

OECD CENTRE FOR SKILLS

Skills Summit 2024 Joint Summary

Skills for the future: Building bridges to new opportunities

21-22 February 2024, Brussels, Belgium

The Government of Belgium, its Regions and Communities, and the OECD organised the 5th biennial Skills Summit in Brussels, Belgium on 21-22 February 2024. The Skills Summit 2024 brought together ministers and senior officials with responsibilities for diverse skills-relevant portfolios – including education, employment and training, economy, and science and technology and innovation – from 36 countries, from the OECD and beyond, as well as representatives from eight international and regional organisations, in an in-person event to discuss the topic of “Skills for the future: Building bridges to new opportunities”. Participants engaged in discussions on the three themes of the Summit: i) Establishing a vision of future skills needs; ii) Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities; iii) Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities.

This document presents a summary of the event by the Government of Belgium, its Regions and Communities and the OECD.

Contacts:

El Iza Mohamedou, Head, OECD Centre for Skills (el-iza.mohamedou@oecd.org)

Andrew Bell, Deputy Head, OECD Centre for Skills (andrew.bell@oecd.org)

Bart Staats, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Skills (bart.staats@oecd.org)

Laura Reznikova, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Skills (laura.reznikova@oecd.org)

JT03544115

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Background of Skills Summit 2024

1. Megatrends such as the digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI), the green transition, population aging, and globalisation are reshaping societies and economies. To take advantage of opportunities inherent in these deep transformations and to build a better future, it is important to strengthen skills systems and develop skills that support a strategic vision for economies and societies. Lifelong learning will be essential for people to keep pace with the changing skill requirements of jobs and society and, by extension, for success in the economies and societies of the future. For individuals, higher skills levels are positively associated with greater chances of being employed, higher wages, higher levels of trust, more active participation in democratic process and in community life, and better health. For countries, a strong skills system could help to ensure that they are resilient and responsive to these and other emerging trends.
2. Since skills policy is a composite policy domain covering aspects of education (from primary to vocational, higher and adult education and training), labour market, industrial, innovation and migration policy, developing a strong skills system will require that all responsible ministries and agencies work together effectively and that governments work effectively with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest and role in the development and effective use of skills, such as employers, education and training providers, civil society organisations and others.
3. In this context, the topic of the 5th Skills Summit was “Skills for the future: Building bridges to new opportunities”. Discussion took place around the three themes of the Summit: i) Establishing a vision of future skills needs; ii) Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities; iii) Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities.

Overview of Skills Summit 2024

4. The Government of Belgium and the OECD organised the 5th biennial Skills Summit in Brussels, Belgium, on 21-22 February 2024. Since Belgium is a federal country, where skills policy is a shared competence of Belgium’s Regions and Communities, participants were welcomed by Flanders, Wallonia, the Brussels-Capital Region, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, and the German-speaking Community.
5. More than 200 participants, including 12 Ministers and 20 Vice/Deputy Ministers or State Secretaries, from 36 countries from the OECD and beyond the OECD (see Annex A for a full list) attended the event. There was also representation from 8 international and regional organisations, namely the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), European Commission, Council of Europe, Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), as well as the Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD. The Summit also included keynote speeches by five invited speakers (see Annex B for their biographies), who provided insights from different perspectives on the topic of “Skills for the future: Building bridges to new opportunities”.
6. On Wednesday 21 February 2024, delegates were welcomed by Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium, Mathias Cormann, OECD Secretary-General, Jo Brouns, Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy and Agriculture, and Christie Morreale, Vice-President of the Walloon Region and Minister of Employment, Training, Healthcare, Social Action, Equal Opportunities and Women’s Rights. Prime Minister De Croo opened the day by noting the paramount importance of skills for leveraging new technologies, which in turn can facilitate the digital and green transitions, while also equipping us to address the needs of our aging societies. OECD Secretary-General Cormann highlighted the central role of skills to the success of economies and societies and to providing citizens with the best possible opportunities to benefit from economic progress, including at a time of significant transformation

in the context of population ageing, the digital transformation and the climate transition. Minister Brouns underscored the necessity of collaboration among various government departments with skills responsibilities and engaging stakeholders to effectively harness these opportunities. Vice-President and Minister Christie Morreale stressed the crucial importance of ensuring that no one is left behind in this period of rapid change, highlighting that disadvantaged groups in particular will need support to develop the skill required to capitalise on emerging opportunities.

