Digitalisation, SDGs & Future of work: addressing tomorrow's skills and jobs challenges

15 October 2019

REPORT

On 15 October 2019, ACCA (The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), PwC, BSA | The Software Alliance and European Movement International, organised an event titled **Digitalisation, SDGs & Future of work: addressing tomorrow's skills and jobs challenges.** This was a side event related to **Finland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, and part of the **European Vocational Skills Week 2019**.

After a welcome speech by **Helen Brand**, OBE, ACCA's Chief Executive, a speech by **Petros Fassoulas**, Secretary General of European Movement International and a video message from **Eva Maydell**, MEP, the panel discussion moderated by Dr. **Kristina Dervojeda**, leader of PwC Innovation Research Centre at PwC Netherlands, welcomed **Mark Keese**, Head of Skills and Employability Division at the OECD, **Kasia Jurczak**, Member of Cabinet of Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility; **Martina Bisello**, Research Officer, Employment Unit at Eurofound; **Matteo Quattrocchi,** Senior Manager, Policy - EMEA at BSA | The Software Alliance and **Anna Widegren,** Secretary General of the European Youth Forum. A video message was also delivered by MEP **Dragos Pîslaru**. **Riikka-Maria Turkia**, Counsellor for Employment, Finnish Permanent Representation to the EU, gave the concluding remarks.

All speakers agreed that to shift mentalities, we need everyone to be on board, this must be a collective effort. Policy makers, youth organisations, individuals, employers, education providers, civil society, we all need to think how to develop the professional skills needed in this changing world, also going beyond technical knowledge.

Anticipation of future skills needs plays an important role, as well as flexible ways of learning, including on the job training. Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a good way to develop initial, labour market relevant skills, but also to up-skill and re-skill later in life. Speakers reminded the need to address both low and high end of skills distribution, as one third of the EU labour force has no or almost no digital skills, and agreed that the important question is how to motivate people to participate in lifelong learning and how to balance the responsibility between the public and private sectors and also the individuals.

Main highlights

Helen Brand, OBE, Chief Executive, ACCA

- The economic landscape is shifting with great velocity across many domains and these are set to have radical impacts. Understanding these shifts and finding the right response is therefore a critical task.
- Given our global and forward thinking nature, it's part of ACCA's DNA to explore global trends and issues for business, economics, society and our profession as a whole. These wider interconnected megatrends, which are important contextual issues for business, map very much to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs. For example: technology is impacting our daily lives significantly; demographics are rebalancing future prospects – from the demands of millennials and their preferences, to an older generation living longer; new value creation is dealing with the rise of intangibles and value that does not appear on balance sheets and the changing nature of work means employment is becoming more flexible, and subject to faster disruption, with the rapid rise of the on-demand economy and the spread of new forms of digital labour and business models.
- The Future of work is a worldwide concern, strongly enshrined in the SDGs and Digital is probably the biggest factor shaping it.
- For finance professionals and the accountancy profession, there are many different technologies impacting the future roles that our students and members will perform: automation, robotics, cloud, cyber, social, AI and blockchain. Digital technology is therefore transforming the role and the competencies accountants require. Smart software systems are replacing manual work (like bookkeeping), and automating more complex AND multifaceted processes such as the financial close. We are already seeing increased adoption of cloud computing by business and, as technology advances, there will be further development of intelligent automated accounting systems.
- The expectations businesses have of finance professionals and professional accountants are also evolving. All professional accountants are increasingly expected to look beyond the numbers. They need to have the skills not only to meet more frequent requests for holistic and forward-looking information, but also more frequent ad-hoc reporting from ever-more demanding stakeholders, as the barriers are eroded between financial and non-financial performance.
- Ethics and integrity will also be critical professional skills, forming part of a broader competency framework that includes softer capabilities such as interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.
- And what is true for finance professionals also applies to our modern economies at large. In our global, fast-evolving, digitalised world, it is imperative to understand the impact – both in terms of disruption and opportunities- of artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and other digital technologies on employment, as well as current and future labour market demand. And of course to take the appropriate actions to re-skill and up-skill the current workforce and make we are equipping the coming generations for the future of work
- The Joint Research Centre, recently launched its report called 'The changing nature of work and skills in the digital age'. This offers an evidence-based analysis of the impact of technology on labour markets and the need to adapt education policies to boost digital skills.
- Through the ACCA Qualification, we are working to support the development of dynamic professional accountants who are strategic forward-thinkers and who can thrive in this world of constant technological change and global connectedness. We're looking to equip our students with the real-world skills and expertise they need to make an immediate positive impact in all types of organisation – whether in the public or private sectors, in industry or professional services and public practice.

