



European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group Schools: Learning for Sustainability

Vocational Education and Training sector and the greening of the labour market

Key messages



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1. Introduction

The policy messages outlined below are drawn from a webinar on 17 October 2023 of the European Education Area Working Group on Learning for Sustainability. They reflect both presentations and discussions by group members that took place during the event.

2. Vocational Education and training for the green transition

The European Green Deal is a comprehensive strategy that seeks to make the European Union climate-neutral by 2050. It strives to ensure that the transition to a more sustainable society and economy is fair and supported by citizens. To achieve climate-neutrality, there is a need for a skilled workforce that can contribute to sustainable practices. These skills are categorised into two main types: **technical skills**, which are occupation-specific and labour market-oriented (e.g., installing solar panels), and **transversal skills**, which are broader and applicable both in the workplace and daily life (e.g. environmental awareness). Vocational education and training (VET) is well-positioned to deliver a combination of these skills.

3. Challenges in Vocational Education and Training

In some countries vocational education and training is seen as a less attractive option compared with other educational routes. However, VET is key to the green transition, as it provides the essential skills needed, such as the use of new cutting-edge technologies. There is a need and opportunity to change the perception of VET and recognise its key role in the labour market and ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality.

Skills provision needs to be adapted to local needs, while focusing both on technical and transversal skills. While most transversal skills relevant for the green transition are similar across different regions, the technical skillsets required will vary depending on local industry needs and capacities.

Monitoring and evaluation of the sector's capacity to deliver green skills is necessary to track and facilitate progress in greening VET. Collaboration and creation of communities where VET stakeholders share experiences and best practices can be one route to address this.

4. Ways forward to promote the greening of Vocational Education and Training

The EU offers a number of funding instruments to support skills development, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Social Fund+, and Erasmus+. Several tools have been developed to define and measure skills for the green transition (see below: Further reading). The European Education Area Working Group on VET and the Green Transition enables technical exchanges on greening VET, in line with the principles of the 2020 VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration.

Cooperation and international collaboration are essential to advance green skills. EU-funded **Centres of Vocational Excellence** are designed to foster collaboration among VET providers, research, companies, social partners, and public bodies. Their goal is to ensure high quality skills and competences that provide quality employment for an innovative, inclusive and

sustainable economy. While some strong vocational hubs and communities exist, these can usefully be linked at the European level to facilitate mutual learning. The EU provides support in terms of financing, awareness raising, and assistance in creating such networks.

VET modules and learning materials should emphasise the teaching of both technical and transversal skills. Such learning ensures that more people, regardless of background or circumstances, can acquire the awareness and competences to actively participate in the transition to a greener economy.

Shared learning, collaboration, and professional development fosters a sense of community and mutual support among educators from different sectors and contexts. A collaborative approach can help ensure that both technical skills and transversal skills are taught consistently and effectively in VET.

On-the-job or in-company training is a distinctive and crucial aspect of VET. While there are commonalities between in-school and in-company training, it is important to recognise that **real-world experiences offered by companies** bring unique value to green VET initiatives.

Companies come in various sizes and engage in different professions, each with varying standards and approaches to sustainability and green practices. There is therefore no one-size-fits-all approach. Challenges in combining the two training modes – in-school and in-company can be positive catalysts for development. They should be viewed as an opportunity for creating synergies that combine the strengths of each to create a well-rounded and adaptable workforce.

5. Good Practice

5.1. GreenoVET

GreenoVET is a four-year project financed by **the Centres of Vocational Excellence programme**. Its aim is to foster environmental, social and economic development in Europe through sustainable and green innovation processes. GreenoVET is focused on **promoting transversal green skills** through collaboration between VET institutions, businesses, and vocational excellence centres in different European regions. It aims to empower VET graduates **for long-term employability** in a changing labour market by emphasising **sustainable and green innovation**.

The centres, or so-called CoVES, are currently based in four regions across Portugal, Finland, North Macedonia and Austria, with plans to soon establish another five centres across Europe based on the same methodology. They support both **regional and international cooperation**, actively involving stakeholders, engaging and integrating them into the co-development of initiatives.

Learn more about **Greenovet**: <https://www.greenovet.eu/>

5.2. Riga State Technical School and Bulduri VET School of Horticulture

In Latvia, all 54 VET institutions are required to align their activities with the green transition. Many of them are working proactively to support the green transition by focusing on **sustainability, green thinking, and integrating green technologies and innovations into their curricula**.

The strategic priorities of the Riga State Technical School (RVT) include sustainability and a green curriculum, specifically the development of green technologies. The school received an EU innovation award in 2022 for its promotion and implementation of green thinking in practice. RVT incorporates green energy sources in its buildings, such as solar panels manufactured by the local industry. Its school curriculum is focused on developing environmental awareness and offers green professions training while supporting circularity in practice through the reuse of all the materials employed in the school for its many classes.

In another example, the **Bulduri VET School of Horticulture focuses on integrating digitalisation and technological innovation to support the green transition**, with one notable example being their 'I-garden'. The project aims for automation and digitalisation of plant monitoring, which includes a camera-equipped robot tending the campus garden and scanning the plants. It is currently being developed to detect pests and illnesses and upload all the obtained data to a database. As such, the school also actively promotes the knowledge triangle of education research, business and innovation.

6. Suggested further reading

[Employment and social developments in Europe 2023](#)

[From linear thinking to green growth mindset 2023](#)

[VET and the Green Transition: A Compendium of inspiring practices 2023](#)

[Green Skills and Knowledge Concepts: Labelling the ESCO classification](#)

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