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The Harnessing Talent Platform supports the European Year of Skills

CREATIVESUNITE

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The Harnessing Talent Platform is one of the tools the European Commission has developed to help Europe’s regions promote, retain and attract the talents that their economies lack.

The European Year of Skills

The European Year of Skills 2023 involves events, awareness-raising campaigns, dialogue, and the development of tools to ensure better investment in reskilling and upskilling as a means to increase the competitiveness of European companies.

All EU bodies working in skills development and employment are contributing to the initiative. They include the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Labour Authority (ELA), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA).

One of very first deliverable of the European Year of Skills 2023 was the Commission Communication on Harnessing talent in the Europe's regions, launched in January, which aims to further promote reskilling and upskilling and to ensure that nobody is left behind in the twin, green and digital, transitions and the economic recovery.

Demographic changes in the EU

The green and digital transitions, the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic have made it imperative for European regions to ensure that businesses adapt and innovate and that workers acquire new skills. This will ensure the continent remains competitive globally and able to resist internal and external shocks.

However demographic shifts are causing disparities between

regions and a growing urban-rural divide. The skills gap in the workforce is becoming more evident: 77% of EU companies are reporting difficulties in finding workers with the skills they need.

Between 2015 and 2020, the EU's working-age population declined by 3.5 million people. It is expected to decline by a further 35 million people by 2050. A total of 82 regions in 16 Member States are severely affected by this. They also face a low share of university and higher-education graduates and an exodus of young people aged 15-39. This situation is often referred to as the "talent development trap".

Regions facing acute challenges

The Commission has identified 46 regions that are in talent development trap. Their average GDP per capita is 64 % of the EU average and one-third of their populations lives in rural areas, compared with the EU's average of 21%. These regions are spread across 11 EU countries including Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Romania.

A further 36 regions, situated in Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, are classified as being at risk of falling into a talent development trap, mainly due to the higher than average net-out migration of young people.

About 30% of the EU's population lives in these regions that are in the trap or at risk of being caught in the talent trap.

Solutions identified

The Commission believes that attracting skilled workers requires the cooperation of national and regional government, universities, vocational education and training institutions, research facilities and businesses.

Factors that will make regions attractive place to live and work include access to services and infrastructure, such as early childhood education, healthcare, and affordable housing, cultural services, transport and energy supply.

Increasing the employment of women will also help prevent workers from leaving the identified regions. The affected regions have a female employment rate of 59%, which is below the EU average of 66%. Working-age women are more likely to leave these regions than men are, if they cannot find work.

Better broadband connections, effective public administration

and public governance, and cross-border cooperation, supported by Interreg programmes, can improve the attractiveness of regions facing a talent development trap.

The Talent Booster Mechanism

The Commission has already started to implement the Talent Booster Mechanism, an initiative to help EU regions reverse skills loss using existing EU funds and initiatives. The Harnessing Talent Platform, launched in July, will help to disseminate information about all the pillars of the Mechanism, provide guidance, information and knowledge, promote events, best practices as well as access to technical assistance and advice to regions in need.

DG Regio will officially launch the platform and promote Talent Booster Mechanism organising a high-level event on 23rd November. Regions can use the platform to apply for the technical assistance offered by the mechanism, to exchange experience and best practices, and to access data to support policy making.

The working groups

Four working groups, focusing on: the digital, health, research and innovation, and territorial development sectors, will complement the impact of the Harnessing Talent Platform. Their members will discuss how regions facing demographic changes can attract, develop and retain talent. Their findings will be translated into policy recommendations and technical guidance.

Each group will have 20 members representing a broad scope of stakeholders including public authorities (national and regional level), researchers, business associations or civil society and NGOs organisations, to mention a few.

The groups are planned to start their activities in November, with the final outcomes to be presented in first half of 2026.

Find more information here