

5TH EDITION

From projects to ecosystems

Forum on Vocational Excellence 2026

Dual Education and Training for Competitive
Regions

Graz · 7–9 September 2026

A 10-minute retrospective

The Forum has evolved into a European ecosystem platform

A community-led annual gathering, hosted in Graz for its fifth edition.



Theme

Dual Education and Training for Competitive Regions

Share effective models between VET and dual higher education · connect education with industry · strengthen regional resilience and competitiveness

A truly international CoVE community

Registration data show both scale and breadth; post-event reporting describes around 400 participants.



Participation mix



Representing the ecosystem
CoVE practice
+ European policy
+ global VET networks

Note: several workbook pivots require reconciliation before final audited reporting.

Three days: community, immersion, co-creation

The programme combined plenary input from practitioners, study visits, peer exchange, action-oriented workshops and lots of networking.

MON 7

Community

- Football Cup
- CoVE Captains meeting
- Welcome reception
- + Side events (ETF – Asian Development Bank; DUALKO, etc.)

TUE 8

Perspectives

- Opening talk show
- 2 keynotes (EU policy & Secondary VET)
- 8 study visits: Secondary and tertiary VET, Chamber, Industry
- Policy round table
- Exhibition & dinner

WED 9

Practice

- 2 keynotes (learning & industry)
- 10 sectoral workshops
- 11 transversal workshops
- Closing panel

Policy direction and regional ecosystem building

Two perspectives on what Europe needs and how regions can act now.

Stefan Olsson

European Commission · DG EMPL

The upcoming European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training

- European policy direction for VET
- VET within the wider skills and competitiveness agenda
- A strategic frame for the CoVE community

Katarina Sandbacka

VAMIA · International Affairs

From Skills to Ecosystems: How VET Can Shape the Future of Our Regions

- Networks must become shared ecosystems
- VET turns knowledge into practical regional capability
- Flexible pathways, company co-design and continuous learning

Learning that transfers. Talent systems that compete.

Two complementary perspectives on education design and strategic workforce development in time of AI transformation.

Birgit Phillips

FH JOANNEUM · Learning, Innovation & Technology

Train for Transfer: How We Learn When the World Changes

- Real work is changing, so learning must change with it
- Preserve judgement, expertise and productive friction
- Design authentic tasks so competence transfers when tools and conditions change

Markus Tomaschitz

AVL · Chief Human Resources Officer

From Talent Shortage to Talent Advantage

- Treat skills and talent as a competitiveness issue
- Integrate companies directly into education and training
- Turn work-based and dual learning into a strategic talent pipeline

Shared message: connect learning closely to changing work, while protecting the pathway from novice to expert.

From parallel systems to regional skills ecosystems

Three priorities for faster, more resilient and more competitive regions.

1

Create permeable pathways

Ease movement between VET and higher education through mutual recognition and regional pilots for joint programmes.
Embed CoVEs in regional and national policy for lasting impact.

2

Build lifelong talent ecosystems

Prioritise rapid upskilling and reskilling, anticipate AI-related professions, learn from strong practice beyond the EU, and retain talent and knowledge in regions.

3

Move faster through partnership

Use public-private partnerships, agile governance and strategic foresight to accelerate competitiveness. Reduce legal barriers to cross-border work in Europe.
Assuring EU funding is support top regional and institutional priorities.

**Core messages: (1) dual education is the fastest route to learning when systems must respond quickly to change;
(2) Europe needs to support scaling of proven methodologies and expanding good practices.**



Impressions CoVE Forum 2026

Talent is only
the starting point.

FORUM ON VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
LET'S DISCUSS THE LEGACY!
ATHENS 2027

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

WELCOME TO THE
VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
EXHIBITION & DINNER
FORUM ON VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE 2026
Hosted by
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GRAZ, AUSTRIA
KATA PULT