



# MAKING TRAINING A REALITY FOR **QUALITY JOBS** IN EUROPEAN INDUSTRIES

12-13 MARCH IN ZAGREB

## CONCEPT NOTE

### INTRODUCTION

The European Commission has rightly put the spotlight on the urgent need to tackle Europe's skills shortages by designating 2023 to be the EU Year of Skills. Recognition is always a good starting point, but the solutions to meet the challenges are lagging, especially if what is proposed fails to address the root cause of the issue.

Unfortunately, the Skills and Talent Package (including the new legislation) proposed by the Commission to tackle the growing challenge of labour and skills shortages in the EU misses the target. The Package puts forward an easy-fix solution pushed by employers, which focuses on attracting migrant workers to Europe, without ensuring their equal treatment on the labour market. In industriAll Europe, we call for long-term solutions based on industrial policy, active labour market policies, education and training, and collective bargaining.

The European labour market has been affected by skills shortages already in the past decades, with trade unions' calls for solutions often falling on policymakers' deaf ears. What Europe is currently experiencing is a result of inadequate policies that fail to address the root causes of the shortages, namely the lack of quality jobs and a guaranteed 'right to training' for workers.



Intra-EU mobility is already causing a massive brain drain in Eastern and Southern Europe and would widen the already big gap between Member States. The freedom of mobility must also be accompanied by a 'freedom to stay', hereby fulfilling the European promise of cohesion and upward convergence. A similar logic also applies in the case of third-country migration, with serious risks of amplifying the brain drain in the Global South, in addition to the insufficient protection that migrant workers have on the European labour market. Trade unions insist that where labour migration is used, it must be accompanied by clear rules to protect migrant workers from exploitation and ensure equal pay for equal work.

In our most recent position paper on the topic, industriAll Europe provides a deep analysis of the issue. We call for wage increases and improved working conditions to address the shortages, as well as a 'right to training' for workers to ensure re-skilling and up-skilling in view of the twin green and digital transition. The twin transformation is the actual 'elephant in the room': on the one hand, the skills shortages risk being the 'Achille's heel' of the transition, putting its success at risk. While, on the other hand, the twin transition will only exacerbate the skills shortage crisis.

The European Year of Skills comes at the right moment, as we are at a turning point in view of the urgency to deliver the twin green and digital transition. Ahead of this summer's European elections, the European Commission must find the political will to go beyond "easy fixes", and make proposals that could really make a difference to improving working conditions and ensuring workers' access to training to bridge the skills gap. Now is the time to make real steps towards implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), with its first principle of a right to training, and getting closer to achieving the target of the EPSR Action Plan of at least 60% of all adults to participate in training every year by 2030.

**This Conference aims to empower trade unions and share best practices to ensure re-skilling and up-skilling, thereby preserving employability in view of the transition. Moreover, we aim to bring together trade union representatives, policymakers, and experts to assess the reality of training on the ground in companies across Europe and to discuss solutions to address the skills shortages.**

## WHEN AND WHERE?

'Making training a reality for quality jobs in European industries' will take place over the course of one and a half days, on 12 – 13 March 2024 in Zagreb, Croatia (Hotel Dubrovnik).

Participants will have the opportunity to exchange on the reality of training in companies within a diverse workshop, comprising: **two panel discussions, a working group and a break-out session, as well as an inspirational talk and an interactive plenary session.** Together, we will debate about the best trade union strategies to ensure a 'right to training' for workers and develop tools for trade unionists to push for the implementation of this right at all the relevant levels.

## HOW?

Two panels to assess the reality of training taking place in companies, as well as how good quality jobs and a 'right to training' can foster European cohesion and deliver a Just Transition and fair digitalisation

### FIRST PANEL

#### More cohesion in Europe by promoting good quality jobs and a 'right to training'

A quick look at recent reports by Eurofound, the OECD, the IMF, CEDEFOP and the European Commission highlight that the main reasons why record numbers of job vacancies currently remain unfilled are the poor quality and unattractiveness of jobs. CEDEFOP goes as far as to say that all sectors with bad pay and working conditions have an issue with shortages, with 70% of companies reporting skills shortages but failing to connect them to the lack of training on the job and a lack of incentives to attract and retain workers. This is confirmed by a recent ETUI study on job vacancy rates and wages in 22 EU countries, which shows that industries with the worst labour shortages pay 9% less on average than sectors where it's easier to recruit.

