

Inclusive REskilling and upSkilling Toward competitive Agrifood and veterinary sector: European agenda Strategy

D3.2 Report on the Pact for Skills initiatives	
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1. Task description

This deliverable 3.2, "Report on the Pact for Skills initiatives," is part of **Task 3.1, "State of the Art and the Pact for Skills"** (M1-M9). The task involves collecting information about the state of the art from all partners of the I-RESTART project. Partners contributed with information related to their domain of expertise, including curricula, best practices, relevant projects at European, national, and regional levels, and policies and initiatives.

UNITO implemented the FIELDS project database, which serves as a repository for storing relevant information and highlighting the contributions of the I-RESTART project.

Partners provided detailed insights from their specialisation, covering the topics of digitalisation, sustainability, business/entrepreneurship, soft skills, one health and sector-specific trends. Information focused on the following activity sectors: animal production, food industry and veterinary activities. Additionally, partners spearhead the search for existing frameworks, action plans, materials, and studies to establish connections with the project.

2. Summary

The report, presented as Deliverable 3.2, discusses various EU initiatives and frameworks related to skills development. It begins with an overview of the European Skills Agenda, a five-year plan to enhance skills quality and relevance, bridge the skills gap, and create a supportive ecosystem for skill development. The document also introduces the European Year of Skills, which addresses skills gaps within the EU and promotes digital and green technology skills through reskilling initiatives. Furthermore, the Pact for Skills is highlighted as a shared engagement model that fosters collaboration between public and private entities to address skills needs and promote lifelong learning.

The report explores the Agri-Food Pact for Skills Partnership, which addresses skills challenges in the agri-food ecosystem and highlights the relevance of the I-RESTART project in supporting the Pact for Skills. Lastly, the text reports on the Food Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) initiative by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the European educational frameworks, and tools contributing to skills development and recognition in Europe.

3. EU initiatives to support skills development

3.1. European Skills Agenda

The [European Skills Agenda](#) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience ensures people develop the skills necessary for green and digital transitions. It focuses on upskilling and reskilling workers across various sectors, including agriculture and food production.

In an era of rapid technological advancements, changing work patterns, and global competition, the European Union (EU) recognised the critical role of skills development in fostering economic growth, social inclusion, and innovation. To address the evolving needs of individuals and businesses, the EU introduced the European Skills Agenda, a comprehensive five-year plan aimed at empowering individuals, upskilling the workforce, and improving the competitiveness of European businesses.

The Agenda's main objectives are:

- enhance the quality and relevance of skills by fostering a culture of **lifelong learning**, promoting continuous upskilling and reskilling, and ensuring that education and training systems are responsive to labour market demands.
- recognise the importance of **reliable data** and **insights** on skills needs and trends. Policymakers, businesses, and individuals can make informed decisions regarding training, education, and employment by developing comprehensive skills intelligence systems.

- **bridge the gap** between supply and demand for skills by anticipating future skills needs and fostering effective matchmaking between job seekers and employers.
- seek to create a supportive ecosystem that facilitates skill development and utilisation by **fostering collaboration** between governments, education providers, social partners, and businesses.

The European Skills Agenda comprises **12 strategic actions** to drive the implementation of the agenda's objectives. These actions collectively drive the development of more and better skills to meet the evolving needs of individuals and businesses in Europe. These actions include:

A call to **join forces** in collective action:

1. A Pact for Skills

Actions to ensure that people have the **right skills** for jobs:

2. Strengthening skills and intelligence
3. EU support for strategic national upskilling action
4. Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and Training (VET)
5. Rolling out the European Universities Initiative and upskilling scientists
6. Skills to support the twin transitions
7. Increasing STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and transversal skills
8. Skills for life

Tools and initiatives to support people in their **lifelong learning** pathways:

9. Initiative on individual learning accounts
10. European approach to micro-credentials
11. New Europass platform

A framework to unlock **investments** in skills:

12. Improving the enabling framework to unlock Member States' and private investments in skills

3.2. European Year of Skills

The [European Year of Skills](#) aims to tackle skills gaps within the European Union and enhance the EU's skills strategy, specifically focusing on developing digital and green technology skills through reskilling initiatives. This comprehensive effort entails assisting individuals acquire the appropriate skills for high-quality employment while supporting small and medium enterprises. The aim of showcasing national efforts, existing and new EU initiatives, and potential EU funding opportunities is to advance skills across Europe. In addition, the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, such as the Commission, the European Parliament, Member States, social partners, employment services, educational institutions, workers, and businesses, will promote skills development. The initiative started on May 9th, 2023, and will run for one year, during which numerous actions and projects will be launched and promoted.

