

# SUMMARY

## ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts Webinar

### HOW TO TRANSLATE SKILLS DEMAND EVIDENCE INTO EFFECTIVE POLICIES?

06 May 2026, 10.00 – 12.00 CET

This webinar of the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts explored how skills demand evidence can be more effectively translated into education, training and employment policies. Building on discussions from the Network's annual live event held in Florence in March 2026, the webinar examined the persistent gap between evidence production and policymaking, focusing on the importance of communication, institutional coordination and continuous dialogue between researchers and policymakers. Particular attention was given to practical tools and frameworks that support evidence informed policymaking, as well as to country experiences illustrating how labour market intelligence and skills anticipation can inform policy design in different national contexts.

**Cristiana Burzio (ETF)** opened the webinar by welcoming participants to the second ETF Skills Lab Network webinar of 2026 and highlighting the continued growth of the Network, which now brings together more than 800 members from ETF partner countries, European Union (EU) Member States and beyond. She outlined the broader programme of activities planned for the year, including regional webinars, peer learning sessions and thematic community initiatives, while encouraging participants to remain engaged through the ETF Open Space and the Network's LinkedIn group. Reflecting on discussions held during the Florence live event on the transition from skills anticipation to policy action, Burzio stressed that the main challenge is not the availability of data itself but the translation of evidence into clear and actionable policy messages. She underlined the importance of strengthening cooperation and dialogue between researchers and policymakers and introduced the structure of the webinar, which combined conceptual reflections, practical tools from the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission and country examples from Armenia and Moldova.

The first speaker, **Ümmühan Bardak (ETF)**, introduced the webinar theme by reflecting on the ETF's long-standing experience in linking skills research to policymaking and explaining why evidence alone is insufficient to generate effective policies. Framing the discussion around the relationship between research, knowledge brokerage and policymaking, she argued that evidence production represents only the first stage of a broader process. Before evidence can inform policy design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation, it must first be interpreted, translated and packaged into forms that policymakers can meaningfully use. Bardak stressed that this intermediary function, often overlooked in research projects, is essential for transforming technical findings into actionable "skills intelligence". Drawing on ETF experience across partner countries and its wider work on [skills demand analysis](#) and [changing skills demand](#), she highlighted a series of recurring barriers preventing evidence from influencing policy. These included research topics disconnected from policy priorities, overly technical or weakly communicated findings, limited stakeholder ownership, insufficient institutional coordination and fragmented responsibilities between ministries and agencies. She also noted that dissemination often remains too generic and insufficiently targeted to different audiences, resulting in limited follow-up and weak policy uptake.

Bardak then outlined several practical lessons for strengthening evidence informed policymaking. She emphasised the importance of selecting policy oriented research topics that address real social and labour market challenges and allocating time for reflection and follow-up after research activities formally end. Another key priority, she argued, is adapting communication formats to different audiences by producing tailored outputs for ministries, schools, companies, students, parents and jobseekers using accessible and user-friendly language. She also stressed the value of building alliances from the beginning of a project by involving public institutions, private sector actors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media representatives in analysis, validation and dissemination processes. Coalition building among institutions, she noted, is crucial for creating shared ownership and ensuring that evidence reaches decision makers effectively. Bardak additionally warned against producing long and generic lists of recommendations, arguing instead for fewer, prioritised and feasible actions that clearly acknowledge policy trade-offs. Finally, she underlined the importance of continuous dialogue between researchers and policymakers through regular policy forums, research briefings and institutional exchange mechanisms, themes closely aligned with the Joint Research Centre's [Competence Framework "Science for Policy"](#) and [Competence Framework for "Innovative Policymaking"](#).

During the Q&A session, participants reflected on the complex relationship between research and policymaking, emphasising that evidence alone is rarely sufficient to influence policy decisions. The discussion highlighted the importance of trust, communication and alignment between researchers and policymakers, noting that policymakers often engage with research through political and strategic priorities rather than purely technical considerations. It was also stressed that researchers frequently underestimate the different ways in which policymakers read and use evidence, particularly when findings support ongoing policy agendas or institutional objectives. Participants additionally reflected on the need for stronger intermediary mechanisms, including think tank functions, ethical guidelines and medium-term funding structures that can help sustain dialogue and support evidence use over time. The exchange reinforced the webinar's broader message that effective evidence informed policymaking depends not only on the quality of research itself but also on continuous interaction, mutual understanding and realistic engagement with political processes.

The second speaker, **Anastasia Deligkiaouri (Joint Research Centre, European Commission)**, examined how evidence informed policymaking can be strengthened through institutional capacity building, interdisciplinary collaboration and the development of shared competences between researchers and policymakers. Introducing the role of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) as the European Commission's science and knowledge service, she explained that the JRC supports policymaking not only by producing scientific evidence but also by collecting, filtering and translating complex knowledge into policy relevant messages. Deligkiaouri stressed that the concept of [evidence informed policymaking](#) is more accurate than "evidence based policymaking", since policymaking is shaped not only by scientific research but also by political priorities, democratic values, stakeholder interests and societal impacts. She argued that evidence is especially important during the agenda setting stage, where the framing of a policy problem determines which types of research, data and perspectives become relevant. In this context, she highlighted the growing importance of systematic evidence collection, anticipatory governance and foresight approaches in responding to increasingly interconnected crises and "polycrisis" conditions. She also underlined the need for transparency, citizen engagement and co-creation processes in order to build trust and ensure that policymaking remains responsive to societal needs and democratic principles.

Deligkiaouri then presented the Joint Research Centre's broader framework for integrating evidence throughout the European Union (EU) policy cycle, ranging from foresight, horizon scanning and impact assessments to implementation support, monitoring and evaluation. Referring to the JRC's role as a "knowledge hub", she explained how interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge management are used to connect scientific complexity with practical policymaking processes. A significant part of the presentation focused on the development of the JRC's [Competence Framework on Science4Policy for Researchers](#) and [Innovative Policymaking Competence Framework for policymakers](#), which aim to strengthen communication, collaboration, stakeholder engagement and evidence literacy on both sides of the science-policy interface. She explained that these frameworks support not only researchers and

policymakers but also emerging “knowledge broker” roles responsible for translating evidence into actionable policy insights. Finally, Deligkiaouri discussed the JRC’s ongoing work with Member States through Technical Support Instrument projects designed to strengthen national evidence informed policymaking ecosystems. Drawing on experiences from multiple European countries, she stressed that there is no single model for effective evidence use and that context specific institutional cultures, political support and long-term investment in skills and infrastructures remain essential for building sustainable policymaking systems.

In the discussion that followed, participants explored the practical and political dimensions of evidence informed policymaking, raising questions about agenda setting, misinformation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the role of values in policy formulation. The discussion highlighted that policymaking is shaped not only by scientific evidence but also by political priorities, competing interests and societal values, making transparency and continuous dialogue essential. It was stressed that evidence informed policymaking should not be understood as a purely technocratic process and that researchers must remain aware of the political and institutional realities within which evidence is interpreted and used. Participants also reflected on the growing influence of AI and digital media on public debate and agenda setting, with emphasis placed on the importance of maintaining human oversight, critical thinking and clear distinctions between facts and opinions. Several exchanges focused on the need for stronger procedures and institutional cultures supporting evidence use, including transparent policy processes, systematic stakeholder engagement and established mechanisms for integrating scientific evidence into decision making. The discussion further acknowledged the limits and uncertainties of research itself, recognising that scientific evidence is not infallible and that policies informed by research must still account for broader social realities, democratic values and potential unintended consequences.

The third speaker, **Ruben Sargsyan (National Institute of Labour and Social Research, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia)**, presented Armenia’s experience in translating labour market evidence into employment policy through both long-term strategic planning and rapid crisis response measures. Framing his intervention around the persistent gap between data availability and its actual use in policymaking, he argued that evidence does not automatically translate into policy and that effective evidence informed policymaking depends on institutional processes, political commitment and continuous adaptation. Drawing on the development of Armenia’s Employment Strategy 2025–2031, Sargsyan explained how the strategy was built through two parallel tracks combining structured data analysis and policy design. [Labour Force Survey data](#), macroeconomic indicators, international experience and stakeholder consultations were integrated with policy costing, target group identification and programme evaluation in order to define long-term priorities. He stressed that a critical turning point emerged from the evaluation of existing employment programmes, which revealed extremely low effectiveness rates and prompted a stronger political commitment to evidence informed policymaking. The strategy development process also relied on extensive consultation with government institutions, business representatives, trade unions and international organisations including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

Sargsyan then illustrated how these principles were applied during the implementation of a crisis response [Active Labour Market Policies \(ALMPs\)](#) designed to support forcibly displaced persons. Because the programme had to be developed rapidly under conditions of uncertainty, policymakers relied on multiple evidence sources simultaneously, including demographic data, labour market and tax administration data, dedicated labour force surveys and direct consultations with beneficiaries. He explained that the programme also served as a pilot mechanism for testing and refining elements of the broader employment strategy in real time. Central to the presentation was the idea of a continuous “policy feedback loop”, in which evidence informs programmes, programmes generate new evidence through implementation and monitoring, and this evidence subsequently refines both policy design and strategic priorities. Reflecting on Armenia’s broader experience, Sargsyan stressed that evidence informed policymaking is not a linear process but an iterative system requiring continuous learning, adjustment and stakeholder engagement. He identified political commitment, the integration of analysis into policymaking processes and the use of programmes as testing mechanisms as key enabling factors,

while also acknowledging challenges such as fragmented data systems, lengthy strategy development processes and the need to take decisions under conditions of incomplete evidence and crisis.

In the Q&A session, participants reflected on the relationship between policy design, implementation capacity and policy impact, emphasising that even well-designed strategies may fail if implementation systems are weak. The discussion highlighted the importance of monitoring mechanisms, measurable indicators and continuous policy evaluation, particularly in employment policies where effectiveness can be assessed through outcomes such as employment rates and labour market integration over time. Several exchanges stressed that policy implementation depends heavily on institutional capacity, quality public administration and human resources, with participants noting that successful strategies require not only technical expertise but also behavioural change, organisational learning and sustained management capacity within public institutions. The conversation also explored the importance of defining clear policy objectives and evaluation criteria from the outset while remaining flexible enough to adapt to changing social, economic and geopolitical conditions. Participants reflected on how crises, migration flows and external shocks can rapidly alter policy environments, requiring strategies to function as “living documents” that evolve continuously through monitoring, feedback and revision. The discussion concluded with a shared recognition that evidence informed policymaking is not a fixed or linear process but an ongoing cycle of adaptation, learning and institutional adjustment.

The fourth speaker, **Mariana Crismaru (National Institute for Economic Research, Moldova)**, presented Moldova’s experience in using skills and labour market evidence to design targeted regional employment interventions for young people. She began by outlining the country’s broader labour market context, characterised by demographic decline, migration, regional disparities, skills mismatch and a high share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Against this background, the study aimed to identify region specific employment opportunities and skills needs in six regions of Moldova in order to support more targeted labour market interventions. Crismaru explained that the project was implemented through a multi-stakeholder partnership involving researchers, public employment services and development partners, with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The analytical framework combined quantitative and qualitative methods, integrating labour market indicators, demographic analysis, vacancy data, policy analysis and direct consultations with employers, local stakeholders and young people. A particularly important component involved short-term regional population projections, which helped local actors better understand the long-term implications of demographic decline on labour supply and regional development.

