TECHNICAL SUPPORT INSTRUMENT IN FOCUS

Supporting skills development

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TSI IN FOCUS

Through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), DG REFORM supports EU Member States to design and implement reforms on skills development, whether in the context of the education setting or from a lifelong learning perspective. Reforms, some of which support the implementation of specific milestones and targets of national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs), aim at improving the quality and funding of adult education and training, the recognition and validation of informal and non-formal skills, the development of new skills and competences, and of governance models for education and training. DG REFORM supports an increasing number of reforms aiming to enhance digital and green skills of the employees, the unemployed, young people as well as low skilled adults or the elderly.

In the area of public administration, the TSI supports strengthening skills in public organisations starting from recruitment of talent, development of skills in new areas of needed expertise, developing human resources practices and training opportunities for key job profiles.

DG REFORM has also been supporting Member States to attract, nurture and retain international talents by fostering integration and labour market inclusion of migrants, facilitating the assessment and recognition of skills acquired abroad, and improving employment opportunities of migrants in the EU.

Supporting skills development – examples of support measures

The support measures provided included:
- Analysis of the state of play to identify obstacles and make recommendations on governance, legislation, policies, inter-institutional cooperation, resources, capacity and tools to skills development;
- Stakeholder mapping and consultations, recommendations on enhancing cooperation with and between stakeholders, e.g. education institutions, employers, public employment services;
- Analysis and mapping of the training and education needs of the workforce;
- Support in designing and implementing strategies, roadmaps and action plans, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- Exchange of EU good practices, peer learning and study visits;
- Capacity building actions, communication and dissemination activities;
- Pilot testing for the implementation of proposed solutions.

Specific examples of support measures include *inter alia*:
- Support to design/update the teaching and learning curricula for teachers and trainers, as well as education programmes to foster development of future-oriented skills and competences;
- Support to design and implement skills ecosystems at national/regional/local level, including skills governance systems, fostering cooperation between business and workers representatives, social partners and training providers;
- Support to design and implement reforms on digital or green skills, or to ensure skills for specific industrial sectors, i. e. AI, cyber security, cloud computing, net-zero technologies, or for better representation of women in certain professions, and skills for SMEs' employees;

- Support to foster more relevant skills for all categories of learners, including the most disadvantaged individuals, or focused on the needs of regions affected by the demographic decline of their workforce;
- Tools and methodologies for the recognition and validation of skills and qualifications;
- Support for modernising the human resources policies and function, as well as strengthening training capabilities, notably in public administration and justice;
- Support to design, monitor and evaluate inclusiveness frameworks and comprehensive strategies to prevent early school leaving and foster school success;
- Identification of barriers hindering the development of green and digital skills, i.e. governance, funding, legislation and recommendations on ways to eliminate them.

EU POLICY CONTEXT

In the 2022 State of the European Union Address, President von der Leyen identified a "*workforce with the right skills*" as a key enabler of the competitiveness of our social market economy. Skills mean more and better jobs because a skilled workforce is a key driver of innovation and growth.

The European Year of Skills 2023 aims to strengthen existing initiatives and foster synergies between the actions set forward by the European Skills Agenda and the Pact for Skills, delivering on the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, notably the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning. The Council recommendations on individual learning accounts and micro-credentials set a framework for boosting training and adult learning across the Union. The Commission is working to implement a 'Talent Booster Mechanism' to support EU regions affected by the demographic decline of their workforce and help them to attract people and develop better skills. The Year of Skills also aims to give a new impulse to legal migration and talent management initiatives under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.

Anticipating and boosting skills relevant for the labour market

Through the TSI, DG REFORM supports Member States to develop and improve methods and tools to monitor labour and skills shortages and to better anticipate the skills and qualifications requirements of the labour market. Reforms include the development and operation of skills forecasting systems and technical specifications for innovative job matching tools; blueprints for sectoral cooperation on skills at national and regional level, setting-up and piloting individual learning accounts, helping SMEs to promote skills development and improving cooperation between businesses and research institutions.

Support employers in promoting skills development in Latvia (2021)

The project supports the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia in the design and development of a policy package and a new regulatory framework to support and incentivise employers to invest in the skills development, up- and reskilling of their employees. Starting from an assessment of key barriers and enabling conditions for Latvian employers to invest in the skills of their employees and an analysis of good practices on encouraging employers to invest in employees' skills, exchanges of good practices and extensive consultations with Latvian stakeholders are organised. This is followed by options for the

development of a regulatory framework to support and incentivise employers' investment in up-/re-skilling their employees, a methodology and monitoring indicators, and a roadmap to help implement policy recommendations.

