

**First Live Event of the Skills Lab Network of Experts**  
**Foreseeing the unpredictable: How new skill needs can be anticipated in times of high uncertainty**  
**Pollenzo (Turin), 13-14 June 2022**

**Summary of the first day, including the panel discussion**

**Xavier Matheu (ETF Director):** It is the first live event after pandemic through bringing experts and researchers together from PCs and EU MSs, perfect occasion to learn, exchange, network, find synergies and co-create knowledge. We know the twin transition of digital and green sectors with accelerated developments, but events like financial crisis or wars cannot be anticipated easily. One clear aspect of the future work is the need to combine technical and soft skills. Remember that this is your independent network, ETF supports and facilitates exchange, but it is up to you members to keep level of activity.

**Manuela Prina (ETF Head of Unit):** What will the future be like? What we are being told about the future (especially if positive), it has a strong impact on us (negative: justification, not my fault). The world is full of fake futurists – catastrophic about the future, but we need to be positive and optimistic about the future. Why do we want to know about the future (of skills)? Want to be happy, societies to be happy (just, fair, green). Huge responsibility goes with predictions, people need to take actions, give them news and data/information they need to take action. “Skills horoscope” from the past years

**Francesca Rosso (ETF Coordinator of the network):** A network’s value is linked to the value of sharing information, building confidence, providing different perspectives, creating long-lasting partnerships. Networks have been fundamental part of ETF since its inception, we always wanted to anticipate emerging trends, transfer valuable information, density of connection between members increases (event without central mediator) → effectiveness is linked to more connections that creates more ideas. This network is not a network of ETF, but in the hands of its members. It will flourish with your activities, while ETF has also some ideas such as ‘call for research proposals’, joint publications, flash news, events in European and Partner countries.

***Panel Discussion: “The more unpredictable the world is, the more we rely on predictions”***

We live in an increasingly unpredictable and unforeseeable times, with several changes happening at high speed, and impacting not only on high tech 4.0 jobs but also on jobs in more traditional sectors. The objective of the panel was to exchange views and experiences on how to deal with unpredictability and uncertainty in the context of skills anticipation and matching and identify possible ways forward to be shared with network members.

**Stavroula Demetriades (Eurofound, Senior research manager):** What are the factors affecting the future of tele- and hybrid work based on Eurofound’s study on the future of telework and hybrid work in the post Covid world until 2035? According to preliminary results, 12% of people do teleworking in the EU, work preferences changed, more people wanted to telework (managers, professionals, scientists). Instead of predictions, scenario development was used on how to have the future we want/ avoid what we don’t want, ranking the drivers of change according to impact: nature of work (how work is changing, we are conducting our work, autonomy), crises (socio-economic, energy, climate...), mindset (what does society/people think about the way we work), regulations, how we organise our work and work together. Hybrid work will become more common with asymmetric world of work and difficulties to motivate/ control people. Given the world full of crises, we need to become more resilient, more work autonomy and skills to organise our work. There is no one model of future, the future outcome also depends on the choices made by the state, companies and individuals.

**Tamar Kitiashvili (Georgia Skills Agency Director):** How did you respond to the pandemic-related challenges in the VET education, what did you learn to cope with similar unpredictable events in the

*future?* Time flows differently during the pandemic; despite challenges it was a restart and opportunity to change things. Main lessons learnt: hard to move suddenly to digital, everything needed changes (curricula, timeframes), students needed different motivations, be motivated and creative. They decided to keep blended learning, with challenges related to training quality and administration. More incentives given to schools to raise autonomy, changed structure of schools, provision of additional services, e.g. psychosocial support, extracurricular activities to develop key competences and emotional stability; partnerships with other actors (health services, employment services, private sector). We have now more holistic view, and added sectorial dimension in predicting future.

