

HARNESSING TALENT IN EUROPE'S REGIONS



Supporting the development of digital technologies and digital innovation ecosystems

Issue Paper – Digital Working Group

31 July 2024

The information and perspectives presented in this issue paper are the result of the work of the Working Group and do not necessarily represent the official opinion of the European Commission.

1. Introduction

As a part of the activities within the Talent Booster Mechanism¹, the Digital Working Group (WG) aims to bring together relevant actors and stakeholders to address specific challenges associated with digital skills mismatches and how to harness talent in the digital sector. The cooperation within the WG, exchanges of experiences and good practices, will allow to identify opportunities and approaches to help mitigate the impact of identified issues in regions and territories.

To that end, the members of the Digital WG have agreed to focus their work on three subtopics:

- The role of education and training (E&T) systems in developing the right skills for the twin transition;
- Supporting the development of digital technologies and digital innovation ecosystems;
- Digital inclusion and accessibility.

The objective of this issue paper is to guide the scoping of the WG's work related to the subtopic **Supporting the development of digital technologies and digital innovation ecosystems** by providing its framework and defining the operational steps.

The outputs defined in this issue paper, as well as the findings related to the identified subtopic, will later be consolidated and aggregated with the contributions from other working groups (Health, Research & Innovation, Territorial) to arrive at final conclusions of the Working Groups' operations. The work will also be enriched with the outcome of existing platforms, such as the Just Transition Platform or the Rural Revitalisation Platform, addressing regions and territories facing common challenges.

2. Scope of the issue

2.1. Description of the issue

The EU and the world are navigating a dynamic landscape marked by deep and swift changes. These shifts encompass crucial issues such as climate, digital transition, and geopolitical dynamics. Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion in Ukraine have served as catalysts for unprecedented collaboration. In this historical juncture, the call for collaboration is more pressing than ever, with the goal of fostering inventive solutions that drive social and economic recovery, ensure environmental sustainability, and fortify resilience against future uncertainties. Furthermore, the increasing prominence of deep tech innovations, stemming from an increasing cohort of start-ups within the EU, holds the potential to deliver transformative solutions.

However, there are persistent and significant challenges that hinder the development of digital innovation ecosystems in the EU. The global trend of digitalisation is exerting pressure on businesses. There's a growing concern that enterprises within the EU may already be significantly trailing behind major global players such as China and the United States, especially in information and communication technologies (ICT) related sales. Additionally, the state of the digital economy varies considerably among EU member countries. Notably, enterprises in some of the EU's newest member countries significantly lag in terms of digital transformation².

Disparities in access to digital infrastructure across EU regions remain a significant barrier. While there has been an overall increase in internet speed throughout the EU, regions with historically inadequate internet access have shown the most considerable relative improvement in recent times. Despite these improvements, regions that already possessed better digital infrastructure experienced a faster absolute increase in internet speed. This indicates that, over time, the disparities in digital adaptation of these new business models between regions have

¹ European Commission (2023), Communication on Harnessing talent in Europe's regions, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/communication/harnessing-talents/harnessing-talents-regions_en.pdf

² Hunady, J., Suša Vugec, D., Pisár, P., Pejic Bach, M. (2022), Digital Transformation in European Union: North is leading, and South is lagging behind, [Digital Transformation in European Union: North is leading, and South is lagging behind | International Journal of Information Systems and Project Management \(uminho.pt\)](#)

expanded rather than contracted³. This digital divide not only limits individual opportunities but also hampers the potential for regional economic growth.

Adapting to these new business models also highlights the challenges of designing and implementing structural reforms in the field of digital public administration for EU regional and local authorities. Gaining access to digital and technical skills presents substantial challenges for the digital transformation of municipalities in the EU, especially for those with limited digital capabilities. Key hurdles to the digitalisation of municipalities include insufficient funding, limited technical capacity, and the need for agreements and cooperation with other municipalities, regional, or national governments⁴.

