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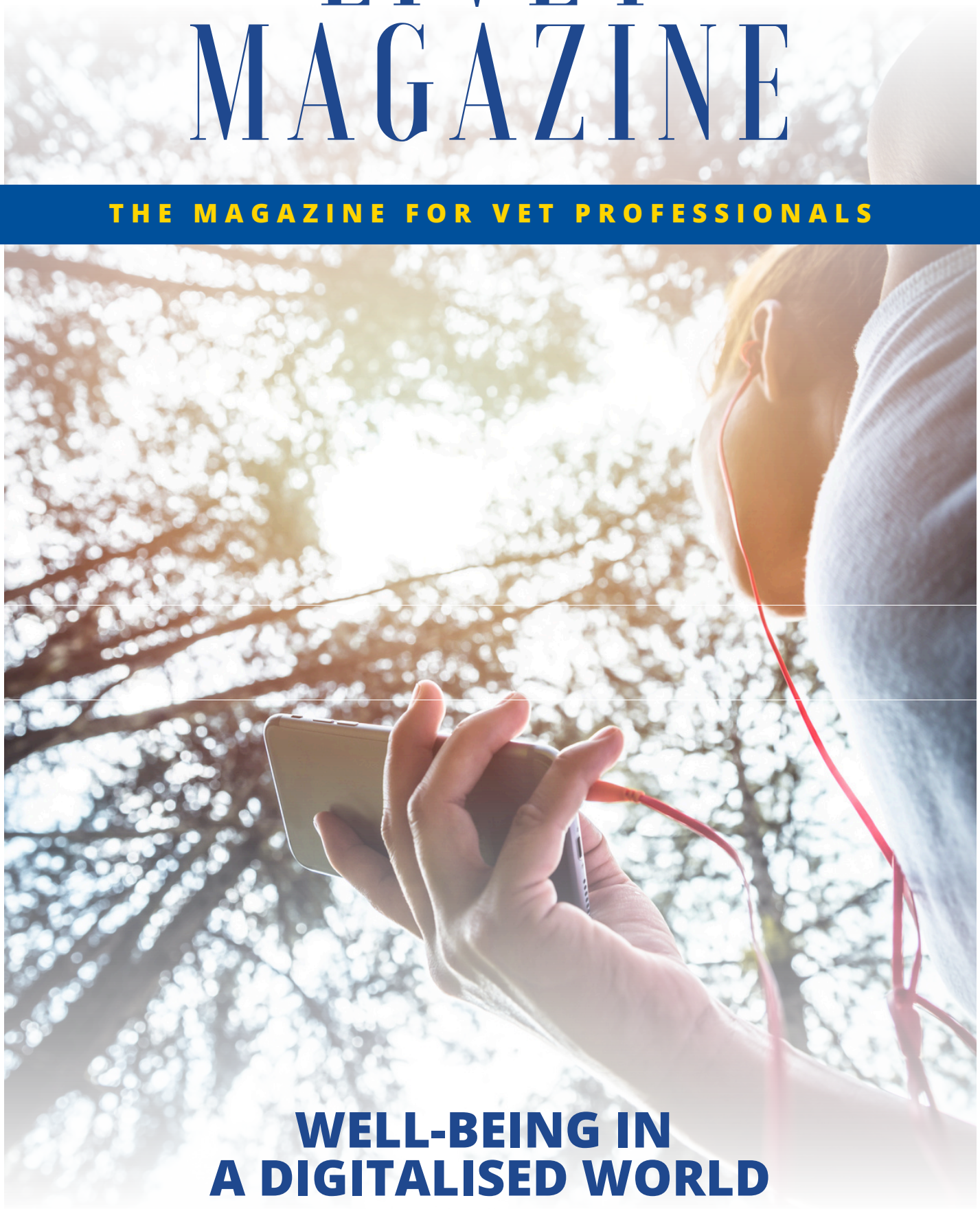

## WELL-BEING IN A DIGITALISED WORLD

EfVET is a unique European-wide professional association which has been created by and for providers of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in all European countries. Its mission is to champion and enrich Technical and Vocational Education and Training through transnational cooperation and building a pan-European network of institutions that could lead European VET policies.


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# WELL-BEING IN A DIGITALISED WORLD: CRAFTING THE FUTURE OF VET 2035

# Message from EfVET President

> ***To shape a sustainable VET system for 2035, we must commit to a holistic definition of well-being, one that addresses the emotional, cognitive, and digital health of learners and teachers alike. It must be a strategic objective, not an afterthought, embedded in curriculum design, learning environments, teacher training, and institutional culture.***


## Joachim James Calleja

**EfVET President**


By 2035, the landscape of vocational education and training (VET) will be dramatically reshaped by rapid digital transformation. Artificial intelligence, automation, virtual reality, and predictive analytics are no longer speculative ideas but are increasingly embedded in the way we teach, train, and work. The European Union's vision for a resilient and inclusive digital Europe outlines the need for a digitally competent population and workforce, and VET is at the heart of this mission.

But are we designing a VET future where learners and educators can truly thrive not just learn and teach?

The future of VET cannot be just about skills and systems it must be about people. As a leader in vocational education, I believe we are at a turning point: the next decade must prioritise well-being as a foundational pillar of quality and sustainability in VET.

**Well-being in the VET context must be reimagined for the digital age.** Traditionally associated with physical safety and job satisfaction, well-being now encompasses a broader spectrum: mental and emotional resilience, social connectedness, autonomy, digital balance, and purpose.

For learners, digital technologies offer undeniable advantages such as flexibility, access, and the ability to learn at their own pace. Virtual simulations replicate real-world work environments, and adaptive learning platforms

personalise instruction. But we are also seeing rising levels of digital fatigue, anxiety, and isolation. Many young people in vocational tracks, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds, face a fragile balance between opportunity and overwhelming opportunities for learning.

Educators, too, face mounting pressures. The pandemic-induced shift to hybrid and online teaching exposed deep gaps in digital preparedness and emotional well-being among teachers. **To shape a sustainable VET system for 2035, we must commit to a holistic definition of well-being, one that addresses the emotional, cognitive, and digital health of learners and teachers alike.** It must be a strategic objective, not an afterthought, embedded in curriculum design, learning environments, teacher training, and institutional culture.

The digitalisation of VET is no longer on the horizon; it is firmly underway. From intelligent tutoring systems and VR-based apprenticeships to blockchain-certified credentials and predictive labour market analytics, we are witnessing a transformation in how vocational education is delivered, accessed, and evaluated.

EU policy frameworks such as the *Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027* and the *Osnabrück Declaration* have rightly emphasised the integration of digital tools into VET. These instruments support the twin transitions: green and digital while advocating for equity, inclusion, and quality. They also envision a future where technology amplifies the relevance and responsiveness of VET to labour market needs. Digitalisation, promises to bridge the gap between training and work.

Yet, with every new promise comes new pressure points. The digital shift has surfaced tensions that educators and providers must navigate carefully:

- Automation versus human touch: while AI can assess skills or personalise learning pathways, it cannot replicate mentorship, empathy, or the tacit knowledge exchanged in human interactions.
- Efficiency versus well-being: Technology enables us to do more in less time. But is more always good and better? A culture of constant connectivity and real-time responsiveness risks undermining both staff well-being and the learner experience.
- Access versus equity: The digital divide in Europe is not just about infrastructure. It's about skills, confidence, and support. Rural learners, migrants, neurodiverse individuals, and older trainees are often left behind, despite surface-level access to devices.

A case in point is a national VET initiative in Italy that introduced AI-driven career guidance systems in upper-secondary vocational schools. While the tools helped match students to high-demand sectors, feedback from teachers highlighted the need for complementary human dialogue and emotional support. Students appreciated the speed of the recommendations but craved a sense of relational trust before making major life decisions.

This example prompts us to be intentional about the kind of digital future we are building in VET. As VET leaders, we must ask: **Are we using digital tools to enhance the learner's growth—or to merely streamline institutional processes?**

If we are to craft a VET ecosystem that prioritises well-being in a digital world, we must first reimagine the role of the VET educator. In the past, vocational trainers were seen primarily as technical experts. But today, their responsibilities extend well beyond instruction; they are facilitators of learning, guides in digital environments, and often the first line of emotional support for young students navigating a complex world.

This expanded role brings with it both opportunities and strain. On the one hand, digital tools can empower educators with real-time feedback, collaborative teaching platforms, and new forms of experiential learning. On the other, the demands of digital adaptation, administrative overload, and the expectation to be always

available can erode teacher morale and job satisfaction. As one Maltese VET instructor recently said to me, *"The tech is fast, but the emotional load is unpredictable."* It means fostering communities of practice where trainers can reflect, recharge, and learn from one another.

At a policy level, this vision aligns with the European Commission's 2023 proposal for a Council Recommendation on improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession. It recognises that teacher well-being is a cornerstone of quality education, and that supportive working conditions are essential to recruit and retain talent in VET. Moreover, we must begin to value the emotional labour of teaching. In a digitalised world, empathy, motivation, and connection are not soft skills—they are essential skills. VET providers need to consciously build cultures where educators feel seen, supported, and respected in their full professional and human identity.

As we design the future of VET for 2035, the central focus must remain on the learner as an empowered agent in a digitally mediated world. This means moving beyond content delivery and toward learning environments that are inclusive, psychologically safe, and affirming of every learner's dignity.

Digital tools, when thoughtfully deployed, can significantly personalise and democratise learning. For instance, in Finland, a blended VET programme in health and social care has integrated well-being check-ins and mindfulness prompts within its e-learning platform supporting both emotional regulation and academic progress. This kind of integration points to a broader shift: **well-being is not an add-on, but an enabler of learning itself.**

However, digital spaces are not inherently safe. Algorithms can reinforce expose young learners to cyberbullying, surveillance, or feelings of isolation. And constant connectivity can blur the boundaries between study, work, and socialisation. For Gen Z learners, many of whom already report high levels of anxiety and social comparison in online spaces, VET must provide not only technical skills but also digital resilience and literacy.

Safe digital environments require careful design which includes:

(i) clear codes of conduct and respectful communication norms in online classrooms,
(ii) digital ethics embedded into curricula, helping learners critically engage with AI, data privacy, and algorithmic decision-making and
(iii) student voice mechanisms that allow young people to shape their digital learning experience and express concerns. Well-being flourishes when learners feel they belong, when they can trust their environment, and when they know that their voices matter.

Ensuring well-being in a digitalised VET landscape is not only a matter of good practice; it must become a matter of systemic policy and strategic design. If we are serious about crafting a VET system that is both future-ready and human-centred, then well-being must be embedded into its very architecture.

Ensuring well-being in a digitalised VET landscape is not only a matter of good practice; it must become a matter of systemic policy and strategic design. If we are serious about crafting a VET system that is both future-ready and human-centred, then well-being must be embedded into its very architecture.

In practice, this calls for coordinated action on several fronts:

- Policy frameworks must integrate well-being as a key dimension of excellence in VET, on par with employability and innovation.
- Funding mechanisms (such as Erasmus+, Digital Europe, or the European Social Fund Plus) should prioritise projects that build emotional and digital resilience.
- Cross-sector partnerships between education, health, labour, and tech actors are essential to address the multifaceted needs of learners and staff.

One promising example comes from Austria, where a public-private initiative between VET colleges, digital start-ups, and mental health professionals has led to the development of a national platform offering real-time support and digital well-being resources for VET learners and teachers. Such models demonstrate that innovation and care can and must coexist.

Moreover, **the voice of training providers must be central in shaping the future of VET. VET institutions are uniquely placed to co-design strategies that reflect the realities of teaching and learning on the ground.** As a community of educators, we must champion a vision of VET that is not only technically advanced but ethically grounded, rich, and socially responsive.

