ETF Working together Learning for life

European Training Foundation

SUMMARY

ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts Online Peer Learning Session

CONNECTING REGIONAL LABOUR MARKET EXPERTISE

9 November 2026, 10.00 – 12.00 CET

This online peer learning session of the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts provided an opportunity for knowledge exchange with the European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring (EN RLMM). The EN RLMM was established in 2006 at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany, with the mission to advance practice and impact of labour market monitoring across Europe at regional and local levels. The Network is dedicated to the development, dissemination, and application of innovative concepts, methods, and tools tailored to labour market analysis. Through a supportive and collaborative environment, it brings together a diverse group of experts—including researchers, policy makers, practitioners and labour market observatories—from more than 32 European countries and beyond.

Building on the collaboration established between the Skills Lab Network and EN RLMM in September 2026, the session presented the EN RLMM's structure, activities and methodological approaches to regional labour market monitoring, alongside its priorities for 2027 and the joint call for papers on 'Holistic approaches to observing youth transitions during times of disruption', with a deadline for abstract submissions of 1 December 2026.

Cristiana Burzio (ETF) opened the session by welcoming members of the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts and EN RLMM. She briefly introduced the Skills Lab Network highlighting its role in facilitating knowledge exchange among approximately 900 members through various activities, ETF OpenSpace and its LinkedIn group. Burzio outlined the session's objectives, including learning from EN RLMM's experience, exploring the findings of the September 2026 Annual Meeting in Bilbao and opportunities for future cooperation between the two networks.

The first speaker, Dr **Christa Larsen (EN RLMM Coordinator),** Managing Director of the Institute for Economics, Labour and Culture (IWAK) at Goethe University in Frankfurt, introduced the EN RLMM's history, structure and activities, explaining how it developed from an initiative launched in Frankfurt in 2004 in response to the need for more systematic regional labour market information to support policy decisions. She described how an initial meeting brought together 80 participants from 15 European countries, revealing a significant gap between research on labour market monitoring and its practical application. This led to the formal establishment of the EN RLMM in Brussels in 2005, to connect researchers, policymakers and practitioners and promote evidence-based decision-making at regional and local levels. Larsen outlined the Network's two complementary components: a Scientific Committee responsible for conceptual and methodological development, and an initiative connecting regional and local labour market observatories to facilitate practical exchange. She explained that the EN RLMM has since expanded to approximately 400 individual members across around 40 countries , and has established partnerships with organisations such as GIZ, OECD and, more recently, the ETF.

Larsen then explained how the EN RLMM sustains knowledge exchange through four interconnected activities: a) the selection of an annual theme by its Scientific Committee, b) the publication of an annual anthology bringing together research and practical experiences, c) an annual meeting dedicated to

discussing emerging evidence and methodologies, and d) specialised working groups addressing topics requiring longer-term collaboration. She emphasised that the Network's effectiveness depends on the active engagement of individual members, mutual trust, a stable core group and a flexible organisational structure that encourages collaboration across countries and disciplines. Reflecting on lessons learned over two decades, Larsen highlighted the importance of moving from a supply-driven approach to a demand-led model of regional labour market monitoring, in which information is developed according to policymakers' needs and communicated in accessible formats. She described monitoring as a continuous process combining three functions: generating relevant information, supporting its interpretation and communication, and translating evidence into coordinated policy action. She concluded that effective labour market intelligence goes beyond data collection and analysis, requiring sustained cooperation among researchers, practitioners and decision-makers to inform regional and local labour market policies.

The second speaker, **Eugenia Atin (EN RLMM, AI Working Group Coordinator),** introduced the EN RLMM's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Working Group, established in 2015 as the Big Data Working Group. She explained that the initial activities focused on exploring the potential of big data and machine learning for regional and local labour market monitoring, assessing the needs and technical capacities of labour market observatories, and identifying existing applications and challenges. To facilitate knowledge exchange, the group established a Big Data Knowledge Hub and organised nine seminars showcasing practical applications of emerging technologies in labour market analysis. As the use of AI became more widespread across the Network, the group was renamed into 'AI Working Group' in 2025, marking a shift from sharing existing practices towards developing collaborative tools and resources. Current initiatives include a dedicated website for knowledge exchange and the exploration of a potential AI transformation index. Atin concluded by emphasising the importance of members' voluntary contributions and inviting participants to share ideas for future activities.

During the Q&A session, participants raised questions about membership in EN RLMM and its thematic working groups, opportunities for online participation in future events, and lessons that newer expert networks could draw from EN RLMM's experience. It was explained that membership is open to individuals willing to contribute their knowledge and participate in exchanges, while joining a working group requires membership in the Network (contact person: Dr Christa Larsen). The discussion highlighted the importance of providing tangible benefits to members, maintaining a flexible organisational structure and building trust through sustained collaboration. Regarding policy impact, examples illustrated how exchanging practices across regions can inform local policy decisions and improve labour market forecasting by combining statistical projections with qualitative evidence. The potential of AI and big data to strengthen labour market analysis was also discussed, alongside challenges concerning data quality, representativeness, transparency and privacy. Participants were informed that online participation in the 2027 event had not yet been confirmed but would be considered.