- ACCA has identified digital - the awareness and application of existing and emerging digital technologies, capabilities, practices and strategies - as one of our seven professional quotients vital for success.
- ACCA research suggests that to add value, the professional accountant of the future will need an optimal and changing combination of professional and interpersonal skills; a collection of technical knowledge, skills and abilities, combined with interpersonal behaviours and qualities. Some of these may be assessed using standardised tests and others not so easily. Collectively this is what our research has defined as the professional quotients of future accountants, at the centre of which technical and ethical skills feature prominently.
- ACCA has an established digital and technology research programme, which includes our latest research on Machine Learning, outlining the tremendous opportunities this area has for our profession, and why ethical judgment and emotional intelligence remain vital attributes.
- In our research, we define emotional intelligence is 'the ability to identify your own emotions and those of others, harness and apply them to tasks, and regulate and manage them'. And, to help our members, students and anyone to maximise their emotional superpower, we have developed a unique diagnostic tool which assesses your level of Emotional Quotient against a global benchmark specific to the accountancy profession. Everyone can find out how they personally score against our EQ benchmark by taking this online survey.
- The pace of change means constant evolution if a professional body and its qualifications are to remain relevant to employers. To ensure we continue to meet the changing demands of the profession, ACCA undertakes an annual syllabus review. We go beyond the technical and financial competencies expected of newly qualified ACCA members. Our qualification now also delivers the professional competencies that are required and highly sought after by employers.
- Thanks to our research, we deliver the relevant digital skills that our students and members need by firmly embedding our findings throughout the ACCA Qualification and our CPD resources.
- A key driver of these changes is the expectations captured by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. When we speak about wider reporting and the increasing importance of non-financial disclosures, this is to deliver better social and environmental performance. For professional accountants and finance teams, their active involvement in this is essential.
- We've recently explored progress here in detail in a new report on *Social and Environmental Value Creation*. It examines the role of business in ESG issues and assesses the current state of corporate disclosures on key social and environmental issues around the world. And it sets out five concrete approaches to follow that can support professional accountant to build a more environmentally aware and socially just world. They are: reporting on climate risk; understanding business dependencies on natural capital; measuring social impact; and leading on purpose-led strategies.
- Deploying a mix of these disclosure and decision-making tools and provides the profession with a way to build the economies of the future and start doing it today.
- But to take up the challenge, the profession needs to build it competencies in four areas: Firstly scientific expertise, with new domains of knowledge and a deeper understanding linked to environmental limits, risks and opportunities; Secondly, understanding societal impact and being able to better assess it and opening up the opportunity for greater value creation; Thirdly, collaboratively even more effectively with others across different fields; and lastly, recognising the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues and making sure strategies and priorities reflect them both.
- We believe that professional accountants can support this in many ways through their existing skillsets and by reaching our across their own organisation. By interacting with wider stakeholders on these complex challenges, they will be able to speed up the

transition needed if we are to deliver the SDGs by 2030. And ACCA is fully committed to this by developing professional accountants with a wider of view of business that covers financial, digital, social and sustainability, alongside an ethical mindset. In short, as ACCA's vision states, leading in developing the accountancy profession the world needs.

- To shift mentalities, we need everyone to be on board. As individuals, employers, education providers, policy makers, we all need to think how to develop the professional skills needed in this changing world, also going beyond technical knowledge. But this requires both a certain mind-set and probably a kind of paradigm shift for many.

Eva Maydell, MEP, President of European Movement International

- It's a common cliché that a 12-year old student today has barely an idea what his job in 10 years will be. However, the same is valid for their parents. And it is more dramatic because adaptation to 21st century jobs is more challenging for those who are aware of the 20 century work.
- Technological development means that more and more often humans and machines work and interact together. Digital skills are not competences of the future but necessary skills of today.
- That is why I have embraced education and upskilling of our society as a personal mission and have been working for it. To be successful, this mission requires the active engagement of every business, institution and civil society actor in Europe.

