

Empowering accountancy: Bridging talent and skills for enhanced EU competitiveness

Key recommendations to drive talent development and reinforce the accountancy profession in Europe.

On 18 November 2025, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) convened an online high-level conference entitled **Empowering accountancy: Bridging talent and skills for enhanced EU competitiveness** that brought together EU policymakers, practitioners, academics and key stakeholders to address today's challenges in the profession and spark a constructive discussion on talent shortages, skills gaps, and market needs.

Organised in partnership with the European Accounting Association (EAA) and in support of the priorities of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU, taking place from July to December 2025, the event highlighted the **value of investing in quality education, lifelong learning, and workforce mobility** – key to meeting the demands of Europe's green and digital transitions. Over **300 participants** took part, spanning EU member states, employers, business leaders, professional bodies, universities, and students. This broad mix of voices highlights both the strong interest and the urgency of tackling skills and talent challenges across Europe.

About ACCA

We are ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), a globally recognised professional accountancy body providing qualifications and advancing standards in accountancy worldwide.

Founded in 1904 to widen access to the accountancy profession, we've long championed inclusion and today proudly support a diverse community of over **257,900 members** and **530,100 future members** in **180 countries**.

Our forward-looking qualifications, continuous learning and insights are respected and valued by employers in every sector. They equip individuals with the business and finance expertise and ethical judgment to create, protect, and report the sustainable value delivered by organisations and economies.

Guided by our purpose and values, our vision is to develop the accountancy profession the world needs. Partnering with policymakers, standard setters, the donor community, educators and other accountancy bodies, we're strengthening and building a profession that drives a sustainable future for all.

Find out more at www.accaglobal.com

Building talent in a changing Europe

The world's largest annual survey on talent and the future of work in accountancy and finance professionals, [ACCA's Global Talent Trends 2025](#), reveals a profession on the midst of profound transformation. Accountants are no longer seen only as number crunchers. Society expects them to be stewards of ethics, accountability and trust.

Despite being formally recognised as one of the EU's shortage occupations under the [EU Talent Pool Regulation](#), demand for accountancy professionals continues to accelerate. This makes attracting and retaining talent a critical challenge. Accountants are central to the EU Union of Skills initiative, driving Europe's upskilling and reskilling agenda, and to the EU Talent Pool, which will connect highly skilled international professionals with opportunities across member states.

As the EU intensifies its competitiveness agenda, **accountants stand at the frontline of the green and digital transitions**. They are pivotal in implementing the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the EU Taxonomy, and broader EU sustainability frameworks. From digital-by-default reporting to assurance of sustainability data and the rise of AI-powered finance functions, the profession provides the backbone of Europe's regulatory and economic success.

The message is clear: **Europe must invest in showcasing accountancy as a dynamic and purpose-driven career**. Supporting lifelong learning, enabling cross-border mobility, and empowering the next generation of accountants are strategic imperatives for Europe's competitiveness, resilience and cohesion.



'If there are not enough people to secure trust in companies' financial and green reporting, then shortages become more than a labour-market problem. They also become a societal problem.'

Marianne Vind, Member of the European Parliament, Denmark



'Without enough auditors and accountants to meet market needs, financial and capital markets will be weakened, and socio-economic cohesion will suffer. These professionals are essential to sustaining growth and prosperity.'

Eelco van der Enden, CEO, Accountancy Europe

Ten policy recommendations to drive talent development and support the accountancy profession

Europe's competitiveness depends on a strong pipeline of accounting talent, equipped with future-ready skills, adaptable mindsets, and a clear sense of purpose. The following policy recommendations emerging from the event provide a strategic pathway to bolster the profession, safeguarding its resilience, influence, and commitment to serving the public good.

1 Spark early awareness of the profession

Introduce accounting and financial literacy at school and university level to inspire interest from an early age. Campaigns, real business case studies, and examples of how digitisation and sustainability have transformed the accounting profession can close perception gaps and position accounting as dynamic and essential to Europe's capital markets' growth.

2 Expand employment opportunities for accounting graduates

Promote platforms, such as [EURES](#) and [EU Talent Pool](#), that connect students and graduates with European employers, promote transparency on skills in demand, and facilitate recruitment by SMEs and larger businesses. Labour market intelligence and job-matching initiatives ensure that training translates into real employment outcomes, bridging the gap between training and entry in the job market.

3 Foster lifelong learning, reskilling, and upskilling

Promote a culture of continuous professional development beyond traditional degrees, with modular learning opportunities, workplace-based training, and micro-credentials. Accredited programmes and recognised pathways, such as CPD programmes, keep skills current and embed lifelong learning as a cornerstone of professional growth.

4 Advance talent mobility across Europe

Expand cross border mobility programmes and strengthen recognition of qualifications to enable students and professionals to gain international experience. Greater cooperation between competent authorities and recognition of international accountancy qualifications will support mobility and reduce administrative barriers. Clear pathways for highly skilled professionals to gain international and cross-functional experience foster adaptability, broaden perspectives, and reinforce Europe's overall competitiveness in the global economy.



'Students often expect linear career paths, but the profession requires adaptability, resilience, and openness to change.'

