

## WISE: The event will start soon....

- Please keep your microphone muted when joining.
- Rename yourself as “Name Surname - Organisation/Region”
- You may keep your camera on. Please note that photos may be taken during the session and shared on social media channels
- The session will be recorded
- The recording and presentation will be sent to all registered participants
  - If you haven't registered yet, drop your name and email in the chat
- We will collect questions in the chat and address them during the Q&A slots
  - During the Q&A, you can also raise your hand to ask questions live.

# Supporting Employment Pathways: Skill-based Guidance with the SkillLab AI Tool

2nd Online Webinar

26 May 2026

Supported by EARLALL Academy



## Agenda

- ▶ WISE Project Introduction
- ▶ Job Readiness and Labor Market Integration
- ▶ Skills and Skills Profiling
- ▶ SkillLab: AI-based Skills Profiling Tool
- ▶ Impressions from the Field: Examples from the case study
- ▶ Looking out the Future: European Policy Update
- ▶ Q&A



## SPEAKERS

**Sara  
Bonfanti**

Head of Programs, IRC Italy  
Experience in refugee resettlement (US) & migration research  
PhD in Development Economics

**Sylvana  
Hiltrop**

Senior Project Manager at SkillLab in Amsterdam, handling AI-based technology implementations for skills profiling and career guidance across the EU.

**Alyona  
Tabunshchyk**

Project Coordinator, Animus Association Foundation (Bulgaria), with lived experience of displacement and a background in supporting Ukrainian refugee women through case management and integration services.

**Olga  
Chizhevskaya**

Project and Partnership Officer, European Association of Regional & Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL)



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# WISE - Supporting Ukrainian (UA) Refugee Women's Socio-Economic Integration and Wellbeing

**Duration:** April 2025 - October 2026

**Target Population:** Employable refugee women, displaced from Ukraine after February 2022, and their dependents. WISE aims to reach 200 Ukrainian refugee women in the four Holistic Support Centers.

**Implementation sites:** Sofia (Bulgaria), Milan, Rome, Turin (Italy).



## Key Objectives

- ▶ Support access to **host labour markets** and potential reintegration into Ukraine's job market.
- ▶ Improve **access to social and public services**, including childcare.
- ▶ Enhance **mental health, well-being, and social connectedness**.
- ▶ Raise awareness and promote the adoption of the **Holistic Support Centre model**.

## Approach & Methodology

- ▶ Empowering to **access jobs now** – with future relevance for voluntary return to Ukraine.
- ▶ Gender-sensitive support rooted in **Women & Girls Safe Space** methodology
- ▶ Combined **mental health and employment services** tailored to refugee women.
- ▶ Tested, refined, and shared across local and EU levels through **multi-stakeholder engagement**.

# Job readiness and labor market integration

Sara Bonfanti, International Rescue Committee Italy

# Holistic Support Centers

Individual Psycho-social support activities: case-management, 1:1 psychological support,

Individual employment counselling enabled by AI-powered digital tool



Group structured and unstructured psycho-social support activities: Women Rise, arts and craft, outings, theater workshops, etc..

**Structured/semi-structured group activities** for job readiness and skills development

**Integration into the host country labor market:** process through which refugee women access, participate in, and progress within the host country labor market, through employment opportunities, skills development, and inclusion in economic and social systems.

**Multidimensional process:**

- ▶ Access to jobs and income opportunities
- ▶ Recognition of previous qualifications and work experience
- ▶ Acquisition of language and vocational skills
- ▶ Understanding of local workplace norms, rights, and systems
- ▶ Access to decent and stable working conditions
- ▶ Reduction of barriers linked to discrimination, legal status, or lack of networks

**Job Readiness Training:** set of online and in-person activities delivered by IRC staff or external experts to help participants develop the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and confidence to enter, return to, or succeed in the workplace:

- ▶ CV writing and job application
- ▶ Job interview preparation
- ▶ Mock language tests
- ▶ Workplace culture
- ▶ General labor rights, type of contracts, and work permits, labour market information and demanded skills
- ▶ AI tool training