Petros Fassoulas, Secretary General, the European Movement International

- Digitalisation presents an enormous opportunity for our continent. But there are some conditions in order to materialise this opportunity. First of all, we need to develop new e-skills that are integrated in education systems and make sure that young people are equipped with necessary skills. It is crucial that the existing workforce is trained and re-trained because technology is changing much faster than our education systems.
- It is very important to support SMEs, especially when it comes to finance and infrastructures. We must support areas such as e-health, e-commerce and e-governance because opportunities here are enormous. Digitalisation can help our democracy as much as our economy. We also need to promote sustainable growth.
- We cannot continue doing things the way we used to. We shouldn't forget the workforce that needs support, especially when it comes to precarious forms of employment. Necessary regulatory frameworks need to be put in place.
- All these elements must be integrated – European institutions and member states need to make sure that regulatory frameworks are closely aligned at the European level.

Dr. Kristina Dervojeda, leader of PwC Innovation Research Centre, PwC Netherlands

- PwC is involved in many studies on the future of work and education. PwC is also closely working with the World Economic Forum on issues related to the future of work. A new global upskilling initiative **New World. New Skills** has recently been launched.
- The topic of future of work is immense and can be looked at from many different perspectives. It can be approached from global, as well as individual level.
- Instead of preparing for the future of work we should talk about creating the future of work. PwC research shows that this perspective is missing in current approach on education and training. We are imposing many rules on workers and instead we should be explaining young people that the future of work is in their hands, it is up to them to create the world that they want to work and live in.
- One of the top priorities is upskilling teachers but it is even more important that teachers are supported by leaders of their institutions.

Mark Keese, Head of Skills and Employability Division, OECD

- The OECD has recently published a report on the future of work. We talk a lot about the megatrend of digitalisation but we should remember that technological change has been with us for hundreds of years and has already had a huge impact at different times on the labour market, notably during the first industrial revolution.
- What is different this time is that a number of megatrends are hitting the labour market at the same time. In addition to the digital revolution, we also have globalisation, more intense global competition, ageing population and climate change. All of these things are major disruptors of the labour market and are changing the skills we need for successful careers.
- This raises many challenges for sustainable development goals. It is important to consider SDGs, in particular SDG 4 – the promotion of gender equality – will digitalisation have a disproportionate impact on women's jobs compared to men's jobs? SDG 8 regarding decent work for all – technological change can improve the quality of jobs but it can also destroy jobs and lead to worse job quality, e.g. if it reduces autonomy and reinforces monitoring and control. SDG 10 – reducing inequality within and among countries – new technologies may widen inequalities and some groups might be left behind.
- Responding to these challenges requires a good diagnostic of what is actually changing in the labour market and how do we expect these changes to happen going forward. Much of the debate has focused on job destruction by new technologies. The OECD finds that we don't have to worry about mass technological unemployment. In fact, employment rates in many counties are at record high levels. What we need to worry about is how we facilitate job-to-job changes and changes within jobs.

- The OECD's research shows that only about 14% of current jobs have a high risk of being completely automated and employment has been rising overall. However, an additional 32% of workers may see substantial changes in their job as many of the job tasks they perform will be automated.
- In order to address many of the challenges, we must ensure that people have access to lifelong learning and can keep their skills up to date. The answer lies in SDG 4 – access to quality education and lifelong learning.
- We need to understand how well are countries doing in achieving this goal. According to the OECD's recent report on *Future-Ready Adult Learning Systems*, not well enough. All countries can do better in improving their adult learning systems.
- There is a substantial skill mismatch across European countries. Countries are failing in their initial education to provide skills that young people need to successfully enter the labour market. This is not just the technical skills, social and emotional skills are also very important in the modern labour market.
- Moreover, i terms of lifelong learning, only about 40% of adults across the OECD countries have participated in any learning in a 12-month period, with enormously variation within and between countries.
- Many adults are disengaged from learning. About 82% of adults report that they are not interested in learning, in fact they often face time or financial constraints. Therefore we must make learning more flexible and do better in financing adult learning.
- A better job must be done in providing information about future skill needs and the training that is needed,.
- The social partners must be involved; they have a key role, it is not just up to the governments to act.
- If we take these changes on board, we can take a proactive stance and shape the future of work with our policies.
- Digital tools can be a part of the solution, not just a part of the problem. They provide a more individual way of learning – we all have different needs and styles of learning. However, part of the problem is that not all adults have the necessary digital skills to use these tools; we cannot just simply rely on digital tools, we must ensure that basic programmes to improve digital skills are provided. Moreover, it is not just having digital skills that is important but what you do with them that makes the difference.
- We can also use digital technologies to do a better job at forecasting skill needs and making this information accessible for everyone.
- We should also not take skill demands as given as these can be influenced by government policies and business practices. In particular, the quality of management practices matters a lot. Adoption and use of technology really depends on it.
- More generally, we need to avoid taking a passive approach to policy making where we wait for problems to arrive and then try to come up with solutions. We should instead be shaping the future of work.

