

MINUTES – 198/26-22/07/26

ETE Committee Meeting – 15TH April 2026

1. European Commission initiatives in the area of skills

A. Future VET Strategy

Isabel Sobrino (Ceemet secretariat) presented Ceemet position paper on the future VET strategy.

Leena Pöntynen, Ceemet Chair of the Committee, asked members to share their insights regarding VET systems in their countries.

Rose Sargent (MakeUK) mentioned that discussions around VET in the UK are similar to those of other countries (as regards the importance of making VET more attractive, improving permeability between different education pathways etc.). She also mentioned that investment in the VET system is increasing in the UK.

Eero Hiidenvuori (TIF) explained that nowadays the need for employees with VET backgrounds is slightly declining in Finland as the skills needs for MET companies are evolving fast.

As regards the permeability between different education pathways, he pointed out that there is the possibility to move from VET to higher education in Finland. As a matter of fact, the VET system in Finland is quite flexible.

Federico Alcamo (Federmeccanica) explained that many students in Italy are not aware of the labour opportunities that the VET system offers as it still viewed as a second career choice.

However, Federmeccanica has noted that, following the launch of social media campaigns to promote the attractiveness of VET, there has been a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in this educational and career pathway. Therefore, the use of social media to enhance the image of vocational training is producing positive results in Italy.

Anne-Kristin Wiedemann (Gesamtmetall) explained that the VET system is well known and well considered in Germany and many future employees chose to follow the VET system.

As regards mobility in VET, she mentioned that Germany has a good established system of regional level of VET mobility. Also, vocational training centers schools have agreements with other cities and regions regarding mobility in vocational training. .

Sonja Studer (Swissmem) mentioned that up to 2/3 of young people choose VET career after school. As a matter of fact, VET is very permeable in Switzerland even to Higher education. However, discussions on how to make this system more attractive continue to take place in Switzerland.

As regards the impact of AI on VET, Sonja Studer stressed that in her views qualifications procedures and VET curricula should be developed taking into account the impact of AI.

Otto Zurcher (FME) explained that the VET system is quite effective and well-functioning in the Netherlands, as well as permeable as there is the possibility to advance to higher education from VET.

Having said that, Otto Z. stressed that there remains a cultural issue around VET in particular a “parental problem” – as parents tend to push their children to higher education rather than to VET.

There are also discussions around the quality of VET teachers.

Johannes Fraiss (WKO) explained that the VET system in Austria is very similar to the Swiss one and that number of youngsters enrolled in VET is of up to 70%. He also explained that VET is quite permeable in Austria – where it is possible to move from vocational training to higher education.

On another note, he mentioned the topic of hybrid teaching. In his views it will be of added value to discuss this topic further in future committee meetings.

As regards mobility in VET this is done at the school level.

Follow-up: the topic will continue to be discussed once the EU VET strategy is released.

B. Future Skills Portability

Isabel Sobrino introduced the topic of skills portability and further presented Ceemet position paper on the matter.

Members in principle welcome this initiative but fear that the Commission can put forward a directive which will be in breach of national competence in the area of education and training.

Follow-up: After a brief discussion on this topic, in particular as regards the possible instrument of this initiative, it was agreed that it will be discussed in more detail once the initiative is released by the Commission.

C. Digital skills

Isabel Sobrino introduced this topic and explained that the future initiative on Digital Skills 2030 aims at helping national education and training systems adapt to the digital age and to this end calls for greater cooperation at EU level to address the challenges and opportunities arising from the accelerating digital transformation

For Sonja Studer, the ETE committee should not discuss this topic unless the initiative touches upon the impact of AI in VET qualifications.

In the views of Leena Pöntynen this topic should be dealt with by Digital Europe.

For Eero H. this is not the biggest issue and the ETE Committee should not focus on this dossier.

Follow-up: the topic will not be discussed in next ETE Committee meetings unless the initiative touches upon AI and VET qualifications.

D. EU governance model on skills and the interaction between the national and EU levels

As there was no Commission representative present in the meeting and the governance model is still underdeveloped, it was agreed that the topic will be discussed in depth at the next ETE Committee meeting together with a Commission representative.