2.2. Drivers of the issue

Lack of adaptability: The success of Europe's investments in technology and process development hinges not only on favourable conditions for innovation and entrepreneurship, but also on effective business models. However, numerous European enterprises, regardless of size, lack the awareness and tools needed to innovate their business models⁵. Therefore, the challenge at hand is to facilitate innovation in business models and enable a broad spectrum of companies to modernise their approaches. Moreover, at the EU level, technology infrastructures (TIs) have been the focus of a limited number of European Commission (EC) policy documents and workshops over the past decade⁶.

Lack of transparency and co-creation during the policymaking processes: It is essential to engage innovators in early discussions with legislators and policymakers to deliberate on the implementation of start-up-friendly policies throughout the EU⁷. Overly complex or restrictive regulations and ambiguous or outdated regulatory frameworks may stifle experimentation and hinder the adoption or development of new technologies. There is a need to reduce regulatory burdens and bureaucratic hurdles.

Access to Funding: The coordination of research, development & innovation (RD&I) funding programmes across EU, national and regional levels, remains a challenging issue for the improvement of the function of the innovation ecosystems⁸. This lack of coordination creates an innovation divide, making it challenging for stakeholders to leverage synergies between various funding initiatives effectively. Consequently, this gap in coordination becomes a barrier, particularly for start-ups and small enterprises, limiting their access to crucial funding. The scarcity of funding can impede RD&I and the scaling of innovative digital solutions. The lack of experience in writing funding applications reduces the number of applications, often resulting in some companies paying third parties to write for them, a limitation for smaller companies as they cannot afford this expense.

Fragmented Ecosystems: Research and technology organisations (RTOs), universities, start-ups, urban design firms and corporations (including those in construction) must enhance their collaboration and coordination efforts to strengthen their relationships. The current lack of collaboration, exchange, capitalise on the already EU funded existing results and tools and coordination among multi- stakeholder digital working groups poses a significant challenge, leading to the fragmentation of the innovation ecosystem⁹. Regional and local authorities should also be involved in these ecosystems to support RTOs and to create cooperation with private sector and larger

³ European Investment Bank (2023), Digitalisation in Europe 2022–2023, https://www.eib.org/attachments/lucalli/20230112_digitalisation_in_europe_2022_2023_en.pdf

⁴ Ibid

⁵ European Commission – CORDIS (2023), Understanding and supporting business model innovation, https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020_INSO-2-2014/it

⁶ Taucer, F., Grande, S., Kert, K. and Jenet, A., (2021), Towards the Implementation of an EU Strategy for Technology Infrastructures, European Commission, Brussels, JRC127798, [Towards the implementation of an EU strategy for technology infrastructures - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/96c19d3a-5cc0-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-245939284)

⁷ Sevdalis, P., Lopes Da Costa Marques Pinto, R., Kapfinger, K., Kurucki, N. (2021), Europe's innovation ecosystem survey report, European Commission, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/96c19d3a-5cc0-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-245939284>

⁸ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Barrera, A. (2020), A robust innovation ecosystem for the future of Europe: report on the results of the stakeholder consultation : October 2019 – February 2020, Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/524268>

⁹ Ibid

industries. Creating an ecosystem of sharing best practices, especially for small regions, urban and peri-urban areas towards green and digital transition.

Skills gap: One of the main challenges the EU is confronted with is digital skills gap that impact profoundly in the development of the innovation ecosystem. Currently 90% of jobs require some level of digital skills, and companies are struggling to find digitally skilled workers¹⁰. This scarcity not only affects the immediate hiring needs of companies but also poses long-term challenges for the overall sustainability and growth of the digital ecosystem. One of the primary issues is the shortage of ICT specialists and technology experts.

2.3. Discussion questions

Considering this issue and the issue drivers identified, the WG members will consider the following discussion questions:

- What actions could be taken to enhance digital innovation systems in EU regions?
- What are the best practices to enhance the coordination of RD&I funding programmes across EU, national, and regional levels?
- What are the main challenges in coordinating RD&I funding programmes across different levels, and how can they be addressed?
- What guidance and resources are most effective for helping stakeholders navigate the funding landscape for digital innovation?
- What specific information do stakeholders need to effectively access and utilise RD&I funding opportunities?