As a result of the project, the Latvian authorities will be equipped with the necessary tools to draft and adopt a new regulatory framework, enabling them to support employers' investment in skills, which is expected to result in increased investments by employers in relevant up/re-skilling of their employees.

Support on the implementation of a national skills framework for learning pathways (2022)

The project provides technical support to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Public Employment Service of Greece for the design and implementation of a lifelong learning framework of quality and labor market relevance, as well as of related evaluation tools.

Technical support includes: recommendations for the development of a skills and competence framework for primary and secondary education, in line with the needs of the market; recommendations for the development of an evidence-based jobseeker profiling system; recommendations for the development of feedback mechanisms to integrate labor market information into active labour market policies (ALMP) design; and a proposal for a performance-based evaluation system for non-formal learning providers, to ensure the quality of non-formal education.

The technical support is expected to increase the capacity of the Greek authorities to design and implement reforms on skills acquisition, with an emphasis on upskilling and reskilling.

Development and Implementation of Individual Learning Accounts in Hungary (2022)

The project supports the Hungarian authorities in the design of a framework for developing and implementing Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) and their enabling framework.

The technical support consists of analytical and empirical research as well as peer learning and good practices exchanges to support the development of a set of recommendations that would inform the reflection of the authorities on the implementation of the ILAs. It will also enable the Hungarian authorities to develop a roadmap and an action plan for the high-level roll-out activities of the system, based on a series of capacity-building workshops.

The implementation of ILAs should lead to an increased participation of Hungarian citizens in adult education and address up- and reskilling needs in the context of digital and green transitions.

Skills intelligence strategy for higher education, including support on micro-credential design (2023)

The project supports the Spanish Ministry for Universities for the development of a Skills Intelligence Strategy for Higher Education to reinforce the role of higher education institutions in the provision of lifelong learning.

The support measures will include: an exhaustive analysis of existing data sources at EU and national level; targeted support on micro-credentials design; specific guidance towards the development of new higher education degree programmes; new forecasting tools as well as mechanisms to ensure capacity to adjust to evolving labour market needs.

The project is expected to provide specific guidance towards the development of new higher education degree programmes and micro-credentials, and the review of existing ones, based on observed labour market trends, good practice and skills needs.

Improving the attractiveness and market labour relevance of Vocational Education and Training

Through the TSI, DG REFORM supports Member States to improve the attractiveness and labour market relevance of their Vocational Education and Training (VET) policies and programmes. At the interface between education and labour market policies, VET play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the acquisition of skills and the competences needed in future jobs. By adapting the structure and services provided by VET schools to the needs and evolution of the labour market, DG REFORM helps the setting up of sustainable VET systems through a systematic dialogue with social partners.

Vocational Education & Training and State education standards in Bulgaria (2019)

The project provided support to the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science to set up an appropriate model to adapt effectively and efficiently the VET provision to the labour market needs. The ultimate goal was to upgrade the existing Sector Skills Committees to the level of Sector Skills councils in other Member States.

The support consisted of analyses of the employment and occupational structure for the development of a model and structure of the Sector skills councils, building on the current sector skills committees. The project fostered the cooperation among relevant stakeholders, including the identification of skills and occupations to design qualifications and Sector Skills Strategies. It supported the development of the methodology for skills anticipation by upgrading existing structures into fully fledged Sector Skills Councils. This should lead to higher adequacy of the VET policies to the labour market requirements.

Modernising Vocational Education & Training Services of the Greek Public Employment Service (2019)

The objective of the project was to support the Greek Public Employment Service (PES) in developing a modern, dynamic, evidence-driven, and cost-effective Vocational Education and Training (VET) system.

The support included a diagnosis of the Greek learning outcomes, skills provisions and labour market outcomes of VET. Based on good international practices aimed at improving the effectiveness of VET, the project proposed a pilot intervention to be implemented by PES, including an evaluation strategy which informed recommendations on how to set up a tracking system for VET graduates.

The project provided the Greek PES with a model for graduate tracking, which is expected to enable a better matching of skills to the needs of the labour market and to have graduates integrate the labour market in a sustainable way. This is laying the foundation for the development of a VET system that provides the key numeracy, literacy and socio-emotional skills and professional skills needed for a successful transition into the labour market.

