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Many individuals in the EU faced continuous job losses or significant income reductions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a great necessity emerged to **acquire new skills to transition from declining activities to expanding ones**, especially due to the rise in new ground-breaking technologies and incentives for the young public to enter a potentially challenging labour market.

Individuals with low or no qualifications face almost three times higher unemployment rates compared to those with higher qualifications.

In the EU, approximately 75 million people, constituting nearly a third of the working population, have low levels of or no qualifications.

In response to these challenges, the EU put forward a set of strategies and actions to accelerate a **green and digital transition** and enhance the resilience and sustainability of the European economy. Within this context, the EC launched the [European Skills Agenda](#), a comprehensive five-year plan that aims to foster the development of high-quality skills and ensure their effective application.

Along with others, Social Economy is currently facing difficulties addressing green and digital skills shortages, such as the need for reskilling and upskilling workforces while preventing exclusion of workers. There is an urgent need for a greener and more equitable path, and **Social Economy Organizations (SEOs) can play a crucial role by contributing with innovating solutions**, as already mentioned in the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP).

SEOs address today's challenges through alternative, non-threatening and sustainable business models, proposing best practices to make the transition fair and sustainable for everyone.

At the core of the EU Skills Agenda is the [Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills](#), a key initiative first introduced in 2016. Currently, 28 projects in more than 20 sectors under the Erasmus+ program are actively implementing the Blueprint, targeting collaborative solutions for the development of concrete skills and feeding them into [CEDEFOP's](#) skills intelligence tool.



Partners in Blueprint Alliances will examine the *impact of the digital and green transitions on jobs and skill requirements and develop specific education and training solutions for rapid implementation at the regional and local levels*, such as creating and updating curricula and qualifications based on changing or emerging occupational profiles.

Initiatives

One of these projects is the **Blueprint for advanced skills & trainings in the social economy, the baSE project**, that brings together a diverse group of key stakeholders from 10 EU countries to address skills mismatches and deliver new skills aligned with updated occupational profiles in the Social Economy (SE) sector.

Another Blueprint Alliance is the **B-WISE project**; it is implemented in 13 EU countries, and focuses on a particular target subgroup in social economy enterprises – organisations focusing on the *integration of workers with support needs (people at risk of being excluded from the labour market)* and known as Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs). The B-WISE project targets the skill needs of workers with support needs, as well as their enablers and supporters (such as job coaches and trainers), while promoting the attractiveness of the WISEs sector as a career choice.

Further on, the **TRANSVAL-EU** project focuses on an interesting growing category: the **transversal skills**. It analyzes its growing significance to employers with the current enormous gap in their validation and explicit recognition in the labor market.

Transversal skills encompass a versatile set of knowledge, skills, and competences that are pertinent across diverse occupations and economic sectors. They are commonly known as *core skills, basic skills, or soft skills*, and form the **fundamental basis for an individual's personal development**. They can be applied in a diverse array of situations and work settings and initiatives have increasingly been promoted on the socio-emotional and behavioral domains of learning.



Social Economy Skills

Lately, the growing awareness about climate change and environmental protection has persuaded different individuals to pursue a career change towards social entrepreneurship. Thus, not only a skills shortage on the needed workforce, but also an **increasing demand for training in social entrepreneurship and, more broadly, green skills** is likely to rise. The necessary efforts in re-skilling and up-skilling green abilities and green jobs requires a much needed investment in **capacity-building skills**, which are, at the moment, insufficient.

It is also essential to recognize that the impact of digitalization extends beyond the skills demand, as *it socially exacerbates the digital divide among the population and create situations that contribute to growing inequalities*. Unfortunately, **SE seems to be currently under-digitalised**, as SEOs suffer from budgetary constraints, shortages in digital skills and technological disparities that prevent them from embracing the digital transition. In addition, advanced technologies are developed primarily by and for the market economy, reducing the the speed at which SE is supposed to embrace new technologies.



SEO's acquisition of digital and green skills is an urgent need in the sector,

However, it is important to acknowledge that the unique nature of SEOs entails the need for specific skills, given its typically local anchoring and its collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders.

Therefore, it requires investment in the up and re-skilling of the workforce, with trainings shaped specifically for SE, so that the skills and tools that go with them are also designed to respect and foster the core values that guide SEOs, such as **inclusivity**.

With 2 million social economy enterprises in Europe, representing 10% of all businesses and about 6% of the EU's employees, inclusivity within an enterprise is vital and has to be properly structured: the legal framework on workers with special needs must be known and adaptations have to be made depending on their necessities.

Therefore, a **triple transition** – green, digital, and fair – is crucial for the SE to ensure **holistic and sustainable development**; otherwise, the benefits of the transition won't be equitable and accessible for all.

Bibliography

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