The main objectives include:

- encouraging **investments** in training and upskilling to enable individuals to retain their current jobs or find new ones;
- ensuring that skills align with employers' requirements through close **collaboration** with social partners and companies;
- **matching people's aspirations and skill sets** with job market opportunities, particularly regarding the green and digital transitions and economic recovery;
- **Attracting skills and talent from third countries** by strengthening learning opportunities and mobility and facilitating the recognition of qualifications.

3.3. Pact for Skills

The [Pact for Skills](#), launched by the European Commission, emerges to **address the rapidly changing global landscape** at a time when technological advancements, demographic shifts, and evolving labour market demands are reshaping the skills required in the workforce, resulting in a need for continuous upskilling and reskilling.

The European Commission has taken a proactive stance, realising that a **collaborative effort is essential** to navigating the challenges and opportunities of the future, aligning efforts, promoting lifelong learning, and addressing the skills gap effectively. Partnerships between public and private entities, including educational institutions, businesses, and social partners, are encouraged to leverage resources, expertise, and networks. These partnerships **foster innovation, facilitate knowledge exchange**, and create a holistic ecosystem for skills development.

The Pact for Skills aims to **identify current and emerging skills needs** in different sectors and regions through in-depth research and analysis. This enables the formulation of targeted policies and initiatives to bridge the gap between supply and demand.

At the same time, the Pact emphasises the importance of providing accessible and high-quality upskilling and reskilling opportunities for individuals at all stages of their careers. This involves developing flexible training programs, recognising prior learning, and promoting digital and soft skills.

The European Commission, in collaboration with national and regional authorities, **mobilises funding** to support the development and implementation of skills-related projects, programs, and infrastructure. Additionally, private investments and innovative funding models are explored to maximise the impact and sustainability of the Pact.

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework is implemented to ensure accountability and assess the impact of the Pact for Skills. Key performance indicators, targets, and milestones are defined to track progress and identify areas of improvement. In addition, regular reporting mechanisms and stakeholder feedback channels contribute to the iterative development of the Pact, ensuring its responsiveness to evolving skills needs.

Its shared engagement model offers a promising avenue to **strengthen the European Union's competitiveness and resilience**.

3.3.1. Pact for Skills for the Agri-Food Ecosystem

Within the Pact for Skills context, a dedicated initiative has been launched to address the specific skills challenges and opportunities in the agri-food ecosystem.

The European Union initiated in February 2022 the [Agri-Food Pact for Skills Partnership](#), led by the European Commission, specifically **DG GROW, DG EMPL, and DG AGRI**, with the coordination of two organisations, [Copa-Cogeca](#) representing the agriculture sector and [FoodDrinkEurope](#) representing the food industry.

The agri-food sector is a central part of European culture and tradition and is vital for the development of Europe, comprising a vast network of farmers, agri-food cooperatives, food processing companies, and SMEs. However, the sector faces numerous challenges, including globalisation, climate change, urbanisation, shifting consumer demands, generational renewal, and international competition.

The Agri-Food Pact for Skills Partnership seeks to address these challenges through collaborative efforts and skills development. The partnership's success hinges upon the **active involvement of various stakeholders** within the agri-food ecosystem, including farmers, agricultural organisations, food processors, relevant associations, education institutions, and training centres. The Pact also involves EU projects in education and training, such as [I-RESTART](#) and [FIELDS](#). At the same time, worker associations, represented by the sectoral trade union platform [EFFAT](#), contribute to the social dialogue within the partnership to facilitate the development and implementation of the strategy at all levels.

By fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing, the Pact enables stakeholders to **collectively address skills gaps**, develop innovative training programs, and ensure the sector's competitiveness and sustainability.

Several objectives drive the Agri-Food Pact for Skills Partnership, all aimed at promoting skills development and enhancing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector. These objectives include:

- **Upskilling and reskilling** - Developing actions to address the skills gap within the agri-food ecosystem by providing targeted upskilling and reskilling opportunities. This involves collaboration between education and training organisations, business operators, and business support organisations.
- **Social Dialogue and Partnerships** - Encouraging social partners to establish new partnerships, dialogue, agreements, or targeted actions to address skills challenges. This fosters cooperation and collaboration between employers, employer associations, workers, trade unions, and education and training organisations.
- **Mobilising students and trainees** - Mobilising students and trainees across the European Union to participate in comprehensive and tailored training programs. This ensures that individuals entering the agri-food sector receive the necessary skills and knowledge to meet evolving industry needs.
- **Promotion of vocational education and training** - Highlighting the importance of vocational education and training (VET), including apprenticeships and lifelong learning opportunities within the agri-food sector. This raises awareness of the value of continuous learning and promotes career development within the industry.
- **Attractiveness of the agri-food ecosystem** - Enhancing the attractiveness of the agri-food ecosystem to attract young generations and experts. This involves effective communication campaigns highlighting the sector's potential, sustainable practices, and exciting job opportunities.
- **SME support** - Addressing the specific skill needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the agri-food sector. The partnership focuses on developing targeted initiatives and resources to assist SMEs in upskilling their workforce and improving their competitiveness.

The partnership will establish a monitoring framework with specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure progress and address challenges. These KPIs will enable measuring progress towards the goals and help identify and overcome the agri-food ecosystem's challenges. In addition, the framework will ensure that farms and food companies can adapt to changing labour market dynamics by embracing technological advancements, developing human resources, and enhancing the overall attractiveness of the sector to both existing and prospective workers.

3.3.2. I-RESTART relevance to the Pact for Skills for the Agri-Food Ecosystem

The I-RESTART project is highly relevant to the Pact for Skills of the Agri-Food Ecosystem and actively contributes to its implementation.

The **project feeds the Pact for Skills of the Agri-Food Ecosystem** by providing project outcomes, particularly curricula, scenarios, training materials, and strategy. In addition, surveys and feedback are constantly offered throughout the project to improve the quality of training and ensure its alignment with the needs identified in the Pact for Skills of the Agri-Food Ecosystem.

I-RESTART project aims to reskilling and upskilling the agri-food and veterinary sectors workforce by providing employee training opportunities, adopting an innovative methodology of micro-credentialing and work-based learning experiences, and offering inclusive, flexible, and engaging patterns of mentored work-based training.

The consortium collected comprehensive data from the animal production, veterinary, and food industry sectors. It focused explicitly on digitisation, sustainability, bioeconomy, business and entrepreneurship, soft skills, one-health, and emerging industry-specific trends. By integrating this data, I-RESTART aims to address these sectors' evolving needs, create professional profiles, and develop detailed curricula, European strategies, and country-specific roadmaps.

Project partners, particularly COPA-COGECA and FoodDrinkEurope, use project results to support specific commitments agreed upon in the Pact for Skills partnership and facilitate communication between EC services and I-RESTART project partners to maximise project outcomes.

Therefore, the I-RESTART project and the Pact for Skills are closely interconnected. The I-RESTART project leverages the insights and resources of the Pact for Skills, involves partners, develops training materials, and thus **contributes to the overall goals of the Pact**. This connection ensures a coordinated and practical approach to addressing the skills needs in the agribusiness sector and supporting its sustainable development.

4. EIT Food initiatives on Skills

The [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT) was established by the European Commission to **enhance innovation capacity in Europe**. Through the formation of Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), the EIT strives to foster innovation across Europe, resulting in economic growth, job creation, and effective solutions to significant societal issues.

KICs bring together businesses ranging from large corporations to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), startups, research centres, and higher education institutions. This collaborative environment fosters a culture of creative thinking and innovation, enabling the development of groundbreaking products and services in diverse fields. Additionally, KICs support the inception or acceleration of new companies and training a new generation of entrepreneurs.

[EIT Food](#), one of the nine Innovation Communities, focuses on revolutionising food production, distribution, and consumption while increasing its value to European society. It tackles major innovation challenges in partnership with trusted industry, education, and research collaborators while actively engaging and informing citizens.

EIT Food is fully committed to delivering on the objectives and priorities outlined in its [Strategic Agenda](#). Its approach is to build multi-actor responses to complex challenges, promoting trans-disciplinary solutions and involving diverse actors and beneficiaries.

One of the six EIT Food strategic objectives is to educate, **engage, innovate, and advance** to attract, develop and empower the brightest minds in agribusiness and lead the transformation of a more sustainable food system.

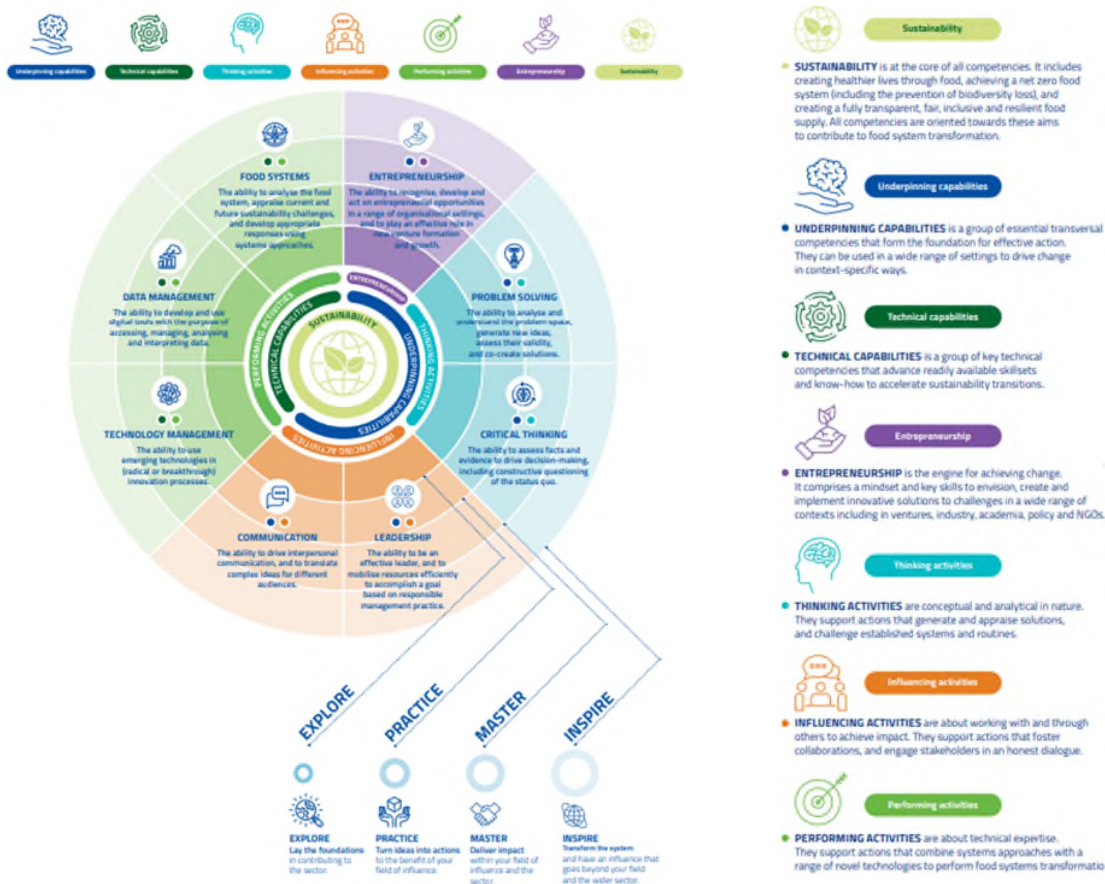
It also embraces a citizen dimension to involve them in shaping the transformation of the food sector and creating a healthier community. The education area of EIT Food is also catalysing entrepreneurship and food innovation by promoting educational offerings that embrace the skills and competencies depicted in the EIT Food competency framework. All the education programmes developed under the Education area of EIT Food incorporate the skills of the framework (Figure 1 - EIT Food Competency Framework) at different levels with different combinations.

The EIT Food Competency Framework identified **eight core competencies** necessary to drive the transformation of the food systems:

1. **Entrepreneurship:** the ability to recognise, develop and act on entrepreneurial opportunities in various organisational settings and to play an effective role in new venture formation and growth.
2. **Communication:** the ability to drive interpersonal communication and translate complex ideas for different audiences.
3. **Problem-Solving:** the ability to analyse and understand the problem space, generate new ideas, assess their validity and co-create solutions.
4. **Technology Management:** the ability to use emerging technologies in (radical or breakthrough) innovation processes.
5. **Critical Thinking:** the ability to assess facts and evidence to drive decision-making, including constructive questioning of the status quo
6. **Data Management:** the ability to develop and use digital tools to access, manage, analyse and interpret data.
7. **Leadership:** the ability to be an effective leader and to mobilise resources efficiently to accomplish a goal based on responsible management practice
8. **Food Systems:** the ability to analyse the food system, appraise current and future sustainability challenges, and develop appropriate responses using systems approaches.

