



## Joint declaration

### of the Employers' Group of the EESC

### and the Association of the Organizations of the Bulgarian Employers

## ***Bridging the skills gap for growth and job creation***

The ongoing megatrends such as globalisation, digitalisation and demographic development are having a profound impact on the economy and the world of work. They entail enormous opportunities, but also challenge Member States, societies and employers to keep up with the pace of change with regard to:

- the disruptive technological developments across the world,
- the ageing of the workforce and the increase in life expectancy,
- profound changes in labour markets and the individualisation of work,
- the increasing skills and generations gaps, and
- the new skills and key competences needed in all sectors of the economy, society and working life.

This calls for reforms in Member States' labour markets and education, vocational education and training (VET) and apprenticeship systems to create a genuine European education area to meet the current and future challenges and succeed in the worldwide battle for talents. The signatories to this declaration, also underlining the role of the social partners and the declared partnership for reforms, firmly believe that this requires implementing the following measures:

#### **In labour markets, we need to:**

- ensure that skills match the needs of the labour market. This calls for addressing skills shortages and the widening skills gaps,
- remove obstacles to job creation and full labour market participation and integration of the entire available workforce, including by benefiting from the positive potential and synergies of different generations,
- advise, motivate and mobilise young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) to find suitable career paths,
- encourage and motivate individuals to take responsibility for developing their skills,
- adapt to the changing nature of work and the need for new patterns in labour relations,

- use the flexicurity approach in order to adapt labour legislation to the modern economy's requirements.

**In education systems we need to:**

- continuously strive for improved quality and effectiveness in order to produce more and better quality with the resources available,
- create conditions for young people to gain relevant skills and key competences at all stages of education and training. Among other things, this requires changing the education paradigm by shifting to cross-functional and interdisciplinary knowledge based on creative thinking and competence building,
- foster creativity, an entrepreneurial mind-set and mobility in education and training at all levels,
- invest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills from primary to higher education as well as in lifelong learning,
- foster lifelong learning on the basis of adaptable and innovative learning methods,
- promote work-based learning and VET and reinforce links between businesses and education providers to avoid skills mismatches,
- ensure wide access to developing skills and competences in a knowledge-based economy.

All this would allow us to turn the human potential and talent into a decisive factor for economic growth, productivity and competitiveness. Continued efforts are needed to ensure that the Member States' education, VET and apprenticeships systems are well-functioning and provide individuals with a broad set of skills needed in the modern economy.

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