7. Following these opening remarks, keynote speeches were made by Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights and Mariana Mazzucato (pre-recorded) Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London. Commissioner Schmit underscored the imperative for a skills revolution, an idea echoed by numerous participants at the Summit, aimed at enabling adaptation to the profound transformations underway in our economies and societies. These changes encompass worsening skills shortages and the adoption of novel technologies, most notably artificial intelligence (AI). Professor Mazzucato, on her part, emphasised the importance of strengthening competencies within the public sector, stressing the necessity to cultivate capacity and dynamic capabilities within public service to assist our countries to overcome the challenges and seize the opportunities of the future.

8. Three side events were organised by the Belgian Regions and Communities to showcase good examples on the topics of: *Partnerships for the twin transitions*, *Training for and by the sector*, *Bringing out the best in our talented youth* (see Box 1 for more information).

9. On Thursday 22 February, the Summit was opened by Willy Borsus, Vice-President of Wallonia and Minister of Economy, Foreign Trade, Research and Innovation, Digital, Land Use Planning, Agriculture, IFAPME and Competence Centers and Minister Jo Brouns, Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy and Agriculture. In their remarks, they emphasised the significance of skills for our future economic resilience and well-being, and expressed their hope that the Summit would facilitate information sharing between countries and serve as a source of inspiration for all delegates.

10. Following these opening remarks, Keynote speeches were made by Mathias Cormann, OECD Secretary-General, Shravan Goli (joining virtually), Chief Operating Officer of Coursera, Mia Seppo, Assistant Director-General for the Jobs and Social Protection Cluster of the ILO, and Mona Laroussi, Director of the IFEF and professor at the University de Carthage (Tunis) and the University of Lille (France). OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann introduced the key themes of the Skills Summit and highlighted effective skills policies that can enhance education and lifelong learning outcomes to help people improve and adapt their skills in dynamic labour markets. Shravan Goli argued that generative AI would have a disruptive impact on all occupations, but also substantial benefits, including higher productivity and greater flexibility in how and where we work. However, realising these benefits would require upskilling and reskilling. Assistant Director-General Seppo stressed the importance of ensuring lifelong learning becomes a reality all people. For her part, Director Mona Laroussi, underscored the need for interdisciplinary approaches to address today's complex challenges.

11. Following these introductory remarks and keynote speeches, Heads of Delegations were given the opportunity to make formal remarks. Delegates spoke about their priorities as well as the many initiatives they are undertaking to ensure that people have the skills they need. Concern for significant and persistent skills shortages was a central theme. To meet current and future skills needs, delegates also stressed the importance of developing a broad set of skills in youth and of providing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling in adulthood.

12. Many delegates spoke of the need to make it easier for people to access learning opportunities and to have skills previously acquired assessed, recognised and validated. Reference was also made to the importance of supporting the development of modular and stackable credits, and micro-credentials that make it easier for people to gain the skills they need in a timely manner. Some mentioned the value of individual learning schemes as important instruments for encouraging and empowering individuals to learn.

Box 1. The Skills Summit side events

Partnerships for the twin transition

This [side event](#) was organised by the Flemish Government and hosted by Jo Brouns, Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy and Agriculture. The side event was linked to the theme of “Establishing a vision of future skills needs”, and participants visited the Green Energy Park in Zellik (info@greenenergypark.be). The Flemish Government discussed skills forecasting and showcased how to put this policy into action. The visit focussed on the ‘Training for the Future’ initiative regarding green energy and drone technology and emphasised the important role of partnerships between universities, industry, companies, and schools. Participants visited a smart village lab and experienced drone technology by Noordzee Drones (hello@noordzeedrones.be) and Buildwise.

Training for and by the sector

This [side event](#) was organised by the Walloon Government and hosted by Christie Morreale, Vice-President of Wallonia and Minister of Employment, Training, Healthcare, Social Action & Social Economy, Equal Opportunities and Women's Rights and Willy Borsus, Vice-President of Wallonia and Minister of Economy, Foreign Trade, Research and Innovation, Digital, Land Use Planning, Agriculture, IFAPME and Competence Centers and. This side event was linked to the theme of “Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities” and had a double objective. Firstly, highlighting the paths offered to the public-targets (young people, close to or far from employment) by various Walloon actors. These paths of acquisition, development, reinforcement and even improvement of skills will be illustrated by examples of partnerships between these Walloon actors. Secondly, participants visited aptaskil, which is a leading training centre for production professions in the chemical, pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. During the visit, the work by aptaskil was also discussed and participants toured the facilities.