Opting for labour migration as a solution, as employers' preferred 'easy-fix', instead of investing in quality employment and training across the EU, will only increase the growing gap between EU countries. Eurofound's survey shows that employers have the most difficulty to retain workers in the industrial sectors in Romania, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia. These are countries with particularly high numbers of intra-EU mobility. Meanwhile, the least difficulties are reported in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg and Ireland. Furthermore, similar profiles are reported missing across countries with mixed skills levels (plant machine operators, STEM professionals, etc.), making migration an unsustainable solution. Furthermore, opting for labour migration without guaranteeing equal treatment of all workers risks amplifying social dumping and even exploitation.

This panel brings together policymakers, experts and trade union representatives to discuss how skills shortages are currently tackled in Europe. We will have the opportunity to learn more about the reality on the ground in Hungary and Croatia, and from CEDEFOP's recent research. Moreover, the European Commission's representative will explain the plans to tackle these complex issues in the ongoing European Year of Skills.



## LAST PANEL

### A 'right to training' for a Just Transition and fair digital transformation: What to be expected from the European level?

The figures speak for themselves: the European Battery Alliance says 800,000 workers need to be re-up-skilled across the value chain to reach the EU's ambitions on batteries. A study by the Boston Consulting Group for the European Electromobility Platform estimates that 2.4 million automotive workers will need to be retrained by 2030. Last, but not least, we need to mention the 25 million manufacturing, mining and energy workers in Europe who will need retraining or up-skilling to meet the challenges of the green and digital transitions in the next decade, as jobs change, some are lost, and others are created.

These figures should make it clear that it's impossible to meet the skills shortages by betting most of our cards on labour migration. Public policies, strong social dialogue and collective bargaining can tackle the problem. Europe needs social conditionalities on public funding and on tax incentives, like in the US Inflation Reduction Act, which foresees training obligations, compliance with collective agreements, and the creation of apprenticeships for companies receiving public support.

In addition, we see that in countries where the social partners work together in good faith, like in Sweden, landmark collective agreements are turned into law to ensure that both public and private actors work together with the social partners to meet the skills needs. In the Netherlands, the social partners in the metal sectors have also recently joined forces to tackle the skills shortages. We need more examples like these.

During this insightful panel, participants will have the opportunity to engage with the speakers from the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Parliament. We will discuss how to make a 'right to training' a reality in all companies across Europe to deliver the twin transition, and what European policymakers could do to make this a reality in the upcoming mandate.

#### HOW?

A working group and a break-out session, as well as an inspirational talk and an interactive plenary session

### I. WORKING GROUP TO DEEPEN OUR EXCHANGE (SESSION 2)

Participants are invited to take part in one of three working groups which aim to deepen the exchange between members from different countries. These will take place after the first panel. The working groups will provide the participants with an adequate forum to reflect on the input from the panel discussion and share their national reality. The discussions will focus on the reality on the ground and the challenges of implementing a 'right to training' and ensuring quality jobs.

Interested participants are invited to find their names on the list of each group. The moderators will present the guiding questions for the group work and report back to the plenary afterwards.

## **II. BREAK-OUT SESSION TO EXPLORE THE DETAILS OF GOOD EXAMPLES (SESSION 3)**

The participants can choose to engage in one of the two break-out sessions during which they can learn more about two different approaches to ensure workers' access to training to enhance their employability in view of the twin transition.

The first break-out session will provide a deep dive into the good example of the German sectoral collective agreement in the metal sector (the "Future Agreement"). This agreement provides a framework at sectoral level that ensures workers' 'right to training' and which can be tailor-made at the company level to foresee the necessary re-skilling and up-skilling of workers depending on the effects of the twin transition on each company. This good example will be complemented by the one in Sweden, where two landmark collective agreements have been turned into law to ensure that skills needs are met. The Swedish case is revolutionary, as it provides access to long-term education and training with a very high level of compensation.

The second break-out session will showcase how public authorities can play a role in enabling training. The example of FOREM in Belgium clearly illustrates how public authorities can contribute to ensure training and match needs with the supply of skills. This will be complemented by the example of the Regional Observatory in Asturias, Spain, whose representatives will explain how this contributes to ensuring workers' access to training in view of reaching a Just Transition in one of Europe's regions most affected by the green transition.

## **III. INSPIRATIONAL TALK TO EXPLORE NEW APPROACHES: 4-DAY WEEK IN LAMBORGHINI**

In December 2023, Lamborghini and FIOM-CGIL and FIM-CISL signed a revolutionary company agreement for 2023-2026, which provides for alternation between five and four-day weeks for production workers, without pay cuts. Participants will have the opportunity to learn more about the agreement and the struggle to successfully reach a 4-day week.

