

REFLECTIONS ON THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS FROM THE YOUTHPASS PERSPECTIVE

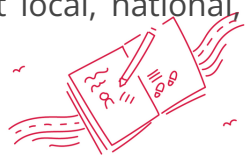


For the EU political and economic agenda, "having a workforce with in-demand skills" is a top priority so the EU economy can ensure its "long-term sustainable growth and competitiveness". However, a number of indicators of the labour market in Europe have identified a significant "skills gap". In order to respond to this, the European Commission decided to designate the period from 9 May 2023 to 8 May 2024 as the **European Year of Skills** in the context of the European Skills Agenda, which aimed to **foster collective action on skills and learning in the European Union**.

The European Year of Skills aimed to support equal access to skills development and promote skills policies and investments to ensure that nobody is left behind in the green and digital transitions.

The European Year of Skills also aimed at strengthening the relevance and provision of skills **through cross-sectoral cooperation** between the social partners, including civil society organisations and non-profit training and education providers.

Finally, the European Year of Skills additionally facilitated **developments in the recognition of skills and qualifications** at local, national, and European levels.



One of the main aims of the European Year of Skills was to contribute to making lifelong learning a reality for all by promoting the mindset of upskilling and reskilling.

By promoting a mindset of reskilling and upskilling throughout the Union, the European Year of Skills can have a broader positive impact on society and democracy, as a better-skilled workforce also means more active and engaged citizens. Reskilling and upskilling equip workers with the skills needed to benefit from better job opportunities, enhance their well-being at work and progress in their personal and professional development, whilst boosting the competitiveness of the economy and contributing to the creation of quality jobs.

Reference: Decision of the European Parliament and the Council of a European Year of Skills

EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Since their establishment in the late '90s, the European Youth Programmes have provided young people with **informal and non-formal learning opportunities**. These programmes have also promoted the principles of **non-discrimination and inclusion**, thus providing equal opportunities and access to learning for all young people, with a particular focus on those with fewer opportunities. In the context of European Youth Programmes (currently Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps), skills development is considered an **integral part of a more holistic competence development process**.

*Reference: European Commission

Youthpass

EVIDENCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES

RAY research that continuously monitors the impact of the European Programmes provides evidence that these programmes **support both young people's and youth workers' development of competences** like intercultural communication, empathy, project management, negotiation, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, foreign languages, digital skills, sense of solidarity, etc. This list shows a clear match with the skills needed within other sectors and an addition to the competences acquired in formal training and education settings.



The competence development process through informal and non-formal learning stresses the importance of the **development of attitudes in addition to the acquisition of skills and knowledge**. Attitudes are key distinguishing factors for quality performance in any professional role and a driving force for engaging in lifelong learning and civic participation.

YOUTHPASS MAKES COMPETENCES VISIBLE!

Youthpass, as a European recognition strategy and a practical tool, **enhances awareness of the learning process and the competences** acquired in European youth programmes. In July 2023, Youthpass celebrated its 1.5 million certificates issued. The Youthpass certificate is based on self-reflection, dialogue and self-assessment. It encompasses two competence frameworks to support the assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes developed during the European mobility and volunteering projects. For young people, it offers the **European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning**, and for youth workers, it provides the **ETS Youth Worker Competence Model**.

YOUTHPASS PROCESS AS A BRIDGE

Finally, in addition to its validation role, Youthpass promotes **learning to learn** as one of the essential (meta) competences needed for acquiring other competences and skills. By encouraging learners to reflect on their learning in the European youth projects, the Youthpass process supports the **development of attitudes and mindsets** critical for quality work and needed to become lifelong learners. Certainly, this is another point of potential bridging between the youth sector, on the one hand, and the education and employment sectors, on the other hand.