Bringing out the best in our talented youth

This [side event](#) was organised by the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region and hosted by Bernard Clerfayt, Minister responsible for Employment and Vocational Training, Digital Transition, Local Authorities, and Animal Welfare. This side event was linked to the theme of “Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities”, and participants visited Molengeek and Art2Work, both leading training providers for NEETs. Molengeek focusses on the technology sector and provides a range of long and short-term training programmes, and Art2Work is a research and social innovation laboratory, that supports young people in their personal development and in building a professional project.

13. Foreshadowing two key recurring themes of the Summit, many delegates commented on the need for effective collaboration across the many government departments and agencies with responsibilities in the areas of education and skills as well as the need to forge partnerships with social partners and other stakeholders with an interest and role to play in the development of skills.

14. Three thematic sessions were held in plenary of the topics of: *Establishing a vision of future skills needs*; *Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities*; and *Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities*. All discussions took place under Chatham rules. Consequently, these discussions are summarised in an anonymised manner.

Session 1: Establishing a vision of future skills needs

Setting the scene

15. The topic of the first session was *Establishing a vision of future skills needs*. While countries are adjusting to the digital and green transitions and other megatrends, they can and should also use this opportunity to consciously shape their own future. Achieving this aim requires a clear vision of the skills that will be strategically important to countries. Building bridges across government and with stakeholders will be essential for developing such a vision.

16. The first session was co-chaired by OECD Deputy-Secretary General Yoshiki Takeuchi, and Minister Jo Brouns, Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy and Agriculture. Ambassador Régine Vandriessche, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the OECD and UNESCO, introduced the session.

17. In his remarks, OECD Deputy Secretary-General Yoshiki Takeuchi stressed the importance of countries developing a vision for their future skills needs. He outlined four key steps for establishing such a vision. First, each country should conceptualise a compelling and strategic vision of the future they want. Second, they need to identify the type of skills they need to achieve this strategic vision. Third, they need to set out a plan to develop these skills. Fourth, implementing these skills strategies requires harnessing the energy and commitment of social partners and stakeholders, as there are limits to what governments can achieve on their own. For his part, Minister Brouns reminded delegates that the megatrends present us with both challenges and opportunities, with success depending to a great extent on the adaptability of our skills systems. He highlighted a number of initiatives that Flanders has undertaken to position itself well to seize the opportunities of the future, including the preparation of skills forecasts at the macro level (Flanders), meso level (clusters, value chains) and micro level (companies), and reforms to paid training leave. He also noted that the Flemish Government has developed an Individual Learning Account. In her introduction to the session, Ambassador Régine Vandriessche remarked on the importance of stimulating greater co-operation between government on the one hand and between employer and individuals on the other.

18. As input for discussions, three questions were shared with participants on the topic of *Establishing a vision of future skills needs* (see Box 2).

Box 2. Discussion questions for participants during the Skills Summit Session 1: Establishing a vision of future skills needs

1. What is your country's strategic vision for the future and how is this vision linked to your country's skills agenda?
2. What specific skills does your country consider to be important for taking advantage of the green and digital/AI transitions (e.g. STE(A)M skills, advanced digital skills, etc.)?
3. How are your government and stakeholders working together to develop the vision and identify strategic skills needs?

Highlights of discussion

19. In considering the need for a vision of future skills needs, many delegates expressed considerable concern with the extent and persistence of current skills shortages and the potential for these shortages to worsen in the context of population aging and other megatrends. The digital and green transitions, in particular, were seen to have the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities if not managed well. At the

same time, many noted that a strategic vision should be a tool to achieve our aspirations for what we want our economies and societies to look like in future.

Among the many worthy aims put forward by delegates included mitigating climate change and environmental degradation, strengthening civic engagement, reinforcing democratic and pluralistic values, and promoting social cohesion.

20. Regarding the skills that such a forward-looking vision requires, delegates commented on the importance of people developing a broad set of skills. Many delegates spoke of the importance of developing the technical skills needed to alleviate current shortages as well as for harnessing the potential of new technology. These technical skills include coding, AI, STEM/STEAM, and occupation-specific skills. Others commented on the importance of developing strong “soft” skills, such as communication skills, management skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills. The importance of ensuring that all people develop at least basic digital skills was strongly noted.