This best-case from Italy is a good example following up on industriAll Europe's series on working time trends. Working less is likely to be part of the answer to work intensification as a result of new technology. It is also essential to solve the skills gaps that plague industries where green and digital change is happening fastest. Time off can be time to train. It can also be an incentive to attract skilled, young people into industries that struggle to compete for workers with digital skills. When done right, working time reduction can therefore be a win-win for workers and companies: a better work-life balance for the former, and a more skilled and productive workforce for the latter.

## **IV. INTERACTIVE PLENARY SESSION TO MAP INITIATIVES ACROSS EUROPE (SESSION 4)**

This interactive session aims to map the reality of training on the ground in companies across Europe. Guided by our inspiring moderator, participants will have the opportunity to share what is actually happening in their sectors in terms of training. We know that, unfortunately, most of the training taking place in companies is the compulsory health and safety module. However, training which aims to develop workers' competences is often very limited or lacking completely. Together, we will explore good and bad examples of training to ensure employability in view of the twin transition of our industrial sectors across Europe. Participants will receive a set of guiding questions in order to prepare for this session.

## DRAFT PROGRAMME

### Workshop on training for a Just Transition

## DAY ONE 12 MARCH 2024, 09:00 – 17:00

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09:00 Registration

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09:30 **Welcome by Isabelle Barthès**, Deputy General Secretary of industriAll Europe

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09:40 **SESSION 1**  
**More cohesion in Europe by promoting good quality jobs and a 'right to training'**

**Panel discussion moderated by Isabelle Barthès**, Deputy General Secretary of industriAll Europe

- Kristīne Krivmane, Team Leader - European Year of Skills, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
- Giovanni Russo, expert from CEDEFOP
- Sunčica Brnardić, Executive Secretary for Labour and Social Law, Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia
- Balázs Bábel, Vice-president of the Hungarian Metalworkers Federation (VASAS)

**Q&A session**

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11:20 Coffee Break

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11:30 **SESSION 2**  
**Working group session: Exploring the reality in European industrial sectors**

- I. Working group
- II. Working group
- III. Working group

12:30 **Report back to the plenary**

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13:00 Lunch Break

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14:00

**SESSION 3**

**Making training a reality: A role for the trade unions**

**Break-out sessions: Innovative practices on training to tackle the twin transition**

**Introduction by Patricia Velicu, Head of Collective Bargaining and Social Policy & two simultaneous break-out sessions for participants to choose from:**

**I. Break-out session: Best-cases of sectoral agreements on training from Germany ('Future' Agreement) and Sweden (Agreements turned into law)**

- Nick Woischneck, Political Secretary, IG Metall district management, NRW ATLAS Automotive Transformation Platform
- Eva Franzén Marong, Trade Union Officer, Unionen

**II. Break-out session: How public authorities can play a role in enabling training, the experience from Belgium (FOREM, Wallonia), and the role of regional observatories, the experience from Asturias**

- Isabelle Michel, Employment, Training and Classification Advisor, Metalworkers Studies Department (MWB-FGTB)
- Sébastien Lemaître, Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment (FOREM)
- Maria Belarmina Diaz Aguado, Director of Energy, Mines and Reactivation, Government of the Principality of Asturias
- Carlos Garcia Sanchez, Director of the Asturian's Energy Foundation (FAEN)

15:10

**Report back to the plenary & Q&A**

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15:30

Coffee Break

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16:00

**INSPIRATIONAL TALK**

**Working time reduction to enable training to deliver the twin transition?**

**The 4-day week agreement in Lamborghini, Italy**

- Mario Garagnani, FIOM, Head of Delegation during negotiations of the agreement
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16:45

**Concluding remarks**

End of day 1

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19:30

Joint dinner

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## DAY TWO 13 MARCH 2024, 9:00 – 12:45

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09:00

### SESSION 4

**Mapping the reality of training to ensure employability in view of the twin transition of industrial sectors across Europe**

Followed by an interactive session moderated by Jeff Bridgford aiming to map training initiatives in our industries in Europe

Participants are expected to provide a short input about the reality of training in their sectors by replying to the questions received in advance.

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10:30

Coffee break

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11:00

### SESSION 5

**A 'right to training' for a Just Transition and fair digital transformation: What to be expected from the European level?**

Debate moderated by Patricia Velicu between:

- Ben Lennon, Advisor ETUC
  - João Albuquerque, MEP Portugal
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12:00

**Next steps: Deciding on an action**

Moderated by Jeff Bridgford, Trade Unions Expert

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12:30

**Concluding remarks**

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12:45

**End of workshops**



[www.industriall-europe.eu](http://www.industriall-europe.eu)

[info@industriAll-europe.eu](mailto:info@industriAll-europe.eu)

Tel: +32 2 226.00.50

 **industriAll**  
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION