

Aligning skills systems across the Western Balkans: regional responses to algorithmic managed work

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About ERI SEE

- Intergovernmental institution established by SEE governments
- Member countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia
- Supports regional cooperation in education and training
- Works with ministries, VET agencies, qualification authorities, teacher training institutions and chambers
- Focus on skills systems, occupational standards, teacher training and lifelong learning

Areas of Regional Cooperation

- Regionally aligned occupational and qualification standards
- Curricula development
- Teacher training and continuous professional development
- Teaching and learning materials
- Work-based learning and lifelong learning
- Quality Assurance
- Regional standards and curricula developed in construction, tourism and hospitality, agriculture, logistics and mechatronics

Changing Labour-Market Expectations

- Work is organised, monitored and evaluated through digital systems
- Employers expect workers to continuously adapt to changing technologies and work processes
- Technical skills alone are no longer sufficient
- Growing importance of digital, transversal and adaptive competences (key competences)

Opportunities and Challenges

- Potential benefits: efficiency, faster processes and improved coordination
- Important concerns: reduced transparency and worker autonomy
- Growing pressure on performance and continuous monitoring
- Risk of reducing competences to measurable indicators only

Lessons from Regional Standards Development

- Employers across the region increasingly request similar combinations of competences
- Technical skills are combined with digital, transversal and adaptive competences
- Occupational standards need continuous updating to reflect labour-market changes
- Education systems need to react faster to changing competence requirements

The Real Challenge: Implementation

- Developing standards alone is not enough
- Teachers are expected to prepare learners for rapidly changing occupations and skills needs
- Continuous professional development has become essential
- Without strong teachers, reforms remain mostly on paper

The Role of Lifelong Learning

- Workers need continuous upskilling and reskilling throughout their careers
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is becoming more important
- Flexible and modular learning pathways are needed
- Education systems need to respond faster to changing skills needs

The Importance of Regional Cooperation

- Labour markets in the Western Balkans are strongly interconnected
- Regional cooperation supports comparability of qualifications and occupational standards
- Exchange of experiences helps education systems respond faster to changing skills needs
- Digital transformation and algorithmically managed work are shared regional challenges

Final reflections

- Education systems should not simply adapt to algorithms
- A broader understanding of skills and competences must be preserved
- Strong implementation capacity is essential
- Investing in teachers and lifelong learning is critical

Thank you!

Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe

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