21. With a view to ensuring that people are adaptable and resilient in the context of change, delegates advocated for a vision that encourages people to embrace change and pursue learning throughout life. To facilitate this, they highlighted the importance of building education and skills systems that are themselves adaptable and responsive to change.

22. Many stressed that the vision should acknowledge that the process of developing the skills and attitudes of a lifelong learner starts very early in life, in our creches and kindergartens and continues throughout initial education and in our workplaces in adulthood. This means ensuring that all children get a good start in schooling and complete compulsory education. In this context, delegates mentioned the importance of modernising curricula to ensure that people develop the skills and attitudes needed to support further learning, promote innovation, engage in entrepreneurship as well to develop the skills and attitudes needed to support civic and democratic engagement. The importance of investing in teachers and in infrastructure was also noted.

23. Echoing a recurring theme throughout the Summit, several delegates noted that the vision should promote awareness of the importance of VET and raise its stature in society. Several commented that VET was too often seen as a second choice and that countries need to redouble their efforts to overcome this stigma.

24. Echoing yet another recurring theme, delegates spoke often of the need for a vision that promoted collaboration and co-ordination across the whole of government and with social partners and other stakeholders. It was noted that building a highly skilled workforce requires engagement with employers, labour unions and other key stakeholders. Some made mention of specific mechanisms that were implemented to facilitate dialogue and collaboration, such as skills councils and regional skills bodies. Some delegates noted the important role that skills strategies have played in helping their countries to foster actionable visions with input from across government as well as from stakeholders.

Session 2 – Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities

Setting the scene

25. The second session focused on the topic of “Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities”. Learning across the life course allows people to develop the skills for the future and adapt skills sets to changing jobs and more diverse career pathways. To this end, countries need to provide youth and adults with the required up- and re-skilling opportunities to strengthen skills sets and support career transitions throughout life. Building bridges between education and work, and between government and social partners, will be key to ensure that skills are developed in line with strategic skills needs.

26. The session was co-chaired by Minister Christie Morreale, Vice-President of the Walloon Region and Minister of Employment, Training, Healthcare, Social Action, Equal Opportunities and Women's Rights and Stefano Scarpetta, OECD Director of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. Ambassador Régine Vandriessche, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the OECD and UNESCO, introduced the session.

27. In her remarks, Vice-President and Minister Morreale stressed the need to rethink institutional conceptions of apprenticeship and the resulting training landscape. In this context, she mentioned a number of recent successes in Belgium (Wallonia) in the field of lifelong guidance and training. In particular, she mentioned an innovative scheme ("Coup de boost"), supported by the trade unions, which helps young NEETs to return to the labour market, as well as the creation of centres ("Carrefour et Cités des métiers") to support every citizen who wants to build their career plan or change professional direction. Finally, she concluded her speech by stressing the importance of bridging the digital divide, which can lead to isolation and undermine social inclusion.

28. In his keynote presentation, OECD Director Stefano Scarpetta underscored the importance of promoting effective learning and career pathways across the life course for responding effectively to the rapid shifts taking place in labour markets. This entails taking action early in life to prepare youth in initial education for future economies and societies. He reminded delegates of the importance of integrating work-based and on-the-job learning to help prepare youth for future jobs. In adulthood, it entails providing good access to upskilling and reskilling opportunities. However, he provided evidence that, despite progress over the last decade, still too few adults participate in adult learning, and that participation is quite unequal. He spoke about the role guidance services can play in helping adults navigate a changing labour market. He also reminded delegates of the importance of engaging all stakeholders – such as employers, trade unions, education and training providers, civil society and others – in skills policy as they possess first-hand insights about what works for whom and can engage youth and adults to help ensure they make informed choices about learning and career pathways. He also commented on the very important role employers play as providers of training for adults.

29. As input for discussions, three questions were shared with participants on the topic of *Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities* (see Box 3).

Box 3. Discussion questions for participants at the Skills Summit Session 2: Creating learning and career pathways that lead to new opportunities

1. How is your country preparing youth in initial education for future economies and societies (e.g. adapting curricula, building a foundation for lifelong learning, providing career guidance, etc.)?
2. What support measures and incentives are in place to stimulate adults to adapt their skills sets and careers to new future opportunities and changing skills needs?
3. How are government and stakeholders working together to ensure that learning pathways and opportunities are responsive to new future opportunities and changing skills needs?

