

On 19 June 2023 took place the first “EZA snack debate” on the “European Year Of Skills: Which opportunities for unions and workers' organisations?”. 19 representatives of workers' organisations from Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Lithuania, Albania, Serbia, and the Netherlands participated online in the event that was organized by the EZA Brussels office and funded by the European Union.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To inform the member organizations about the content, goals and measures of the European year of skills
- Creating awareness for the possibilities of this special year and encouraging extra efforts to be made on lifelong learning and job guidance.
- Provide information for social dialogue at company and government level
- Sharing information about initiatives
- First step to detect eventual support with a workshop.

Kristine Krivmane, Team leader European Year of Skills, DG EMPL, European Commission hold the introductory speech with a presentation about the reasons for this special year, the main goals, the measures to support the initiatives, available funds, the national coordinators, and an overview of actual initiatives, closing with a call for action.

Sabrina Ferraz Guarino, policy advisor in the team EYoS, closed with an interactive approach by questions on SLIDO. The result then gave an impression of the existing knowledge of the various components and the willingness to cooperate.

Agnes Roman, Advisor Life-long learning of European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) explained the ETUC priorities on VET and skills accepted in workshops and also in the recent congress in Berlin on this topic.

The introductions were followed by a Q & A session with a lot of questions and comments.

## **Key ideas**

### ***Year of Skills:***

- ✓ Big challenge ahead: 77% of companies struggled to find employees with the required skills in 2019, only 37% of the workers participate in adult learning and 90% of jobs require digital skills.
- ✓ Need to promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling by efficientm effective and inclusive investment in learning, strengthening skills relevance, matching people's aspirations and skills-sets with labor market opportunities and attracting people from third countries with the skills needed.
- ✓ Everyone must be involved (European Institutes, local networks, international partners, member-states.
- ✓ European skills agenda wants tools for life-long learning, unlocking investments (also working together all EU funds), skilling for a job and joining forces.
- ✓ Promoting the Year with flagship events, key events, already 695 events on the open calendar of the EYoS platform.

- ✓ Key initiatives like harnessing talent in the regions, green deal industrial plan, enabling factors for a successful digital education, European Digital Skills Certificate, updated learning mobility framework, Cybersecurity Skills Academy.
- ✓ Implementing the national coordination
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Promoting local initiatives, sharing good practices

***ETUC priorities on VET and skills:***

- ✓ Education and training must enable people to shape the world of work and society in a way that is oriented towards democracy, humanity and justice.
- ✓ Special focus is needed for women workers, young workers, migrant workers and unemployed for not only upskilling and reskilling, but also validating their skills and competencies and in accessing quality guidance and counselling.
- ✓ Need for more social dialogue and making collective agreements to create a guaranteed right and access for employees to high quality and fully inclusive employees training. Agreement on digital framework between social partners is needed.
- ✓ Quality apprenticeship, and funds only for employers meeting social dimensions.
- ✓ Is there only a mismatch between jobs and skills or are the jobs offered of very low quality?
- ✓ Social dialogue is essential for skills forecasting, updating occupational profiles.
- ✓ About third country nationals. No brain drain

**Conclusions and recommendations**

- The fundamentals for the Year of Skills are good and we have to support the increase of life-long learning and career guidance.
- Based on our experience there is still a long way to go that companies and public services are ready to use this opportunity in the right way.
- With the help of the semester and the RRF we must create the conditions to strengthen a more accessible and inclusive life-long learning system, leaving no worker behind.
- DG EMPL and social affairs and DG EAC (youth, sport, culture and education) must work together so that education and life-long learning are naturally in line with each other.