# Skills and Skills Profiling

Sylvana Hiltrop, SkillLab



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## ★ Skills?

the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

## ★ Skills Profiling?

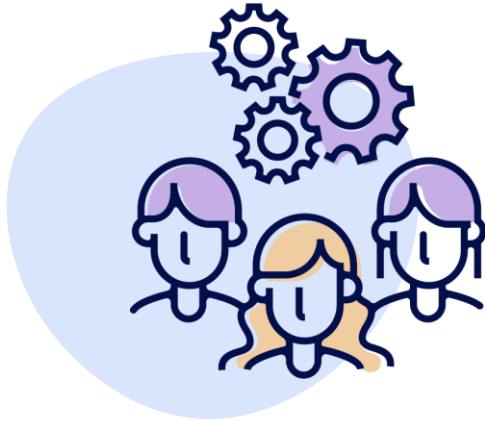
the process of capturing and documenting skills and knowledge that a person has gained through their various professional, educational, and informal experiences.

## ★ ESCO

a classification of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations that are relevant for the EU labor market, education and training. It contains more than 3000 occupations and 13.890 skills linked to each other.



# Skills Profiling



What are my skills and knowledge?



How do my skills and knowledge relate to different occupations?

# Transversal Skills and Life Experiences

Many skills can be easily transferred across diverse occupational contexts and sectors

- Building **confidence and visibility** -> Converting diverse life experiences (hobbies, care work) into the language of skills
- Backbone of **labor market mobility** -> unlocking career transitions
- Highlighting **soft skills** across occupations
- Focus on **long-term agility** rather than short-term task execution
- Standardized by ESCO

## OLENA IVASCHENKO

### **Production Assistant**

**Fiat**

2023 - Present

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### **Linguistic Project Manager**

**Global Lingua Services**

Company

2010 - 2020

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### **Community Outreach Coordinator**

Company Civic Action Non-Profit

2005 - 2010

## MARIA RUDNENKO

### **EXPERIENCE**

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PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

TOV KIROV

2022-2024

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### **EDUCATION**

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LINGUISTICS STUDIES

LVIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

2018-2022

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### **VOLUNTEERING**

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REFUGEE CENTER

BULGARIA 2022

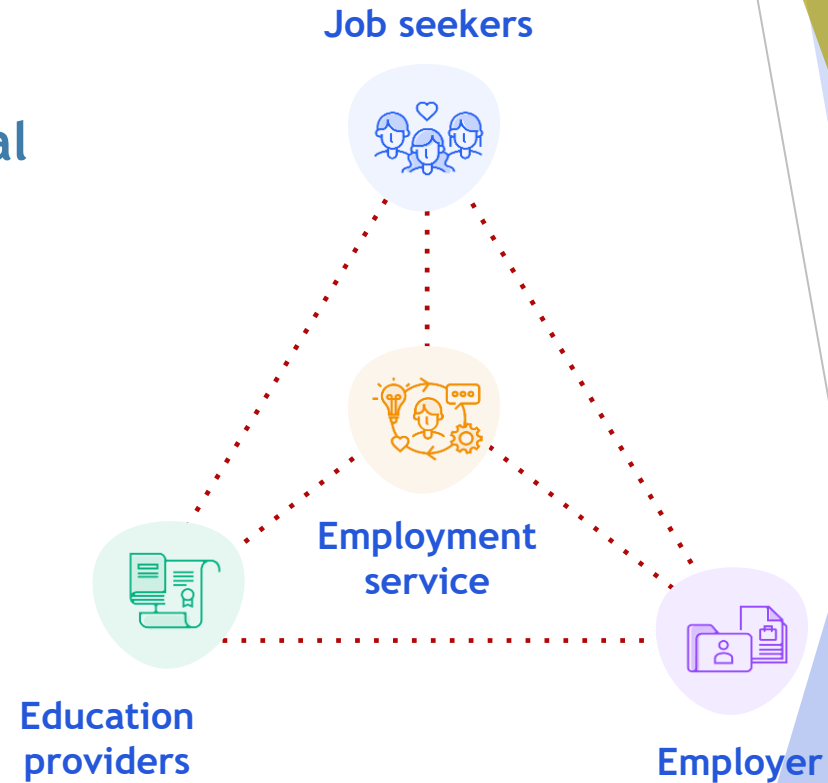


# SkillLab: AI-based Skills Profiling Tool

Sylvana Hiltrop, SkillLab

## SkillLab: Building Technology to Connect Local Skill Systems

- Amsterdam-based technology provider
- Building AI-based solutions for labor market stakeholders
- Delivering impact globally across over 35+ countries
- Skills identification and skill-based recommendations