Highlights of discussion

30. Delegates reflected on the many factors that highlight the need for improving learning and career pathways to new opportunities. As in the previous session, a number of delegates spoke about the challenge of preparing youth for professions that do not even exist today. One delegate mentioned the importance of visualising learning and careers as a highway with on- and off-ramps instead of as ladders to underscore the increasing regularity of transitions and importance of efficiently facilitating them to ensure people stay employed or find new or better jobs.

31. Many expressed concern that still too many young people have bad experiences in school, with deleterious impacts on their school performance and completion, as well as on their motivation to learn in adulthood. For some, curricula that emphasise memorisation of factual knowledge was a key problem. They argued for the introduction of competency-based curricula, informed by a strong understanding of labour market needs. Others mentioned the importance of investing in teacher training and infrastructure to ensure all students have access to the technologies (e.g. robotics, AI, etc) they will use in workplaces. This was seen as valuable not only for strengthening the link between education and the world of work, but also for strengthening school completion. Some delegates highlighted policies their countries had introduced to ensure that youth had early exposure to technology to stimulate their interest in both the technology and learning.

32. Effective pathways to post-secondary education were seen as critical given that higher levels of education are increasingly required for most jobs. Delegates identified a number of key supports such as access and tailored career advice, accessible and high quality skills and labour market information; access to work-based learning and/or internships; and access to industry recognised credentials. Once again, the importance of elevating the status of VET to promote greater participation was mentioned.

33. In recognition of the increasing need to upskill or reskill in adulthood, delegates discussed a wide range of measures to encourage and support adult learning. Strong career and learning guidance systems were viewed as critical to support and inform learning. Some delegates noted the importance of short-term training programmes delivered in partnership with employers to help adults quickly acquire the skills needed to return to work or find better jobs. Others noted the importance of flexible provision to meet the needs of learners, as well as measures to better align the training offer with labour market needs. Others still noted the importance of systems to recognise and certify of skills no matter where and when acquired to facilitate learning pathways and career mobility. Delegates also mentioned other measures to support worker pathways, including “skills plans”, entrepreneurship programmes, training leaves, and tax incentives for companies invest in peoples’ skills. A number of countries mentioned that individual learning accounts (ILA) can be an important tool for motivating learning, but also noted that they needed to be complemented with strong guidance and quality assurance systems to ensure their success.

34. The importance of social dialogue and partnerships was also seen as important for strengthening learning and career pathways since employers and labour, education and training providers and other stakeholders are well positioned to help learners to make informed decisions. A few countries mentioned that they had created sectoral skills councils with industry representation that help to draft recommendations on skills needs and support curricular reform. Skills Pacts, such as the European Pact for Skills, were given as example of an instrument that can help bring together social partners, public employment services, and other industrial stakeholders in common purpose to support people to develop skills that are most needed in the labour market.

Session 3 – Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities

Setting the scene

35. In the third session, the topic of discussions was *Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities*. To ensure that everyone can thrive in a rapidly changing world, countries should develop inclusive skills systems that support the people most vulnerable (e.g. young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, jobseekers, workers in jobs at risk of disappearing, etc.), to adapt to changes in the world of work. To reach these people and to provide them with the required support, countries should build bridges between governments and the actors who work most directly with them.

36. The session was co-chaired by Minister Bernard Clerfayt, Brussels’ Minister responsible for Employment and Vocational Training, Digital Transition, Local Authorities, and Animal Welfare, Minister

Caroline Désir, Minister for Education of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, Etienne Gilliard, Director General of Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Scientific Research of the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and Andreas Schleicher, OECD Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills.

37. Minister Bernard Clerfayt spoke about an issue of inclusion common for urban areas: the challenge of a labour market mainly made up of jobs for highly skilled workers and, at the same time, a very low-skilled population. He stressed the need to do a better job of engaging NEETs to prepare them to fill shortage occupations and provided a few examples of successful initiatives in Brussels, such as one in which they partner with community service organisations to reach out to NEETs where they live. He noted that Brussels has made paid training leave also accessible to parttime workers, which has greatly improved their take up by women. In her remarks, Minister Caroline Désir focused on the role of school and teachers to support inclusion and success in learning for all. She highlighted a series of reforms in the French-speaking Community of Belgium designed to combat inequality, including lowering the starting age in school, shortening school holidays, making specialist support available to pupils with autism, and providing financial support to buy supplies for children from disadvantaged families. For his part, Director General Etienne Gilliard highlighted the importance of reaching out to the most vulnerable groups, providing them with support, guidance and orientation. This should be done in a coordinated, centralised way. He also stressed the importance of making learning pathways flexible so as to equip everyone with the skills needed to meet the major societal challenges.