The eight competencies are divided into technical capabilities with three performing activities and underpinning capabilities with five transversal competencies. The educational programmes of EIT Food contemplate the Competency Framework incorporating the different competencies.

Competency Framework



EIT Food Education programmes span different educational and career stages to prepare the food systems' future workforce. The educational programmes address all or in part the EIT-Food competency framework at different levels: Explore, Practice, Master and Inspire. The training ranges from short-term courses, summer schools, online learning, PhD programmes, and degree-awarding Master's programmes to certified professional education.

- **Courses for students:** Programmes are designed to bring students, industry experts and entrepreneurs together to co-create new solutions for the Food System, tackle societal challenges and create a real impact on our future. The programmes run for different periods; choosing between those that last a few weeks, several months, or over a year is possible.
- **Courses for consumers:** The online courses are open to everyone interested in learning more about the food system without any prerequisite knowledge or experience. All our courses are free to join. Certificates of completion and permanent access to course content are possible via the purchase of an optional upgrade.
- **Courses for professionals:** Programmes are designed to help professionals navigate their career steps in the Food System. The professional programmes are designed and delivered by higher education institutions, industry experts and established entrepreneurs internationally renowned for their expertise in Food Systems-related topics or business management.
- **Courses for organisations:** Programmes are designed to nurture a highly qualified, innovative, entrepreneurial food systems workforce. The courses empower companies as leading innovators in the Food Systems industry and help grow the business towards a more sustainable future.

EIT Food Education with the [Learning Service platform](#) helps learners or organisations choose the course that best fits their career prospects and skills acquisition. The EIT Food competency framework, with role profiling

and skills intelligence, allows to set up courses or to couple courses from external providers that have embraced the specification of quality insurance and accreditation system of EIT Food.

5. European educational initiatives and framework

The following section comprehensively explores key educational concepts, initiatives and frameworks that play a central role in shaping the education and training landscape within the scope of I-RESTART activities.

5.1. Concepts

- **[Vocational Education and Training](#)** (VET) provides learners with essential skills that enhance their employability, support their personal development, and encourage active citizenship. VET boosts enterprise performance, competitiveness, research and innovation.
VET systems in Europe rely on a well-developed network of VET stakeholders. These networks are governed by the involvement of social partners, such as employers and trade unions, and in different bodies, for example, chambers, committees and councils. A [Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#) defines key principles for ensuring that vocational education and training is agile, adapts swiftly to labour market needs and provides quality learning opportunities for all age groups. To promote these reforms, the Commission supports [Centres of Vocational Excellence \(CoVEs\)](#), bringing local partners together to develop the skills ecosystems, contributing to regional, economic and social development, innovation, and smart specialisation strategies.
- A **[micro-credential](#)** is a record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning (EU, 2022). A micro-credential serves as tangible evidence of a learner's accomplishments after completing a brief learning experience. These achievements are rigorously evaluated against clear and transparent standards. Micro-credentials present a flexible and focused approach to empowering individuals in their personal and professional growth by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies.
Unlike conventional qualifications, micro-credentials offer shorter and more agile learning opportunities. The growing demand for adaptable, learner-centred education and training fuels their rapid proliferation across Europe and the globe. Both public and private providers are now offering these opportunities to cater to the diverse needs of learners. Moreover, micro-credentials can extend educational and training benefits to a wider spectrum of individuals, including those from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds.

5.2. Initiatives

- The **[EU Skills Panorama](#)** is an online platform developed by the European Commission to provide up-to-date information and analysis on the supply and demand of skills in the European Union (EU) labour market. It aims to support policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders in making informed decisions regarding skills development, education, and training. The platform disseminates research findings and skill-related news via marketing campaigns and social media, reaching a larger public that must make educated decisions about education, training, and employment in EU countries. It covers various topics, including employment trends, skill shortages and surpluses, skill needs by industry and occupation, and the impact of technological and demographic changes on the labour market. The EU Skills Panorama is a valuable resource for understanding the EU's current and future skill requirements, promoting evidence-based policymaking, and supporting the development of a skilled and competitive workforce.
- **[Eurydice](#)** is a network established by the European Commission that provides information on European education systems and policies. It collects and analyses data on various aspects of education, including curricula, assessment methods, governance, funding, and mobility. The network produces reports, publications, and online resources to support policymakers, researchers, and education professionals in

understanding and comparing European education systems and practices. Eurydice aims to foster exchange and cooperation in education by promoting knowledge sharing and providing evidence-based information.

