



# Erasmus+: Building Skills Worldwide

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## Table of Abbreviations

|           |                                                                      |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AI        | Artificial Intelligence                                              |
| AR        | Augmented Reality                                                    |
| BIP       | Blended Intensive Programme                                          |
| CBHE      | Capacity Building in Higher Education                                |
| CBVET     | Capacity Building in the Field of Vocational Education and Training  |
| E+        | Erasmus Plus                                                         |
| EC        | European Commission                                                  |
| ECTS      | European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System                     |
| EEA       | European Economic Area                                               |
| EHEA      | European Higher Education Area                                       |
| EMJM      | Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters                                         |
| EMJMD     | Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degree                                  |
| ENFP      | Erasmus+ National Focal Point                                        |
| EQF       | European Qualifications Framework                                    |
| ERP       | Erasmus Without Paper                                                |
| HEI       | Higher Education Institution                                         |
| ICT       | Information and Communication Technology                             |
| KA        | Key Action                                                           |
| PSIDS     | Pacific Small Island Developing States                               |
| SME       | Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise                                    |
| SSA       | Sub-Saharan Africa                                                   |
| SDG       | Sustainable Development Goals                                        |
| VET       | Vocational Education and Training                                    |
| VECRA-MOZ | Vocational Excellence in Climate Resilient Agriculture in Mozambique |

# 1. Executive Summary

In a context marked by rapid technological change, climate-related risks, demographic pressures, and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty, skills development is increasingly recognised as an important contributor to economic participation, institutional resilience, and social stability. This publication examines the role of the Erasmus+ Programme (2021–2027) as one of the European Union's main instruments for supporting skills development and institutional co-operation in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, with particular attention to Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Middle East.

Based on evidence from post-2020 implementation, the analysis suggests that Erasmus+ engagement in these regions extends beyond individual mobility opportunities. Through a combination of capacity-building actions, co-operation projects, and targeted mobility schemes, the programme contributes to gradual improvements in human capital development, institutional practices, and the alignment of education systems with labour-market and societal needs. Rather than producing uniform outcomes, Erasmus+ interventions tend to operate incrementally, reflecting diverse regional contexts and institutional starting points.

A central finding of the report is the role of Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) as a key co-operation mechanism underpinning Erasmus+ engagement outside Europe. Since 2020, CBHE projects have addressed a range of structural challenges faced by higher education institutions in partner countries, including curriculum relevance, governance and quality assurance processes, staff development, and links to labour markets and public policy priorities. These projects typically seek to embed reforms within existing institutional frameworks, supporting continuity, institutional ownership, and alignment with national or regional strategies. Across the regions analysed, this institutional focus emerges as a consistent feature of Erasmus+ co-operation.

The report further highlights the growing importance of digital literacy as a transversal competence across multiple Erasmus+ actions. Digital skills are addressed not only as technical capabilities, but also as enabling competencies for learning, participation, and international co-operation. Through CBHE, Erasmus Mundus, vocational education and training actions, youth initiatives, and Jean Monnet activities, Erasmus+ has supported developments in digital pedagogy, blended and virtual learning formats, research collaboration, and internationalisation practices. These approaches have been particularly relevant in contexts affected by limited connectivity or uneven access to digital infrastructure, including parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, Pacific Island states, and fragile or post-conflict settings in the Middle East, where digital solutions have helped sustain learning and widen participation.

Skills development related to the green economy and sustainable transitions also features prominently in the analysis. Since 2020, Erasmus+ projects across all regions have incorporated themes such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, circular economy principles, and green entrepreneurship into education and training systems. Capacity-building and vocational education initiatives have translated these priorities into curricula, laboratories, and work-based learning opportunities, while Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters have contributed to advanced interdisciplinary expertise

relevant to global sustainability challenges. Jean Monnet actions have complemented these efforts by strengthening policy literacy and governance capacities related to sustainable development. Taken together, these activities suggest that Erasmus+ plays a supportive role in advancing skills for environmentally sustainable transitions in partner countries.