38. In his keynote presentation, OECD Director Andreas Schleicher noted that opportunity gaps open up early in life, compound in childhood and persist into adulthood. He provided evidence that students from disadvantaged schools often do not have access to the same resources as those from advantaged schools. He also noted that many disadvantaged students are not choosing educational paths that will lead to the jobs they aspire to and explained that this misalignment between educational paths and aspirations must be closed if disadvantaged students are to develop the skills for success in future labour markets and societies. He also pointed to very large gender gap in aspirations for ICT jobs, with girls far less likely to aspire to careers in ICT than boys. These sorts of opportunity gaps persist in adulthood, as evidenced by the fact that 6 in 10 adults are not participating in any form of adult learning and most of these non-participants do not even perceive a need for further learning despite the significant transformations taking place in our economies and societies. Director Schleicher argued that we need to change how we think about learning, noting that while in the past we viewed learning as the path to work, now we must view work as an important place of learning.

As input for discussions, three questions were shared with participants on the topic of *Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities* (see Box 4).

Box 4. Discussion questions for participants at the Skills Summit Session 3: Enabling everyone to develop the skills for new opportunities

1. How is the learning system in your country supporting the most disadvantaged groups in society?
2. Do the adults who are vulnerable to changing economies and societies and are not yet participating in learning (e.g. low educated workers, jobseekers, the inactive) have access to sufficient information and guidance on lifelong learning, as well as accessible learning opportunities?
3. How is your country working with stakeholders (e.g. at the local level) to encourage and support vulnerable adults' participation in education and training?

Highlights of discussion

39. Delegates were unanimous in their expressed commitment to ensuring that all people have access to opportunities to succeed in learning, regardless of their socioeconomic background, ethnicity, migrant background, language, disability, etc. They shared examples of a wide range of initiatives their countries were undertaking to ensure that this aspiration becomes a reality. These initiatives included both preventive and remedial measures.

40. Delegates discussed the reasons why our societies should concern themselves with ensuring that all people have opportunities to succeed in learning. Many delegates emphasised the social benefits, such as facilitating their employment and wellbeing and reducing social welfare and health costs. Others noted that supporting up- and reskilling of disadvantaged populations was good economic policy. For example, some noted that disadvantaged populations are an important, untapped pool of talent that can be trained to fill shortage occupations.

41. A number of delegates emphasised the importance of overcoming aspirational and motivation gaps. In this context, some mentioned the need to ensure that girls as well as boys are aspiring to develop STEM skills and that they have access to opportunities that allow them to act on these aspirations. Many commented on the need to reach out to youth NEETs and re-engage them in learning or work.

42. The importance of tailoring education policies to the needs of different learners was discussed at length. For example, some delegates spoke of adapting school curricula to the needs of different learners. The importance of early warning systems to identify pupils in danger of falling out of school and targeting them with additional support was also given as a good practice. Some mentioned that their countries are providing extra advice and support to parents and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as subsidies and co-financing for books, materials, meals and transportation.

43. VET was again discussed at some length, in this session as an important means for engaging and supporting school completion among disadvantaged populations. Some argued that VET provides a good pathway to jobs for disadvantaged populations as it offers a more tangible learning experience and direct exposure to the world of work. Along similar lines, some highlighted initiatives undertaken to provide career guidance from very early grades, as a means to motivate disadvantaged students to remain in school.

44. Many delegates spoke of the need to strengthen access to learning among unemployed or inactive adults. Several mentioned that their countries were promoting work-based learning for these groups, including internships and apprenticeships. Others mentioned efforts they are taking to strengthen active labour market policies, including by providing improved outreach through public employment services, the provision of free and equal access to employment, training and self-employment programmes, as well as providing employment opportunities in public works. Others still mentioned that they are offering tax incentives to businesses that train or employ vulnerable populations. The importance of investing in the integration of newcomers by supporting the recognition of previous degrees and skills, as well as access to further education and training was also noted.

45. Some delegates highlighted the need to make education and training provision more flexible to better meet the needs of certain groups of disadvantaged adults. For example, it was noted that many workers on fixed-term or non-regular employment contracts need access to counselling and training opportunities offered outside of standard hours and provided in different modalities. A couple of delegates spoke of promoting digital learning, not only as a means to support the development of digital skills among disadvantaged populations but also as a means to reach those who might otherwise lack access to learning opportunities, such as those living in rural or under-serviced areas.