2.4. Suggested outputs

The subgroup working on digital innovation ecosystems brings value by specifically focusing on enhancing innovation capabilities within EU regions, complementing the EU Cohesion Policy's broader goals of balanced growth and regional development. It aims to address disparities in innovation capacity by promoting strategic investments in digital infrastructure, R&D, and skills development, as well as fostering cross-regional collaborations and knowledge transfer.

To contribute to addressing the issue drivers and the discussion questions described in the previous section, the main output envisaged is a toolkit to enhance place-based digital innovation. The toolkit aims to address the fragmented coordination of RD&I funding across EU, national, and regional levels, which creates an innovation divide and hampers talent attraction and retention in the digital sector. The toolkit will provide stakeholders with resources and guidelines to navigate the funding landscape, including a list of funding opportunities, best practices for securing funding, and a funding navigation toolkit with step-by-step guides and templates. It is designed to benefit mainly SMEs, startups, innovators, universities and regional development agencies, ensuring alignment with other working groups and initiatives.

A more detailed breakdown is provided below.

2.4.1. A toolkit to enhance place-based digital innovation

Why?

- The **issue targeted** is the lack of coordination of RD&I funding programmes across EU, national and regional levels. As explained in the issue paper, the coordination of RD&I funding programmes across EU, national and regional levels, remains a challenging issue for the improvement of the function of the innovation ecosystems¹¹. This lack of coordination creates an innovation divide, making it challenging for stakeholders to attract and retain talent for the digital innovation system.

¹⁰ All digital (2022), Strategies to Address the Digital Skills Gap in the EU, <https://www.europeandigitalskills.eu/sites/TDSG/uploads/files/white-paper-eu-digital-skills-gap.pdf>

¹¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Barrera, A. (2020), A robust innovation ecosystem for the future of Europe: report on the results of the stakeholder consultation: October 2019 – February 2020, Publications Office, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/524268>

- The **objective** of this output is to provide guidance and resources on the funding landscape for stakeholders involved in digital innovation ecosystems. By doing so, the toolkit seeks to improve coordination and collaboration among funding programs, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of innovation ecosystems, reducing the innovation divide and contributing to the attraction and retention of talent.
- There are **existing initiatives and best practices** in enhancing digital skills, such as the Digital Education Action Plan¹², the SELFIE tool¹³, the European Training Foundation programmes¹⁴, the EU Funding Toolkit by Euclid Network¹⁵, the EU Rural Toolkit¹⁶, and the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition¹⁷. The proposed toolkit will complement these initiatives by providing funding guidance tailored to digital innovation ecosystems. It will enhance existing toolkits by offering practical and easy to understand resources for stakeholders to navigate funding opportunities, thereby improving coordination, reducing the innovation divide, and attracting and retaining talent in the digital sector.

What?

The output will consist of a toolkit containing resources and guidelines to enhance place-based digital innovation. This will include:

- a list of funding opportunities and summary of the related application processes.
- best practices on how to secure digital innovation funding (with practical examples of success stories). The catalogues should include a description of these practices, including the success factors, and guidelines to transfer them to different contexts.
- a funding navigation toolkit (i.e. a set of resources including step-by-step guides, templates, and checklists to help startups and SMEs navigate the funding application process efficiently). The toolkit will provide concise details and links to the respective EU portals, enabling users to explore and review them according to their specific needs. Instead of being updated regularly, it will direct users to the most current information available through the provided links.

Who?

- The output will **benefit a wide range of stakeholders**, including SMEs, startups, innovators, universities and regional development agencies.
- **Stakeholders to be consulted** will mostly consist of the WG members themselves and their network but may also include representatives from these groups.
- Close alignment with the work conducted for the other subtopics of this WG, as well as with the R&I WG and the work of the Territorial WG related to ***Dynamic Innovation Ecosystems***¹, should be ensured. This output has however a different focus than these other subgroups, as it relates to funding opportunities related to digital innovation, while the other subgroups will focus more on innovation more broadly and on digital innovation ecosystems.
- It **could also be utilised** by the European Network of Innovation Agencies (TAFTIE) to assist innovation agencies across Europe in better coordinating and accessing funding opportunities.