By 2035, digital technologies will be more embedded in our daily lives than ever before. But if vocational education and training is to remain meaningful, it must resist the temptation to become merely a conveyor belt of technical competencies. Our task is not only to prepare learners for the digital future, but to ensure that their future is worth living in.

Well-being is not a luxury anymore; it is a prerequisite for sustainable learning, for innovation, and for the formation of ethical citizens and competent professionals. A truly forward-thinking VET system must cultivate not just digital skills, but belonging, purpose, and resilience. **As leaders and providers in VET, we are called upon to act boldly. This implies investing in environments, digital and physical, where people feel safe and supported. It means elevating the voice of training providers and educators in European policy decisions.** It also means recognising that the measure of a successful VET system is not only how many people it trains, but how well they are cared for in the process.

In the years ahead, technology will continue to change how we learn and work. But let us make sure that human dignity remains at the centre of that transformation. Only then can we truly craft a VET future that not only equips people for jobs but empowers them to live better.

# LEARNING FROM IVET TEACHERS: CEDEFOP LAUNCHES THE EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL TEACHER SURVEY (EVTS)


## Jürgen Siebel

**Cedefop Executive Director**


Vocational education and training (VET) teachers play a critical role in driving Europe's digital and green transitions. Yet, their own professional challenges have often remained in the background. As skills shortages grow and digital transformation accelerates, teachers are expected to do more, adapt faster and meet the evolving needs of learners. But how do these changes and pressures affect their well-being, professional satisfaction and long-term commitment to the profession?

To answer these questions, on 25 September 2025, Cedefop is launching the **European Vocational Teacher Survey (EVTS)** — the first EU-wide, multilingual survey focused on the experiences, continuing development needs and challenges of initial VET (IVET) teachers across 23 EU countries. This large-scale initiative will provide the evidence needed to better understand and support teachers in today's rapidly changing educational landscape.

### New Pressures on the Profession

VET teachers are at the forefront of preparing learners for an evolving labour market. However, their role now goes far beyond traditional teaching, acting as digital innovators, counsellors and career guides. They must master emerging technologies while maintaining hands-on, practice-based instruction, bridging the gap between traditional craft and future skills.

At the same time, the profession's attractiveness is in decline. Only 67% of VET teachers report that teaching was their first career choice, while just 17.7% feel that their work is valued by society. Many VET teachers are employed on temporary contracts, earning on average 10.5% less than other tertiary-educated professionals. In some Member States, graduates of teacher training programmes are reluctant to enter the classroom at all.

Jürgen Siebel

Shortages are particularly severe in STEM, digital skills and green technologies, areas essential to Europe's long-term competitiveness and sustainability. These shortages are often more acute in disadvantaged or remote areas, adding to the difficulties of recruitment and retention.

### Beneath the Surface

Recent pilot work by Cedefop reveals a complex professional landscape.

- VET teachers' working environments are often challenging, characterised by high workloads, stress, and overcrowded classrooms, while pressure to rapidly adopt digital tools contributes to low job satisfaction and signs of mental exhaustion.

- Early-career VET teachers often feel underprepared and encounter barriers to accessing quality continuing professional development (CPD).

These findings raise critical questions: What support do teachers need to thrive? How can school systems address these challenges effectively and equitably?

## EVTS: Building A New Evidence Base for Policy

Despite growing interest in teacher well-being, robust and comparable data on VET teachers' experiences remains scarce. Much of the existing information is fragmented, anecdotal, or confined to national contexts. The European Vocational Teacher Survey (EVTS) is designed to fill this critical gap.

> *"The Survey marks a crucial step in understanding and supporting the people behind vocational education. By asking teachers directly, the survey will help shape policies that ensure they are equipped, supported, and valued while labour markets and VET systems continue to evolve."*

EVTS will collect data from 14,000 upper secondary VET teachers (ISCED 3) across 23 EU Member States through a mix of online surveys, phone interviews and virtual discussions. The survey methodology will follow strict sampling and quality assurance standards, ensuring valid and comparable results across diverse VET systems.

The aim is to generate actionable insights for national and EU-level policymakers, VET providers, school leaders and social partners. EVTS will explore how the digital transformation, climate education, inclusion and everyday classroom dynamics are shaping teacher well-being and development.

EVTS will explore four key areas shaping teaching in a changing world:

- **Staffing and workload** – How teacher shortages, administrative burdens and ageing workforces affect job satisfaction and performance.
- **Well-being –** The pressure teachers face and how schools can support the mental health of both staff and students.
- **Professional development** – How to access CPD and enhance its effectiveness, especially with respect to green and digital skills.
- **Resources and infrastructure** – Whether teachers have the tools and support needed for modern, quality instruction.

By gathering this evidence, EVTS will guide smarter policies and help strengthen the profession for the future.

## Listening, learning, acting

Expected in 202, findings from EVTS will provide the first harmonised evidence base on the realities of teaching in upper secondary VET across the EU. These insights will inform smarter recruitment strategies, better CPD pathways and stronger mental health and well-being policies. They will also help shape improved working conditions that reflect the evolving demands of digitalised learning environments.

The EVTS aligns closely with key EU priorities, including the European Skills Agenda, the Osnabrück Declaration and the Council Recommendation on VET. It will also support national efforts by ministries, VET providers and social partners working to build more inclusive, future-ready systems.

A VET teacher guiding students in a computer lab. ©luckybusiness/adobe.stock.com

# THE IMPACT OF DIGITALISATION ON LEARNERS AND WORKERS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Violaine Roggeri (EU-OSHA) and Konstantinos Pouliakas (Cedefop)

### The Digital Skills Revolution: A Mandate for All Learners and Workers

The digitalisation of Europe's workplaces and economies has made digital skills a mandatory requirement across nearly all sectors and occupations (2). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) reports that 90% of European Union (EU) workers use at least one digital device at work, and nearly a third are exposed to artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in their workplace (2). While basic digital literacy was once sufficient, it is no longer enough: medium and advanced digital skills, ranging from data analysis to programming and the use of AI-driven tools, are becoming increasingly critical for employability and career growth (2)(4). Digital pervasiveness has grown in recent years including in non-ICT occupations, as revealed by Cedefop's online vacancy analysis for Europe (11).

The digital divide runs deeper, with Cedefop's research showing that access to digital workplaces is a key factor perpetuating initial digital skill gaps or preventing continuous education or training investments. VET graduates are more likely to be employed in jobs with lower digital skill requirements compared to their peers from general education backgrounds (2). Even among younger workers who have transitioned from education to employment, this digital skills gap remains significant. Over time, while the gap narrows, it never fully closes, suggesting that VET graduates are systematically at a disadvantage in accessing digitally intensive work positions (2). The ability to continuously update VET learners' digital competencies is crucial for navigating this evolving landscape. (3).

### Risks of Digital Exclusion and Social Inequality

This skills gap has broader social implications beyond individual career prospects. VET graduates could risk social exclusion if their digital skills remain underdeveloped, particularly as findings show they are less likely to invest in ongoing digital skills development.
Only a quarter of European adult workers engage in continuous digital skills training, with just 15% improving AI skills in 2023-24. Most concerning, those who need digital training most—older

workers, lower-educated workers, and those in rural areas—are least likely to receive it (4). This disadvantage can persist for decades, affecting productivity, job satisfaction, and social mobility (12).

## The Changing Nature of Work: OSH Implications

Digitalisation is not only modifying skill requirements but also fundamentally changing the nature of work itself. Digital technologies such as AI, robotics, the internet, and digital platforms are transforming the "where, when, and how work is done" (1)(3). The European Agency for Safety and Health at work (EU-OSHA) highlights several key trends:

**(i) Increasing remote and platform work:** more workers are operating outside traditional workplaces, often with greater autonomy but also less oversight and support (1)(3).

**(ii) Automation of tasks:** both manual and cognitive tasks are increasingly performed by intelligent machines, shifting the human role to supervision, troubleshooting, and creative problem-solving (1)(3).

**(iii) Algorithmic management:** workers are often overseen by digital systems, which can increase efficiency but also introduce new psychosocial risks, such as stress from constant monitoring and performance pressure (3)(5).

EU-OSHA has identified significant new occupational safety and health (OSH) challenges, such as a rise in work intensity and information overload - with 34% of companies reporting higher work intensity and 32% facing information overload due to digital technologies(5).Increasingly blurred boundaries between work and private life are reported by 27% of companies, which can lead to increased stress and poorer mental health outcomes (5), is a further concern. Platform workers, a growing segment of the workforce, may lack basic OSH protections, social dialogue, and collective bargaining rights (5); Indeed Cedefop's AI skills survey reveals that 16-17% of European adult workers work with digital tools, apps or systems that algorithmically monitor or evaluate their job performance, provide task instructions and 46% expect to be monitored more at work in the next 5 years due to AI.

Opportunities for safer and more inclusive workplaces

However, the digitalised labour landscape is not all doom and gloom! If well managed, digitalisation offers significant opportunities to improve working conditions and create safer, more inclusive workplaces, including:

(i) Enhanced safety: digital technologies can remove workers from hazardous environments, enable better monitoring of risks, and automate repetitive or dangerous tasks (3).

(ii) Greater flexibility and autonomy: remote work and digital platforms can offer workers more control over their schedules and improve their work-life balance (3).

(iii) Inclusion of vulnerable groups: digital tools can help integrate disabled people, older workers, and those with care responsibilities into the workforce (3).

(iv) Provision of personalised and customised opportunities for learning, skills accumulation and career advancement.

These benefits, however, depend on how technologies are implemented, managed, and regulated. Poorly managed digital transitions can exacerbate inequalities and introduce new risks, particularly for VET graduates who may need continuous updating of their digital skills to thrive in this environment (3)(4).

## Bridging the digitalisation gap in VET

To bridge the digitalisation gap and prepare the workforce, EU Member States are strongly encouraged to implement a range of measures to adapt VET systems to digitalisation (2)(4) with a focus on:

The promotion of digital competences in both initial and continuing VET to ensure apprentices/learners and workers can access and benefit from high-quality digital skills training throughout their careers, including how to proactively address OSH challenges that digitalisation brings (2)(3)(4)(7).

The central role of educators and trainers is to prepare the future workforce. To effectively

equip workers for the digital workplace, VET teachers require continuous professional development to keep pace with rapid technological change and integrate digital skills training into curricula, while proactively addressing OSH challenges (3)(4)(7).

## Recommendations for VET Stakeholders

For VET providers, policymakers, and employers, EU-OSHA and Cedefop highlight the following key priorities:

- Integrate 'in demand' digital skills into all VET curricula.
- Foster a culture of lifelong learning among both individuals but also within workplaces (to make it easier for VET graduates to upskill and reskill as technologies evolve).
- Strengthen collaboration between VET institutions, employers, and technology providers to ensure relevant and forward-looking skill development programmes.
- Address OSH challenges proactively by using digital tools to enhance safety while monitoring for new psychosocial and ergonomic risks (3)(5).
- Promote inclusive access to digital training by targeting vulnerable groups and ensuring no one is left behind in the digital transition (4).

As Europe's digital and green transition accelerates, the success of Europe will be measured not only by employment rates but by the quality of jobs, their safety, the inclusivity of opportunities, and the resilience of workers in a rapidly changing world. These are social and economic necessities for a sustainable and competitive Europe.

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# DIGITAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN FINNISH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

## Essi Ryymin and Sanna Ryökkynen

Finland has long been recognised for its high-quality education system, including vocational education and training (VET), which enjoys strong societal valorisation and close ties to labour market needs. In the European context, VET is central to ensuring competitiveness, innovation, and social inclusion, as emphasised by EU strategies such as the Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) (European Commission, 2021). Finland's approach aligns with these priorities, positioning digital transformation as a driver of both economic growth and equitable learning opportunities.

