

EVENT SUMMARY

Live event “From skills anticipation to policy action”

25-26 March 2026, Florence (Italy)

The ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts Conference, held on 25–26 March 2026 in Florence, convened policymakers, researchers and practitioners to examine how skills anticipation can be more effectively translated into policy action. Organised within the framework of ETF’s ongoing work on skills intelligence and with the support of the [European University Institute \(EUI\)](#), the event addressed a critical and persistent gap: while analytical capacity and data availability have significantly improved, their systematic use in policymaking remains uneven.

The conference aimed to explore methodological innovations in skills anticipation, identify practical conditions for embedding evidence into policy cycles and investigate how to strengthen dialogue between evidence producers and users. Bringing together participants from ETF partner countries, EU institutions, international organisations and networks and academia, the event provided a space for exchange on both technical approaches and governance challenges.

[Group picture](#)



Day 1 focused on framing the debate, reviewing future trends in the labour markets and exploring methodological approaches and examining the broader context shaping skills anticipation systems, including the impact of artificial intelligence (AI). Day 2 further explored how evidence can be operationalised within policymaking processes.

The conference opened with remarks from ETF's Director Dr Pilvi Torsti and EUI's Secretary General Ambassador Armando Barucco, setting the tone for the two-day event. The welcome notes emphasised the urgency of developing more agile and responsive skills systems in the face of rapid labour market transformations. While significant investments have been made in skills anticipation, the central challenge remains ensuring that this evidence informs concrete and timely policy decisions. A key message highlighted from the outset was that the issue is no longer a lack of data, but rather how to transform data into actionable insights. This requires not only technical capacity, but also institutional coordination, shared language between stakeholders, and effective communication strategies.

The keynote speakers, Ambassador Armando Barucco (left) and Dr Pilvi Torsti (right)



The first keynote session explored the implications of artificial intelligence for labour markets and education systems. Speakers Ummuhan Bardak, ETF and Prof Vladimír Šucha, EUI examined how AI is reshaping work by transforming tasks, redefining occupational structures and altering skill requirements and what could be the risks of AI systems in our learning capacity in education systems.

As noted by Ms Bardak, AI should not be viewed as a uniform or deterministic force. Instead, its impact varies depending on how technologies are adopted, regulated and integrated into existing systems. As highlighted in the recent [ETF report of AI impact on labour markets](#), AI brings us both opportunities and risks. While concerns about job displacement persist, the discussion also highlighted the potential for AI to augment human capabilities, improve productivity and create new forms of work.

Particular attention was given by Prof Šucha to the concept of “human agency” in an AI-driven context. He stressed that education and training systems play a crucial role in ensuring that individuals are not passive recipients of technological change but active participants. This implies strengthening not only digital and technical skills, but also transversal competences such as critical thinking, problem-solving and adaptability.

The discussion underscored that policy choices will ultimately shape whether AI leads to greater inclusion or exacerbates existing inequalities.

The keynote speakers, Ummuhan Bardak (right) and Prof Vladimír Šucha (left)



Panel 1 (Skills Anticipation and Matching Methodologies) provided a comprehensive overview of the methodologies used across countries to anticipate and match skills supply and demand. The session combined an international perspective with ETF's partner countries-specific experiences, illustrating both the diversity of approaches and the common challenges faced. Presentations highlighted the examples of several methodologies implemented in partner countries, including:

- Quantitative forecasting models based on macroeconomic and sectoral trends
- Skills surveys and employer-based data collection
- Real-time labour market information derived from online job vacancies
- Big data and AI-driven analytical techniques
- Qualitative approaches, including expert panels and stakeholder consultations

Country examples from Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia illustrated how these tools are applied in different institutional contexts. While progress has been made in strengthening analytical capacity, several recurring challenges were identified in their implementation, such as:

- Data limitations and fragmentation
- Inconsistencies in methodologies and results
- Limited technical capacity in some contexts
- Weak coordination between institutions
- Difficulties in translating analytical outputs into policy-relevant messages

A key takeaway from the discussion was the importance of combining multiple methods to produce robust and context-sensitive insights. Participants emphasised that purely data-driven approaches are insufficient without interpretation, validation and engagement with stakeholders. The session also highlighted the importance of institutionalising skills anticipation systems to ensure continuity, reliability and policy relevance over time.

Some of the speakers in the “Skills Anticipation and Matching Methodologies” panel on Day 1



The second panel (Skills Anticipation, Policy Interventions and Social Impact) included contributions from Eurofound and Cedefop which provided insights into how the EU agencies support labour market monitoring and skills intelligence at the European level and how they can support policy design and evaluation.