David Derichs, Senior University Lecturer, Aalto University, Finland, and member of Education Committee, European Accounting Association (EAA)

5 Modernise vocational education pathways

Vocational pathways can become a strategic pillar of Europe's talent strategy. Elevate vocational education as a modern, impactful pathway into accounting and finance professions. Dual-education models should be aligned with professional qualifications, allowing vocational learners to progress seamlessly into internationally accredited programmes. Training aligned with labour market needs, certified programmes, and progression routes ensure job-readiness while supporting reskilling and lifelong learning.

6 Embed sustainability and digitalisation in education

Integrate ESG reporting, climate finance, and digital skills such as data analytics, automation, and AI into accounting curricula. Toolkits, case studies, and modern teaching resources equip professionals to meet employer expectations and support accountants with valuable future-ready skills.



'Workplace flexibility, wellness, and ESG integration are not optional extras – they are essential to attracting and retaining talent.'

Nicholas Kaufman, Senior Manager, CFO Advisory, EY Denmark

7 Promote workplace flexibility and well-being

Encourage hybrid and remote work models, wellness initiatives, and effective workload management strategies by employers. Highlighting and scaling best practices strengthens employee retention and appeals to younger generations, making flexible, people-centred workplaces a baseline expectation in today's labour market.

8 Build advisory and strategic capabilities

Shift professional development from compliance-only training towards advisory excellence. Curricula should cultivate strategic thinking, decision-support, and value soft skills, preparing accountants to act as trusted partners and entrepreneurs who drive growth, resilience, and long-term competitiveness.



'We need to make the profession attractive to young researchers; without them, the academic pipeline in accounting will weaken.'

Carsten Rohde, Head of Department and Professor of Cost and Management Accounting, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

9 Position Europe as a global talent hub

Attract students, academics, PhD candidates, and highly skilled professionals by expanding mobility programmes, ensuring recognition of qualifications, and investing in collaborative research centres. Streamline visa and residency processes for accounting and finance professionals and ensure the EU Talent Pool recognises accredited qualifications automatically. Strengthening the academic pipeline and innovation capacity secures Europe's leadership in sustainability, digital transformation, and capital markets.

10 Elevate the profession's societal role

Launch campaigns that showcase accounting's contribution to financial stability, SME growth, sustainability, and socioeconomic cohesion. Joint campaigns with EU institutions should promote the role of accountants in enabling transparent sustainability reporting, enhancing SME resilience, and supporting the transition to a green and digital economy.



'Accountancy skills are portable, and international challenges require international responses in an era when digital tech and super-fast communications make borders.'

Lucia Real Martin, GAICD, Executive Director for Relationships, ACCA

Call to action

Accounting is more than numbers – it enables growth, safeguards stability, and connects business with society. By positioning the profession as a vital connector between business and society, its strategic importance is reinforced and recognised as a cornerstone of Europe's resilience and competitiveness.

Yet without decisive action on talent, the EU risks undermining the effectiveness of its sustainability reporting agenda, weakening the Capital Markets Union, and diminishing trust in financial information. Europe's global growth depends on a strong pipeline of accounting and finance professionals. Without this talent, SMEs face barriers to financing, sustainability goals stall, and capital markets lose confidence.

The ten policy recommendations in this paper provide a clear roadmap to closing skills gaps, modernising education, and strengthening workplace practices. By raising early awareness, embedding lifelong learning, integrating sustainability, harnessing digitalisation, and supporting mobility, the profession can evolve to meet the demands of the 21st century.

ACCA stands ready to collaborate with EU institutions, national authorities, educators, and employers – through research, skills frameworks, and capacity-building support – to act now: invest in talent, implement these recommendations, and ensure Europe's accountancy profession remains a driver of prosperity, trust, and global leadership.

For any comments or questions about this brief, please contact Fiona Murray, ACCA Head of EU Affairs (fiona.murray1@accaglobal.com).

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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Empowering accountancy: Bridging talent and skills for enhanced EU competitiveness **18 November 2025**

09:30 – 09:35 **Opening remarks**

Agnieszka Jarosz, ACCA, Head of Northern and Eastern Europe

09:35 – 09:50 **Keynote Contributions**

Marianne Vind, Member of the European Parliament, Denmark

09:50 – 10:10 **Presentation of the ACCA Global Talent Trends 2025**

Jamie Lyon, Global Head of Skills, Sector and Technology, ACCA

10:10 – 10:50 **Panel discussion: Building talent in a changing Europe**

Exploring policy, education, and business strategies to close the skills gap and future-proof the accounting profession in Europe.

Moderated by: Agnieszka Jarosz, ACCA, Head of Northern and Eastern Europe

Panellists:

- **Elco van der Enden**, CEO, Accountancy Europe
- **Valentina Guerra**, Director Social Affairs and Training departments, SMEUnited
- **David Derichs**, Senior University Lecturer, Aalto University, Finland, and member of Education Committee, European Accounting Association (EAA)
- **Carsten Rohde**, Head of Department and Professor of Cost and Management Accounting, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
- **Nicholas Kaufmann**, Senior Manager, CFO Advisory, EY Denmark

10:50 – 11:00 **Closing remarks**

Lucia Real Martin, GAICD, Executive Director, Relationships, ACCA