Kasia Jurczak, Member of Cabinet of Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

- The available studies and evidence on the impact of digitalisation on the labour market andthe future of work varies – from very optimistic to very pessimistic scenarios. The EU policy approach is based on cautious optimism. The EU recognises challenges associated with the increased digitalisation, but also opportunities that can be captured as long as we are prepared.
- Individuals will experience multiple transitions in their life – between jobs and occupations, no longer just one job for life. Businesses also need to take action, especially in upskilling workers. As societies, we also need to be ready for an open discussion, to address fears of many people. The discussion on the future of work needs to take place not only with the people in the know; it must involve all ages and all education statuses.

- Alongside with digitalisation, we have to think of social and environmental megatrends that we are facing and the SDGs offer a great framework in this regard.
- Having the right skills is key regarding preparation for digitisation. Having the right links between education providers and employers is very important, as well as adjusting our social security systems to cater for new forms of work.
- We need evidence before taking any action. The recent Joint research Center report on the **changing nature of work and skills in the digital age** shows how the idea of a worker has changed over time. Digitalisation not only creates jobs but also enables other jobs to change. It is not about jobs appearing or disappearing, it is about the content of jobs.
- Jobs that are the most difficult to automate are jobs that require human-specific capabilities, such as creativity, autonomy, sociability. These are the skills that at current stage AI is not able to replace. Jobs of the future will require combination of digital with human skills.
- Vocational education is often being presented as a second choice. However, it can be a great way to upskill or reskill also later in life.
- Europe has a huge demand of high-level digital skills but there is also a huge gap in delivery of courses. The future EU budget, an in particular Digital Europe Programme, is foreseeing funding for courses on high-level digital skills. Basic digital skill are also very important, however many people don't have reading or writing skills which makes it more difficult to operate digital tools.
- As regards to EC plans in the area of future of work, skills will remain high on the agenda. The mandate letter of the incoming Commissioner for Jobs Nicolas Schmit mentions update of the skills agenda. One of the elements will be exploring the possibility to have individual learning accounts. Like with any commission initiative, stakeholders will be invited to contribute to public consultation and express their opinion on the aspects of this new initiative.
- The issue of career guidance is very important.
- When it comes to the approach in addressing digitalisation and the rise of Artificial Intelligence, the US has taken a corporation-driven approach; Europe promotes a very unique approach that puts human in the centre of policy making. This will continue in the new European Commission.
- While education is a national competence, EU is introducing some soft measures. An important aspect of quality education are good teachers. Not only teachers of digital skills but all teachers across the board need to be upskilled and be able to use digital technologies to teach their subjects in an interesting way.

Martina Bisello, Research Officer, Employment Unit, Eurofound

- The future of work is being shaped by various powerful forces, the so-called mega trends that we are all aware of (technological development, climate change, demographic shifts, globalisation). We can essentially identify three main different vectors of technological change: automation of work, digitisation of processes and coordination by platforms.
- These three elements complement each other, however among the three, automation of work is the one that has very important implications in terms of human input, structure of employment by sector and occupation, and therefore the skill needs.
- According to Eurobarometer 2017, around 70% of respondents fear that robots will steal their jobs and that they destroy more jobs than they create. It is necessary to acknowledge that there is a substantial difference between replacing technologies that make jobs and skills redundant and enabling technologies that make people more productive in existing tasks or increase the quality of the output. For instance, the use of computer-aided diagnosis has become a part of the routine screening process in many hospitals, but has not replace radiologists in detecting lesions and assessing the extent of the disease; instead it gives them a second opinion with which to improve and adjust their initial diagnosis. Another example is the use of collaborative robots or 'cobots' in

manufacturing. These are light and mobile robots designed to work alongside with humans and/or safely directly interact with them in a shared space. Cobots are generally used to automate repetitive, unergonomic tasks - such as fetching and carrying heavy parts, machine feeding and final assembly.