Improving the quality and effectiveness of the French Centres of Vocational Excellence (2020)

This project supported the French Ministry of Education to reform the implementation framework of the French Centres of Excellence (Campus des Métiers) to increase their quality and effectiveness. In particular, it provided an in-depth analysis of different campus models and associated challenges, it organised focus groups to discuss good practices and provided concrete recommendations.

The project included piloting of the recommendations that lead to a final proposal to reform the implementation framework of the Campus des Métiers model, including an excellence label, as a reference of quality VET provision and in line with the EU initiatives of Centres of Vocational Excellence. This will eventually contribute to a higher involvement of the business community in the campuses as well as an increased quality, labour market relevance and attractiveness of VET.

Strengthening skills for the green and digital transition

Through the TSI, DG REFORM accompanies the development of reforms to prepare the green and digital transition and adapt the education and training systems. TSI interventions aim at enhancing the green and digital skills, competences and attitudes of learners, teachers and trainers, with a view to rendering the green and digital transition accessible and inclusive. In addition, DG REFORM supports Member States to design and implement a high-performing digital education ecosystem at all educational levels. Reforms enhancing green and digital skills rely on a close collaboration between various stakeholders, including national and regional administrations, education institutions, training providers, social partners, industry, research and innovation institutes and learners.

Roadmap to green skills in Flanders (2021)

The project supported the Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy in steering the transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient and green economy by guiding the green skills transition in the Flemish economy and in its related organisational structure.

It included support for the development of a high-level Green Skills Strategy, including a governance framework, based on an assessment of the skills needs, good practices and consultations with stakeholders, as well as a Green Skills Roadmap for the whole economy to facilitate its implementation.

The expected results should enable the Flemish authorities to acquire a good understanding of the green skills needs and gaps within the Flemish economy, dispose of a high-level strategy for guiding the green skills transition in the Flemish economy, and of a clear implementation roadmap with concrete steps to ensure the relevant skills provision to support the green transition.

Digitalisation of the education system in Austria (2021)

DG REFORM supported the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Research in the development of a digital upskilling curriculum for teacher educators and an educational media strategy, including a revised delivery model that integrates digital media.

Based on a situational analysis in Austria and of European good practices, this project set out and piloted a proposal for a digital upskilling curriculum for teacher educators. It also made recommendations for its adoption and roll-out across the country. Regarding the provision of educational media, a proposal for revised delivery model and a roadmap for its implementation were developed.

In the course of the project, the Austrian authorities tested a set of tools to support the digital upskilling of teacher educators. The project provided them with a validated proposal for a revised delivery model for educational media and a concept for its implementation. The project is expected to contribute, in the long term, to an increase of the digital skills of teacher educators in Austria.

Enhancing cybersecurity education in the Netherlands (2022)

This project aims to complement digital education in university curricula with a focus on cybersecurity and to strengthen cyber-resilience through Automated Vulnerability Research (AVR) technology, which is a technology used for identifying software vulnerabilities in an automated, scalable way.

The project facilitates the Dutch authorities' efforts to realise the overall ambitions of their national AVR roadmap involving more students in AVR, promoting AVR collaboration between universities and industry and embedding of AVR in cyber security curricula of various universities. The TSI support will consolidate the results of the first AVR pilot competition and would support the organization of a further edition in 2023. It will also create the conditions for replicating this competition in other Member States.

The project is expected to contribute to embedding AVR in cybersecurity curricula in the Netherlands. It should also enable the partnership between educational institutions and industry partners to scale up AVR and create (inter)national business and research partnerships.

Adapting higher education to labour market requirements

Through the TSI, DG REFORM supports Member States transforming their higher education systems, improving the governance model and developing strategies for performance-based funding and quality assurance mechanisms, to better respond to labour market requirements. The TSI promotes knowledge exchange and foster cooperation between universities, research and businesses, with a view to address the development of skills which are relevant for the labour market.

Increasing the sustainability of Higher Education provision in Ireland (2019)

The objective of this project was to adapt higher education and funding provisions to the skills needed on the labour market in Ireland. It provided the Irish department of education and skills with an international analysis of the funding models for higher education and an analysis of the skills' situation in Ireland. It resulted into a model to test the cost implications of different policy decisions regarding the funding and the design of higher education programmes, the economic and social impact in the short term, and their macroeconomic impact.