- **[Life Skills for Europe](#)** (LSE) is a project that intends to improve basic skills provision throughout Europe by explaining, expanding, and scaling up the life skills approach. The project's eventual beneficiaries are people from poor backgrounds, refugees, and people who are averse to 'foreigners' and intercultural dialogue. The project will yield various tangible results: a 'glossary' of 'life skills' based on an adult education organisation survey, desk research, and interviews to convey the multiple approaches and understandings of life skills across Europe; a collection of good practices from European life skills programs, as well as a study of the methods to help understand what works and how to make it work; a collection and analysis of techniques used in Europe to promote and improve life skills and intercultural understanding; a provisioning framework and transferable modules to develop an indicative framework for life skills provision, including modules on language, reading, and numeracy skills, as well as financial, digital, health, and civic capacities; an Awareness Raising and Strategy Toolkit that will include not only summaries of the lessons learned in O1 and O2 but also recommendations and proposals for life skills tactics at various levels.
- **[Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe](#)** (EPALE) is an online platform that supports the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and good practices in adult learning. It brings together professionals, educators, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in adult education. EPALE provides a space for collaboration, networking, and disseminating resources and information. The platform offers a range of content, including articles, news, events, discussion forums, and learning opportunities. EPALE contributes to the professional development of adult educators, fosters innovation, and promotes the impact of adult learning on individuals, communities, and societies in Europe.
- **[European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network](#)** (ELGPN) is a network that promotes cooperation and the exchange of information on lifelong guidance policies and practices across Europe. It brings together policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders in career guidance and lifelong learning. ELGPN supports developing and implementing effective guidance policies and systems to assist individuals in making informed choices about learning, work, and career development throughout their lives.
- **[Europass](#)** is an initiative to increase the transparency of qualification and mobility of citizens in Europe. It aims to make a person's skills and qualifications understood throughout Europe. The Europass portfolio includes the Europass CV, which allows individuals to showcase their personal information, education, work experience, and skills; the Europass Language Passport, which provides a self-assessment of language proficiency; the Europass Mobility Document, which records learning experiences abroad; the Europass Certificate Supplement, which includes additional information about vocational qualifications; and the Europass Diploma Supplement, which offers detailed information about higher education diplomas. Europass Profile and Europass cover Letter editor, are also included. Europass promotes transparency, mobility, and the recognition of qualifications within Europe.

5.3. Frameworks

- **[The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework](#)** (EntreComp) was published by the European Commission as a tool to establish entrepreneurship as a competence for life. It aims to be used for lifelong learning in education, communities, work, and enterprise. EntreComp is a framework of 15 entrepreneurship competencies classified into three areas: 1) Ideas and Opportunities, 2) Resources, and 3) Into action. These are further broken down into threads, representing 8 progression levels from beginner to expert. Moreover, the framework could also be applied according to the project or organisational goal: a) mobilise interest in entrepreneurship and inspire action; b) create value by adapting the framework to specific contexts, c) appraise and assess levels of entrepreneurship competence; implement entrepreneurial ideas and projects; d) recognise entrepreneurship skills.