**Claudia Plaimauer (3s Management Consulting, Austria):** *What are the new “methods of skill anticipation” which would perfect your future predictions, have some of traditional methodologies become obsolete in present situation?* Traditional labour market sources were disappointing due to longer time needed to produce data; missing details of granularity, missing regional level analysis. Some policies distort traditional LM indicators (e.g. validity of unemployment rates when people are not laid off but kept on). So we turn to more current data sources for real-time information → e.g. big data for vacancies and combining with old data. Broad portfolio of methods is needed, pandemic highlighted desperate need for real-time information. Also the recipients of labour market research became more diverse, more people interested in results, easily accessible manner needed (e.g. infographics).

**Michele Filippo Fontefrancesco (University of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollenzo-Italy):** *How can innovation be matched in jobs linked to traditional and cultural sectors such as those related to agriculture, food and crafts?* In the gastronomic science, innovation has accelerated linked to sustainability, call for tradition and local products, reliable food production and reshaping food scale. Agricolology allows new generation to document and use resources that are around. ‘Slow-food’ movement started in late 1980s, standardisation of species/varieties → product should be good, respect of environment and people, sources from the past: While technology can bring something important, we shouldn’t forget our past. Most important challenge is how to reach sustainability?

**Rodion Kolyshko (Institute of Professional Qualifications Director, Ukraine):** *What are the most important tasks in the area of skills anticipation and matching in the post-conflict Ukraine?*

The current brutal invasion and war in Ukraine is the most dreadful force major situation which paralyses a normal life and work of a nation. It destroys the lives of Ukrainian people and all the plans of the state institutions. In the post-war period, we need to respond to the following challenges: rebuilding the infrastructure and housing (construction), improving healthcare and education services, development of defence and intelligence sectors, deficit of financial and material resources, energy security and efficiency, and related digital and green transitions for the country.

**Discussion:** *Science for policy advise: how can researchers impact the policy makers? What do change mean for traditional sectors (crafts, food, etc.) compared to high-tech sectors? What would you have done differently in your area if you had known the arrival of big disruptors beforehand (e.g. pandemics financial crises, wars)?*

- The more specific the question the more willingness there is to listen to the answer; e.g. university of applied science commissioned to research on skills → results fed directly into curriculum development; if study identifies specific challenges, causes reaction on national level, give information in format they can apply.
- Transform practices, facilitation, providers of skills are key: development hubs, diversified services and opportunities for personal development and future careers, modern citizen needs more, open floor for ideas from different perspectives, most adaptive mechanisms to modern learning in non-

formal education, coming close to final beneficiaries, different sectors have different expectations and needs.

- If we don't know which stakeholder is interested in research, our research is not relevant, cannot be carried out. The results are used by European institutions for soft and hard forms of interventions; lesson to learn: organizations need to be prepared for the future, network and partnership with other EU agencies needed.
- In higher education, it is recognized that only knowledge was not enough, professors felt lost, students were not requiring more knowledge but asking for reflection → that's the lesson: role of trainer = emotional, human part; the importance of practical learning, people need guidance to access sources (so many available online).
- We cannot predict everything, but from the general trends we already know more soft skills are needed, students need to be empowered, create their own jobs, trials on learning of soft skills starting from pre-school, not only STEM but also social sciences (anthropology, psychology) to understand behavioural changes of individuals. Making them empowered requires much more emphasis on self-confidence and taking initiative.

### **Hackathon**

The key element of the event was the hackathon. The aim was to design, build and present the most innovative solution to the three challenges listed below related to emerging skills needs, and then pitch a final concept, prototype or presentation to the participants. The first winner was the Team Green CHOO-SEE (Plan your career play your future) on the use of big data, and the second was the Team renewable energy.