Elin Brattlund and Massimiliano Mascherini (Eurofound) presented examples of comprehensive monitoring systems that integrate labour market dynamics, working conditions and quality of life indicators, enabling a more holistic understanding of labour markets. They provided an overview of Eurofound’s [four flagship pan-European surveys](#), which offer unique comparative data on working conditions, company practices, and quality of life and allow the identification of new and emerging trends. The speakers also presented the [European Restructuring Monitor \(ERM\)](#), which tracks the employment impact of large-scale restructuring events in real-time, the [EU PolicyWatch](#), a database mapping national policy response to emerging challenges, and the [Convergence Hub](#), which monitors upward social convergence across Member States.

Stelina Chatzichristou (Cedefop) presented Cedefop’s approach to skills intelligence, and how skills anticipation is crucial for shaping skills intelligence. She illustrated skills anticipation methods and tools powered by Cedefop - [Skills Forecast](#), skills foresights, online job advertisements analysis (OJA) as presented in Cedefop’s [SkillsOVATE](#), [surveys](#). The speaker highlighted the importance of a comprehensive skills governance approach to efficiently link skills anticipation outputs with policy making, along with Cedefop’s relevant framework.

A central theme of the discussion was the transformation of data into “strategic intelligence.” This involves not only analysing information but also tailoring it to the needs of policymakers, ensuring clarity, relevance and usability. It was noted that lengthy and overly technical reports often fail to influence policy, whereas concise and targeted messages are more effective.

The last keynote speaker for day 1, Peter Bosch (Egmont Institute) focused on connecting research and policy when attracting Skills and Talent to the EU. The discussion highlighted increasing global competition for skills and the need for coordinated policy responses, with the speaker emphasising the

importance of aligning migration, education and labour market policies to create attractive ecosystems for talent. Evidence-informed policymaking was presented as a key enabler for designing effective strategies, while also acknowledging the political and social complexities involved.

Day 2 shifted the focus from methodologies and analytical tools to the practical use of evidence in policymaking. The sessions explored how skills intelligence can be translated into clear, actionable policy messages and effectively integrated into decision-making processes.

The keynote speaker Anastasia Deligkiaouri (Joint Research Centre - JRC) examined the conditions under which evidence-informed policymaking can be effective. A central theme is the need to bridge the gap between evidence producers and policymakers, who often operate with different priorities, timelines and communication styles. While researchers tend to prioritise methodological rigour and depth, policymakers require concise, timely and policy-relevant insights.

The discussion underscored that the main challenge lies not in generating evidence, but in translating it into formats that support decision-making. This requires not only technical expertise, but also effective communication strategies, institutional capacity and alignment with policy priorities. This is one of the main actions in the JRC, with [several flagship initiatives](#).

The following panel discussion further explored the mechanisms that enable evidence uptake in policymaking. Panellists brought in concrete examples and success factors in connecting researchers and policymakers to use evidence and skills intelligence in policymaking, particularly in the field of skills anticipation and matching.

Dr Gaia Taffoni (EUI) focused on the limited uptake of foresight in policy processes, building on the findings of the [EVALUSE project](#). Policymakers need evidence that helps them understand possible future developments, especially in times of high uncertainty. However, using evidence about the future is not straightforward. Tools such as foresight are not designed to measure and compare known options, but to help policymakers explore uncertainty, identify emerging trends, and reflect on different possible futures. The speaker explained why future-oriented evidence is essential for designing policies in fast-changing environments, and why using it effectively requires different criteria and expectations.

The second panellist Dr Christa Larsen (Institute for Economics, Labour and Culture (IWAK) of Goethe University Frankfurt am Main) illustrated how the 'Regional Labour Market Monitoring' approach is applied in the regional labour market policy of Hessen. Abstract research findings often lack direct applicability to political decision-making processes, and they require a process of contextual differentiation to ensure alignment with specific regional economic and labour market conditions. This translation of knowledge occurs within the regional strategy workshops they organise, in which regional stakeholders are familiarised with research results.

Anastasia Deligkiaouri (JRC)'s second intervention focused on how to build capacity both of scientists and policymakers in relation to Evidence-Informed Policymaking. She introduced the two relevant competence frameworks developed by the JRC, namely the [Competence Framework 'Science for Policy'](#) for researchers and the [Competence Framework for 'Innovative Policymaking'](#). She highlighted the need to develop shared capacities in communication, engagement and collaboration, recognising that effective interaction between stakeholders is essential for bridging the research-policy divide. The discussion also pointed to the importance of capacity building, with examples of training programmes targeting both researchers and policymakers to improve their ability to work with evidence.

The fourth panellist Cristina Mereuta (ETF) illustrated ETF's recent work on an integrated package of knowledge development, evidence gathering and policy learning on the impact of active labour market programmes (ALMPs). She presented the main characteristics of these activation policies in ETF's partner countries as well as the monitoring and evaluation results, looking as well at ALMPs performance in fragile and conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Some of the panelists: Dr Christa Larsen (center) and Dr Gaia Taffoni (left)



The last panel provided practical cases from ETF's partner countries on the use of evidence in skills development and employment policies. Cases from Egypt, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Türkiye were presented, all showing how evidence can be translated into policy through iterative and participatory processes.