- The [e-Competence Framework](#) (e-CF), published by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), is a key component of the European Union's digital skills development effort. The e-CF's common language can be used in practice across the European IT professional skills development ecosystem. This single reference can help IT organisations of all sizes, qualification providers of all types, and policymakers at the national and European levels work together to close the digital skills gap. The European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) references 41 competencies as necessary and used in an IT professional work context. It uses a shared vocabulary for competencies, skills, knowledge, and proficiency levels used and understood throughout Europe. The e-CF standard also includes transversal factors related to IT professional competencies.
- [Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training](#) (ET2020) is a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. It sets out key objectives and priority areas for improving European education systems' quality, relevance, and effectiveness. The framework promotes lifelong learning, inclusiveness, digital skills, and active citizenship. It focuses on early childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning, and modern education systems. ET2020 encourages member states to work together, exchange good practices, and implement common goals to enhance the quality and efficiency of education in Europe.
- [The European Qualifications Framework](#) (EQF) is a reference framework that helps communication and comparison between European qualification systems. Structured in 8 levels where 1 presents the lowest level of proficiency and 8 the highest, these reference levels are described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competencies. This allows any national qualifications systems - national qualifications frameworks (NQFs)- in Europe to relate to the EQF levels. Learners, graduates, providers and employers can use these levels to understand and compare qualifications awarded in different countries and by further education and training systems. This approach enables the comparison of all types and levels of qualifications, including qualifications from higher education, vocational education and training and general education, and qualifications awarded by the private sector and international organisations. The EQF works with other European and international instruments to support the recognition of qualifications:
 - The [Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018](#) on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad refers to the EQF as a way to foster transparency and build trust between national education and training systems.
 - Directive 2005/36/EC addresses the [recognition of professional qualifications in the EU](#), enabling professionals to move across borders and practise their occupation or provide services abroad.
 - [The Lisbon recognition convention](#) is an international agreement administered by UNESCO and the Council of Europe that allows for the recognition of academic qualifications in Europe and beyond.
 - The EQF is compatible with the [Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area](#) and its cycle descriptors. Education ministers of the intergovernmental [Bologna Process](#) agreed upon the framework in 2005.
- [National Qualifications Framework](#) (NQF) help to make qualifications easier to understand and compare. They can also encourage countries to rethink and reform national policy and practice on education, training and lifelong learning. NQFs classify qualifications by level based on learning outcomes - what the holder of a certificate or diploma is expected to know, understand, and be able to do. This classification reflects the content and profile of qualifications. Some member states already had their NQF; some did not. In the latter case, states were called by the EU to develop their own (like Italy). Member states were called to reference NQFs and EQF levels in both cases. For example, the French NQF has only five levels and is ordered the other way round compared to the EQF (level 1 is the highest, and level 5 is the lowest).
- [European Quality Assurance Reference Framework](#) (EQAVET) is a reference instrument aimed at helping EU countries promote and direct the continuous improvement of their vocational education and training (VET) systems from commonly agreed references. In addition to contributing to improving quality, its purpose is to

establish mutual trust between VET systems and facilitate the acceptance and recognition of the skills and competencies acquired in different countries and educational settings. The framework guides how to develop a quality assurance system. It contains examples of different approaches used by Member States grounded on the principle that quality assurance applies across all system levels and involves a collective responsibility to work with all relevant stakeholders to improve VET. This is particularly important when developing International training curricula, as it should match the quality standards defined by each country.

- **[The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System](#)** (ECTS) is a European Higher Education Area tool for making studies and courses more transparent. It helps students to move between countries and to have their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised. ECTS allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload.

ECTS enhances the flexibility of study programmes for students. It also supports the planning, delivery and evaluation of higher education programmes. It is a central tool in the Bologna Process, which aims to make national education systems more comparable internationally. ECTS also helps make other documents, such as the Diploma Supplement, clearer and easier to use in different countries.

ECTS has been adopted by most of the countries in the European Higher Education Area as the national credit system and is increasingly used elsewhere.

60 ECTS credits are the equivalent of a full year of study or work. These credits are usually divided into smaller modules in a standard academic year. A typical 'short cycle qualification' typically includes 90-120 ECTS credits. A 'first cycle' (bachelor's) degree comprises 180 or 240 ECTS credits.

Usually, a 'second cycle' (or master's) degree equates to 90 or 120 ECTS credits. The use of the ECTS at the 'third cycle', or PhD level, varies.

ECTS is applied to support student mobility between higher education institutions. The course catalogues, Learning Agreements and Transcripts of Records help the recognition and transfer of credits earned by students during a mobility period abroad. The ECTS Users' Guide describes the system and its use in greater detail.

- **[European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training](#)** (ECVET) primary purpose is to facilitate the transfer of learning credits from one qualification system to another, therefore linked to learners' mobility experience. It offers a framework for making learners more mobile and qualifications more portable, laying down principles and technical specifications and using existing national legislation and regulations. It applies to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF.

ECVET is a European system of accumulation and transfer of credits. It has been designed to recognise an individual's learning outcomes in a learning pathway to qualification. The system favours the documentation, validation and recognition of achieved learning outcomes acquired, particularly in the framework of transnational mobility, in both formal Vocational Education and Training (VET) and non-formal context. It is individual-focused and based on the learning outcomes approach, defined as the combined knowledge, skills and competencies that will lead to a qualification. This enables a more accurate design of training courses which answers to the training needs of employees. Some ECVET concepts and processes are already embedded in European qualification systems such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer Scheme).