- Replacement of specific tasks within jobs will change job profiles. Around 20% of workers who use computers or computerised equipment will experience change in their main job tasks.
- In terms of jobs profiles, a recent qualitative Eurofound study on the Future of Manufacturing based on workers' interviews has found evidence of "blue collar jobs" turning white, in the sense that workers in traditional manual semi-skilled jobs now performing more intellectual tasks than before, relatively to physical tasks which are instead decreasing. This is the case for instance in the automotive sector, where we can find the highest density of industrial robots. The increase in the use of digitally controlled equipment in production requires workers to have more developed ICT skills, to be able to read technical documentation and dealing with numerical information, to know how to handle errors and troubleshooting production lines.
- Predicting future skill needs is a challenging exercise. However, we can see that in recent years all the occupations that have expanded are either professionals or service and commercial managers who require a combination of ICT use and social skills, like communication, empathy or teamwork.
- In terms of ICT skills, the EU labour force has still an insufficient level and the gap should not be underestimated (although considerable variation among MS shows that there are some positive examples too). While already 90% of future jobs require some level of digital skills, 43% of Europeans lack basic digital skills (DESI, 2017 data). The gap between demand and supply for advanced digital skills is expected to widen even further: in 2018, 53 % of companies had difficulties in filling vacancies for ICT specialists (DESI, 2019). A new JRC study shows that overall academic provision in advanced digital skills in the EU (AI, high-performance computing (HPC), and cybersecurity) is low.
- Social skills are becoming increasingly important in terms of employability and remuneration. We should keep encouraging initiatives that help fostering them.
- At the macro level, institutional and social factors also play a role in shaping technological change. There is a critical gap in analysing how new technologies may play out, the scope for social actors to shape different outcomes, the role of power and interests in shaping state intervention (e.g. through public policy).
- At the micro/company level, the ultimate predictor of automation is the way work is organised. If work is organised in the way that human attributes, such as emotional intelligence, are minimised, and work is organised in a very standardised way (the case of platform economy work), this can facilitate further automation of work.
- Technological change has a great potential in making Europe leader in sustainability transition. We should make sure that this transition is socially inclusive and fair.
- Training the trainer is fundamental when it comes to digital skills. The EC Digital Education Action Plan must also be mentioned.
- Key recommendation for policy makers: fear of technological development should be transformed into opportunities.

Matteo Quattrocchi, Senior Manager, Policy - EMEA at BSA | The Software Alliance

- A recent report on software jobs published by Software.org, the BSA Foundation, incorporating analysis done by the Economist Intelligence Unit, found that all in, software was responsible for €1 trillion of total EU value-added GDP in 2016; and that across the EU, work supported by the software industry through direct, indirect, and induced contributions represents 12.7 million jobs. Many of these jobs are very high-skilled.

- Jobs in software development, computer programming, and cybersecurity are growing faster than Europe can fill them. But software jobs include far more than coding and programming. There are some sectors that would not be directly connected to software but are actually very affected by digital transformation, for example farming industry – it is very important for today's farmers to be able to manage very complex IT machinery.
- BSA has developed Global Workforce Development Agenda and has drafted four main recommendations.
    1. Broaden access to technology;
    2. Expand workforce retraining;
    3. Create alternative pathways to the evolving workforce;
    4. Improve access to Science and Technology education.
- Digital technologies are revolutionising every sector and it is therefore important that we are able to understand and harness new opportunities. This starts at school and university, and continuous during professional life.
- As regards to broadening access to technology, increasing possibilities for people to access internet is incredibly important. It increases people's opportunities, for example in job search, at the same time it allows access to additional education opportunities, such as online learning.
- Regarding education, it is essential to have the right tools. Schools must have the proper technological support.
- As regards to workforce retraining, it is fundamental that private and public sectors create opportunities. The private sector must be more flexible in creating opportunities for workers to train on the job or after work.
- Creating alternative pathways for workforce might be a complicated task because it is geographically and sector-specific. Apprenticeship programmes and technical schools can contribute a lot in this area.
- Education is foundation to all of this, especially increasing diversity in STEM field. Investment in education should therefore be a priority. Infrastructure is the underlying factor in access to technology.
- Technological innovation is driven by human needs and preferences. Inclusivity is key – everyone should be able to voice their opinions. Education remains the most fundamental point – an educated workforce is eventually going to shape the conversation in the right way.
- It is very important for the private sector to be more present at all levels. BSA is actively involved in the programme Girls Who Code.