The Finnish National Roadmap for the Digital Decade sets ambitious goals for enhancing digital infrastructure, competencies, and services across all sectors, including VET (European Commission, n.d.; Finnish Government, 2024). Strategic objectives include ensuring that all learners acquire strong digital and AI-related skills, that digital learning environments are inclusive and accessible, and that digitalisation supports lifelong learning. Finland's Digital Compass (Finnish Government, 2022) underscores the aim of integrating digital solutions in a sustainable and human-centric way, while the Ministry of Education and Culture's programme for sustainable digitalisation in education sets a target year of 2027 for fully embedding these practices (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023).

### Inclusive and sustainable initial VET

In VET specifically, initiatives such as the *Digi Teachers – Working Online project* (European Commission, 2023) demonstrate how digitalisation can enhance inclusion, for example by expanding opportunities for students with special educational needs and vulnerable groups easy to forget (OECD, 2025). At the same time, OECD (2021) analysis highlights that digital tools in VET must be coupled with skills for the green transition, creating integration between environmental and technological competence. These discourses are relevant in Finland's holistic approach to developing competencies for the digital economy, where social responsibility is at the heart of education—empowering VET students not only with technical expertise, but also with the ethical insight, critical thinking, and adaptive skills needed to live purposefully and act with integrity in a complex society.

In further, Finland's participation in the *Mapping Digital Skills in IVET Curricula* project (CEDEFOP, n.d.) aligns with its national goals for digital transformation. The country's VET system is already adapting to include digital and green competences, and this project offers a chance to validate and enhance these efforts by benchmarking, sharing good practices and addressing skill gaps on European level.

### Advancing digital well-being in VET

While digitalisation offers unprecedented opportunities, it also introduces new risks to students' well-being. Concerns include increased screen time, social media-related mental health issues, and addictive behaviours linked to unhealthy comparison and online pressure (WHO, 2023). Finland has begun addressing these concerns at the policy level—such as restricting mobile phone use during the school day (Yle News, 2024)—and at the pedagogical level through guidance on responsible and balanced technology use (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023).

On the global scale, initiatives like the EU Better Internet for Kids strategy (European Commission, 2022) and UNESCO's frameworks for safe digital engagement (UNESCO, n.d.) have informed Finnish strategies. In Finland's VET system, teachers are considered key to promoting student well-being. This involves training educators to identify early signs of distress, encourage healthy online habits, and integrate the ethical and reflective use of technology into their teaching. To achieve this, targeted professional development is necessary, as teachers are central to modelling and guiding responsible digital behaviour. (European Commission, 2021; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023.)

Finland's integrated approach—combining high educational quality, strong digital capacity, and proactive well-being policies—offers a model for how VET can lead the way in preparing students for a future where digital competence is inseparable from social, emotional, and ethical readiness.

*Acknowledgement:*
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# WELL-BEING IN DIGITAL EDUCATION


## Justina Pluktaite

**Upper Secondary School of Chemistry Pardubice**


There are various theories and interpretation what does it mean well-being in digital education.

According to the Council of the European Union "'Well-being in digital education' is understood as a feeling of physical, cognitive, social and emotional contentment that enables all individuals to engage positively in all digital learning environments including through digital education and training tools and methods, maximise their potential and self-realisation and helps them to act safely online and supports their empowerment in online environments".

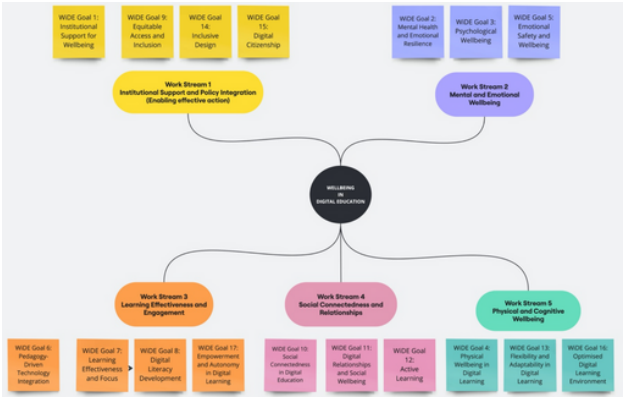
Within the European Digital Education Hub (EDEH) Squad on this topic with more than 25 colleagues went deeper to explore it in Autumn 2024. We have developed few outputs:

- Organised Well-being in Digital Education (WiDE) week (December 2025) with various experts, practitioners sharing their knowledge. Recordings of the sessions are shared on the EDEH section.
- Created a Framework of Well-being in Digital Education, which will be also presented in the coming EfVET conference during one of the workshops.
- Gathered more than 40 inspiring resources relevant to the topic: a Toolkit for educators and managers.
- Developed marketing material to raise awareness: infographics, podcasts.

By joining EDEH community you may access the materials.

In the Figure 1 you can have a sneak-peak into the WiDE Framework elements that reflects wider understanding of this concept and not only as cyber security or doing physical exercises while learning or teaching online. While quoting from the framework it is organised into five interrelated workstreams, each focusing on a critical aspect of well-being in digital education. It does not prescribe a one-size fits-all solution, but provides flexible recommendations that can be tailored to the specific needs and priorities of different institutions and countries:

1. **Institutional support and policy integration:** This work stream focuses on embedding well-being in digital education through a whole system approach.
2. **Mental and Emotional Well-being:** This workstream focuses on promoting mental and emotional well-being in digital education by equipping students and educators with strategies to manage challenges and build resilience.
3. **Social Connectedness and Relationships:** This workstream focuses on strengthening social connectedness and fostering meaningful relationships in digital education to create a sense of community and belonging.
4. **Learning Effectiveness and Engagement:** This workstream focuses on enhancing learning effectiveness and engagement through pedagogy-driven technology integration, fostering focus, developing digital literacy, and promoting autonomy in digital learning.
5. **Physical and Cognitive Well-being:** This work stream focuses on promoting physical and cognitive well-being in digital education through optimised learning environments and flexible approaches.




Jürgen Figure 1 WiDE Framework: Work Streams and actionable goals (Think WiDE, Act Wide; EDEH)

In brief, I would like to invite colleagues to raise awareness on this topic and have a constructive discussion on well-being when we organize digitally enriched learning. Aside to great benefits of digitalization (in which I strongly believe) we – VET trainers and managers – have to see wider picture and train our trainees to embed a positive, safe and balanced habits, approaches and opinion towards digital training tools and environments.

Of course, in this discussion we should not forget the trainers' well-being when VET organisations and labour market are pushing and youth are asking to integrate technological advancement in their trainings. By raising understanding and implementing even small actions could have a great impact.

All VET organisations' target should be to implement a holistic and strategic approach while involving various stakeholders. Start small, learn and share!

**References**

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# WELL-BEING IN LEARNING CONTEXTS


## Casandra Cristea

**Scuola Centrale Formazione**


In recent years, there has been a growing sense of **mental health challenges** among young people. But what is the nature of this phenomenon? Experts speak of a form of often **very serious malaise** that has a multidimensional impact on the biological, psychological and social spheres, affecting the entire school population. It manifests itself in the form of panic attacks, anxiety, school phobias, dissociative and psychotic phenomena, social withdrawal, risky behaviour, etc., which significantly compromises the personal, relational and professional life of learners. Even before the pandemic, which has certainly contributed to accelerating the phenomenon, associations such as Scuola Centrale Formazione, a network of 120 vocational training centres in 13 Italian regions, had reported widespread alarm among teachers, particularly with regard to the difficulties of managing "problem behaviour".

A more in-depth look on the Italian context emerges from the Erickson Study Centre report "Working with adolescents" (2024), which investigates the perspectives of both young people and professionals who deal with adolescents on a daily basis (teachers, psychologists, psychotherapists, etc.). The survey identifies as crucial issues the problems of social/digital use (13%), family difficulties (12%), relationship and social withdrawal (12%), as well as psychological and learning problems related to school (11%) and substance abuse (11%).

So how can this widespread feeling of unease be countered? A first step is to approach the issue of psychological well-being in educational contexts in a **systemic manner,** overcoming stereotypes and difficulties to approach these issues. In concrete terms, the presence of specialised staff and teachers who are personally and professionally open to a culture of well-being, together with the promotion of specific pathways dedicated to self-awareness, emotion management, stress management and burnout, are essential for taking care of young people and oneself as a professional.

Casandra Cristea

It is precisely in this sense, starting from the urgent need for renewal and regeneration, that the work of Scuola Centrale Formazione is structured, seeking to promote change by working on three fundamental points: (1) a "school ecosystem" seeking strategies to improve inclusiveness, the well-being of teachers and students, and continuous updating; (2) individual teachers' self-awareness of their own educational biases in order to recognise and value the uniqueness of each adolescent; (3) the creation of opportunities to listen to and value the voices of young people, even when they are unconventional, disturbing or silent.

SCF's privileged position, given its constant contact with its numerous member organisations, allows it to identify the training needs of teaching staff, offer continuous updates on innovative teaching methods and invest in training courses that propose new perspectives based on the importance of positive learning and mental well-being. This is how a **model of a "caring school"** begins to take shape.

In addition to updates, SCF works on creating synergies that design a **"prevention and intervention system"** for its members. This system includes, for example, the **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MSBR) programme** launched in 2023, which will continue in 2025-2026 with supervision meetings and a series of webinars, "The Awareness Gym", on managing teachers' emotions and techniques to support young people from VET pathways in this process. The programme is led by experts from the member organisation Artigianelli Institute from Trento, focuses on strengthening personal resilience, and aims to transfer mindfulness techniques to educational contexts.

Another central focus of SCF's work is based on European projects, which enable comparison with other countries and the participation of teachers in training and research activities. One of the projects currently active with other EfVET members is Erasmus+ **F3 "Fitter Minds, Fitter VET, Fitter Jobs"**, whose survey highlights good teacher literacy regarding the types of mental disorders present in schools and a broad openness towards the inclusion of those who suffer from them. However, 34% of Italian respondents (100 teachers from 10 VET centres in the SCF network) consider that teachers are not supposed to recognise the symptoms of such disorders. This view may be linked to scepticism, lack of training or overload in relation to the roles required by the new classroom context. The students' responses, on the other hand, reveal a lack of information on many aspects of mental health. Approximately 50% (out of 200 survey participants) say they do not know where to find information on the subject.

In order to improve training on mental well-being and gather teachers' needs, following the experience gained by its associated organisation, the Luigi Clerici Foundation in Milan, SCF has launched **Sportello SFIDE**. This is a **bi-monthly online forum for teachers and school support professionals.** Each meeting, led by a psychologist specialised in educational support, aims to help teachers understand and manage challenging situations and "specific cases" and to approach stress reduction techniques.

SCF also talks directly to students through the design of systemic actions specifically tailored to them.

The concrete tools available now are an app for self-assessment of well-being and mental health (F3 project) and a mental well-being support programme for students during the mobilities abroad.

Besides the promotion of inclusive didactics, the member organizations are supported in designing inclusive **learning spaces** as a driver of well-being for all those who experience them daily.

SCF's "well-being programme" continues with a structured programme based on two in-person retreats per year and online training in mindfulness techniques for teachers, who will be accompanied in experiencing them in their classrooms, with the prospect of a second period of supervision and coaching for those coordinating the process in their VET centre. The aim is to create and nurture, through structured and consistent steps, a culture of well-being at school, which inevitably starts from personal (self-)awareness.

# FROM BURNOUT TO BALANCE PROJECT: EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO PRIORITISE WELL-BEING


## Iva Perkovic

**Asociación Mundus - Un mundo a tus pies**



### Rethinking Teacher Well-being in Today's Classrooms

The profession of teaching, once considered inherently rewarding, is now under strain. Rising workloads, emotional labour, and administrative burdens are just some of the factors contributing to the increase in teacher stress and burnout across Europe. As a result, the topic of teacher well-being has become more urgent than ever.

