

**Committee :** International Labour Organisation

**Subject :** Training and practicing the professions of 2030

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The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), representing over 45 million workers, believes that the rapid evolution of technology, shifting economic landscapes, and social challenges are creating unprecedented transformations in the world of work. The professions of 2030 will emerge from the integration of artificial intelligence, automation, climate transition, and evolving social expectations. Ensuring that workers are equipped with the necessary skills to adapt and thrive in this changing environment is paramount.

This position paper outlines our key priorities and recommendations on how Europe should prepare its workforce for the professions of 2030, emphasizing inclusive training, lifelong learning, and strong social protections. Our proposals are aimed at fostering a just transition that leaves no worker behind, in alignment with the ILO's agenda on decent work and sustainable development.

By 2030, the very concept of professions will be fluid. Digitalization, AI, and robotics will blur traditional job descriptions, with many professions requiring hybrid skills—combining technical expertise with human-centric capabilities like creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. At the same time, the green transition will reshape sectors like energy, manufacturing, and construction, creating demand for new skills and job profiles.

To ensure a fair and inclusive transition to a digitally transformed labour market, the ETUC emphasizes the need for accessible, future-proof education systems. This requires redesigning curricula to align with skills for tomorrow's jobs, prioritizing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, digital literacy, and sustainability. An interdisciplinary approach is equally essential, blending technical training with soft skills like communication, teamwork, and adaptability—qualities that will remain vital as automation expands. Expanding access to high-quality vocational education and training (VET) will further enable workers from all socio-economic backgrounds to acquire skills for emerging fields.

Given rapid technological disruptions, workers will need to continuously upgrade their skills throughout their careers. The ETUC advocates for establishing a universal right to lifelong learning, allowing workers to reskill and upskill without financial or time barriers, supported by joint investment from governments and employers. Flexible learning models, such as online courses, part-time programs, and workplace-based training, should be accessible to all, especially to those in precarious roles. Recognizing and validating skills acquired informally, such as through workplace experience, is also key to enabling smoother transitions into new professions.

The labour market changes spurred by digitalization and decarbonization will have significant effects on sectors like manufacturing, energy, and transport. In response, the ETUC calls for comprehensive just transition strategies to support workers moving from declining industries to new fields such as renewable energy, AI, and healthcare. These strategies must include retraining opportunities, income support, and career counselling. Equally important is the active involvement of workers and trade unions in shaping transition policies; a collaborative approach fosters inclusion and reduces resistance. Training programs should also prioritize gender equality to ensure women are not disproportionately affected by automation and have equal opportunities in tech and green industries.

As the future of work evolves, it is essential to adapt social protection systems to provide all workers, including gig and non-standard workers, with fundamental rights and protections. Universal access to

unemployment benefits, pensions, healthcare, and paid leave will help safeguard gig and platform workers. In addition, robust safety nets are needed for those undergoing job transitions due to technological or environmental changes, protecting them from poverty or instability while they reskill.

Employers are crucial in preparing the workforce for future demands, and the ETUC underscores the importance of corporate responsibility in worker training. Companies should be mandated to invest in regular skills training, viewing it as a long-term investment in innovation rather than a cost. Partnerships between businesses and educational institutions are also essential to bridge the skills gap, and governments should incentivize these collaborations with tax credits or public-private initiatives, encouraging a coordinated approach to workforce development.

The future of work will undoubtedly present significant challenges, but it also offers an opportunity to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable labour market. By investing in future-proof education, lifelong learning, just transition frameworks, and strong social protections, Europe can ensure that all workers—young and old, skilled and unskilled—are prepared to practice the professions of 2030.

The ETUC is committed to working alongside the ILO, national governments, employers, and workers to create a future of work that benefits everyone. We must act now to equip Europe's workforce with the skills and protections they need to thrive in the changing world of work.