# How to move from titles to skill profiles?

MARIA RUDNENKO

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**EXPERIENCE**

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
TOV KIROV  
2022-2024

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**EDUCATION**

LINGUISTICS STUDIES  
LVIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
2018-2022

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**VOLUNTEERING**

REFUGEE CENTER  
BULGARIA 2022



←
?

2022 - ongoing ✎

★

**Production assistant**

Production Assistant

Added skills
2

**Which skills did you use?** 🔍

Pick from suggestions or search for skills. It's OK to add skills you only used rarely.

**Adhere to organizational guidelines** +

Adhere to organizational or department specific standards and guidelines.... more

**Follow company standards** ✔

Lead and manage according to the organization's code of conduct.

How often did you use this skill?

Rarely

Always



**Maria Rudnenko**

✉️ lilasgrayground+mariarudnenko@gmail.com  
📍 Bulgaria

I am a dedicated professional with 3 years of work experience.

★ **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Production assistant**

TOV KIROV - Sofia, Bulgaria  
February 2022 - May 2024 • 2 years 3 months

Dispose waste | Maintain cleaning equipment | Vacuum surfaces | Follow a brief | Monitor stock level | Use personal protection equipment | Assume responsibility | Cutting technologies | Use power tools | Pack goods | Store goods | Quality standards

🎓 **EDUCATION**

**Bachelor / Higher diploma - Linguistics**

Lviv Polytechnic National University / Lviv Polytechnic National University - Ukraine  
2018 - 2022

Transcription methods | Legal terminology | Technical terminology | Interpreting modes | Pedagogy | Linguistics | Spelling | Curriculum objectives | Literary theory | Pronunciation techniques | Phonetics | Grammar

👤 **LIFE EXPERIENCES**

**Social support**

Manage emergency procedures | Contribute to protecting individuals from harm | Ensure public safety and security | Keep records of passports | Process applications | Provide security in detention centers | Asylum systems | Support children's wellbeing | Support volunteers | Listen actively | Educate on emergency management

🔗 **TOP PRACTICAL SKILLS**

<p><b>Handling and moving</b>   10 skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Cleaning</li> <li>— Moving and lifting</li> <li>— Using hand tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assisting and caring</b>   6 skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Protecting and enforcing</li> <li>— Providing general personal care</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication, collaboration and creativity</b>   5 skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Working with others</li> <li>— Obtaining information verbally</li> <li>— Solving problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Information skills</b>   2 skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Processing information</li> <li>— Monitoring, inspecting and testing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working with machinery and specialized equipment</b>   2 skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Installing, maintaining and repairing mechanical equipment</li> </ul>	

🔗 Job titles, degrees and other elements marked with this icon were automatically translated.

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# MARIA RUDNENKO

## EXPERIENCE

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
TOV KIROV  
2022-2024

## EDUCATION

LINGUISTICS STUDIES  
LVIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
2018-2022

## VOLUNTEERING

REFUGEE CENTER  
BULGARIA 2022



## Maria Rudnenko

✉ liliastplayground+mariarudnenko@gmail.com

📍 Bulgaria

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## 👤 LIFE EXPERIENCES

### Social support

Manage emergency procedures | Contribute to protecting individuals from harm | Ensure public safety and security | Keep records of passports | Process applications | Provide security in detention centers | Asylum systems | Support children's wellbeing | Support volunteers | Listen actively | Educate on emergency management