The report also observes that Erasmus+ combines a degree of coherence in its objectives with adaptability to regional contexts. In Sub-Saharan Africa, activities often respond to demographic growth, learning gaps, and labour-market informality by strengthening institutions and developing skills in green energy, transport, and digital sectors. In Asia, Erasmus+ co-operation tends to focus on labour-market alignment and digital transformation through curriculum reform and university–enterprise collaboration. In Latin America and the Caribbean, projects frequently integrate sustainability, technology, and entrepreneurship into vocational and professional education to address productivity constraints and informality. In the Pacific, Erasmus+ initiatives help mitigate geographic isolation through digital co-operation, pedagogical innovation, and policy-oriented engagement. In the Middle East, the programme is particularly relevant in fragile and post-conflict environments, where internationalisation, employability, digital skills, and institutional resilience are closely interconnected. Across all regions, Erasmus+ appears to function as a catalyst for workforce readiness, institutional modernisation, and regional co-operation.

Several factors emerge as contributing to the effectiveness of Erasmus+ interventions in third countries not associated to the Programme. These include mutual trust and shared ownership between European and partner institutions, alignment with national and regional policy priorities, the promotion of transversal competences such as digital, green, entrepreneurial, and intercultural skills, and the institutionalisation of outcomes through governance and organisational frameworks rather than project-only delivery. The activation of alumni networks also plays a role in supporting brain circulation, mentoring, and local leadership.

Beyond employability outcomes, the analysis indicates that skills development supported by Erasmus+ contributes to broader objectives related to preparedness and social cohesion. The programme's adaptive responses to crises – through digital delivery, disaster-responsive education approaches, and post-conflict capacity building – highlight the relevance of competences such as adaptability, critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical engagement with digital technologies. By fostering intercultural dialogue and structured co-operation, Erasmus+ also supports conditions conducive to social cohesion and peacebuilding, particularly in fragile contexts.

Looking ahead, the publication puts forward a number of recommendations that may contribute to strengthening the global dimension of Erasmus+ in third countries not associated to the Programme. These include reinforcing skills development while integrating foresight, digital transformation, and sustainability more systematically across actions, as well as encouraging stronger cross-regional co-operation among Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Middle East. The findings also point to the value of embedding digital and media literacy within capacity-building and vocational education initiatives, alongside more structured approaches to preparedness, including climate adaptation and the ethical use of artificial intelligence. Continued attention to inclusive participation – particularly for women, learners in rural and remote areas, and persons with disabilities – remains important, as does closer co-operation between education institutions and enterprises to support employment and innovation pathways.

## 2. Introduction

In recent years, the European Union has placed increasing emphasis on skills development as a foundation for competitiveness, social cohesion, and long-term resilience. Initiatives such as the European Skills Agenda and the emerging concept of a “Union of Skills” articulate a strategic vision for strengthening lifelong learning systems, improving skills anticipation, and aligning education and training more closely with labour-market needs within the EU. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition that skills systems must be adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking in order to respond to technological change, demographic shifts, and the green and digital transitions.

This strategic orientation also provides a useful reference point for understanding the EU’s external engagement in skills development. Beyond Europe, contexts differ significantly in terms of institutional capacity, labour-market structures, demographic dynamics, and access to resources. Against this wider skills development landscape, Erasmus+ plays a distinct role by translating shared principles – such as relevance, inclusion, quality, and co-operation – into practical actions tailored to partner countries. The focus of this document is therefore on how Erasmus+ supports skills development in regions outside Europe, and how its implementation responds to regional priorities and constraints through concrete co-operation projects, mobility schemes, and capacity-building initiatives. Skills are central to global social progress, economic growth, and resilience. In today’s world of rapid technological and demographic change, the main factor shaping opportunity is the ability to acquire and apply new knowledge. In third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, where education and workforce needs are changing, developing skills is vital for employability, innovation, and social inclusion. By aligning their strategies with international standards, these countries seek to build robust skills ecosystems that better prepare their populations for future employment, competitiveness, and sustainable development.

In this context, the Erasmus+ Programme is the EU’s main initiative for education, training, youth, and sport. Launched in 2014 and renewed for 2021–2027, it supports learning mobility, co-operation, and policy innovation in Europe and beyond. Erasmus+ has broadened its engagement with partner countries, advancing human capital development through student and staff exchanges, capacity-building in higher education, vocational and professional training, youth initiatives, and digital and green skills partnerships. These activities support partner institutions in modernising teaching and learning, improving digital readiness, strengthening governance, and building inclusive, future-oriented skills systems.

At its core, Erasmus+ equips individuals with skills and competences for personal development, labour-market integration, and active civic engagement. Concurrently, the programme supports institutions in updating curricula, integrating digital technologies, expanding international networks, and fostering cross-border collaboration. Through these multifaceted engagements, Erasmus+ enables education to contribute directly to economic competitiveness, community resilience, and democratic stability. Its outreach to third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme is particularly important, as it allows regions with emerging or transitioning labour markets to engage in global knowledge exchange, co-develop innovative solutions, and reinforce the foundations of long-term capacity building.