How?

Various research tools are envisaged to produce and disseminate the toolkits. This includes:

- **desk research** to identify the relevant funding and processes and to identify best practices to secure funding;
- **consultations with WG members and their network** to collect experts' insights on the topic.

¹² European Commission. (n.d.), Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027), https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

¹³ European Commission (n.d.), SELFIE - Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering Innovation through Educational Technologies, https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital_en

¹⁴ European Training Foundation (n.d.), ETF - Supporting Human Capital Development, <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en>

¹⁵ Euclid Network. (2022), EU Funding Toolkit, https://euclidnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/eu-funding-toolkit_final_2022.pdf

¹⁶ European Commission (n.d.), Rural Vision Funding, <https://funding.rural-vision.europa.eu/?lng=en>

¹⁷ European Commission (n.d.), Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, https://ec.europa.eu/digital-strategy/our-policies/digital-skills-and-jobs-coalition_en

When?

Tentative timeline

Sub-deliverable	Scheduled time
List of available funding opportunities	Q4 2024
Best practices on how to secure digital innovation funding	Q1 2025
A funding navigation toolkit	Q1 2026

3. Role of the WG and operational elements

3.1. Role of the WG members

The Digital WG is composed of two WG leaders and WG members.

The **WG Leaders** drive the overall activities of the WG with the support of the HTP Secretariat.

In addition, within each WG, **subtopic leaders** will lead and oversee the work being conducted for each of the subtopics selected. **Subtopic groups** can also be created which will be responsible for producing the outputs they have agreed on, with the support of the HTP Secretariat (described below). One WG member can work on several subtopics, as subgroup members or subtopic leaders¹⁸.

The **WG Members** will:

- validate the driving strategy, priorities, and subtopics of analysis of the Digital WG;
- validate the workplan plan of the WG;
- be engaged in the assessment of good practices, as well as the analysis of their transferability;
- develop recommendations for the relevant authorities;
- develop an actionable framework for local and regional authorities in implementing tailored and comprehensive solutions to tackle development issues related to the subtopics.

All WG members could also be consulted on the subtopics discussed in other WGs.

3.2. Role of the HTP Secretariat

The HTP Secretariat will support the work of the WG members, by:

- identifying relevant documentation, sources and practices that could be useful for the activities of the WG;
- facilitating contacts from the WG members to external stakeholders the WG would like to consult;
- suggesting strategies, methodologies, and steps to produce the outputs;
- doing the quality review of all drafts and final outputs;
- mobilising experts (for instance, on good practices) to provide presentations or other contributions to the WG members;
- facilitating exchanges between the WG members.

The HTP Secretariat will also ensure alignment and synergies with the other subgroups and HTP WGs as well as with other instruments such as the Just Transition Platform, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and the Rural Revitalisation Platform. The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, which supports clusters (groups of interconnected companies and institutions) in Europe to drive economic growth and innovation, is particularly relevant for this subtopic. Both the HTP's Digital WG and the ECCP emphasize the importance of fostering innovation and the development of digital technologies. The ECCP also connects clusters across Europe, many of which are focused on digital innovation and technology sectors.

¹⁸ One WG member can lead several subtopics if deemed relevant by the WG members.

4. Annex: List of stakeholders and key initiatives

4.1. Key stakeholders

4.1.1. Who is affected by the issue?

Stakeholders affected by the issue include:

- **public research, SMEs, large companies, innovators, and industries relying on TIs:** these stakeholders depend on TIs for conducting experiments and research, for technology transfer and innovation, and for the development and testing of new technologies;
- **innovators, start-ups, businesses, and industries:**
 - innovators: Face challenges due to complex regulations affecting their work;
 - start-ups: Struggle with restrictive policies hindering growth and development;
 - businesses: Encounter regulatory obstacles that may impede innovation.
- all the stakeholders involved in the ecosystem, such as **RTOs, universities, start-ups, and corporations.**