In response to this reality, the Erasmus+ project *From Burnout to Balance – Supporting Educators' Well-being* was launched with the aim of equipping teachers with tools to recognise, prevent, and address burnout. Developed by a consortium of European partners - GIP FIPAN (France) as coordinator, together with Agriculture School Križevci (Croatia) and Asociación Mundus (Spain) - the project is built around the conviction that teacher well-being must be integrated into the very fabric of professional development.

A core strength of the training lies in its holistic and human-centred approach. It moves beyond standard pedagogical strategies and instead focuses on the inner experiences of teachers themselves. The training modules are structured around several interconnected themes: understanding the mechanisms and warning signs of stress and burnout; integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) and coaching methodologies into daily teaching practice; and applying positive psychology principles - such as strengths-based approach, positive, communication, gratitude, and purpose-driven engagement - to foster a healthier, more supportive educational climate.

### A Practical and Research-Informed Approach

The European Commission's Working Group on Schools Policy (2022–2025) has underlined that teacher well-being is essential to achieving quality and equity across education systems. In alignment with this vision, the project offers concrete tools and evidence-based practices that can inform the work of policymakers, school leaders, and training institutions across Europe. Apart from that, growing research confirms the urgency of this focus. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, among others, stresses that the well-being of teachers is a key factor in the success of inclusive and effective education. Teachers who report higher levels of well-being are more likely to build strong relationships with students, demonstrate professional resilience, and create emotionally supportive learning environments (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The training programme provides a structured, experiential space for reflection, collaboration, and practical application. Rather than offering quick-fix solutions, it equips educators with long-term strategies for maintaining emotional balance and purpose in their work. Participants explore early indicators of stress and disengagement, experiment with boundary-setting, and adopt coaching and positive psychology techniques. These approaches not only nurture teacher well-being, but also support student autonomy, motivation, and a culture of emotional safety in the classroom. The findings and tools developed through From Burnout to Balance contribute directly to this agenda, offering practical support for policymakers, school leaders and training providers alike.

What distinguishes the project's methodology is its attention to the emotional dimension of teaching. Education is not just cognitive work; it is deeply relational and often emotionally taxing. Many educators report a sense of isolation, lack of institutional support, or pressure to constantly perform - factors that can slowly lead to disengagement and burnout.

By providing a structured, research-informed space for teachers to reflect and reconnect with their purpose, *From Burnout to Balance* promotes long-term change. Rather than offering temporary relief, it encourages a shift in mindset - from surviving the profession to sustaining personal well-being within it.

Initial results from pilot training sessions in France, Croatia and Spain from the beginning of 2025 indicate high levels of satisfaction among participants. Teachers valued the combination of theory and practice, as well as the opportunity to prioritise their own needs - something rarely offered in traditional training schemes. As a continuation of this effort, Asociación Mundus has incorporated the project's training content into its Erasmus+ KA1 teacher training offer. During the month of July alone, over 25 educators from across the EU took part in sessions specifically designed to enhance their competences in well-being, stress prevention, and emotionally responsive teaching.

By Iva Perkovic, Asociación Mundus
Project Manager, Network & Alliance Member

## Towards Sustainable Teaching: Well-being as a Foundation

The experience of the *From Burnout to Balance* project confirms a growing need to embed teacher well-being at the heart of education policy and training. Investing in teachers' emotional resilience is not a luxury - it is a necessity for healthy, inclusive and future-oriented schools. Professional development must go beyond technical skills and include the emotional competences needed to sustain a demanding profession over time.

All training materials, tools and resources developed within the project are publicly available and free to use. Educators, trainers, and institutions are warmly invited to visit the official project website and explore the toolkit: https://mundusgroup.com/international-projects/burnout/

For more information you can contact our project manager Iva Perkovic - iperkovic@mundusgroup.com

# TREADS: BUILDING A DIGITALLY SECURE AND HUMAN-CENTRED FUTURE FOR EUROPEAN TOURISM

## Leire Díaz

Europe's tourism industry stands at a defining moment. After years of pandemic disruption, shifting traveller expectations, and the growing urgency of sustainability, the sector must now also confront a fast-accelerating digital transformation. This shift offers tremendous opportunities for innovation, personalisation, and operational excellence, but also brings new and complex risks that are not only technical but deeply human.

Cybersecurity is no longer a niche IT concern. It is now a fundamental pillar of trust, mental health, employability, and organisational stability. In tourism, an industry built on relationships, reputation, and service quality, this matters more than ever.

Tourism in Europe is at a crossroads. To stay competitive and resilient, the sector must embrace digital transformation without losing sight of its most valuable asset: people. Digitalisation offers enormous potential for innovation, efficiency, and growth, yet it also brings risks that directly affect professionals, businesses, and communities. Cybersecurity lies at the heart of this challenge. Beyond being a technical requirement, it is now a pillar of well-being, safeguarding trust, mental health, employability, and organisational stability.

The Tourism Resilience and Digital Skills (**TREADS**) project, funded by the European Union, is designed to help the sector navigate this transition responsibly. By investing in vocational education and training (VET), **TREADS** aims to build digital skills, raise cybersecurity awareness, and strengthen the overall resilience of Europe's tourism ecosystem.

### Why Cybersecurity Matters for Well-being in Tourism

Traditionally, well-being in tourism has been framed in physical, emotional, and social terms. But in today's connected world, digital security has become a fundamental dimension of professional and organisational health. Cyberattacks, data breaches, and disinformation don't just threaten IT systems; they create stress, damage trust, hurt

Leire Díaz

reputations, and can lead to business closures and job losses.

For tourism professionals and SMEs, these risks translate into real human costs: anxiety about using technology, fear of making mistakes, and increased mental workload. Cybersecurity breaches don't just break systems, they create stress, erode customer confidence, and threaten livelihoods. For small tourism businesses and workers, this can mean:

- **Anxiety about using new systems**
- **Fear of making mistakes and facing blame**
- **Increased mental workload**
- **Loss of trust within teams and with customers**

That's why **TREADS** treats cybersecurity not as a technical checkbox but as an essential part of employee well-being and sector sustainability. When people feel safe, confident, and supported, they can embrace innovation and help their businesses thrive.

### A Collaborative European Partnership

TREADS is not a theoretical exercise. It's a hands-on, multinational collaboration that brings together expertise from across Europe to deliver

practical, relevant solutions tailored to the tourism sector. The partnership includes:

**CDEA-Cebanc (Spain):** Project coordinator with decades of VET experience in administration, hospitality, and tourism education.

**GAIA Cluster (Spain):** Representing over 300 technology companies, contributing cutting-edge knowledge on innovation, digitalisation, and cybersecurity.

**Fondazione Enaip Lombardia (Italy):** A leading VET provider with 20 accredited training centres, offering strong pedagogical expertise.

**Travel 2Fit (Greece):** A startup mindset specialising in data-driven tourism solutions aligned with market needs.

**Atlantis Engineering (Greece):** Supports development of online training platforms, leveraging IT expertise.

**Arctur (Slovenia):** Contributes advanced technologies, from AI to blockchain, with a focus on sustainable tourism.

This diverse partnership ensures that the solutions developed are high-quality, practical, inclusive, and sensitive to the real challenges of tourism professionals and SMEs.

Concrete Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Since its launch, **TREADS** has focused on delivering real, actionable results rather than abstract goals. Early outcomes already demonstrate this commitment:

**Specialised Training Modules:** We are developing tailored courses in cybersecurity awareness, media literacy, and digital transformation for tourism professionals and microenterprises, designed to demystify technology and empower learners.

**TREADS Digital Library:** An open-access, online hub with toolkits, best-practice guides, policy insights, and training resources to support continuous learning and self-paced development. This resource is designed to grow over time, becoming a central reference point for the sector.


International Workshops and Events: Held in Greece and Italy, these events have brought together educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, fostering exchange of ideas, cross-border networking, and collective problem-solving.

Active Dissemination Across Europe: TREADS maintains a strong presence on social media (TREADS Instagram Profile | Treads Project | Facebook and TREADS LinkedIn Page) and in European forums to ensure resources and insights reach the widest possible audience. The goal is to create an ecosystem of learning where knowledge is shared and scaled.

These efforts highlight a critical lesson, digital transformation in tourism can only succeed if it is designed around people, trust, and safety.

## Recommendations for a Human-Centred Digital Transition

Based on these experiences, the **TREADS** partnership has identified several key recommendations for the sector:

Make cybersecurity a core part of training and organisational well-being strategies. Treat it as essential for healthy, confident workplaces,not just a technical box to tick.

Foster media literacy and resilience against misinformation. Trust is a cornerstone of tourism, and destinations need to be prepared to defend it in the digital space.

Tailor training to small businesses and professionals. Use accessible language, practical examples, and real-world contexts to ensure uptake and retention.

Encourage public-private collaboration. No single actor can solve these challenges alone; education providers, technology experts, policymakers, and businesses must work together to create sustainable, shared solutions.

## A Vision for the Future

Digital transformation is not optional for European tourism, but its success depends on being inclusive, safe, and centred on human well-being. Cybersecurity must be understood as a foundation for trust, employability, and organisational health.

At **TREADS**, we believe that investing in digital and cybersecurity skills is not just an economic necessity but a social responsibility. It is an investment in people's livelihoods, in the sustainability of communities, and in the future of one of Europe's most important sectors.

Through continued development of resources, best-practice sharing, and collaborative events, **TREADS** will keep working to ensure that tourism's digital transition truly supports a more resilient, competitive, and human-centred industry.

Find more information and resources at: https://treadsproject.eu/

# REGULATIONS ON DISTANCE LEARNING AND TEACHERS' DIGITAL COMPETENCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION – THE CASE OF GEORGIA


## Kakhaber Eradze

**Rector, Business Academy of Georgia-SBA, International Expert on TVET and Governance**


The initiative "Well-Being in a Digitalised World: Crafting the Future of VET 2035" is directly linked to how the vocational education system utilizes digital opportunities – not just as an additional tool, but as the core of systemic transformation. In a digital world, student well-being and success are largely determined by whether they experience firsthand how digital skills and technologies are applied in real teaching and learning processes, rather than merely learning about them abstractly within a theoretical module.

We must move beyond the approach where knowledge about digital opportunities is delivered only as a theoretical concept, and instead embrace a systemic vision where digital technologies are effectively embedded into the teaching and learning process. This is why a systemic and coherent approach is critically important both for quality education and the well-being of learners in the 2035 vision.

Digital transformation is already an inevitable process in vocational education. Countries around the world are striving to establish flexible and high-quality systems of distance learning. Different national systems respond to digital technologies in diverse ways: some actively implement blended or fully remote learning models, while others adopt more conservative regulatory approaches. In this context, the case of Georgia provides valuable lessons in identifying gaps between regulation and practice.

The professional standard for vocational education teachers, adopted in Georgia in 2024, emphasizes the importance of digital competences. The standard clearly defines that teachers are required to effectively apply modern technologies in planning, delivering, organizing, and assessing learning.

Dr. Kakhaber Eradze

Key elements include:

- Planning learning using modern technologies and innovative resources (Standard 1.2, 1.5);
- Conducting the teaching process with digital tools and ICTs, including digital content creation (Standard 3.2.4);
- Adapting technologies to meet individual student needs, including inclusive education approaches (Standard 2.2.5, 3.4.1);
- Supporting interpersonal and teamwork with technology and collaborating with the private sector to access digital resources (Standard 5.4.6);
- Using digital tools to develop assessment instruments and provide feedback (Standard 4.2.3, 4.2.7).

This approach strengthens the role of the teacher as a digital leader and highlights the need for educators to combine subject-specific and digital pedagogical competences.

Despite significant progress in developing teachers' digital skills, a second regulation – the national rule on distance learning – significantly restricts the application of those competences.