A recurring theme was the importance of making evidence accessible, understandable and relevant to stakeholders. This involves presenting data in clear and practical formats, tailored to the needs of policymakers and other actors. In several cases, findings are discussed through consultations with ministries, employment agencies and employers, ensuring that evidence is validated and contextualised before informing policy decisions.

The examples also highlighted the importance of considering regional and local contexts. Differences in demographic trends, economic structures and labour market dynamics require tailored approaches to policy design. Skills anticipation systems were shown to be most effective when closely aligned with the specific needs and realities of different regions.

Another key insight was that the use of evidence in policymaking is not a linear process. Instead, it involves continuous interaction between data collection, analysis, stakeholder engagement and policy adjustment. This iterative approach allows for more responsive and adaptive policy interventions.



Key takeaways

The event provided a comprehensive and structured overview of current approaches to skills anticipation and the challenges of translating evidence into policy action. While significant progress has been made in developing analytical tools and methodologies, the discussions highlighted that their impact ultimately depends on how effectively they are integrated into policymaking processes.

A central conclusion is that strengthening the link between research and policy requires a combination of technical, institutional and communicative efforts. This includes improving data quality, fostering collaboration, aligning incentives and enhancing the capacity of researchers to communicate their findings to the public and of policymakers to interpret and use evidence. As labour markets continue to evolve, particularly under the influence of technological change such as AI, ensuring that skills intelligence informs policy decisions will be critical for building more resilient, inclusive and forward-looking skills systems.

The event further demonstrated that the critical bottleneck lies in the translation and use of evidence. Even robust and high-quality analysis fails to generate impact when it is not communicated in accessible formats, aligned with policy needs, or supported by appropriate institutional mechanisms. Strengthening the interface between researchers and policymakers—through shared frameworks, capacity building and continuous dialogue—emerged as a key priority.

Moreover, the use of evidence in policymaking was shown to be inherently iterative and context-dependent. Effective policies require ongoing interaction between data, stakeholders and decision-makers, as well as coordination across policy areas. This reinforces the need for integrated approaches and adaptive governance systems capable of responding to complex and evolving labour market dynamics.

The event concluded with a site visit to the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), during which participants were introduced to the mission and activities of the Archives and had the opportunity to see selected historical documents and visit the archival deposit.

One of the sessions of the visit to the Historical Archives of the EU



Resources

All presentations and materials presented at the event can be found at:

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/skills-lab-network-experts-skills-anticipation-policy-action>

Cedefop (2024), Next generation skills intelligence for more learning and better matching - Skills anticipation trends, opportunities and challenges in EU Member States

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/9190>

Cedefop (2021), Understanding technological change and skill needs: skills surveys and skills forecasting

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4197>

Cedefop (2021), Understanding technological change and skill needs: big data and artificial intelligence methods

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4198>

Cedefop (2021) Understanding technological change and skill needs: technology and skills foresight

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4199>

CEPS (2025), Preparedness in the labour market: a toolkit for anticipating the future of work

https://cdn.ceps.eu/2025/09/2025-08-JS-Explainer_future_approaches_formatted-2.pdf

European Commission (2024), How to write an effective and engaging policy brief:

<https://emotionalcities-h2020.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2024/07/Policy-brief-UHC.pdf>

ETF (2026), The impact of AI on labour markets. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2026-03/ETF_The%20impact%20of%20AI%20on%20the%20labour%20markets.pdf

ETF (2025), From skills anticipation to skills action. Collection of articles to understand skills demand in EU neighbouring countries. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-05/2025.04684_01_ENN.pdf

ETF (2024), Cross-country reflection paper on the future skill needs in selected sectors, <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/future-skills-etf-partner-countries>

ETF (2021), Changing skills for a changing world: Understanding skills demand in EU neighbouring countries www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/changing-skills-changing-world-understanding-skillsdemand

JRC (2023), Competence Framework 'Science for Policy' for researchers, https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/visualisation/competence-framework-%E2%80%98science-policy%E2%80%99-researchers_en

JRC (2023), Competence Framework for 'Innovative Policymaking', https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/visualisation/competence-framework-innovative-policymaking_en

JRC (2019), Understanding our Political Nature: How to put knowledge and reason at the heart of political decisionmaking, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, doi:10.2760/910822. https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/projects-activities/understanding-our-political-nature-how-put-knowledge-reason-heart-political_en

European Commission (2022), Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/SWD_2022_346_final.PDF

OECD (2020), Mobilising Evidence for Good Governance: Taking Stock of Principles and Standards for Policy Design, Implementation and Evaluation. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e0195354-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e0195354-en>

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Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto (2021), From Research to Impact: A toolkit for developing effective policy brief: <https://socialwork.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Policy-Toolkit-Final-v2-Apr27.pdf>