Anna Widegren, Secretary General, European Youth Forum

- The employment circumstances for young people have improved over the past years, however we are still in a situation where 1 in 5 young people are facing poverty and social exclusion. Young people are also facing the highest unemployment compared to any other age group. The transition from education to employment is getting more and more challenging where many young people are caught in a vicious cycle of internships and are not able to access entry level jobs.
- As the world of work is transforming and new challenges are emerging, we need to acknowledge that young people are already in much more precarious situation in the labour market.
- Digitalisation must be considered when talking about future of work, however there are other megatrends that need to be taken into account, such as globalisation, changing demographics, climate change. All these megatrends are interrelated and need to be approached an addressed together.
- Earlier this year we launched a report on the key challenges and opportunities for youth in terms of the future of work. These challenges touch on five key themes:

1. Investing in young people's skills.

- Young people are often assumed to be “digital natives”. This is a myth which fails to reflect that not all young people can afford to access technology or that they have learned the skills necessary to thrive at work. Being able to use technology is not the same as having the right skills. In fact, only 18% of young people feel they have the skills necessary to thrive in the digital economy. Investing in young people’s digital skills is key, in line with SDG 4.4.
- There is a shortage of professionals with the skills related to climate adaptation and mitigation despite the strong impacts of climate change, and a lack of education around skills to produce and consume sustainably to protect our environment and achieve the targets set out in Goal 12 on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns and Goal 13 on combating climate change. Thus there is a need to invest in “green skills” that will also enable young people to seize opportunities in the growing green economy.

2. Reforming welfare systems and labour legislation

- New forms of employment and the growing trend towards forced self-employment are jeopardising access to social security. This is a challenge for young people who already face multiple barriers in accessing social protection.
- Unemployment benefits, based on a contributory model, are often inaccessible for young people looking for their first job, or who have only completed internships or short-term contracts.
- This is why it is important that in the future the welfare system shifts away from focusing on tackling unemployment and instead focuses on tackling poverty and social exclusion so it is better in line with SDG 1 on tackling poverty.

3. Safeguard workers’ rights and wellbeing

- Young people are increasingly seeking jobs that offer a good balance between their personal and professional lives. Young people also tend to look for jobs that have societal cause or reflect their values and have ethical elements in it.
- Technology offers the opportunity to improve work-life balance by defining work hours or performing telework. However, increased use of technology for work progressively blurs the line between private and working time. Many workers are never able to truly disconnect from work which can lead to absenteeism and burnout. As such, policies like the right to disconnect may be essential for the future to ensure the wellbeing of young works and to promote work life balance.

4. Create a youth-friendly labour market

- Although decreasing, the youth unemployment rate was still more than double that of the general population in 2018. This illustrates that current labour market policies are not inclusive enough for youth. Employers must be encouraged to invest in entry-level jobs for young people, thereby investing in the development of their own future workforce.
- Governments have a responsibility to strengthen the quality of on-the-job learning experiences to improve their educational value and ensure that young people can fully enjoy their social and economic rights for example through strong regulation on apprenticeships and internships.

5. Invest in a new economy

- Many of the challenges we face as a society today are the result of an economic system rooted in maximisation of short-term profit. Yet this system is unsustainable and risks only exacerbating inequalities in the future.
- To combat this, alternative business models that support human and planetary well-being are on the rise. These models offer young people a ‘socially responsible’ job and, as they are based on democracy, participation and empowerment.

- The transformational nature of the megatrends of the future will naturally change the role of work in our lives. People are looking for work that does not only generate income but also has a contribution to society. We need to make sure that social and economic inclusion is a part of that. People need to have continuous learning opportunities.