- *Challenge 1 – Future skill needs in promising economic sectors (1 team red)*
- *Challenge 2 – Minimizing skills mismatch (2 teams blue)*
- *Challenge 3 – Using big data (2 teams green)*

### **Result of brainstorming session in the second day**

#### ***Ideas for promoting the network***

- Promoting our network activities in the universities and among young researchers, businesses, educational institutions, youth associations, policymakers...
- Connecting our network with the other international and/or regional networks, create synergies for higher impact
- Creating regional and national groups of network members for specific networking and exchange
- Incorporating Skills Lab network into national 'Skills Week' activities (in countries such as Albania)
- Creating a database for the members of the Skills Lab Network, including their research areas and skills for future cooperation
- Deepening connections among the members through multiple sources of social media connections: creating a LinkedIn page of the network, group chats over LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, space for sharing reports and articles by members, etc.
- Developing a 'code of conduct' on communication between the network members.

#### ***Ideas for common network activities***

- Developing a common knowledge base – open source of data gathered, list of individual and group publications on our topics
- Data sharing, development of data packages, joint skills needs analysis based on open source data sources, mentoring and technical exchange among members
- Organising thematic (online) events/webinars on skills lab-related topics (skills demand and anticipation)

- Using (blog) articles to promote research findings of network members
- Supporting members to find funding opportunities and reliable partners (supporting cooperation between researchers from different countries)
- Facilitating exchange/study visits/ peer learning/ training activities between network members
- Publishing a special international journal (or on other journals) on skills-related topics with the contribution of network members, which could help to enlarge the network
- Organising International Round Table for Skills Identification, teaching methodologies and evaluation tools (ETF, OECD, ILO, NGOs, universities)
- Pairing artisans in partner countries to introduce them to new technologies through mobility events

#### ***Topics of particular interest for knowledge sharing and development***

- Future skill needs analysis in selected economic sectors, the impact of digitalisation and technology on the future of work and evolving skill needs mapping by economic sub-sectors
- Measuring skills mismatch, improving skill matching, understanding digital transformation via the European Skills and Jobs Survey
- New forms of employment and the scope of platform work in the countries
- Use of Big Data for labour market intelligence (e.g. text mining of online job vacancies, patents, scientific papers/ articles, policy papers)
- Skills for green transition in the countries (renewable energy, construction, tourism, agriculture)
- Traditional skills anticipation methods at national/ local/ sectoral level: labour market information system, employer survey, skills forecasting, skills foresight, tracer study, youth transition survey, sectorial study, LM observatory, skills analysis for smart specialisation, etc.
- Skills and labour mobility, impact of migration on skill needs
- Identifying LM opportunities for vulnerable groups (youth, female, etc.)

***Results of the event feedback survey:*** In total 32 participants filled in the ETF feedback survey on the Pollenzo event. With the rating between 1 and 4 (1=not at all, 4= absolutely a lot), the overall satisfaction is rated very high, both on the content and the format of the event. With 1-2 exceptions, all scores were given between 3 and 4, with a majority of 4. Few participants expressed some logistic issues they experienced, mainly linked to the organisation of missions that is noted by ETF.

Majority of respondents who filled in the survey have all three accounts of Facebook, LinkedIn and Whatsapp. The most voted communication tool is LinkedIn, followed by WhatsApp. However, 6 out of 32 respondents did not have a LinkedIn account, 2 out of 32 did not have WhatsApp account, 10 out of 32 did not have Facebook account. Based on these results, the best strategy to cover everyone in terms of communication could be creating a LinkedIn page for the ETF Skills Lab Network, which can be joined by the majority of members, and to complement it by a WhatsApp group to cover those with missing accounts. Therefore, the communication of the Experts Network could be ensured by multiple channels: Network page on the Open Space, Network page in LinkedIn, WhatsApp group for those who agreed to share their phone number and emailing from the "SkillsLab" account.

***CONCLUSIONS: The event was successful with a high engagement of participants. The network reached to 120 members. During the session for the definition of the actions in 2023, many participants expressed their interest in directly contributing to the Network. 2 countries volunteered to host the next live event (Georgia, Tunisia).***