The rule, approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia on 30 August 2024, regulates the implementation of distance components in vocational programs. While its objective is to safeguard quality, it introduces a number of rigid constraints that hinder digital transformation and limit flexibility.

The regulation:

- Does not reflect the full range of modern digital pedagogical practices and technologies;
- Lacks flexibility for different types of programs and contexts;
- Restricts the potential of successful, capable colleges to innovate digitally;
- Hinders geographic access to education in rural and vulnerable communities.

Moreover, educational standards are overly prescriptive – they predefine which components may be delivered remotely, failing to account for the growing capabilities of institutions that are technically and pedagogically ready for high-quality online education. These limitations also block joint program development with international partners, thus isolating Georgian VET from global education spaces.

These policies ignore the progress that digital approaches have brought to vocational education. It should be acknowledged that digital technologies have significantly reshaped the form, content, and pedagogy of teaching in Georgia. As part of its modernization process, often supported by the EU and other international partners, Georgia has seen considerable developments in digital VET delivery.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both public and private vocational colleges rapidly adopted distance and hybrid learning models. Platforms such as Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom were widely used for theoretical training. Some colleges introduced video lectures, digital tests, and electronic textbooks, enabling self-paced and flexible learning.

The use of simulations and interactive labs is gradually increasing. For example, VR applications are being used in agriculture, mechanics, and tourism programs to enhance practical skills. Digital technologies also enable personalized learning. Some colleges in Georgia are experimenting with learning analytics and data-driven feedback. While still in early stages, the use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT-style assistants) could become a future pathway for digital teaching support.

International practice shows that effective distance learning can be delivered using both synchronous and asynchronous methods. Some EU countries use hybrid models where theory is delivered online and practical work is conducted in person. Online assessment technologies with high data protection standards are also in use. Georgia's regulatory framework, however, continues to reflect a cautious and restrictive approach.

This creates a systemic paradox: teachers are required to develop digital competences, but the space to apply those competences is severely limited by regulations and rigid standards. This contradiction undermines the potential of digital transformation and requires urgent policy revision.

## Policy Recommendations

1. Review the distance learning rule to permit fully asynchronous learning for components where synchronous delivery or practical work is not essential.

2. Allow fully remote delivery for standard-based programs if the provider meets additional quality assurance criteria for online learning.

3. Make assessment procedures more flexible and enable secure digital tools for remote assessment, under clearly defined conditions.
4. Permit the remote delivery of transversal key competences (general modules), especially where high-quality digital resources are available.

5. Adapt regulations and standards to reflect the real capacity of institutions and support innovation. Introduce internal quality standards for distance learning to guide and enable institutional experimentation.

# WELL-BEING IN A DIGITALISED WORLD - LISTENING TO THE NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF


## Reuben Mifsud

**Deputy Director CPD**

**Malta College of Arts Science and Technology**


Across Europe, vocational education and training (VET) institutions are navigating the opportunities and pressures of a rapidly digitalising world. While digital tools can enable flexibility, efficiency, and innovation, they can also introduce new risks to staff well-being. At MCAST's Centre for Professional Development (CPD), within the HR Department, we believe that listening to our people, especially those new to our institution, is essential to shaping a healthy, sustainable workplace in the digital age.

As part of our onboarding process, right after recruitment, every new employee is invited to reflect privately on well-being at work: what it means to them, what they are looking for, and what they expect. They are each asked to identify three things important for good mental health at the workplace. This article draws from those responses, focusing on the elements linked to digitalisation. The original wording from the flashcards has been preserved exactly, with only non-relevant entries removed.

From these reflections, five recurring themes emerged: **information overload, tech-related anxiety, digital surveillance, blurring of work-life (life-work?) boundaries, and isolation.** Each is explored below, accompanied by three values to nurture in order to mitigate its impact. Besides stating circumstances or examples, the new staff members often just wrote down some key values as a single word. An attempt has been made here to link three relevant values to every theme below. Admittedly, most of these values do not strictly pertain to well-being and digitalization but are core workplace values which transcend time and circumstances.

### 1.Information Overload

Constant notifications and excessive data can overwhelm employees. As a result, our VET institutions need to have deliberate practices to limit and sift so that the information which reaches the employees is of a manageable dosage.


**Staff reflections:**

- *Clear healthy, quality communication between all levels and sections. Feedback systems. A platform to give opinions about any concerns or even good feedback.* ***Having a voice. Heard when making suggestions for improvement.***
- *Transparent policy and following already implemented procedures.*
- *Having leaders who are genuinely interested in staff well-being.*

**Values to nurture:**
*Professionalism – Compassion - Empathy*

### 2.Tech-Related Anxiety

The pressure to adapt to new tools and platforms can lead to stress. Constant updates and rapid tech changes also pile up the anxiety. Employees in VET institutions are owed certain measures to counterbalance this inevitable anxiety.

**Staff reflections:**

- *Stay positive with the team. Tension free environment and lack of chaos. Drama free.*
- ***Individuality and independence – allowed to do things at your own pace.***
- *Guidance services for staff. A section you can speak to if you have a problem. Someone who is available to listen to the needs and worries of the workers.*

**Values to nurture:**
*Motivation – Patience - Kindness*

### 3. Digital Surveillance

Besides the stress highlighted above, monitoring tools may reduce trust because all the actions of the employee are traceable. Our employees serving in VET institutions need to feel trusted – it is not about the leaders' trust, but they themselves need to feel this trust leaders have in them.

**Staff reflections:**

- *Personal trusting relationships of different levels.*
- *Learn and share skills, information, experiences. Protected time to reflect in order to move forward.*
- ***A learning environment where mistakes are seen as a learning opportunity.** Provided the space to make mistakes and grow from them and learn.*

**Values to nurture:**
*Honesty – Respect - Trust*

### 4. Blurring Work-Life Boundaries

This has become a cliché. It is difficult to distinguish the different roles we fulfil. The term lifelong learning has long become an important all-embracing philosophy. There is a time component, and we need to learn from the cradle (or even while we are still in the womb) to the grave. We often also introduce the term lifebroad learning which emphasises the need for our learning to be on diverse matters as opposed to being deep but only in a few matters of expertise.

However, a dimension we often overlook is that of lifewide learning – learning associated with the different roles we fulfil as we journey through life. We are not only employees. We also belong to a family. Most of us also belong to particular communities – geographical communities, faith communities, communities of interest etc. All these form our identities. Our VET institutions need to recognize, celebrate and give value to these roles to alleviate the inevitable blurring of boundaries between them.

**Staff reflections:**

- ***Always-on culture – Digital tools blur boundaries, leading to burnout.***
- *Remote work and digital tools can extend work hours.*
- *Setting clear digital boundaries — defining work hours, limiting after-hours communication, and managing screen time.*

**Values to nurture:**
*Responsibility – Autonomy - Job satisfaction*

### 5. Isolation

Virtual communication reduces face-to-face social interactions, causing loneliness. Our VET institutions need to rediscover the value of the - perhaps old fashioned – workplace associations (such as social committees) which offer collegial support.

**Staff reflections:**

- ***Community not just work.***
- *Empowering members of staff through 'feel good' initiatives such as team building sessions.*
- *Feeling appreciated - not feeling just like a number.*

**Values to nurture:**
*Empowerment – Collegiality - Community*

These unfiltered staff voices underline that digitalisation is not solely a technical challenge, it is deeply human. For VET institutions across Europe, this grassroots perspective can serve as a practical checklist for monitoring and improving well-being in a digital age. By embedding these values into organisational culture, we can harness the benefits of digital tools while recognizing the paramount importance of the people who make education possible.

# WELL-BEING IN THE DIGITALISED WORLD – AN EfVET MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE


## Balkrishna Mishra

**EfVET Member**

**Team Lead-TDS Placements & Services Pvt Ltd**


The digital transformation has opened unprecedented opportunities in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Online learning platforms, virtual simulations, and global collaborations are making skills development more accessible, flexible, and personalised than ever before.

For the EfVET community, these advancements bring both promise and responsibility: while technology can enrich education, it also raises important questions about mental, physical, and social well-being. Finding the right balance between progress and human welfare is essential if we are to create a truly sustainable and inclusive future for learners.

### Digital Innovation in TVET and Its Impact

Across the EfVET network, institutions have embraced digitalisation in ways that have transformed the learning landscape. Training programmes now extend far beyond geographical boundaries, enabling students to access high-quality education regardless of location. Virtual workshops and simulations offer safe, realistic environments for practising complex skills, while international partnerships provide valuable multicultural exposure. These innovations have strengthened both the quality and reach of TVET, preparing learners for a globally connected workforce.

### Health Challenges in the Digital Era

Yet, with these benefits come new challenges. Extended screen time can lead to mental fatigue, reduced concentration, and a sense of overload. Physically, the long hours spent in front of a computer can cause poor posture, eye strain, and discomfort. Socially, the shift to online environments sometimes reduces opportunities for face-to-face interaction, potentially impacting communication skills and a sense of community.

Balkrishna Mishra

These issues, if unaddressed, could undermine the long-term success of digital learning initiatives.

### EfVET's Balanced Approach

Recognising these challenges, EfVET promotes strategies that integrate well-being into every aspect of TVET. Hybrid learning models, combining online and offline modes, help reduce screen fatigue while fostering human interaction. Mental health support, through counselling and mindfulness activities, creates a more supportive environment for students and staff. Simple measures such as regular physical activity breaks —whether stretching between classes or short walks—can have a significant positive impact. In addition, promoting digital literacy alongside self-regulation encourages learners to use technology effectively and responsibly.

## Yoga and Meditation: Traditional Wisdom for Modern Learning

Outdoor group meditation promoting well-being in TVET learners.

From my own experience as both an EfVET member and a long-time practitioner of yoga and meditation, I believe these ancient practices can offer modern solutions for digital-age well-being. Yoga asanas improve flexibility, posture, and energy levels, counteracting the physical strain of prolonged computer use. Meditation enhances mental clarity, focus, and emotional resilience, while pranayama—breathing exercises—can quickly refresh the mind during intensive study or work sessions. These methods are simple, adaptable, and culturally universal, making them an ideal complement to EfVET's mission of inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainable development.

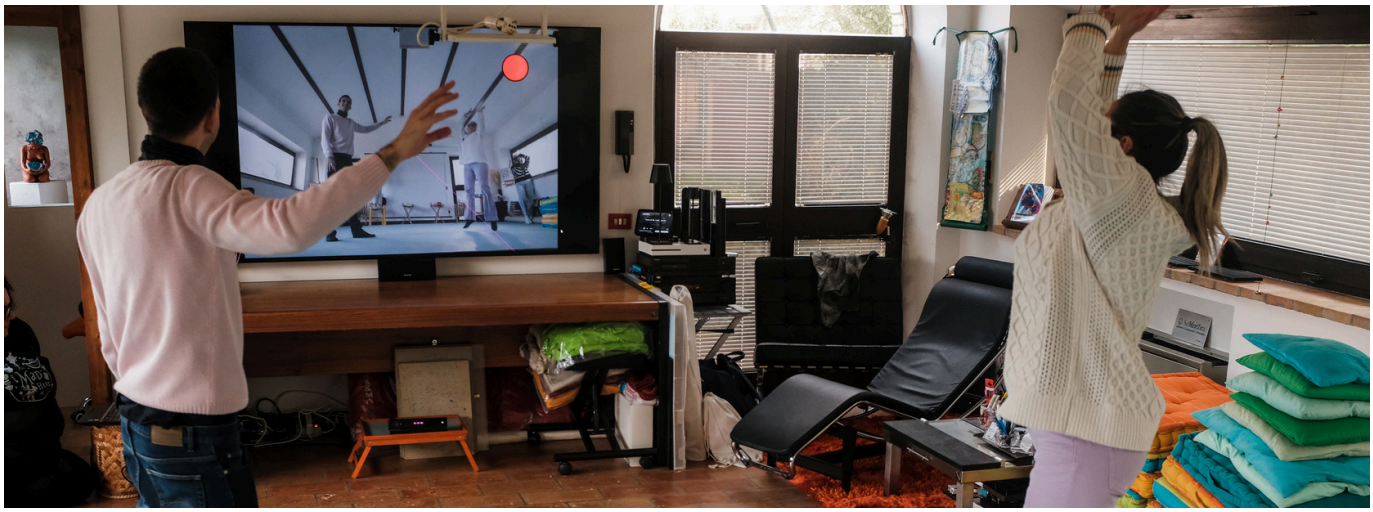
## Conclusion

Digitalisation holds the power to expand TVET's reach and impact to unprecedented levels. But lasting success depends on keeping people at the heart of progress. Technology should be a tool that serves human growth, not the other way around. By combining digital innovation with traditional well-being practices, the EfVET community can create a learning culture that nurtures both skill and spirit—producing not just competent professionals, but healthy, empowered individuals ready to thrive in an interconnected world.