46. As in the other sessions, a number of delegates highlighted the important role of social partners. For example, it was noted that business and community service organisations can be important agents to engage disadvantaged populations and encourage and support their return to education, training or work.

Conclusions

47. Following reflections by Minister Bernard Clerfayt and OECD Deputy Secretary-General Yoshiki Takeuchi, delegates at Skills Summit 2024 confirmed the importance of building a vision of the skills people will need to take advantage of the opportunities ahead of us and of ensuring that people have access to learning and career pathways that support the achievement of that vision. Delegates commented that action in this regard will be key to ensuring that their countries and people will be able to thrive in the context of the digital and green transitions, population aging and other megatrends, which are already leading to growing skills shortages and have the potential to exacerbate inequalities.

48. Many delegates spoke of the challenges of anticipating skills needs in a time of profound change. Some spoke of the need to make better use of the same technologies that are helping to drive change, such as AI, to help us to assess what these changes mean for future skills needs.

The importance of developing a broad set of skills was also strongly stressed; not just technical skills, but also general cognitive and meta cognitive skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, as well as transversal skills such as communication and teamwork skills.

49. Many delegates expressed the need for a vision for the future that not only responds to emerging challenges, but also establishes our aspirations for the future. For many, this entailed developing a vision for the skills their countries need to build a competitive advantage or advance strategic economic priorities. For many, it also meant developing a vision of the skills needed to bolster democratic values and civic engagement and strengthen inclusion.

50. Getting a good start in learning was seen as key to developing the right skills and stimulating motivation to continue learning throughout life. Countries are launching a wide range of initiatives to help ensure this actually happens, from reducing the age of school entry to adopting competency-based curricula. Many countries are also introducing measures to support the success of children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, from early warning systems to financial support for meals and school supplies.

51. VET was seen to provide an important pathway to work, and one which could be particularly useful for those preferring a more practical learning experience as well as for youth from many disadvantaged groups. The skills developed in VET were also seen as critical to address skills shortages. However, a widely held concern was that too few youth today aspire to enrol in VET. Many spoke of the need to elevate the status of VET in our societies.

52. Ensuring that adults have opportunities and the motivation to engage in lifelong learning was another key objective shared by most countries. Countries have introduced a wide range of initiatives to support this aim, including: strengthening the collection and dissemination of skills and labour market information, improving the provision of learning and career guidance, offering short-term training to promote quick returns to work, introducing Individual Learning Accounts, and offering financial incentives to employers to invest in the skills of their employees. Once again, delegates emphasised the importance of providing targeted support to those in need to ensure that they are not left behind.

53. Another recurring theme was the importance of fostering collaboration and co-ordination across the many government entities and with stakeholders that have an interest and role to play in the development and effective use of skills. While ministries responsible for education and employment have an obvious role to play in skills policies, there is also an important role for those with responsibility for economy, innovation, migration, taxation, among others. Effective and efficient skills systems are ones where the efforts of these actors are aligned and co-ordinated. Social partners and stakeholders have a critical role to play since they are the holders of knowledge about skills needs, can help to engage disadvantaged and inactive youth and adults in education, training and work, and are themselves important

providers of learning opportunities. Delegates shared their experiences in fostering collaboration through formal engagement bodies such as skills and sector councils.

54. Moving forward on these fronts will require leadership, vision, and perseverance. It is hoped that the generous sharing of experiences and good practices at the Summit will provide the inspiration needed to take further steps forward. The OECD looks forward to its continued engagement with countries and other international organisations to bolster the momentum for building a future-oriented skills agenda. Delegates also look forward to the next Skills Summit in 2026, where they will hopefully all be in position to speak of the positive steps we made since the 2024 Summit.

Annex A. Participating countries and organisations

Countries	International and regional organisations	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • Belgium • Bulgaria • Canada • Chile • Colombia • Costa Rica • Croatia • Czechia • France • Greece • Hungary • Ireland • Italy • Japan • Latvia • Lithuania • Luxembourg • Malta • Mexico • Morocco • Peru • Poland • Portugal • Romania • Slovak Republic • Slovenia • South Africa • Spain • Sweden • Switzerland • Thailand • The Netherlands • Türkiye • United Kingdom • United States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILO • UNESCO • European Commission • Council of Europe • OIF • EESC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business at OECD (BIAC) • The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD

Annex B. Keynote speakers' biographies

Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Nicolas Schmit assumed the role of European Commissioner responsible for Jobs and Social Rights in December 2019. Prior to this, he served as a Member of the European Parliament for the social-democratic *Lëtzebuenger Sozialistesche Aarbechterpartei* following his election in May 2019.