Crismaru then described how evidence from multiple sources was combined to identify emerging sectors, shortage occupations and region specific opportunities across Moldova. The analysis highlighted growing demand in sectors such as energy, renewable energy, textiles, social entrepreneurship and digital industries, while also identifying local opportunities linked to rural tourism, eco-agriculture, agro-processing and rural logistics. Findings were subsequently translated into concrete skills priorities covering technical, occupational, digital, transversal and entrepreneurial competences. These results informed the design of targeted training and outreach activities implemented together with public employment services and local stakeholders, including skills camps and vocational training programmes such as façade insulation training. Crismaru stressed that several factors contributed to the successful use of evidence in practice, including early stakeholder ownership, strong cooperation with public employment services, a demand driven approach and the presentation of findings in a clear and operational format. At the same time, she acknowledged important challenges, including limited regional labour market data, fragmented institutional coordination and difficulties engaging employers in research activities. Reflecting on the broader lessons learned, Crismaru concluded that evidence alone is insufficient unless it is translated into practical and accessible forms capable of supporting concrete implementation and policymaking decisions.

In the discussion, participants reflected on how dialogue between researchers and policymakers can be sustained beyond the completion of individual studies and projects. The discussion highlighted the importance of continuous stakeholder cooperation, particularly between research institutions, public employment services and development partners, in ensuring that evidence remains connected to policymaking processes over time. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to communicate findings in a clear, practical and accessible manner through workshops, visual presentations and direct

engagement with ministries and local stakeholders. Participants also explored the relationship between national evidence and broader international trends, noting that many of Moldova's identified priorities, including digital, entrepreneurial and green skills, overlap with wider European labour market developments while still reflecting the country's own demographic and regional realities. The conversation further addressed the limitations of directly transferring policies between countries, stressing that labour market interventions cannot simply be copied from one context to another. Instead, effective policymaking requires adaptation to local realities, demographic trends, migration patterns and regional labour market conditions, particularly in countries where data availability remains limited.

In her closing remarks, **Cristiana Burzio (ETF)** thanked the speakers, moderators and participants for their active engagement and reflected on the key messages emerging from the discussions. She emphasised that there is no single model or universal solution for translating evidence into effective policies and that successful policymaking depends above all on continuous interaction, transparency and sustained exchange between researchers, policymakers and implementation actors. Burzio highlighted that the webinar discussions demonstrated the importance of dialogue, stakeholder engagement and adaptive policymaking processes, capable of responding to changing realities and institutional contexts. She encouraged participants to continue the debate through the Network's [LinkedIn group](#) and confirmed that all presentations, referenced materials and the webinar recording would be made available on the [ETF Open Space](#), together with an event summary. Concluding the session, she thanked participants for their continued involvement in the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts and invited them to stay connected for upcoming activities and future discussions.

## Resources

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

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/how-translate-skills-demand-evidence-effective-policies>

European Commission (2024), How to write an effective and engaging policy brief: <https://emotionalcities-h2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Policy-brief-UHC.pdf>

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](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-policy-making\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/visualisation/competence-framework-innovative-policy-making_en)

JRC (2019), Understanding our Political Nature: How to put knowledge and reason at the heart of political decision making, 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](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](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/SWD_2022_346_final.PDF)

International Center for Policy Advocacy (2017), "An essential guide to writing policy briefs", [https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/icpa\\_policy\\_briefs\\_essential\\_guide.pdf](https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/icpa_policy_briefs_essential_guide.pdf)

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>

Luisa Faustini-Torres (2020), EuroMedMig Policy Paper Series Number 2, July 2020 [https://www.academia.edu/44019185/2020\\_Research\\_Policy\\_Nexus\\_in\\_Mediterranean\\_Migration\\_Issues\\_A\\_Critical\\_Assessment\\_of\\_the\\_Debate\\_between\\_Guia\\_Gilardoni\\_and\\_Iv%C3%A1n\\_Mart%C3%ADn](https://www.academia.edu/44019185/2020_Research_Policy_Nexus_in_Mediterranean_Migration_Issues_A_Critical_Assessment_of_the_Debate_between_Guia_Gilardoni_and_Iv%C3%A1n_Mart%C3%ADn)