# PAINTERACTION AND SCREEN TO SOUL: INNOVATION AND INCLUSION IN EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING


## Francesco Fermanelli

**Coordinator of Screen to Soul**

Matteo, together with Giulia, one of the Screen To Soul operators, during a paINTeraction activity. Immersed in an interactive experience of movement, expression, and connection.

### *European Collaboration for Inclusion in Vocational Education: EGInA and Screen To Soul*

The **European Grants International Academy** (EGInA) actively collaborates with **Screen To Soul**, an innovative social startup, on several European projects including **EnneVet** and national **NRRP** projects. This commitment is part of the broader **Vocational Education and Training (VET)** context, where inclusion and personalized learning are key objectives.

The common goal is to **develop innovative digital tools** and **methodologies** that facilitate **participation, creativity,** and **integration** of young people and adults with disabilities or social difficulties. In this scenario, ***paINTeraction*** emerges as a concrete and innovative solution capable of combining technology, art, and inclusion.

### *paINTeraction: The Body That Speaks and Creates*

***paINTeraction*** is the beating heart of Screen To Soul, an **augmented reality software** that transforms the screen into a space for **interactive**, **creative**, and **inclusive expression**.

Unlike virtual reality, which isolates users in an alternative digital world, ***paINTeraction***'s augmented reality enriches the present experience by **promoting contact** with physical and human reality, and **enhancing movement** and **relationship**.

Thanks to **intuitive motion-sensing technology**, users can draw in the air with their hands or body, creating luminous trails on the screen or easily manipulating geometric shapes in an engaging way. This multisensory experience stimulates **body awareness, coordination, imagination,** and **expressive freedom,** essential aspects for those living with disabilities or social isolation.

Originally conceived for therapeutic and educational contexts, ***paINTeraction*** is evolving through the integration of artificial intelligence to offer an increasingly adaptive and personalized experience, opening the way to new modes of interaction and learning.

It is not just an expressive platform: it is a **language** for those who struggle to communicate with words, and a **game** for those who need to vent, move, and rediscover pleasure in connecting with themselves and others.

### *A Project for Everyone: From Education to Culture*

***paINTeraction*** is a **versatile** and **inclusive** tool, suitable not only for people with vulnerabilities but also for anyone who wishes to explore new forms of expression and interaction.

In the **VET context, *paINTeraction*** can be integrated as a tool to **develop educational, social,** and **motor** skills, fostering a**ctive participation** and **motivation**. Thanks to its immersive nature, it can also be used in the fields of **art** and **art history,** allowing users to literally "enter" a work of art, exploring and studying it in a more engaging and innovative way.

In artistic and cultural environments, ***paINTeraction*** offers **new perspectives** for participatory art and emotional education, **breaking down barriers** and **stimulating dialogue** between audiences and exhibition spaces.

Whether in a classroom, day center, or art gallery, ***paINTeraction*** invites everyone to **interact** with the digital space in an **intuitive**, **inclusive**, and **deeply human way**.

### *Screen To Soul: Innovation, Inclusion, and Art*

Founded in **2023**, Screen To Soul was born from the collaboration of **professionals, art therapists, trainers,** and **communicators** united by the goal of creating digital tools that put technology at the service of inclusion and personal growth. Among them are **Altheo Valentini**, founder of EGInA and co-founder of Screen To Soul, and **Simone Donnari**, founder of Centro Atlas Onlus and co-founder and legal representative of the startup.

The company's mission is to **develop digital educational platforms** that combine **technology** and **art** to **promote** the **inclusion** of young people and adults with psychological or social distress, while also **protecting** against risks and digital addictions.

Screen To Soul's experiences are designed to **stimulate relational, perceptual-motor**, and **creative growth**, helping to overcome invisible social barriers. Every project aims to **promote education**, **integration**, and inclusion, with the goal of **building a more accessible future for all**.

### *Toward an Inclusive Future with Technology and Creativity*

The collaboration with **EGInA** and European projects like **EnneVet**, as well as **national PNRR** initiatives, represents a valuable opportunity to enhance ***paINTeraction*** and other Screen To Soul initiatives, elevating their effectiveness and reach.

The vision is clear: to develop increasingly **intelligent, personalized,** and **accessible digital solutions** capable of supporting people in their learning, inclusion, and **personal growth journeys**, with a real and lasting social impact.

With ***paINTeraction***, technology is no longer a limitation or a risk, but a tool that values the body, movement, relationships, and art, opening new paths for education and integration in training and cultural contexts.

# WORKPLACE INNOVATION: A KEY TO MAKING VET ATTRACTIVE AND FUTURE-READY


## Max Hogeforster

**Chairman of the Hanse-Parlament, Germany**



To make vocational education and training (VET) attractive for young people and sustainable for SMEs, Europe must rethink how learning and working are designed together. Workplace innovation - new ways of organising work, engaging employees, and building collaborative cultures - is emerging as a decisive factor. In 2024 20 institutions from 7 countries launched the WIN4SMEs project to demonstrates how Centres of Vocational Excellence can help employers and educators foster healthier, more inclusive, and innovative workplaces.

Across Europe, VET still struggles with its image. Too often, it is seen as a "second choice" compared with academic pathways. Yet at the same time, employers, especially SMEs, face critical skills shortages, an ageing workforce, and difficulties attracting younger generations.

The solution is not only better equipment or more digital skills, but also a new way of shaping workplaces themselves. Young people today look for jobs where they feel included, valued, and able to balance work and life. If VET is to remain relevant, it must embed this understanding into its DNA, aligning training with work cultures that support well-being, creativity, and collaboration.

This is where workplace innovation becomes vital. It means redesigning jobs, management practices, and learning opportunities so that people thrive - not just perform. For SMEs, it increases competitiveness and resilience; for learners, it makes vocational pathways genuinely attractive. Employer engagement in VET has often been measured in numbers: how many apprenticeship places are available, or how many companies partner with schools. But engagement today must go deeper. It should involve co-creating the culture of work in which students, apprentices, and employees develop their skills.

Research shows that workplaces where apprentices and employees have autonomy, voice, and opportunities to innovate also report higher productivity and job satisfaction. For young apprentices, this means experiencing VET not just as a training scheme, but as a pathway into meaningful and motivating work. For teachers and managers, it creates partnerships with employers that go beyond curricula, towards shared responsibility for well-being.

Attractiveness is the litmus test for VET's future. If young people, parents, and employers perceive vocational pathways as outdated or limiting,

participation will stagnate. But if VET becomes associated with forward-looking, innovative, and human-centred workplaces, it can be repositioned as the first choice for ambitious learners.

Practical ways in which workplace innovation supports this shift include:

- Flexible training models that allow young people with different needs to succeed and progress.
- Participative management in SMEs, giving learners and employees a voice in shaping work.
- Integration of digital recruitment and communication tools, making VET visible where young people already are.
- Focus on diversity and inclusion, ensuring that women, migrants, and learners with special needs see themselves reflected in modern workplaces.
- Entrepreneurial mindsets fostered early, so that VET graduates not only join companies but also create them.
- These elements are not “extras” - they are the very things that make VET appealing in a digitalised world.

Against this backdrop, the project WIN4SMEs (www.win4smes.eu), co-funded by Erasmus+, has been launched in 2024 as a Europe-wide effort to mainstream workplace innovation in SMEs and VET systems. By building a network of Centres of Vocational Excellence in seven countries, it is showing how international cooperation can turn abstract ideas into real practices.

Each centre focuses on a specific dimension - from participative HR management in Germany to diversity in Finland, social integration in the Netherlands, or inclusive training in Lithuania. Together, they create a living laboratory of how VET and SMEs can jointly shape innovative working cultures. Alongside the development of new training programmes ranging from EQF level 3 up to dual bachelor’s degrees at EQF level 6, the initiative also focuses on highly practical measures. A central element is the identification and exchange of best practices in workplace innovation, providing SMEs across Europe with concrete, transferable solutions that can be directly applied to improve working cultures and strengthen vocational pathways.

The project’s ambition goes beyond pilot activities. It aims to make workplace innovation a structural part of VET at all levels - initial training, continuing education, and higher education. By 2028, its tools and programmes will have been transferred to dozens of partners across Europe, ensuring long-lasting impact.

The future of vocational education will not be defined only by how fast it adapts to digitalisation or green skills, but by how well it integrates well-being and innovation into everyday work. This is what young people demand, and what SMEs need in order to thrive.

WIN4SMEs demonstrates that vocational education is not only about technical training, but about reshaping the very culture of work. By embracing workplace innovation, VET providers can offer apprenticeships that are exciting, inclusive, and future-proof. Employers, in turn, gain motivated staff and healthier workplaces.

The message for Europe is clear: if we want VET to be attractive and competitive by 2035, we must invest not just in skills and technology, but also in the way people learn and work together. Workplace innovation is the bridge that makes this possible .

# STRONGER MINDS, STRONGER FUTURES: WELL-BEING IN EUROPEAN VET


## Kornél Dőri

**Student Maastricht University Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience and intern of Magyar Digitális Oktatásért Egyesület**

**Co-authors**

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- Szilvia Hegyiné Závori - H*ead of international relationship and mobility of Budapesti Műszaki Szakképzési Centrum Újpesti Két Tanítási Nyelvű Műszaki Technikum*
- Tibor Dőri – *Magyar Digitális Oktatásért Egyesület, Member of Board of EfVET*


During the last few years there has been an alarming increase in the number of students and teachers reporting some type of mental illness[1]. The pandemic has brought this issue into the spotlight, as the social isolation, general fear, rapidly changing state of living and the restriction of general day to day activities have significantly degraded the mental health of people all around the world[2]. While it was hoped that after the restrictions were lifted and people could return to their normal daily routines the damage done to people's mental health would also revert back to the pre pandemic level, it has stayed with us and only increased since then.

The main motivation for the Erasmus+ project F3 – Fitter Minds, Fitter VET, Fitter Jobs was to improve the current situation, by decreasing the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and to increase the understanding/knowledge of both teachers and students regarding mental health. The survey aimed to identify the areas where the students and teachers/leaders would need assistance when trying to decrease stigmatisation, improve mental health literacy, foster a more inclusive learning and working environment for those living with mental health issues.


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*[1] https://jedfoundation.org/mental-health-and-suicide-statistics/ (2025)*
*[2] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3032 (2025)*


### Results

Teachers

740 VET staff filled out the questionnaire. Out of 740 respondents 620 were teachers, 51 leaders, 65 support staff and 4 were undefined.

By combining the responses, we get a general overview of the current stance of teachers and leaders regarding the topic. 28.65% of participants scored low, 22.97% scored below average, 40.27% scored average, 6.49% scored above average and 1.62% of participants scored high.