ECVET has been set up to work with other European tools, more specifically the EQF and EQAVET, to achieve greater compatibility and, like this, facilitate the permeability and transferability between different VET systems in Europe and their qualifications being a critical tool for enhancing and assuring VET mobility. The four stages of EQAVET mentioned can be applied to specific learner experiences in mobility programmes and, more broadly, to ECVET partnerships.

- **[European Skills, Competences, qualifications and Occupations](#)** (ESCO) is the multilingual classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations relevant to the EU labour market and education and training. Born in 2017, it is still under development. The Commission developed ESCO as a complementary tool to the EQF.

In fact, on the one hand, Member States develop databases, assigning an NQF level to each qualification,

relating them to the EQF, and describing the expected learning outcomes. On the other hand, ESCO offers standardised terminology to make these learning outcome descriptions understandable and comparable across borders. One of ESCO's main missions is to build stronger bridges between the world of education and training and the world of work, reducing skill mismatches and supporting the better functioning of the labour market. The vision behind ESCO is to provide a common reference language that could support transparency, translation, comparison, identification and analysis of the content of a qualification, thus helping to indicate how those relate to the skills and occupations needed across occupations and sectors. ESCO Platform should be used as a guide when developing the occupational profiles and specific qualifications associated with these new or reviewed profiles. It is important to ensure regular communication with ESCO when proposing new occupational profiles, assuring these are based on evidence resulting from the analysis carried out by the relevant stakeholders.

6. Studies and reports



Organisations and research institutes in agriculture, the food industry, animal production, and veterinary activities have conducted various studies and reports. These studies often highlight these sectors' skills gaps, emerging trends, and training needs. Examples of relevant studies include those conducted by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the European Agricultural and Rural Convention (EURAC).

- [European Skills and Jobs Survey](#) (ESJS): The ESJS is conducted by Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. It provides insights into the skills challenges and training needs in various sectors, including agriculture, the food industry, and veterinary activities. The survey results can help identify skills gaps and inform the development of training programs.
- Skills for Green Jobs: The Cedefop publication "[The green employment and skills transformation](#)" focuses on the skills requirements and training needs related to the transition to a green economy. It examines the skills profiles in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-tourism sectors. This report can provide insights into the skills needed in sustainable agriculture and related fields.
- [Agricultural and Rural Convention](#) (ARC): ARC conducts studies and produces reports on various agriculture and rural development topics. These reports cover agricultural policies, rural entrepreneurship, and sustainable farming practices. They often provide recommendations for skills development and training to support the competitiveness and sustainability of the agricultural sector.

7. Conclusions

This report has presented an in-depth analysis of EU initiatives and frameworks related to skills development, specifically focusing on the Pact for Skills and its relevance to the Agri-Food Ecosystem. The European Skills Agenda, the European Year of Skills, and the Pact for Skills have been highlighted as key drivers for addressing skills gaps and fostering collaboration between public and private entities. The Agri-Food Pact for Skills Partnership, launched within the Pact for Skills context, aims to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the agri-food sector through collaborative skills development efforts. The I-RESTART project significantly contributes to this partnership by providing curricula, training materials, and strategies that align with the sector's evolving needs.

Moreover, the report has outlined the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's (EIT) Food initiatives, emphasising their commitment to driving innovation and sustainability within the food sector through multi-actor collaborations and skills development. The EIT Food Competency Framework, comprising eight core competencies, plays a crucial role in guiding education and training programs to shape future leaders and innovators.

Furthermore, European educational initiatives and frameworks have been introduced to provide a comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape that supports skills development. These initiatives encompass Vocational Education and Training (VET), micro-credentials, and various platforms for guidance and learning. Frameworks such as EntreComp, e-CF, EQF, and ESCO contribute to standardising and enhancing the recognition of skills across Europe.

This report is a roadmap for integrating skills development initiatives and frameworks into the I-RESTART project objectives and activities. Collaboration with the Agri-Food Pact for Skills Partnership will ensure project outcomes align with sector-specific needs and promote a holistic approach to skills development.

This report underlines the critical role of skills development in shaping the future of the agri-food industry and highlights the significant contribution of the I-RESTART project to this transformative journey.



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