The support measures provided the Irish department of education and skills with an economic evaluation of funding options of higher education, a model to forecast and evaluate the costs

of different funding policy options as well as recommendations regarding the best funding mode to ensure the sustainability and accessibility of a high-quality higher education system.

Road Map to foster cooperation between universities, research and businesses in Spain (2020)

The technical support aimed at enhancing the cooperation between the Spanish public system of research and innovation, comprising most universities as well as public research organisations, and the rest of Spain's innovation system (businesses in particular).

The project provided support to the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation with the design and implementation of a roadmap to ensure an effective implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Strategy 2021-2027. The proposed roadmap provided a range of targeted actions, as well as several recommendations to tackle existing barriers, and achieve effective cooperation and engagement across the entire innovation ecosystem. It also led to a set of indicators and recommendations to strengthen information systems and to monitor the effectiveness of the Strategy.

The project should lead to the improvement in the extent, quality and efficiency of knowledge exchange, engagement and collaboration between public research organisations and businesses in Spain, which should help improve the country's innovation, productivity and growth performance.

Upskilling and reskilling in a qualitative and inclusive manner

Through the TSI, DG REFORM supports EU Member States in their efforts to increase the rate of participation of adults (particularly low-skilled or older persons), in relevant education and training programmes, and to improve the quality and recognition of adult learning programmes to eventually increase adults' skills levels. The support targets the quality and financial aspects of adult education and learning, the recognition and validation of informal and non-formal skills, the development of measures to further develop skills and competences, and development of country-specific governance models for education and training.

National Plan for Adult Literacy in Portugal (2018)

The project supported the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP) in Portugal to improve the level of alignment of its quality assurance system to the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training and ensure its effective implementation by VET providers.

The project helped to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders by mapping the situation regarding low-skilled or illiterate adult population, elaborating a roadmap for the design and implementation of a National Plan for Literacy (changes to the legal framework and necessary resources), and capacity-building for institutions and professionals involved in the National Plan for Literacy.

The project supported the design a National Plan for Literacy and related implementation strategy. The outcomes of the project eventually contributed to improving the attractiveness and relevance of VET and increasing the integration of VET graduates in the labour market.

Improving the recognition of competences and development of individual learning pathways by the Provincial Centres for Adult Education in Italy (2020)

The aim of the project was to support the Italian Ministry of Education in strengthening capacity of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) in developing consistent guidelines to unify and facilitate the assessment and recognition process. Key activities included consultations with stakeholders to identify strengths and weaknesses of the services provided by CPIAs; review of EU good practices in skills evaluation and recognition and guidance provided to low skilled adults; guidelines for CPIAs to improve skills recognition and development of individual learning paths; capacity building to CPIAs staff.
The guidance developed is expected to support CPIAs in conducting consistent, transparent and uniform process of assessment and recognition of competences. In long term, this should lead to increasing accessibility and outreach of CPIAs and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Establishing a validation system of prior non-formal and informal learning in Croatia (2022)

The purpose of the project is to support Croatia in establishing a new system for the validation of prior non-formal and informal learning, by providing the authorities with concrete operational instruments and practical guidance and equipping relevant stakeholders with understanding of how the new validation system may work. The ultimate goal is to support Croatia in the efforts to improve participation of adults in lifelong learning.
The technical support is delivered through an analysis of the current situation in Croatia, an assessment of international good practices, consultations with stakeholders and organisation of peer-learning activities, leading up to recommendations and a methodology for a new validation system of prior non-formal and informal learning in Croatia.
The project is expected to provide national authorities with concrete instruments and practical guidance to introduce a system for the validation of prior non-formal and informal learning.

Ensuring that civil servants have the right skills

Through the TSI, DG REFORM supports EU Member States in their efforts to ensure that their public administrations are fit for the present and future challenges. The support targets the development of measures to revamp the human resource management system to enhance the professionalism of civil servants, further develop skills and competences for civil servants in line with the complexity of the policymaking environment and reinforce the attractiveness of the civil service.

Strengthening change management process of executives in Italy (2021)

The pilot project supported the Ministry of Economy and Finance to improve its effectiveness by strengthening the capacity of managers to perform effectively and timely. The technical support focused on two main dimensions: the re-engineering of the processes of the Department for General Affairs within the ministry and the innovative capacity building of management and executives of the department. Key activities included a stocktaking exercise, peer reviews, the development of a competency framework and a training programme for

managers, as well as a toolkit for the assessment and recruitment of managers. Moreover, an action plan was developed to enable the Department of Public Administration and the National School of Administration to promote the results of the project.