The higher the score the better, meaning that they have lower general biases, higher general knowledge related to mental health, reported higher availability of resources and policies, have a low tendency to engage in stereotyping and are very open to include people suffering from mental illnesses into their life. A low score means the complete opposite.

Students

The sample size was significantly bigger when compared to the teacher/leader sample size with 1436 responses in total, from which 1373 were valid.

By combining the questions, the following result emerges: the majority of students 58.12% scored low, 17.41% below average, 21.41% reached an average score, 2.11% a score of above average and 0.95% scored in the high category. The meaning of the scale very low to very high is the same as it was for the teachers.

| Attribute | Students | Teachers/Leaders |
|---|---|---|
| General Bias | Majority scored **below average** (36.56%) and **average** (19.74%). High score: 20.39% | Majority scored **below average** (50.41%) and **low** (12.57%). High score: 9.59% |
| Mental Health Literacy | **53.75%** scored **low**, only **2.77%** scored above average or high | **22.97%** scored **low**, **12.57%** scored above average or high |
| Availability of Resources | **56.45%** scored **low**, only **10.34%** scored above average or high | **51.62%** scored **low**, **8.52%** scored above average or high |
| Stereotypes | Majority (**64.97%**) scored **high**, showing a **strong tendency to stereotype** | **30.81%** scored high with a strong tendency for stereotyping |
| Inclusion Willingness | **63.15%** scored **low**, only **8.01%** scored above average or high | **50.54%** scored **low**, only **22.84%** scored above average or high |
| Overall Literacy Score | **58.12%** scored **low**, only **3.06%** scored above average or high | **28.65%** scored **low**, **8.11%** scored above average or high |
| Key Observations | Higher stereotyping, lower knowledge, less willingness to include, significant misinformation | Slightly better knowledge, still low scores in policy awareness and inclusion |

## Discussion

Stereotype

It is clear from the responses that teachers/leaders have a much better overview and understanding of the topic than students do. This is however not suggesting that teachers and leaders have no room for improvement in these areas. Excluding the general biases teachers and leaders would benefit from an organized knowledge sharing network to fill the knowledge gaps and to enable the sharing of good practices while fostering an environment that encourages open discussion on mental health and mental illness.

Policy

Both groups have reported that there is a major lack in policies and institution wide strategies/guidelines surrounding this issue. It is important to highlight that the lack of institutional strategy, policy and practice for mental health provision. It undermines the importance and priority of ensuring mental well-being in the view of teachers and management deprioritizing it. It's worth noting that there is a possibility that these systems are in place, but the teachers and/or management is not aware of them.

Inclusion

Although teachers/leaders were observed to be less stereotypical than the student, in both cases the overwhelming majority have reported little to no willingness to include someone suffering from any mental illness into their day-to-day life. This could be due to multiple reasons, one of which was already touched upon, namely the association with the word 'mental illnesses.

## Conclusion

It is very concerning to see that, although the number of students and teachers facing mental health problems is increasing at an unprecedented rate, the vast majority of people present in education have major stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding the topic, seriously low levels of knowledge, understanding and literacy about mental health.

The poor score achieved on the measure of availability of resources may point to either the absence of clear strategies or a communication problem within the institution regarding mental health-related provisions. These shortages are such that they are significant barriers to overcoming mental health issues and challenges in schools and to maintaining a supportive and safe learning and teaching environment.

Consequently, in line with the recommendations of the EU Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, capacity building on mental health and mental well-being should be one of the top priorities for all three respondent groups (students, teachers, and heads of institutions).

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the results obtained from the survey:

1. Develop and Implement a Whole-School Approach
2. Continuous Mental Health Literacy Education
3. Anti-Stigma Campaigns
4. Strengthen Accessibility to Support Services
5. Create Spaces for Dialogue and Inclusion
6. Use Data to Drive School Policy and Action Plan for Improvement
7. Leverage Erasmus+ for Transnational Learning

# IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ENHANCING LEARNING AND WELL-BEING


## David Moreno

**Chief Business Development and Marketing Officer at Virtualware**


Imagine a classroom where students not only learn but thrive, where they feel safe, motivated, and confident in their abilities. A place where mistakes are opportunities rather than threats, and where teachers can guide effectively without stress. This vision is no longer a distant ideal. Immersive technology, often referred to as Extended Reality (XR), which serves as an umbrella term for Virtual reality, Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality, is transforming Vocational Education and Training (VET), enabling immersive, safe, and engaging learning experiences while promoting the well-being of all participants.

### Student Well-Being: Learning Without Fear

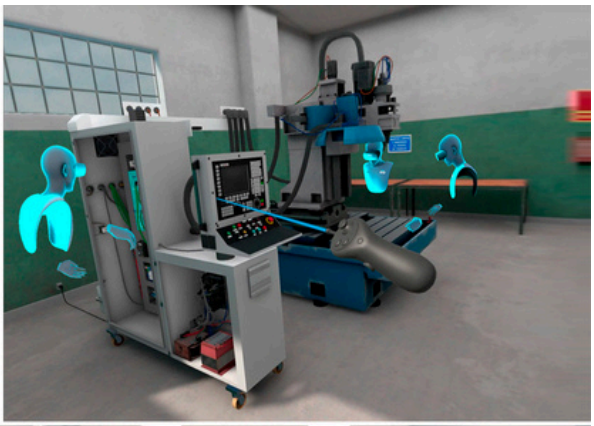
Traditional VET, especially in sectors such as manufacturing, energy, or automotive, often involves physical risks, high-pressure environments, and logistical challenges. These conditions can generate stress, anxiety, and reduced motivation, impacting both learning outcomes and personal well-being.

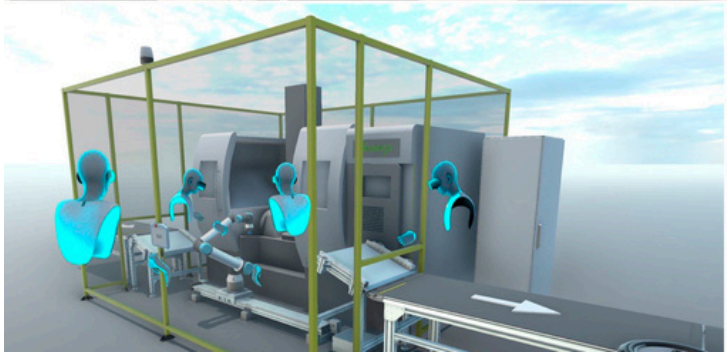
XR addresses these challenges by creating realistic simulations of workplace environments where students can practice complex tasks safely. Mistakes have no real-world consequences, allowing learners to experiment, repeat exercises, and gain confidence. This safe space fosters emotional resilience, reduces anxiety, and encourages deeper engagement with the learning process.

Additionally, XR allows students to progress at their own pace, repeat exercises as needed, and explore scenarios that match their personal learning style. This autonomy and flexibility contribute directly to a sense of control, achievement, and overall well-being.

### Supporting Educators: The Foundation of Strong VET

The well-being of educators is essential for a healthy VET ecosystem. XR does not replace teachers, it empowers them. Instructors can guide



multiple students simultaneously in a virtual environment, monitor performance, and provide targeted feedback without physical strain or repetitive demonstrations.

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### Spain Leading the Way: Tknika and the Basque Government at the Forefront

In the Basque Country, Spain, the regional government partnered with Tknika in 2022, its centre for applied research in vocational education and training, to launch an ambitious program that brings immersive technology into classrooms across the region. Since then, dozens of vocational training centres have been equipped with collaborative XR learning environments, with a long-term goal of connecting approximately 50 centres in a single innovative network.

The program relies on VIROO, an enterprise-grade XR platform built to create and deliver safe, engaging, and collaborative immersive experiences. It provides a unified and secure ecosystem that allows immersive initiatives to be managed and scaled across multiple centres, ensuring consistent access for both students and educators. With intuitive tools that simplify content creation and adaptation, instructors can focus on meaningful teaching rather than technical complexity. Most importantly, the platform enables life-sized, fully immersive simulations in dedicated immersive rooms, where learners can practice without risk, gain confidence, and develop emotional resilience.

By focusing on hands-on learning, collaboration, and workforce readiness, Tknika and the Basque Government are setting a benchmark for how immersive education can support innovation and economic growth at a regional and national scale. In fact, The Spanish Ministry of Education recently launched a six-year, €6.5 million initiative to create and implement XR content across 66 Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).

### Towards VET 2035: Well-Being as a Core Pillar for Industry 5.0

As we look toward 2035, it is clear that well-being must stand alongside technical skills and employability as a fundamental pillar in VET. Immersive technology presents a powerful means to weave well-being into learning, creating safe, immersive spaces where students can practice, adapt, and grow without fear of failure.

Industry 5.0 introduces a new approach to human-technology collaboration, emphasizing human-centred design, sustainability, and resilience. Technologies such as XR allow learners to interact with realistic virtual models of machinery, workplaces, and processes, preparing them not only technically but also in terms of safe, mindful, and ergonomic work habits. In this way, XR becomes a bridge, not only between education and industry but also between the well-being of students, educators, institutions, and employers, helping to build a healthier, more effective VET ecosystem ready for 2035 and beyond.

# VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS A DRIVER FOR THE CREATION OF A "TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY"


## Teresa Damásio

**Chief Executive Officer at ENSINUS GROUP**


New technologies are today an inseparable part of the teaching and learning process. In vocational education, this reality becomes even more relevant: preparing students for the labour market requires constant engagement with digital tools and a keen awareness of the transformations taking place within companies.

We are living through a profound digital transition, in which Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a decisive role. It is no longer a matter of future trends but a reality already transforming the way businesses, employees, and clients interact. To ensure that young people are truly prepared, AI must be integrated into curricula in a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary way, enabling students to develop skills that are aligned with real market needs.

According to Microsoft's *Work Trend Index*, 64% of workers state that they do not have enough time to complete all their daily tasks, this is a capacity gap[1]. Here, generative AI proves to be a fundamental support, assisting in information analysis, process optimisation, and the execution of repetitive tasks, freeing up time for higher-value activities. Far from being a threat, this technology should be seen as a complementary element, enhancing productivity and well-being.

For this transformation to be effective, however, schools must also evolve. The European Commission, through the Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, has set as its priorities the creation of an effective digital education ecosystem and the strengthening of digital skills across all educational stakeholders. This implies investing in infrastructure, equipment, and connectivity, but also in teacher training and in promoting an inclusive and equitable digital culture — ensuring equal opportunities for both girls and boys.

**References**

*[1] The deficit between business demands and the maximum capacity of humans alone to meet them.*

The pandemic accelerated this awareness. The rapid adaptation to virtual classrooms showed us that learning cannot remain confined within four walls. Today, what is required is the creation of a genuine "technological society", where pedagogical innovation keeps pace with social and business transformation. Nevertheless, it is essential never to overlook the well-being of students and teachers: digital technology must be an ally, not a source of exclusion or overload.

For the creation of these "technological societies", it is crucial that teachers invest in updating their digital knowledge through tools promoted by the European Union, ensuring correct and meaningful use of new technologies. Maintaining engagement is vital to harness the potential of these tools within the classroom. Only then will it be possible to bring innovation into vocational schools and make curricula more competitive and adapted to current realities. The classroom experience must be motivating, participatory, collaborative, and communicative. To achieve this, teachers must be equipped with the right tools to acquire and transfer digital skills, thereby bringing classroom learning ever closer to professional practice.

It is within this connection between the labour market and education that the key to the success of vocational education lies, making it a genuine differentiator. By integrating new technologies, curricula can be better aligned with the current needs of companies. In this way, students will be truly prepared to enter the workforce, positioning vocational education as a driver of both differentiation and innovation. Vocational schools should be regarded as institutions that provide immediate access to the world of work and immersive experiences for students during their training.

