

*Brussels, 15 July 2025*

## Statement on the European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training

**EuropeOn & GCP Europe welcome the Commission's renewed focus on vocational education and training (VET).** Technical education is essential to Europe's strategic objectives, yet it is too often overshadowed by academic education. It's time to level the playing field and give technical careers the visibility and value they deserve.

The installation sectors are comprised of millions of professionals ([2.7 million in electrical installations alone](#)) who play a fundamental role in **implementing Europe's green and digital objectives**, while also contributing to its **preparedness, energy security and competitiveness**.

Installation companies need a **workforce equipped with full qualifications**, earned through VET in most cases. As SMEs (or even micro-enterprises), installers work predominantly in national or regional markets and rely on trusted, local training systems that guarantee the level of competence they are looking for, and which ensures quality, efficiency and safety of installations.

**The upcoming European Strategy on VET must reflect these realities, offer support where possible and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches that override the established and functioning structure of national education systems.**

Indeed, most national VET systems are fit for purpose but are suffering from a shortfall of investment in some specific areas. The European Strategy for VET should seek to address the specifics that could benefit from action:

- **Attractiveness of vocational pathways:** This should be the top priority for any action on VET. Despite strong demand, good earnings and resilience to AI disruptions, VET careers in our sectors still struggle to be attractive among young people, families, teachers and career counsellors.
  - ⇒ Member States, also with the support of the EU, should strive for real parity of esteem between VET and academia.
  - ⇒ National and local authorities should launch or reinforce campaigns, possibly with EU funding, that promote the value of apprenticeships and technical careers. [Read more on attractiveness campaigns.](#)
  - ⇒ Such campaigns must value complete VET curricula, providing full qualifications, and not partial trainings that only lead to very specialised and limited skillsets.
  - ⇒ Member States should provide for more appealing conditions for VET teachers to attract them to technical schools.

- **Apprenticeships and work placements:** in our sector, apprentices can spend up to half their time in training within companies, who are de facto educators and yet don't benefit from the same support as academic institutions. Incentives for employers to take on apprentices are lacking, as the costs involved can outweigh the benefits.
  - ⇒ Provide targeted financial incentives (e.g. tax relief or funding) using national or EU funding instruments for installation companies who train apprentices.
  - ⇒ Member States should work with schools and trade organisations to develop new mechanisms (or strengthen existing ones) able to match candidates with companies looking for apprentices.
  
- **Upskilling and lifelong learning:** Structured lifelong learning options in areas like solar photovoltaic, sustainable heating and cooling solutions, smart building systems, or charging infrastructure for electric vehicles can be limited, especially in formats that facilitate the participation of full-time employees.
  - ⇒ National and local authorities should provide further support, including through EU funding, to make modular upskilling opportunities freely available, especially for green and digital technologies.
  - ⇒ National and local authorities should expand digital learning infrastructure to reach busy installers and underserved areas.
  - ⇒ National and local authorities must provide tangible financial incentives for employers to make investments in upskilling their workforce, and to compensate training costs or time spent in training by employees.
  - ⇒ Curricula should be aligned with national labour market demands, by seeking and heeding input from social partners.
  - ⇒ Short courses for installers should be primarily aimed at professionals with a full basis of skills (e.g. qualified electricians) to expand their skillsets with top-ups for specific technologies.
  
- **VET schools:** Practical, work-based training is essential to develop a qualified workforce and ensure they have the skills employers are looking for. However, VET schools can suffer from outdated infrastructure and equipment, insufficient funding or qualified teaching staff.
  - ⇒ EU and national funding must support VET schools to ensure the adequate equipment is available to keep up with new technologies.
  - ⇒ National and EU funding should further support the training of VET instructors in green and digital technologies.
  
- **National qualification systems:** as mentioned, while investments in national VET systems are needed, they are deemed to work well and the professionals that follow the full curriculum are attractive to employers.
  - ⇒ EU tools such as the Europass, EQFs or ESCO classification can be useful as voluntary and supportive add-ons but should not become mandatory in any way that would give them primacy over effective national frameworks.

- ⇒ Relevant authorities should involve social partners in any initiatives impacting the qualifications of professionals to foster the trust of employers in the education system.

Additionally, the Union of Skills sets forth the ambition to work on two aspects of education policy that could have a significant impact on VET systems:

1. **Micro-credentials:** while they can support upskilling for specific technologies, they are not a substitute for the full qualifications awarded in initial education. [Read our full statement on micro-credentials.](#)
2. **Automatic recognition of qualifications (“Skills Portability”):** this may support labour mobility, but it risks undermining the integrity of national systems, which vary in training standards and qualifications requirements (including for safety reasons). [Read our full statement on automatic recognition of qualifications.](#)

While micro-credentials and skills portability can have a positive impact in some, very specific areas, they are **by no means critical** to address the shortcomings in VET systems and should not distract regulators’ attention away from the points outlined above.

The Strategy must reinforce, not replace, what works in national contexts, while investing in the people and partnerships that will power Europe forward. **EuropeOn and GCP Europe look forward to the Commission’s European Strategy on VET and stand ready to support its work on this timely and welcome initiative.**

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**EuropeOn** is the European voice of the electrical contracting industry since 1954. With 2.7 million professionals in over 420.000 businesses and with a turnover of over EUR 300 billion, electrical contractors provide electrical installations and services for buildings and infrastructure, enabling cities and citizens to take part in the Energy Transition. Addressing energy, climate, mobility, building and skills policies, EuropeOn is engaged at EU level to foster synergies between the electrical contracting sector and European policymakers. EuropeOn is campaigning in favour of [Skills4Climate](#) and is part of the [Electrification Alliance](#), Construction 2050, the [Platform for E-mobility](#), and the [Forum for European Electrical Domestic Safety](#), among others. [www.europe-on.org](http://www.europe-on.org)

**GCP Europe** is the voice of the building services engineering sector, mechanical contractors, plumbers, and HVAC installers. The association represents their interests at the European Union level and, by doing so, contributes to the achievement of the EU's climate, energy, and prosperity goals. <https://gcpeurope.eu/>