4.1.2. Who needs to be involved to solve the issue?

In addition to stakeholders affected by the issue, the following stakeholders need to be involved to solve the issue:

- **local and regional governments** play a crucial role in implementing policies and initiatives to promote the recognition and prioritisation of technology infrastructures (TIs) in policies;
- **legislators, policymakers, and innovators** to facilitate discussions and create start-up-friendly policies, reducing regulatory burdens;
- **local and regional governments** can implement policies and initiatives that promote collaboration among stakeholders;
- **industry associations and industrial clusters** can act as intermediaries, fostering collaboration among businesses, research organisations, and start-ups;
- **grassroots organisations and community leaders** can create awareness, facilitate networking events, and advocate for local initiatives that foster collaboration and innovation;
- **innovation hubs and incubators** can provide physical spaces and support services to facilitate collaboration.

4.2. EU Context

The EU Cohesion Policy is a framework designed to promote and support the overall harmonious development of its Member States and regions. It aims to reduce regional disparities, foster balanced economic growth, and enhance social and territorial cohesion. The policy is implemented through various funds, primarily the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), and the European Social Fund (ESF). These funds are instrumental in financing projects that address regional inequalities and promote sustainable development across Europe. A key aspect of this policy is fostering innovation ecosystems that can drive sustainable growth and competitiveness.

In their 2021 study, Doussineau and Bachtrögler-Unger¹⁹ explore the synergies between EU Cohesion Policy and Horizon 2020 funding. They analyse regional funding concentration on key enabling technologies and

¹⁹ Doussineau, M., & Bachtrögler-Unger, J. (2021), Exploring Synergies between EU Cohesion Policy and Horizon 2020 Funding across European Regions: An analysis of regional funding concentration on key enabling technologies and societal grand challenges, [\(PDF\) Exploring Synergies between EU Cohesion Policy and Horizon 2020 Funding across European](#)

Moreover, innovation ecosystems in the EU can be significantly supported by Cohesion Policy to ensure competitive and sustainable growth. Brousseau and Dalle (2023)²⁰ propose the concept of a European 'Venture Commons'- a collaborative framework that combines resources and expertise to foster innovation across regions. The authors argue that Cohesion Policy should not only focus on reducing disparities but also on creating environments conducive to high-impact innovation. This involves supporting entrepreneurial activities, facilitating knowledge transfer, and promoting cross-regional collaborations. Kuzior, et.al (2022)²¹ assesses the innovation ecosystems of EU countries and Ukraine, emphasising the role of Cohesion Policy in sustainable development. The authors identify significant variations in innovation capabilities and sustainability practices across regions, highlighting the need for tailored Cohesion Policy strategies. Their assessment underscores the importance of aligning regional innovation efforts with sustainable development goals, ensuring that economic growth does not come at the expense of environmental and social well-being. The study suggests that Cohesion Policy should prioritise investments in green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure. Additionally, fostering digital skills and enhancing R&D capabilities are crucial for building resilient and future-ready innovation ecosystems.

1. Despite notable progress, substantial disparities in innovation capacity persist among EU regions. Wealthier regions, particularly those in Western and Northern Europe, continue to lead in innovation, benefiting from advanced infrastructure, higher levels of investment, and a skilled workforce. In contrast, regions in Southern and Eastern Europe often lag, facing barriers such as inadequate digital infrastructure, lower R&D investment, and a shortage of skilled labour.
2. Cohesion Policy has been pivotal in supporting innovation ecosystems, particularly in less developed regions. Through the ERDF and other funds, the policy facilitates investments in digital infrastructure, research and development (R&D), and skills development. For instance, the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) has been a key initiative, encouraging regions to identify and develop their unique strengths and potential in specific innovation areas.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of robust digital infrastructure and innovation ecosystems. Regions with advanced digital capabilities were better positioned to adapt to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The Cohesion Policy has been instrumental in supporting recovery efforts, with targeted investments aimed at enhancing digital resilience and facilitating economic recovery.

²² European Commission (2024), Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, [Inforegio - Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/economic-social-territorial-cohesion/en/ninth-report)

Goal	Description
Digital Europe Programme²³	
Strengthening the EU's digital capabilities	The programme is designed to bridge the gap between digital technology research and market deployment. It will benefit EU citizens and businesses, especially SMEs.
Horizon Europe²⁴	
Funding opportunities for startups, researchers, and innovators	Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. It facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It also supports creating and better dispersing of excellent knowledge and technologies.
Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition²⁵	
Promote digital skills development	EU initiative bringing together Member States, companies, social partners, non-profit organisations and education providers, who work to address the lack of digital skills in the EU. It offers organisations that take action to increase digital skills across the EU an opportunity to learn from peers and showcase their actions and impact. The actions done under the Coalition umbrella are key to reaching the Digital Decade targets.
New European Commission communication on Better Regulation²⁶	
Improve the quality of legislation and make regulatory processes more efficient and effective	Better Regulation aims to ensure that EU policies and laws are prepared in an open and transparent manner, informed by the best available evidence, and backed by comprehensive stakeholder involvement, so that they achieve their objectives at minimum cost.
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)²⁷	
Support new Entrepreneurs	This programme allows new entrepreneurs to visit existing companies in other countries to help them gain experience and set up new partnerships, it is a vital programme for new entrepreneurs.
Action book on Innovation and Place-Based Transformations²⁸	
To promote innovation within local contexts to encourage economic and social development.	It aims to empower regions and cities by leveraging their unique strengths and capabilities, encouraging collaboration between local authorities, businesses, academia, and community organisations. The programme provides a framework for building regional innovation ecosystems that can tackle local challenges whilst enhancing competitiveness and sustainability. By prioritising place-based strategies, it guides stakeholders in developing smart specialisation strategies and creating resilient, innovative communities for sustainable and inclusive growth.
Pact for Skills²⁹	
To create a unified framework for upskilling and reskilling, supporting Europe's green and digital transitions across all industrial ecosystems.	Launched in July 2022 under the Pact for Skills, the Digital Large-Scale Partnership aims to address critical challenges facing the European workforce. Coordinated by TIM Italia, the partnership includes Lasco Srl, WhiteLibra, and BEAM ME UP from Italy, as well as OECON and the University of Thessaly from Greece. Key issues identified by the partnership include a shortage of ICT specialists, insufficient digital expertise in businesses of all sizes (particularly SMEs), the rapid transformation of industries impacting jobs and skills, and a lack of gender and lifetime balance. By collaborating on a comprehensive upskilling and reskilling strategy, the partnership seeks to empower Europe's workforce to navigate the challenges of the digital economy effectively.

²³ European Commission (n.d.), Digital Europe Programme, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme>

²⁴ European Commission (n.d.), Horizon Europe, https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

²⁵ European Commission (n.d.), Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en>

²⁶ European Commission (2021), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Better regulation: Joining forces to make better laws, [EUR-Lex - 52021DC0219 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexUriCommDoc.do?uri=CELEX:52021DC0219:EN:EUR-Lex)

²⁷ Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) (n.d.), <https://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu>

²⁸ European Commission (n.d.), Action book on Innovation and Place-Based Transformations, https://place-based-innovation.ec.europa.eu/actionbook-innovation-place-based-transformations_en

²⁹ European Commission (n.d.), Pact for Skills, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

Centres of Vocational Excellence and communities of practice (CoVE) ³⁰	
To develop innovative and adaptable vocational education and training (VET) institutions that can swiftly respond to economic and societal needs.	CoVE is an Erasmus+ initiative that establishes Centres of Vocational Excellence designed to support local economies through "skills ecosystems." These ecosystems consist of a diverse range of partners such as VET providers, employers, research institutions, development agencies, and employment services. Together, they work to align VET offerings with the regional economic landscape, fostering social development, innovation, and strategies for smart specialisation. By providing education and training that meets the rapidly evolving demands of industry, CoVEs ensure a skilled workforce that can drive regional economic growth.

³⁰ European Commission (n.d.), Erasmus+ - Centres of Vocational Excellence, [Centres of Vocational Excellence - Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/en/centres-vocational-excellence)