- Jobs, such as teaching or nursing, have to become more valuable in our society. Furthermore greater recognition for the added value that being active in community decision-making or in volunteering can bring is important too.
- Employers are looking for soft skills, therefore different types of education must be recognized in order to encourage that.
- Greater recognition for invisible, unpaid work, for example, such as care work or housework, would help enhance gender equality.
- We often tend to perceive that the future of work is happening to us rather than something we can shape. We should stop focussing on what future might look like and start thinking what future we want and how to get there. Youth-inclusive future must be created. Investment in education at all levels and all types of education is truly crucial in order to succeed. It is necessary to create future-proof pre-emptive policies.
- Europe is experiencing ageing teaching force and this must be addressed. Recognising different methods and ways of teaching is important.

Dragos Pîslaru, MEP (video message)

- It is important for the EP Renew Europe Group to support activities that focus on future of work, digitization and the new agenda of skills. We recognize that the future of work is one of the main challenges of tomorrow.
- We are facing challenges of technology, demography, migration and others. We have two options: one is to be reactive about it, try to be defensive and regulate; the other option, which is preferred by the Renew Europe, is to be forward looking and anticipate how to move things forward.
- The debate on future of work is being highlighted by many international organisations, such as ILO or OECD. We are dealing with a lot of uncertainty and volatility. New technologies and demand for new skills that are triggered by digitisation bring uncertainties but also opportunities for better productivity and competitiveness, also better work-life balance.
- We need to see upskilling and reskilling as integrated part of our lives. Education has become much more complex and we need lifelong learning.
- Vocational training still bears the stigma of being the alternative for less gifted students. We should go beyond this level of understanding and see education as an integrated process where theoretical and vocational training are working together for the benefit of competences and skills that we need.
- The European Semester is more and more integrating the social component and the European Commission will be integrating the SDGs. It is important to see that the attempt to fight the unemployment, especially for youth, and reskilling is taking place.

Riikka-Maria Turkia, Counsellor for Employment, Finnish Permanent Representation to the EU

- Vocational education training is seen in a very positive light in Finland, however it wasn't always the case. The country has put in a lot of targeted work in order to make it more attractive.
- The future of work is high on the agenda of the Finnish presidency. It is a way to enable sustainable growth. New modern industrial strategy for the EU is something that the presidency is also looking into.
- Digitalisation, artificial intelligence and data economy are drivers of productivity, growth, employment, prosperity and wellbeing in Europe. The Finnish Presidency has promoted an 'economy of wellbeing' - a holistic approach to increase our understanding of how people's wellbeing enhances productivity and generates economic growth in the long term. Any new policy should consider the effects on people.
- Like the European Pillar of Social Rights, the economy of wellbeing recognises the importance of equitable access to quality education and training.

- The Finnish presidency has very ambitious objectives regarding continuous learning. Opportunities for continuous learning must be generated from school age to the age of retirement and beyond.
- The Finnish presidency would like to see updating lifelong learning strategies and policies as part of the new European Commission agenda. In the EPSCO Council meeting of 24 October, Employment Ministers will have a policy debate on a strategic approach to continuous lifelong learning. Many member states agree that there is a need to update the concept of lifelong learning. The idea is to focus on continuous lifelong learning. A particular focus in the debate will be on disadvantaged people and their participation in lifelong learning.
- The EPSCO Council will also adopt the Council Conclusions on the ILO Declaration for the Future of Work. This will be the EU response and the reaction to the Declaration and the invitation for the Commission to continue its work in this area.
- The Education Council will meet on 8 November, first, to discuss effectiveness, efficiency and quality of education and training with the finance ministers. Then the education ministers will adopt Council Conclusions on the key role of lifelong learning policies in empowering societies to address the technological and green transition. The EYCS Council will also have a policy debate on artificial intelligence in education and training.
- The important question is how to motivate people to participate in lifelong learning and how to balance the responsibility between the public and private sectors and the individual.
- Anticipation of future skills needs plays a key role, as well as flexible ways of learning, including on the job training. Universities and school systems need to be able to have a long-term prognosis; active labour market policy measures need to react short-term.
- There is generally an agreement on the skills agenda – it is not a controversial topic. The main question is how to motivate people and get them involved. Strategic partners must be more proactive.
- Public sector has responsibility in providing basic education, however private sector and individuals need to take their responsibility as well. It is important that individuals engage in their self-development.
- Lifelong learning would not work without lifelong guidance. It should take into account gender aspect in order to increase women's participation in ICT sector. Diversity is necessary in all kinds of professions.