However the following broad concerns were raised by members:

- There is a lot of confusion around the governance model under the Union of Skills
- Members have the feeling that many bodies will be created
- Ceemet and members think that it is important that Ceemet is actively involved in the new governance model
- There is a general impression that the Commission is interfering with national competence in the area of education and training

In general members say that their national bodies tend to notice more and more the influence and pressure of the EU in the area of education and training.

Follow-up: the topic will be discussed in depth at the next ETE Committee meeting to be held in October 2026

2. OTHER INITIATIVES

A. Discussion on AI and skills – by ETE experts

Aurelia Stein (Gesamtmittel) explained that AI is a widely discussed topic across different sectors in Germany. However, there is no unified national system or framework for AI adoption and the landscape is highly heterogeneous, with significant differences between large companies, SMEs, and the education sector. Indeed, large and international companies are already highly advanced in their use of AI and many have implemented AI for data analysis and

operational optimisation. On contrast, SMEs remain at an early stage, lacking clear guidance on how to implement AI effectively.

As regards the area of education and skills development, teachers in the school system are not well prepared to teach AI-related content. In this regard there is a growing focus on understanding when to use AI and when not to use it.

Aurelia S. also said that there are two parallel discussions emerging in Germany around AI:

1. The development and use of AI tools.
2. The skills needed to use AI tools effectively.

Moreover, she stressed that critical thinking on AI is a major topic, especially in IVET (initial vocational education and training).

On another topic she mentioned that there is an ongoing debate on how AI should be used or restricted in examinations and assessment processes.

Last but not least, she explained that the **Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)** is currently conducting a nationwide research project on the use of generative AI in vocational education and training. The study examines how generative AI is being used in companies, vocational schools and other VET institutions, what changes are emerging in everyday training practice, and what kind of support practitioners need. The first results are expected in September.

Sonja Studer mentioned that Switzerland does not have a unified national approach to AI. The topic is widely debated across sectors and policy circles.

As regards the labour market she mentioned that it is surprising to notice that unemployment among academics is rising faster than among individuals with vocational education and training backgrounds. This trend suggests broader societal shifts linked to technological change and labour market needs.

On another note, she mentioned that in her views, AI should not be treated solely as an IT or technical matter, as AI represents a cultural and organisational transformation affecting work, skills, and identity.

Last but not least she mentioned that Swissmem is actively supporting its member companies in navigating AI-related challenges and opportunities.

Otto Zurcher mentioned that AI remains a very prominent and highly debated topic across the sector.

In this regard, he emphasized that FME is actively organising numerous events and webinars to inform companies about the practical application of AI. Despite these efforts, there are no consolidated figures on the actual use of AI in the workplaces. Nevertheless, there is a strong awareness that many companies—especially large ones—are already applying AI extensively.

Moreover, a comprehensive industry agenda has been published recently, aiming to move companies from general AI awareness to practical, on-the-floor implementation.

Regarding social partner activities in this area, he mentioned that trade unions have negotiated a digital skills programme for employees in the sector in order to improve their AI skills.

Johannes Fraiss mentioned that there is no nationwide AI strategy currently in place.

As regards training and AI he explained that a significant share of AI-related training is happening directly within companies. As a matter of fact, many firms are taking responsibility for upskilling their workforce independently.

Concerning the role of WKO, they are working to integrate AI skills into apprenticeship curricula. They are also expanding AI-related training opportunities for apprentices and employees.

On another note, he mentioned that the main bottleneck in this area is the lack of AI skills among teachers. This gap limits the ability of schools and vocational institutions to deliver modern AI-related content.

Rose Sargent mentioned that there is a significant gap between SMEs and large companies in their use of AI. Larger companies tend to be more advanced and systematic in their adoption. However, most companies are already using AI on the customer-facing side, particularly in service, support, and communication processes. For companies AI to improve productivity is key. As a matter of fact, dedicated AI productivity courses are available to help companies and employees integrate AI into daily work.

There are also initiatives focused on AI use in schools, supporting early exposure and digital readiness.

On another note, she mentioned that a consultation process on the use of AI in companies is currently being developed by XXXX.

Leena Pöntynen explained that Finnish companies increasingly post AI-related job openings, often with a strong IT focus. A growing number of companies are seeking specialists to manage their AI transitions. In this regard there is rising demand for upskilling and reskilling in AI across the workforce.

