

European Year of Skills

Report on the Skills CoP launch

2023

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EURASHE Skills Communities of Practice (Skills CoP)¹

The EURASHE Skills Community of Practice (Skills CoP) integrates the trio of EURASHE communities which consists of informal peer learning for exchanging good practices and contributing to capacity-building. The CoP launched in February 2023 gathers staff in HEIs as well as professionals from various stakeholders, from interested to expert level, and intends to be a learning and exchanging space for new synergies and contributing to shaping the next developments within the skills' scope in Europe from the PHE perspective.

Being 2023 the European Year of Skills, the relevance of this CoP is key for reflecting on and supporting the upskilling and reskilling in Europe. Education institutions, associations and policymakers are joining and working towards investment in skills fit for the current and future demands of the societal green and digital transitions, pursuing the principle of ensuring the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning (EPSR2).

The Skills Community of Practice is an initiative for institutions and professionals to exchange ideas, knowledge, and best practices in the field of skills development. It aims to support the integration of skills-based approaches into higher education curricula and to foster collaboration between education and industry.

The Skills CoP is currently co-lead by Mondragon University, Basque Country, Spain and the Future Skills Think Tank NextEducation from Baden-Wurttemberg Cooperative State University, Germany. EURASHE is responsible for managing the CoP and owns the Intellectual Property of the Publications.

¹ See the dedicated website page at <https://www.eurashe.eu/skills-cop/>

² European Pillar of Social Rights - Chapter I, 1st principle: "Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market."

Launch event in Bilbao³

The Skills CoP hosted its first-ever event on 1 February 2023 hosted by the Bilbao Berrikuntza Faktoria, Mondragon University, Bilbao, Spain.

The launch event was attended by representatives from various higher education institutions across Europe, as well as industry experts and government officials. The participants had the opportunity to hear from keynote speakers, engage in interactive workshops, and network with peers.

The event started with setting the scene, underlining the objectives, scope and purpose of the EURASHE Skills CoP from EURASHE and the co-leaders.



The Skills Community of Practice is a significant step forward in promoting the integration of skills into higher education.

Armando Pires, President of EURASHE

This session was informative and introductory to the activities of this community bringing together a wide range of experts and entities in the field of education and training.

The keynote speech was delivered by Margherita Bacigalupo⁴, which presented the Partnerships for Regional Innovation that consist of a new strategic approach to innovation-driven territorial transformation, based on the experience of Smart Specialisation, linking EU priorities with national plans and place-based opportunities and challenges, to mobilise innovation funds beyond the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), to mobilise other policies beyond innovation funding to accelerate the green transition, and to better connect

³ See the dedicated website page at https://www.eurashe.eu/events/skills_cop/

⁴ Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission

regional, national and all EU policy efforts to reach local goals, adding clear directionality. Such partnerships serve to:

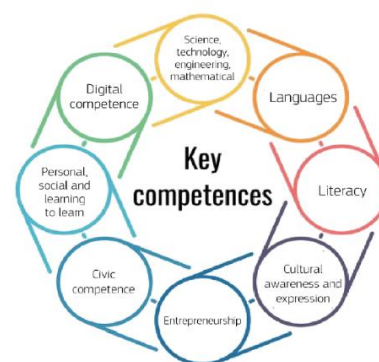
- Identifying local challenges and setting place-based directionalities for sustainability;
- Catalyse EU and local efforts & enhance coordination of regional, national and EU innovation policies;
- Building on S3 and anchored in the EU policy framework, to accelerate the twin transitions mobilising all available instruments;
- Address fragmentation;
- Funding and policies in territories;
- Development, transfer, and use of knowledge.

Furthermore, Bacigalupo guided participants through the Competences frameworks that have been developed by the JRC:

1. [GreenComp: The European sustainability competence framework](#)
2. [DigComp: The Digital Competence Framework for citizens](#)
3. [EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework](#)
4. [LifeComp: The European framework for the personal, social and learning to learn key competence](#)

The key competence constellations serve for:

- Personal fulfilment and development
- Employability, social inclusion, active citizenship
- Sustainable and Health-conscious lifestyle
- Thriving life in peaceful societies



<https://figuresinthesky.visualcinnamon.com/> Commission

And, as a major role, in developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship. Bacigalupo highlighted the particularity of the competences: they cannot be taught but developed.

