

UNION OF SKILLS

Policy briefing

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Short summary of the policy

The Union of Skills is a strategic initiative by the European Commission aimed at building a resilient, competitive, and inclusive European workforce through improved education, upskilling, and talent mobility. It promotes lifelong learning, stronger cooperation between education and industry, and better recognition of skills across borders. The policy also seeks to address labor shortages, support digital and green transitions, and ensure equal access to quality learning opportunities for all. The initiative is inspired by the Draghi and Letta reports and builds on the [European Education Area](#) and the [European Research Area](#).

The European Commission also published a [factsheet on the Union of Skills](#), which clearly highlights the initiatives contributing to each of the objectives. Altogether, the EU is investing over 150 billion EUR to support businesses and people to develop the right skills.

Main objectives of the policy

- **Empower individuals with strong foundational skills:** Aim to ensure everyone in Europe has access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities, fostering equity and enabling participation in society and the economy.
- **Support lifelong upskilling and reskilling:** Promote continuous learning to help individuals adapt to changing job requirements and transitions, enhancing employability and personal development.
- **Facilitate the mobility of skills** across borders: Enhance the recognition and portability of skills and qualifications within the EU to support free movement and address labor market needs.
- **Attract, develop, and retain talent:** Implement strategies to make Europe a global hub for talent, addressing demographic challenges and skill shortages in key sectors.
- **Strengthen governance and skills intelligence:** Establish robust governance structures and data-driven approaches to monitor skills trends and inform policymaking effectively.

- **Advance basic and STEM education:** Focus on improving literacy, numeracy, science, and digital skills from early education through adulthood to prepare for digital and green transitions. Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- **Promote inclusive and equitable learning opportunities:** Address disparities in education access and outcomes related to socio-economic background, gender, and geography to ensure no one is left behind.
- **Enhance collaboration between education and industry:** Foster partnerships between educational institutions and businesses to align curricula with labor market needs and support innovation. Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

These objectives collectively aim to bolster Europe's competitiveness by investing in human capital and ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills necessary for success in a rapidly evolving world.

Context and relation to the Digital Europe Programme (DEP)

DEP contributes to reaching the objectives of the Union of Skills. The need for more and better skills is targeted in the Union of Skills with several objectives, one key deliverable is the “EU Skills Academies”.

Parts of the policy directly related to specific objectives (SO) in DEP

With activities funded under SO4 – Advanced Digital Skills, DEP gives a direct answer to the objectives of the Union of Skills. The sectoral skills academies funded under DEP are building successful models to deliver skills that are needed by the industry for a green and digital transition. They are requested within the Union of Skills initiative for the AI, Quantum, Virtual Worlds, and Semiconductors.

Activities in the DEP Work Programme 2025-27 contributing to the objectives of the policy

Each Digital Europe call under SO4 directly advances core Union of Skills goals (scaling up talent, improving quality, fostering cooperation and creating sectoral pipelines). Additionally, parts of the activities funded under other SOs are linked to skills development (e.g. ApplyAI topics).

Note: For proposal drafting, explicitly reference which Union of Skills objective(s) your activity addresses, show measurable outcomes (numbers trained, mobility cases, certification uptake), and describe cross-border and industry-education linkages to maximise policy alignment.

Digital Europe Topic	Key Strand (Union of Skills)	Explanation
Sectoral digital skills academies (Semiconductors)	Building skills for quality lives and jobs	Develops specialized semiconductor skills to enhance employability and working conditions in a high-value sector.
	Upskilling and reskilling for the digital & green transition	Provides structured learning for workers to adapt to new technologies relevant to both digitalisation and sustainability.
	Circulating skills across the EU for competitiveness	Promotes EU-wide mobility and mutual recognition of semiconductor qualifications to strengthen competitiveness.
	Attracting, developing and retaining talent	Builds an attractive European training ecosystem to bring in and retain skilled semiconductor professionals.
Excellence in higher education and training programmes in key digital areas and applied technologies	Building skills	Strengthens Europe's high-end education and research capacity in digital technologies, improving employability and innovation.
	Upskilling and reskilling	Enables professionals and students to update their expertise in key digital and green-related fields.
	Circulating skills	Supports mobility & recognition of advanced digital qualifications across borders through joint programs.
ELEVATE: European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies	Circulating skills	Creates a networked "league" of digital academies to harmonise curricula and foster mobility of learners and educators.
	Attracting, developing ... talent	Promotes Europe as a global centre of excellence in digital skills through cooperation and visibility.
	Building skills	Improves the quality, reach and inclusiveness of advanced digital training through shared standards and best practices.
European Advanced Digital Skills Competitions	Building skills	Competitions promote skill excellence and motivate learners to improve and showcase their abilities.
	Attracting, developing ... talent	Identifies and nurtures outstanding digital talent, supporting their development within Europe.
EU Code Week	Building skills	Promotes basic digital and coding literacy, fostering early interest in digital careers.
	Building skills (inclusive focus)	Encourages girls and young people to engage in digital activities, promoting inclusion and equal opportunity.
Advancing Girls and Women in Digital	Building skills	Increases women's participation in digital professions, improving equality and workforce diversity.
	Upskilling and reskilling	Equips women with advanced digital skills, supporting their integration in emerging tech sectors.
	Circulating skills	Expands Europe's talent pool by integrating more women into cross-border training networks and programmes.
Digital Skills and Jobs Platform	Circulating skills	A pan-European hub connecting learners, employers and training providers, enhancing visibility and mobility of skills.
	Upskilling and reskilling	Serves as a central entry point for continuous learning, matching training offers with emerging labour-market needs.
Supporting the coordination of the Cybersecurity Skills Academy	Building skills	Strengthens Europe's cybersecurity competence base, developing highly employable professionals.
	Upskilling and reskilling	Enables continuous cybersecurity training to support Europe's secure digital transformation.
	Attracting, developing ... talent	Helps identify and retain cybersecurity specialists — a priority talent area for the EU.

Related policies and further information

[Union Of Skills - EC factsheet](#)