## 🛠️ TOP PRACTICAL SKILLS

### Handling and moving | 10 skills

- Cleaning
- Moving and lifting
- Using hand tools

### Assisting and caring | 6 skills

- Protecting and enforcing
- Providing general personal care

### Communication, collaboration and creativity | 5 skills

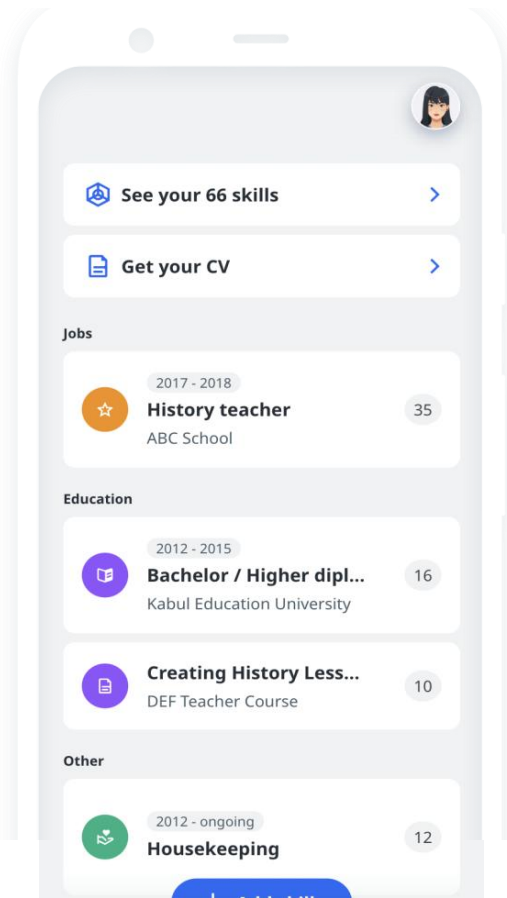
- Working with others
- Obtaining information verbally

### Information skills | 2 skills

- Processing information
- Monitoring, inspecting and testing

# Two components of the Skills Profiling Tool

## User App

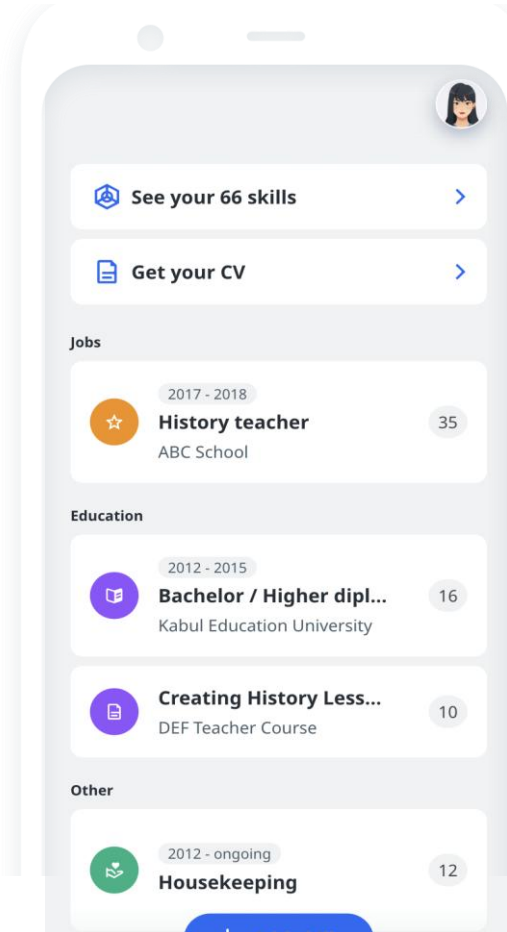


## Counsellor Portal

The Counsellor Portal interface is shown on a desktop. It features a navigation menu on the left with options like "Users", "Registered users", "Invited users", "Team members", "Archived", "User groups", and "Profile 1". The main content area displays "Registered users" with a total count of 29. It includes filters for "Last Activity", "Careers", "Skills", and "Assigned to", along with a "+ Filters" button. A summary card shows "In progress" (16) and "Completed" (4) users, both with "+ 0 this week". Below this is a table of registered users:

<input type="checkbox"/>	User name ↑	Status	Experiences	Skills
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ana Marie Miller		2	29
<input type="checkbox"/>	Camilo Fernandez		3	15
<input type="checkbox"/>	Franco Carmelo		2	23
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guilia Meher		2	31
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lina Paola Rodriguez		2	22
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lina Schmidt		4	43

## Solutions for Jobseekers



The Problem - People, especially those excluded from the labor market, aren't/don't:

- **Aware** of the skills they have,
- **Understand** the skills they acquired in diverse life experiences,
- **Have confidence** communicating about their skills,
- **Know** how to progress in their careers and/or life condition and feel stuck.