The third speaker, **Dr Aleksandra Webb (University of the West of Scotland, EN RLMM Scientific Committee)**, presented the main findings from EN RLMM's 2026 Annual Meeting held in Bilbao in September, on "Monitoring the Transformation of Occupations, Job Roles and Skills". She explained how AI, the green transition, demographic developments and geopolitical changes are simultaneously reshaping labour markets, creating new challenges for regional and local labour market monitoring. Drawing on research and discussions presented at the event , Webb highlighted that changes in tasks and skills requirements often occur more rapidly than changes in occupational classifications, requiring more detailed approaches to monitoring labour market transformation. She emphasised that AI is not simply replacing jobs but is increasingly augmenting existing roles, reshaping career pathways and changing the balance between technical, digital, green and transversal skills. She also reflected on structural labour shortages arising from ageing populations, skills mismatches and regional inequalities, alongside the uneven impact of AI across occupations and the importance of governance, transparency and data protection in managing technological change.

Webb then outlined the key lessons from Bilbao, emphasising that successful labour market transformation requires a balance between economic competitiveness, social sustainability and regional cohesion. She highlighted the essential role of public services in identifying early signs of labour market disruption and supporting resilient regional economies. The need to move beyond producing labour market intelligence is key, to ensure that evidence informs education curricula, qualifications,

investment decisions and individual career choices. Webb stressed the importance of monitoring changes in workers' tasks and job quality, recognising labour mobility as both a consequence of labour market transformation and a valuable source of intelligence. Turning to methodological approaches, she advocated combining quantitative data and forecasting with qualitative evidence from employers, workers and local stakeholders to better capture complex labour market developments. She concluded by highlighting priorities for labour market actors, including monitoring skills rather than occupational titles, strengthening lifelong learning, improving AI understanding and digital literacy, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, and building partnerships to translate labour market intelligence into effective policy action.

During the Q&A session, the discussion focused on the role of qualitative approaches in understanding changes in workplace skills and practices. Webb explained that bringing together employers, workers and regional labour market stakeholders through focus groups and participatory discussions can provide insights that quantitative surveys alone may not capture. She emphasised that these approaches can help identify the underlying causes of skills shortages and inform practical policy responses, ranging from short-term training measures to longer-term revisions of vocational education and higher education curricula.

Last but not least, **Dr Andrew Dean (University of Exeter, EN RLMM Scientific Committee)**, introduced the Network's 2027 annual theme, *"Holistic Approaches to Observing Youth Transitions During Times of Disruption"*, and outlined the joint anthology and conference being organised by the EN RLMM and the ETF Skills Lab Network. He explained that the initiative aims to bring together evidence-based research, policy insights and practical experiences on youth employment, labour market transitions and skills development, with particular emphasis on innovative interventions. Dean presented the four thematic areas for contributions. The first focuses on youth transitions into work in times of uncertainty, including precarious entry-level jobs, vocational education and training, apprenticeships, young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), and youth mobility. The second focuses on skills, Artificial Intelligence, and the future of work, including the impact of AI and digitalisation on entry-level work, changing skills requirements, inequalities and the use of graduate tracking and labour market intelligence. The third thematic area addresses inclusive and sustainable labour markets and the 'Triple Transition', , exploring the implications of the green, digital and social transitions for job quality, equity and social cohesion. The fourth area focuses on policies, institutions, and local responses, including youth employment initiatives, employer engagement, local partnerships and opportunities for international learning.

Dean then outlined the 2027 publication and conference timetable, inviting Networks' members to contribute evidence-based papers offering practical recommendations that could inform policy responses across different regions. Abstracts of 500–1,000 words should be submitted by 1 December 2026, with selection decisions expected by 20 December and full papers due in February 2027. Final manuscripts are scheduled for May, ahead of publication in August 2027 and the joint EN RLMM–ETF conference in Turin on 16–17 September 2027. He explained that selected contributions would be presented through thematic panels and workshops, with the aim of facilitating exchange between researchers and practitioners. Dean also highlighted the importance of understanding the critical transition points between education and employment, where young people may disengage from learning or encounter barriers to entering the labour market.

During the Q&A session, participants sought clarification on the scope and eligibility criteria of the joint call for papers. Dean confirmed that contributions could focus on emerging challenges and propose evidence-based policy recommendations even where specific policy measures have not yet been introduced, particularly regarding the impact of artificial intelligence on young people's employment opportunities. He also welcomed submissions from multidisciplinary teams involving researchers, policymakers and public employment services, as well as papers addressing several interconnected themes. Participants were encouraged to contact the organisers for feedback on potential contributions before submitting their abstracts.

In her closing remarks, **Cristiana Burzio (ETF)** thanked the EN RLMM representatives for sharing their experience and reflected on the similarities between the two networks, particularly their shared thematic interests, commitment to partnerships and emphasis on members' contributions. She drew parallels

between EN RLMM's working groups and the Skills Lab Network's sub-communities on skills and migration, and on graduate tracking and emphasised the common objective of generating knowledge to support evidence-informed policymaking. She reminded participants of the 1 December 2026 deadline for the joint call for papers and the upcoming Skills Lab webinar on enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities, scheduled for 18 November.

Resources

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

https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/online-peer-learning-session-connecting-regional-labour-market-expertise