On another note, she mentioned that the AI Finland Network linked to TIF, is running the AI 1000 project. The project aims to train up to 1,000 companies to help them understand the strategic importance of AI for their operations.

As regards skills needs in companies, companies need quick, accessible opportunities to experiment with AI tools.

Last but not least Leena P. highlighted international examples, noting that Singapore has already trained all teachers in AI.

Federico Alcamo explained that there is no national AI plan currently in place. Implementation varies widely across schools, society, and workplaces, leading to a fragmented landscape.

As regards AI and schools, Federico stressed that students began using AI independently and without teacher oversight, creating a gap between student behavior and institutional preparedness. Moreover, teachers generally lack the necessary AI skills, which limits effective classroom management and guidance. In this regard, a major challenge concerns student evaluation, as traditional assessment methods are not adapted to AI-supported learning.

In his views, AI has strong potential to personalize lessons and support differentiated learning pathways, but this requires teacher training and clear guidelines.

On AI and industry, Federico Alcamo mentioned that only larger companies are currently implementing AI in their solutions. This creates a risk of long-term polarization between advanced firms and those unable to adopt AI. The limited number of companies using AI is seen as a significant risk for competitiveness.

As regards AI skills he mentioned that there is a shortage of professionals capable of implementing AI in companies. The labour market does not yet provide enough workers with the required competencies.

Last but not least he stressed that traditional coding skills are becoming less central.

B. Quality framework on traineeships

Isabel Sobrino debriefed members as regards the latest developments on this dossier.

Negotiations are moving at a slow pace. No discussion was held on the topic.

Follow-up: Ceemet to continue to inform members as regards new developments on this dossier

C. Fair transition policies

Isabel Sobrino debriefed members as regards the latest developments on fair transition policies.

There was no discussion on the topic.

Follow-up: Ceemet to continue to inform members as regards new developments on this dossier

3. SOCIAL DIALOGUE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

After a brief discussion as regards the SD E&T WG of 7th May 2026 it was agreed to propose to industriAll Europe that the issue of hybrid teaching be potentially discussed. Leena Pöntynen will take the lead on this matter at the social dialogue meeting and debrief MET social partners about this topic.

Follow-up: Ceemet to propose to industriAll Europe that the topic of hybrid teaching be discussed. Members to propose new topics for discussion in the social dialogue.

4. EU FUNDED PROJECTS ON SKILLS

A. ASA/TRIREME- Digital and green skills for the mobility ecosystem

Jakub Stolfa, president of the Automotive Skills Alliance and coordinator of TRIREME made a presentation regarding the TRIREME sectoral skills strategy and the skills hub.

Isabel Sobrino then referred to the social partner regional workshop to be held in Gothenburg on 3rd November 2026 and asked ETE members to register to the workshop.

Follow-up: Ceemet will continue to inform members as regards its role in this project.

B. Aerospace and defence sectors (Skills4DC)

Isabel Sobrino briefly presented this EU funded project.

Johannes Fraiss stressed that aerospace and defense sectors are important in Austria.

Eero H. explained that the defense sector is very important in Finland and that they are currently building a major drone factory.

He also mentioned that there is an acute shortage of welders in defence sectors. However, companies cannot hire welders from non-EU countries for security reasons

Follow-up: Ceemet will continue to inform members as regards their role in this project.

5. AOB

The next ETE Committee meeting will be held in Brussels in October. A doodle to fix the meeting will be sent to members.

ACTION ITEM:

- Item 1: VET and Skills Portability will be discussed in coming ETE Committees (Once the initiatives by the Commission are released). The governance model will be discussed at the next ETE Committee together with a Commission representative
- Item 2: Ceemet will continue to update members as regards the dossiers on quality traineeships and fair transition policies
- Item 3: Members to propose possible new topics for discussion at the social dialogue Education and Training meetings. The topic of hybrid teaching will be possibly discussed with the trade unions

- Item 4: Ceemet will continue to debrief members as regards its participation in EU-funded projects. Members to register for the next social partner regional workshop to be held in Gothenburg on 3rd November 2026
- Ceemet to send a doodle in order to fix the next Committee meeting in October in Brussels