People don't access jobs nor education.

The Solution - People:

- **Appreciate** skills gained from life experiences.
- **Recognize** their skills.
- **Feel confident** communicating their skills.
- **Understand** the skills required for desired careers.

People access more sustainable career pathways and improved livelihoods.

## The Problem - Career counsellors are:

- **Overwhelmed** with the volume of people they have to serve,
- **Burdened** with the amount of administrative work involved,
- **Unable** to provide personalized advice without accessible data.

Counsellors are unable to help people at scale and in a personalized and high-quality manner as they wish to.

## The Solution - Counsellors can:

- **Attend** to many more individuals, leaving less people behind.
- **Save time** from admin tasks (such as data collection).
- Start **personalized counselling** based on each individual's skills data, CV and career interests / plans.

People access more sustainable career pathways and improved livelihoods.

The screenshot displays the SkillLab Demo interface. On the left, a sidebar menu includes 'Users' (with a sub-menu for 'Registered users', 'Invited users', 'Team members', and 'Archived'), 'User groups' (with 'Profile 1' and 'Archived'), and '+ Add profile group'. The main area shows 'Registered users' with 29 total users. It features filters for 'Last Activity', 'Careers', 'Skills', and 'Assigned to', along with a '+ Filters' button. Two summary cards show 'In progress' (16 users, +0 this week) and 'Completed' (4 users, +0 this week). Below these is a table of users with columns for 'User name', 'Status', 'Experiences', and 'Skills'.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Lina Schmidt		4	43

# Impressions from the field: Example from the case study

Sara Bonfanti, International Rescue Committee Italy  
Alyona Tabunshchych, Animus Association Foundation

## The Italian experience

- Tool introduced through several information sessions on CV writing and the platform
- Women invited to join the tool via email and WhatsApp

### Key factors for limited profile completion and engagement:

- **Limited time** availability due to urgent employment-related priorities
- Women's **limited digital skills** to use the platform independently
- Many women already had a CV and were primarily seeking tools to identify **concrete job or training opportunities**
- Employment-related needs were often closely linked to psychosocial support needs, **preference for in-person 1:1 support**
- The skills-based generated **CV** generated perceived as **too long, not fully aligned with Italian employers' expectations**
- The need to send individual personalised access links limited the possibility of wider and more immediate dissemination of the tool



## How we implement SkillLab

### GROUP SESSIONS

- *We ran group sessions to introduce skills profiling tool. It is useful for orientation, but individual follow-up proved essential for deeper engagement.*

### 1-on-1 EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING

- *The tool works best in individual counselling. We guide each woman through her profile, explore results together and link to job search, CV and cover letter.*

### SELF-COMPLETION (digitally confident)

- *Women with stronger digital skills fill the tool themselves or after the group session or after individual counselling after our referral – then we continue the process remotely. This opens distance counselling.*



## CASE STUDIES

✓ FOUND A JOB

### *Management assistant, German B1*

She filled SkillLab herself – digitally confident. We used her multilingual profile (German B1, English) to target admin roles. The tool confirmed her strengths and she secured employment almost independently.

✓ FOUND A JOB

### *Math teacher, 4+ yrs experience*

She came already knowing she wants the role she did in Ukraine. We used SkillLab essentially as a CV-building tool – the profile organised her pedagogy skills clearly and she found a teaching position in Bulgaria.

⚡ URGENT CASE

### *Tourism degree, hospitality exp.*

We used the tool after an interview – in a hurry to find work quickly. SkillLab helped reframe her hospitality and service skills, though time pressure limited deeper career exploration.