Mr. Schmit has had an extensive career in public service within his native Luxembourg. He served as Minister for Labour and Employment in the Luxembourgish Government from 2009 to 2018 and prior to this, was Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Immigration from 2004. Additionally, from 1998 to 2004, he served as the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the European Union. Nicolas Schmit holds a Doctorate in International Economic Relations and a Masters in French Literature from the University of Aix-Marseille.

Mariana Mazzucato, Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London

Mariana Mazzucato is a professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London, where she is the Founding Director of the university's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP). Previously, she has held the RM Phillips Professional Chair at the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University.

She advises policymakers internationally on innovation-led inclusive and sustainable growth. Her advisory roles have included Chair of the World Health Organisation's Council on the Economics of Health for All, Co-Chair of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, and membership of the South African President's Economic Advisory Council.

Mariana Mazzucato is also an author. She published "The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens our Business, Infantilises our Governments and Warps our Economies" in 2023 and, during her position of Special Advisor for the EC Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation from 2017 to 2019, she authored the high-impact report, "Mission-Oriented Research and Innovation In the European Union".

Shravan Goli, Chief Operating Officer of Coursera

Shravan Goli is the Chief operating Officer of Coursera, one of the world's largest online learning platforms that partners with over 300 leading universities and industry partners which has allowed institutions around the globe to upskill and reskill their employees, citizens, and students in various domains including science, technology, and business. Prior to his role as COO, he held the post of Chief Product Officer at Coursera from 2018-2022.

Beyond Coursera, Shravan Goli holds a position on the Board of Directors for NETGEAR, contributing to committees on Software and Subscriptions and Nominations and Governance. Aside from corporate roles, he has also served as an Angel Investor for startups such as CirroSecure.

He has held previous leadership positions, including President at Dice.com from 2013 to 2016, and as Chief Executive Officer at Dictionary.com from 2009-2013.

Mia Seppo, Assistant Director-General for the Jobs and Social Protection Cluster, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Mia Seppo is the Assistant Director-General for the Jobs and Social Protection Cluster at the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Prior to assuming this position, she had a two decade-long career at the United Nations, where she worked on issues related to development effectiveness. From 2021 to 2023, she was the UNDP Resident Representative in Zimbabwe, from 2017 to 2021, she was the UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, and from 2013 to 2017, she was the UN Resident Coordinator in Malawi. Prior to these senior positions, Ms. Seppo's was Country Director for Sierra Leone 2010 to 2013, an advisor for Crisis and Post-Crisis Countries from 2005 to 2010 and a Change Management Advisor from 2004 to 2005.

Mona Laroussi, Director of the Institute of the Francophonie for Education and TVET (IFEFF) and professor at the University de Carthage (Tunis) and the University of Lille (France)

Mona Laroussi is the Director of the Institute of the Francophonie for Education and TVET (IFEFF) and a professor at the University of Lille in France. Previously, from 2014 to 2017, she held the position of Executive Director at the Institut de la Francophonie for Knowledge Engineering and Distance Learning within the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF).

Mona Laroussi's research has focused on Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Personalised Learning Environments (PEL). In 2023 she co-authored the article "Open Educational Resources and Open Education: The RELIEFH Ecosystem for Gender Equality" and in 2021, she authored "Digital technology in the training of teachers and support staff in Africa." Prior to her current role, she serves as a professor at the University of Carthage from 2001 to 2013.

Annex C. Contact information

El Iza Mohamedou, Head, OECD Centre for Skills (el-iza.mohamedou@oecd.org)

Andrew Bell, Deputy Head, OECD Centre for Skills (andrew.bell@oecd.org)

Bart Staats, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Skills (bart.staats@oecd.org)

Laura Reznikova, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Skills (laura.reznikova@oecd.org)

Raf Boey, Senior Policy Advisor, Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy (raf.boey@vlaanderen.be)

Martin Ouaklani, Wallonia, Brussels and Wallonia-Brussels Federation (m.ouaklani@delwalbru.be).