



Secure the availability of skilled workforce

BACKGROUND

The next economic upswing will be impossible if companies lack a sufficiently qualified workforce. Moreover, labour market projections demonstrate that demand for higher skills levels will increase as European countries seek to leverage their competitive advantage in high-quality production processes. However, in Europe, there currently is a great mismatch between skills people have and skills they would need to have to perform their jobs properly or to find jobs easily.

Education and training have a central role in responding to challenges of globalisation, demographic ageing, climate change and new technologies. More and better investment in human capital allows to better respond to these challenges. Effective lifelong learning strategies can contribute to providing a platform for a well functioning labour market and a broad skills base. Rapid progress in other regions of the world denotes the importance of innovative, advanced and quality-intensive education and training systems for economic competitiveness. European policy in education and training is working towards building an integrated and coherent approach to better understand and compare qualification frameworks across Member States and sectors.

Immigration from third countries is an important part of the response to demographic ageing and alleviate labour market shortages. Failure to attract migrant workers with the right skills mix, which can vary from country to country, will hamper Europe's competitiveness and long-term economic growth. While Member States have different traditions and policies with respect to migration from third-country nationals, the role the EU can play in facilitating legal migration will be at the heart of the debate on migration policy in the years to come.

Greater relevance of education and training systems to labour market needs is needed

BUSINESSEUROPE, in cooperation with the other European Social Partners, has adopted a framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, as a contribution to the Lisbon Strategy. It demonstrates that increasing the focus on workplace competences is key for the development of employability in all forms of education and training with a lifelong learning perspective.

A competence based approach needs to be promoted throughout education and training systems in all European countries. Mechanisms to assess the competences workers acquire through work and to guide them in their individual learning pathways also need to be further developed. Specific actions aimed on people at work and in particular older workers and disadvantaged groups can provide part of the solution to demographic ageing and skill shortages.

Enterprises and education institutions should work in partnership

BUSINESSEUROPE has actively contributed in shaping common European tools that seek to facilitate transparency and mobility, and supports developments at national level to further stimulate partnerships between learning providers and institutions. The ongoing progress in drawing up National Qualification Frameworks based on learning outcomes should be undertaken in close consultation with the social partners.

BUSINESSEUROPE is also involved in the Bologna process to better associate enterprises in the definition of higher education curricula and university management, in order to boost students' employability on labour markets. It also actively contributes to the Copenhagen process with the aim of raising the attractiveness and quality of as well as improve access to vocational education and training.

Attract migrant workers to fulfil the needs of European labour markets

Legal economic migration can provide part of the solution to alleviate labour shortages in Europe. A coherent framework on conditions for admission and residence of third-country nationals is essential but any EU proposal should respect the principle of subsidiarity and be flexible enough to allow national administrations to apply a wide range of admission mechanisms in order to respond quickly to the needs of companies. Likewise, EU initiatives should promote the establishment of unbureaucratic, rapid and transparent administrative procedures at national level. The EU Blue Card proposal is a step in the right direction to increase the attractiveness of the EU for highly qualified workers. BUSINESSEUROPE also expects a lot from the upcoming proposal on EU-wide entry and residence conditions for intra-corporate transferees.