of all skills, including transversal skills such as language skills, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity, intercultural competences, team work and media literacy.*

- (19) **■ In many Member States**, public and private investments in upskilling and reskilling are insufficient. **■ Many undertakings**, 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. ***Dedicating resources to ensure employees are able to work with the latest technologies is important for the competitiveness of enterprises.*** An enabling framework unlocking and incentivising employers' financial investments in skills and giving visibility to the economic value of upskilling and reskilling *is needed. For example, The SME Relief Package aims to facilitate access to finance and skills. The Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions*³⁴ *provides that Member States shall ensure that where an employer is required by Union or national law or by collective agreements to provide training to a worker to carry out the work for which he or she is employed, such training shall be provided to the worker free of cost, shall count as working time and, where possible, shall take place during working hours***■** .
- (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 ***and the development of a holistic approach*** to support continuing skills development throughout the entire working life.³⁵ The Council Conclusions of 8 June 2020³⁶ 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.

³⁴ ***Directive (EU) 2019/1152 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on transparent and predictable working conditions in the European Union***

³⁵ See for instance the increase in tertiary attainment, cf. Education and Training Monitor 2021

³⁶ 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)³⁷, 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. ***The Reinforced Youth Guarantee aims to ensure that all young people receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.*** 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"³⁸. 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.

³⁷ Established by Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of 12 February 2021.

³⁸ 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 Fund³⁹ 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 neutrality⁴⁰ 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 development⁴¹ 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. Invest EU 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.

³⁹ 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)

⁴⁰ Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality (OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 35)

⁴¹ Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on learning for the green transition and sustainable development, OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 1.

- (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.
- (25) The **Communication from the Commission entitled "Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030"**⁴² 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.***

⁴² 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 **period starting from 9 May 2023 until 8 May 2024** shall be designated as the ‘European Year of Skills’ (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, the overall objective of the European Year shall be to further promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling **in accordance with national competences, laws and practices. In this way, the Year shall aim to boost the competitiveness of European companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and to contribute to quality job creation**, 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 and contributing to continuous learning and career progression, empowering people to access quality jobs and to fully participate in the economy and society**. 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 **by closing gaps and skills mismatches for an empowered workforce and people** in the Union **able to seize the opportunities of this process, by:**

1. Promoting increased, more effective and inclusive investment *at all levels, inter alia by public and private employers including by small and medium sized enterprises, into all forms of* upskilling *and reskilling, education and training* 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 *and provision* by closely cooperating with, *and promoting cooperation among, cross-sectoral and sectoral* social partners, public and private employment services, companies, *civil society entities, not-for-profit social service providers, and* education and training providers, *and by* developing joined-up approaches with all branches of governments *at Union, national, regional and local level and by facilitating the recognition of skills and qualifications*.
3. Matching people's aspirations, *needs* and skills-set, *including those skills acquired during mobility*, with labour market *needs and* opportunities especially those offered by the green and digital transitions, *emerging new sectors* 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 those not in education, employment or training (NEETs), *low-skilled persons, older workers, persons with disabilities, people from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds, people living in remote areas and in the outermost regions, as well as 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) ***online and in person*** conferences, forum discussions and further events to promote debate on the role and contribution of skills policies to achieve competitive, sustainable ■ economic growth in light of the demographic change, ***the digital and green transitions, thus also supporting an active and engaged citizenship*** and to mobilise relevant stakeholders to ensure access to ***education, training and learning opportunities*** 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, ■ ***employers, including SMEs***, 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 ***and to maximise the benefits and potential of a skilled workforce***;
 - (d) information, ***comprehensive*** communication and awareness-raising campaigns on EU initiatives for upskilling and reskilling ***and continuous learning***, promoting their implementation and delivery on the ground and also their uptake by potential beneficiaries;

- (e) increasing dialogue **■ with social partners, and** existing stakeholder groups and networks, also via established online platforms **at national, regional and local level and ensuring stakeholder engagement opportunities linked to the European Year of Skills;**
- (eb) **Promoting the design of national, sectoral and company-specific skills strategies and training, including through social dialogue and the involvement of social partners;**
- (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 **and continuing the implementation of** tools and instruments for increased transparency of qualifications, including qualifications awarded outside the Union, **and for validation of non-formal and informal learning;**
- (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, **learning and education** 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 in their Member States, enabling the involvement** of relevant **actors 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, **in particular the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), CEDEFOP, European Labour Authority (ELA), European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA).**

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 *closely* engage with *the* social partners, *civil society, learning and education providers*, labour market bodies, *learners*, and representatives of organisations or bodies active in the field of skills, *education, training and continuous learning* 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)**, as well as *international stakeholders* , while ensuring the visibility of the Union's participation.

Article 7

Monitoring and evaluation

By 31 **May 2025**, 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

The President

For the Council

The President