The project is expected to contribute to strengthening the effectiveness and professionalism of the Italian public administration.

Strengthening policy development and foresight in the Irish Public Service (2021)

The project aims at supporting policy development in Ireland by increasing Irish authorities' capacity to both develop and implement public policies, and successfully and consistently integrate strategic foresight into the policy development process. The project focuses on providing public administrations with frameworks, tools and practices to support policy development across departments and administrations in order to increase the relevance and sustainability of public policies.

The project has a strong focus on supporting skills development in public administrations by offering both technical guidance in the form of good practices, tools and methods, and practical support in the form of training and workshops.

Strengthening the attractiveness of the public service in the French regions (2021)

This aim of the project was to improve the French administration's institutional human resource capacity to plan and implement actions at national and regional level to attract, recruit and retain staff, with a particular focus on those regions which are less attractive. The technical support made it possible to gain a better understanding of the attractiveness factors of the civil service in four pilot regions and its potential bottlenecks; compare the situation with that of other OECD and European Union countries and identify major trends in public employment and its impact on the human resources function; and react to boost this role as an employer state in the regions through recommendations to develop indicators to monitor attractiveness.

The project is expected to reinforce the attractiveness of French regions, particularly in regions considered the least attractive, in a context of evolution of professions, by revamping the Human Resources Management model.

Attracting talent and fostering integration of migrants

Through the TSI, DG REFORM supports Member States to anticipate and respond to the challenges linked to attracting the skills and international talent in European societies, and promoting the full socio-economic integration of migrants for the development of vibrant European labour markets. Reforms include the design and implementation of migration management and labour market integration strategies, analyses of talent attraction ecosystems and the implementation of strategies to match international talent with local employers, assessments of labour shortages and skills mismatches and the reform of legislative frameworks in order to facilitate the aforementioned objectives. In this respect, the TSI promotes knowledge exchanges between public administrations, the sharing of good practices, and capacity building exercises to prepare national administrations to deliver on these policy objectives.

Multi-criterial points-based system of preferential migration in the framework of foreign employment policy in Czechia (2020)

The project provided comprehensive support to Czechia in light of high labour shortages across employers and across the skills spectrum, specifically by helping to manage inflows of non-EU workers that can meet the skills needs of the local market. Building on the Czech government's prioritization in reforming the labour migration management system, the support measures included an assessment of the then-existing system and the planning of its legislative review based on international good practices, the development of an IT tool for the assessment of the labour needs that could be filled through migration and the communication of the use of this system with relevant public and private stakeholders. The impact of the project is the preparedness of Czechia to be responsive to shortages in key labour sectors, and the ability to position itself as an attractive destination for skilled migration.

Supporting an efficient national mechanism of recognition of refugee's qualifications in Italy (2022)

The project provides support to the Italian government in the upscaling and mainstreaming of the Council of Europe's European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR). Considering that its use was previously confided to the academic sector, the key aim of the project is to enable the Italian government to expand it more broadly. The support measures being provided includes a comparative analysis of the use of the EQPR in other Member States, review and analysis of the relevant national legislative framework to identify gaps and barriers, capacity-building activities aimed at targeted stakeholders, and a mechanism to fast track the recognition of EQPR holders beyond the academic sector. The impact of the project is expected to be the improvement of the mechanism of recognising qualifications, contributing to the better inclusion of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market.

Talent Hub EU - Collaborative, multi-country migration and integration optimization in Denmark (2022)

The project provides support to Denmark to develop more successful, future-oriented talent retention policies that will ensure that skilled and highly skilled international talents stay longer or permanently in the country and the EU more broadly. Additionally, the project fosters talent mobility across the EU by promoting better cooperation between Member States (such as Germany, Spain and Estonia). The support measures provided include an analysis of relevant legal framework for labour migration, an analysis of best practices for attracting and retaining skilled and highly skilled international talent, recommendations for enhancing the regulatory and legislative frameworks, as well as capacity-building and trainings for relevant Danish authorities. The measures are meant to address challenges such as excessive administrative red tape in processes linked to work and residence permits, the validation of credentials and recognition of skills/qualifications, discrimination in recruitment processes, and more. The impact of the project would be to help build capacity in talent retention, foster cross-jurisdictional cooperation and ultimately make EU Member States more attractive for international talent.