The Vocational Schools of ENSINUS Group are already responding to this challenge. We are investing in a profound technological transformation, with updated courses aligned with market needs, ensuring students have access to innovative pedagogical resources and strong digital skills development. To this end, we are equipping classrooms and laboratories with the same technologies used in companies, and we are creating small-scale enterprises within the classroom environment. Our aim is to provide students with the reality they will encounter in the labour market.

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# SAFE, SUPPORTED, AND DIGITAL: RETHINKING WELL-BEING FOR VET AND SMES


## Irini Iacovidou

**Eurosuccess Consulting**


As the vocational education and training (VET) sector looks toward 2035, one question stands out: ***how can we ensure that digitalisation strengthens rather than undermines human well-being?*** While the digital transition has enabled new ways of working, learning, and connecting, it has also blurred traditional boundaries between personal and professional life. For many educators, managers, and employees, hybrid environments have brought increased flexibility but also heightened risks of burnout, isolation, and disengagement.

At the upcoming **EfVET Conference 2025** in Fátima, Eurosuccess Consulting (Cyprus) and OIC Poland Foundation (Poland) will address this pressing challenge in their joint workshop, to equip SME leaders, VET educators, and training managers with strategies to build cultures of trust, inclusion, and balance in digitally evolving workplaces.

The inspiration for this workshop comes from the Erasmus+ **WellbeINTeam project**, which focuses on **psychological safety**—the sense that individuals can speak up, share ideas, admit mistakes, and ask questions without fear of negative consequences. Decades of research, most famously by Amy Edmondson at Harvard Business School, demonstrate that psychological safety is one of the strongest predictors of team performance and innovation. Yet in many hybrid workplaces, it is precisely this safety that is most at risk. Online meetings, asynchronous communication, and constant digital connectivity can easily leave some voices unheard and increase stress levels.

In bridging theory with practice, psychological safety matters in digitalised environments and how it directly connects to well-being. Drawing inspiration from the WellbeINTeam project, bespoke practical approaches and tools can, in fact, help leaders and organisations recognise challenges and empower healthier, more supportive cultures in hybrid settings. Rather than staying abstract, the joint workshop will be on actionable insights that participants can reflect on and adapt to their own professional realities. SMEs, which form the backbone of the European economy, must adapt to hybrid realities. Leaders who cultivate cultures of trust, flexibility, and open

communication are better positioned to retain talent, improve productivity, and sustain innovation.

For SMEs, this is not just a leadership trend but a matter of survival in a digitalised economy. Smaller enterprises often operate with lean teams and limited resources, making them especially vulnerable to stress and disengagement if workplace cultures are not supportive. By embedding psychological safety into their organisational DNA, SMEs can strengthen resilience and loyalty among employees, and ensure that innovation does not come at the cost of human well-being. Such an approach allows businesses to thrive even under the pressures of hybrid models, where boundaries between work and personal life are increasingly blurred.

Well-being in a digitalised world is not a peripheral issue; it is central to shaping the **future of VET in 2035**. If we fail to prioritise the human dimension, digitalisation risks exacerbating stress and inequality. If we succeed, however, we can create workplaces and learning environments where technology enhances rather than erodes our humanity.

By bringing psychological safety into the spotlight, Eurosuccess Consulting and OIC Poland Foundation hope to demonstrate that **well-being is not just a personal responsibility but an organisational priority.** The **WellbeINTeam** approach shows that when leaders and institutions make deliberate efforts to promote inclusion, open dialogue, and balance, digital transformation becomes an opportunity for growth rather than a threat. Because in the end, crafting the future of VET 2035 is not only about digital skills; it is about creating safe, supportive, and inspiring spaces where people can truly flourish.

# WELL-BEING IN A DIGITALISED AND INTERNATIONAL WORLD


## Sirje Hassinen

**Expert of International Affairs, PhD**


In an era shaped by borderless connections and rapid digital transformation, the well-being of individuals has become an increasing challenge. While digitalisation offers unprecedented global connectivity, it also brings risks to our health and mental well-being. Constant exposure to digital platforms can lead to social media-induced anxiety, screen time fatigue, and digital addiction, undermining fundamental human values like privacy, self-worth, and meaningful social interactions. Conversations around screen time, appropriate ages for digital tools, and the dangers of constant connectivity are more relevant than ever.

The world is full of technology and information, with many services now delivered through apps or digital platforms. For some, these digital channels remain inaccessible without face-to-face interactions. Moreover, the digital divide persists, with many struggling with basic digital literacy, limiting access to services and educational opportunities.

Well-being is now a central part of the global conversation about managing the balance between digital progress and preserving human values[1]. As people's physical and mental health face greater strain, education systems must foster resilience and adaptability. This requires more than just providing devices or digital skills: the development of human-centred competencies in an increasingly international and tech-driven world.

How do we help individuals navigate this digitalised world and balance real-world presence with digital engagement?


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### Digital well-being

According to the WHO, well-being refers to a positive state shaped by social, economic, and environmental factors. In today's hyper-connected world, where screens mediate much of our experience, well-being has taken on complex new dimensions. It is no longer just about physical or emotional health but is intertwined with how individuals engage with technology, navigate global dynamics, and form relationships in hybrid environments.

**Picture 1: Daily digital activities. Bing Image Creator.**


Daily activities today are heavily integrated with digital tools. These include mobile banking, e-shopping, managing work emails, using collaboration tools for hybrid work, sharing documents, controlling smart devices, streaming services, fitness apps, and telehealth services. Social media also plays a growing role in communication, despite its impact on mental health (Picture 1).

Studies show how much people use digital devices daily, though the numbers vary by age, region, and device. According to **Statista**, the global average screen time for adults is around 7 hours across mobile, desktop, and TV. Younger generations like Gen Z may exceed 9-10 hours per day. Another report highlights that adults spend 3-4 hours daily on smartphones, particularly on social media, messaging apps, and entertainment.

The ability to connect anytime and anywhere has revolutionised communication, work, and healthcare. However, this accessibility can also lead to overwork, digital burnout, and feelings of isolation. The expectation to be "always on" can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed, even amidst constant connectivity.

Two distinct worlds now coexist: the physical world, where we face uncertainty and stress, and the digital world, where we craft idealised versions of ourselves and interact without physical constraints. One of the biggest challenges today is loneliness, which significantly impacts mental and physical health. Humans are biologically social beings, wired for interaction. While digital tools bridge distances, they can also distort reality, replacing human relationships with AI interactions.

The lack of meaningful, in-person connections can lead to feelings of emptiness, depression, and anxiety. The paradox of being “more connected” digitally while feeling “more isolated” is growing. As we spend more time online and less in face-to-face settings, the need for real connection often fades. Communication, particularly in intercultural contexts, relies heavily on non-verbal cues that are hard to convey online. Effective communication also demands language skills and cultural sensitivity.

The impact of digitalisation on mental health, particularly among younger generations, was evident during COVID-19. Increased anxiety tied to pressure on educational success, personal appearance, climate change, political unrest, and social media addiction led to rising concerns. Experts are investigating the possible causes, with social media’s addictive nature being a significant factor.

## Steps to digital well-being and a balanced life

As digitalisation accelerates, education must play a critical role in shaping individuals who can thrive in this new reality. For educators and policymakers, this shift requires more than access to devices or basic digital skills. It demands the integration of skills that support overall well-being and future citizenship skills. These human-centred competencies include communication, collaboration, empathy, cultural sensitivity, problem-solving, adaptability, and the ability to manage stress and uncertainty. The META-COIN project offers resources and activities to help train these skills, preparing individuals for an increasingly digital world.

**Picture 2: Meta-skills modules Courses Archive - META-COIN Project**


As students develop foundational ICT skills, digital citizenship education becomes essential to address widely varying levels of digital literacy and prepare learners for success in a connected world. Education systems should prioritise digital well-being, global competence, and personal resilience, combining technical skills with critical thinking, ethical awareness, and self-regulation.

To foster well-being in education, educators can integrate daily digital detox routines, mindfulness exercises, and critical media analysis into lessons, while incorporating creative activities like games to make learning more enjoyable and engaging. Encouraging student-led discussions on online behaviours and digital identities helps raise awareness and promote healthy digital engagement. Additionally, platforms such as SELFIE [1] and DWEL [2] can be leveraged to assess school-wide digital well-being, allowing educators to adapt strategies and support students' mental health.

**References**

[1] SELFIE - European Education Area
[2] DWEL – Digital Weldability Test and Prototyping Platform - Produktion2030

Innovative educational models, such as Mindshift Pedagogy, AI-powered support systems like GraphoGame, and digital sustainability education, emphasise values-driven technology use, personalised learning and emotional support, and eco-friendly digital habits, making education more intentional, engaging, and responsible.

Future educational developments must emphasise both ICT and well-being skills, ensuring that learners gain not only technical competence but also the resilience, ethical mindset, and critical thinking necessary to engage with technology responsibly.

As OECD and UNESCO stress, well-being is not an individual pursuit but a shared global challenge. Inequities in digital access, cultural misunderstandings, and unsustainable tech practices threaten collective health.

European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

# A LEARNING PLATFORM FOR VET

## Well-being in a Digitalised World: Crafting the Future of VET 2035

**October 22-25**

EfVET Conference Fátima 2025

SCAN ME

CHECK THE PROGRAMME

Welcome to **34th EfVET Annual Conference - A Learning Platform for VET.**

This year's conference theme is **"Well-Being in a Digitalised World: Crafting the Future of VET 2035"** from **22nd to 25th October 2025 in Fátima, Portugal.**

The theme 2025 originates from two pressing needs in the vocational education sector. While **digital transformation** brings significant opportunities for efficiency, flexibility, and innovation, it also presents new challenges, particularly regarding the **well-being** of learners, teachers, and managers within vocational schools, colleges, and universities of applied sciences. The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and remote work arrangements needs a re-evaluation of how well-being is embedded within work-based learning models and working conditions.

Facing these realities, what future do we envisage for VET with a well-being-centric approach? **As we move towards 2035**, many believe that well-being must be integrated as a fundamental pillar alongside technical skills and employability. The conference will explore innovative ways to reshape vocational education by prioritising well-being at three key levels: (i) Student Well-Being, (ii) teacher/manager well-being, and (iii) employer engagement for a well-being working culture.

**The EfVET Annual Conference 2025 will serve as a critical platform for stakeholders—educators, students, vocational training managers, employers, and policymakers—to collaboratively design the future of vocational education with well-being as a guiding principle.**

# EfVET MAGAZINE ISSUE DECEMBER 2025: CALL FOR ARTICLES

## THEME:
## "CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCES: VET FRONT-RUNNER?"

EfVET Magazine will be gathering items regarding the theme of "Citizenship and Democratic Competences in VET", in the context of the ongoing debates on the role of VET in strengthening democracy, civic participation, and social inclusion.

This topic is inspired by several initiatives at international level, including, among the others, the Council of Europe's Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, which provides a comprehensive model of 20 competences that empower individuals to act as responsible citizens, participate actively in democratic life, and contribute to a culture of human rights, peace, and intercultural dialogue. Similarly, UNESCO-UNEVOC, CEDEFOP and many projects promoted by VET centres have been working on this competences and the intersection with VET.

In this issue, namely, we want to explore **how VET systems, institutions, teachers, and learners can integrate citizenship and democratic competences into their educational practices**. How can vocational education go beyond skills for employability and foster values, attitudes, and behaviours essential for democratic societies? What good practices, challenges, and innovative approaches exist across Europe and beyond?

We warmly invite authors to share research, case studies, institutional practices, and reflections on how VET can contribute to preparing learners not only as professionals but also as active citizens committed to democracy and social responsibility.

Manuscript **Deadline: 28th of November 2025** to be sent to Paolo Nardi (**paolo.nardi@efvet.org**) and Jaime Rivas (**jaime@efvet.org**).

**Click here** to view the detailed guidelines

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