A panel on skills moderated by EURASHE gathered experts in the field⁵. From the side of the Deputy Minister for Universities and Research of the Basque Country, we heard about the Basque Country as an international paradigm of a stable region well-equipped for transitions to an innovative economy, focussed on emerging knowledge activities. In this context, the keyword is a collaboration with the regional ecosystem for enabling the skills development for green and digital transitions. There is a tradition in the Basque country for establishing collaboration between public administration and companies, for instance, which is crucial to ensure that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) effectively absorb the needs of the industry and students

⁵ Adolfo Morais, Deputy Minister for Universities and Research, Basque government; Iñigo Larrea, Talent Manager at Mondragon Corporation; Ulf-Daniel Ehlers, Professor for Education Management and Lifelong Learning at Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University (DBHW); Margherita Bacigalupo, Joint Research Centre, European Commission.

develop suitable skills in a long team for adapting to the labour market. The HEIs must advance certain frameworks as a 2030 agenda, for innovation in education, and quality in research covering the transversal dimension of business collaboration.

Likewise, we learned from the Mondragon Corporation about the relevance of learning ecosystems in lifelong learning context towards the following transitions: R&D, IT OT (IT OT – From support to business transformation), digital manufacturing and smart administration and finance regarding how the corporation can source the human capital needed to keep it competitive and adapt to rapid economic changes, illustrated by several examples. It is crucial to invest in learning, not only in education but in companies, as well, and funding plays an essential role in guaranteeing sustainability.

We heard from the dual-education example (Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW)⁶ on the role of Applied HE in society and in skills development due to the strong relation with the labour market fostering collaboration. DHBW is looking at the “future skills revolution” from a practical perspective, and how to prepare students to be independent in the real world of work. Coaching and mentoring programmes become more relevant in this context. It highlighted two core aspects of Applied HE: flexibility and collaboration. It also pointed out the relevance of skills for bringing sustainability, democracy, and civic participation.

The European Commission has acknowledged that smart specialisation strategies need to be implemented through investments in skills and not just research or support for innovation in firms. We learned from the JRC that, in the 2021-2027 programming period, the Smart Specialisation is expected to continue playing a central role in regional development. The first objective is to differentiate between R&I and skills (for smart specialisation, industrial transitions and entrepreneurship). Collaborations and partnerships, including in the context of HE for smart specialisation are enablers of transformation to take place.



⁶ <https://www.dhbw.de/startseite>



Following this panel, participants were guided on a visit to the Mondragon University Campus – AS Fabrik⁷, a project to improve the competitiveness of companies and consolidate Zorrotzaurre as a reference ecosystem in advanced services and industry 4.0.

During the afternoon, and back to the Bilbao Berrikuntza Faktoria, a series of three workshops took place and gathered several presentations on the respective topics and discussions in small groups. The first workshop named “Skills demand: What skills do we need?” there was stressed the need to guide the development of skills rather than focusing on teaching and bringing innovation to the teaching and learning processes. In this context, self-assessment criteria could play a relevant role. Another aspect that was underlined in this context was the relevance of feedback for revising learning outcomes by mentors to assess skills like transversal skills at the end of an internship. The development of industry-driven projects, work-based learning and collaboration with the labour market and HE are other aspects highlighted for fostering skills and meeting the skills demand.

At the second workshop on “Challenges of the skills supply”, participants underlined the bureaucracy linked to changing the curricula, the lack of teachers and trainers' specific competences and the need to upskill and reskill those professionals, as well as the lack of financial resources to sustain the relations between education and industry. It is crucial to focus on the skills demand in addition to the skills supply, as “many students applying to university and college courses are not motivated primarily by productivity, innovation and prosperity at the point when they apply for study and supply-side approaches do not shape demand and absorptive capacity for skills”⁸.

In workshop 3 “Cooperation regional skills ecosystem: What do we need to do to create an ecosystem?” the main enablers for building such ecosystems are multi-stakeholder collaboration, adequate funding, to identify skills gaps and needs of the region with the stakeholders involved, attractive curriculums, skilled education and trainers, and foster

⁷ <https://www.mondragon.edu/en/where-are-we/bilbao-asfabrik>

⁸ <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/cityredi/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/12/How-can-universities-colleges-and-employers-deliver-the-skills-for-local-productivity-innovation-and-prosperity-v2.pdf>

initiatives like the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), while creating a relation based on trust, as “productive, innovative and prosperous places are built on successful ‘skills ecosystems’”⁹.

A pleasant cocktail reception closed the event which allowed participants to continue their exchanges on the topic, as well as to network and find further partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.

The launch event brought together education professionals, industry leaders, and stakeholders to explore the importance of skills development in higher education. EURASHE is committed to supporting the development of skills-based approaches in higher education¹⁰ and will continue working towards successful events like the launch event in Bilbao, making the EURASHE Skills CoP alive and fruitful for the wider community.

⁹ <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/cityredi/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/12/How-can-universities-colleges-and-employers-deliver-the-skills-for-local-productivity-innovation-and-prosperity-v2.pdf>

¹⁰ See our Eurashe Statement on The European Year of Skills available at <https://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/statement-european-year-skills.pdf>