➤ EXPLORING

### *Commercial director, accountant*

She is not in immediate need. Using SkillLab to discover new opportunities she hadn't considered – the wide skill profile (management, finance, CSR) is opening her thinking about career transitions in Bulgaria.

↑ CAREER MOVE

### *Teacher, psychologist*

She is already employed, but salary growth is blocked in her current role. Using SkillLab to map transferable skills (psychology, counselling, curriculum) and identify better-paid positions and the ones she qualifies for.

## REALITY CHECK

### ✓ What works

- ✓ Gives a structured starting point – especially helpful for women who struggle to name their skills verbally
- ✓ Expands self-perception – women discover competencies they never considered professional
- ✓ Skills-based CV opens doors beyond the Ukrainian job title
- ✓ Works well in distance/remote counselling for digitally confident users
- ✓ Builds confidence: seeing skills mapped and named restores a sense of professional identity

### ✗ Challenges

- Motivation gap – a technically good match is ignored if the person simply does not want that career
- Bulgarian barrier – many higher-skilled roles require B1+ Bulgarian, which most beneficiaries don't yet have
- Urgency pressure – those who need a job now have little space to explore longer-term pathways
- Recognition of qualifications – Ukrainian degrees and titles don't map directly to Bulgarian/EU standards
- Low digital interest – a minority show little engagement with the online tool format

## Psychological Support Within Employment Contexts

### Trauma-Informed Approach

- *Many beneficiaries arrive carrying **displacement trauma**. Employment counselling sessions are structured to never pressure.*

### Psychological Referral

- *Animus runs **psychological support**. When emotional barriers emerge during skills work – fear of failure, grief, loss of identity – warm referral to a psychologist happens.*

### Skills Work as Empowerment

- *Seeing one's skills mapped and named has a **measurable psychological effect**. For many women who felt 'reduced to refugee status', the profile restores a sense of professional self. This is intentional, not accidental.*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS – Bulgaria

- ▶ SkillLab is valuable both for women seeking immediate employment and for those exploring new career pathways.
- ▶ Individual counselling is significantly more effective than group sessions, as the tool requires a safe and private environment for meaningful exploration.
- ▶ Motivation gap is real. A technically good match means nothing if the person doesn't want that career. The tool opens conversation, not conclusions.
- ▶ Bulgarian proficiency is a structural barrier — many higher-quality matched roles need B1+. Language pathways must be integrated with employment support.
- ▶ The HSC holistic model is the precondition. It is the pairing with psychological support, language and flexible counselling that generates real outcomes.

# European Policy Update

Olga Chizhevskaya, EARLALL



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## Union of Skills

- is an EU strategy launched by EC in March 2025
- to address skills shortages, improve workforce competitiveness, and empower individuals across EU with the skills needed for education, employment and lifelong learning



## FOUR KEY PILLARS

1. Enhancing Basic Skills
2. Reskilling and Upskilling for Disruptions
3. Facilitating Labor Market Mobility
4. Attracting and Retaining Global Talent

## Union of Skills: key deliverables

- **VET Strategy** - aims to strengthen competitiveness, resilience, and regional cohesion while addressing emerging challenges, including the impact of artificial intelligence. It is expected to outline concrete actions to make VET systems more future-proof and responsive to labour market needs.
- **Skills Portability** - aim at making skills more transparent and enabling skilled workers to move more easily throughout Europe.

## EU Talent Pool

- **New EU platform linking employers with skilled non-EU jobseekers**
- **Helps address labor shortages and supports fair recruitment**
- **Can improve employment access for WISE beneficiaries**
- **To be developed by the European Commission, fully operational by 2027**

# Discussion / Q&A



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## Join the WISE Webinars Series:



Scan to learn more and register

- ▶ Session 3 - 8 June, 12:30-13:30 CET
- ▶ Session 4 - 22 June, 12:30-13:30 CET

### WISE Final Conference

- ▶ **SAVE THE DATE: 16 September 2026,  
Brussels**

Thank you!



Share your feedback



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