Accordingly, this publication explores how Erasmus+ supports skills development in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, drawing on evidence from a range of projects that address three areas fundamental to national development:

1. skills for employment,
2. skills for teaching and learning, and
3. skills embedded within broader policy and system-level reforms. Through these perspectives, the analysis highlights innovative approaches that strengthen education systems, enhance workforce ecosystems, and expand institutional capacities in partner countries. It demonstrates that transnational collaboration provides a practical framework for advancing shared priorities, including digital transformation, green transition readiness, inclusive education, and social cohesion.

### 3. Methodology

This paper adopts a multidisciplinary, evidence-based methodology to comprehensively analyse the Erasmus+ programme's impact on skills development, with a particular focus on third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme not associated with the programme. By integrating policy analysis with qualitative case study examination, both macro-level trends and micro-level practices are systematically captured and analysed.

The primary research method employed is desk research, utilising various sources, including official EU policy documents, Erasmus+ reports, international guidelines from UNESCO and the OECD, peer-reviewed articles, and credible videos and news. Systematic cross-checking helped compare data from these sources, making the results more accurate and trustworthy. This reduced bias and allowed us to confirm our findings across different situations.

The research process was structured around two complementary analytical dimensions:

1. **Context Analysis: Erasmus+ and Skills** – This examines how Erasmus+ contributes to the development of skills in areas such as work readiness, teaching, learning, and policy. It examines the programme's goals, tools, and international impact from a broad perspective.
2. **Qualitative Case Study Examination** – This analysis selected case studies from third countries not Associated to the Erasmus+ Programme not associated with the Erasmus+ Programme based on their specific skills development needs. Selection criteria focused on the relevance of each case to these needs and their engagement with Erasmus+ and related European Union initiatives. This approach helps identify best practices transferable across different contexts.

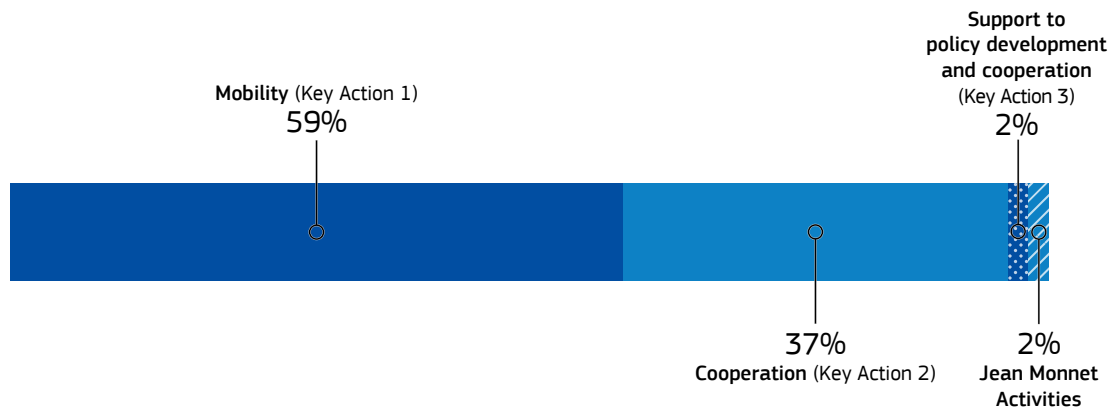
The paper is grounded in an evidence-based, multidisciplinary approach that incorporates perspectives from education, labour economics, international relations, and policy studies. This integration ensures that the analysis addresses both structural policy dynamics and practical implementation strategies. This approach yields a paper that combines both policy insights and practical ideas. Major findings include that digital skills and readiness practices can be shared, Erasmus+ helps skill building in countries not part of the programme, and combining policy review with case studies provides a better overall picture. The research is useful for policymakers, educators, and others who want to support reforms and capacity building worldwide.

## 4. Erasmus+ Key Actions in Skill-Building

Erasmus+ contributes to skills development at an international level through a range of mobility, co-operation, and partnership-based actions. Its relevance is particularly evident in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, where education systems, labour markets, and institutional capacities are undergoing significant transition. In these contexts, Erasmus+ provides structured opportunities for learning, exchange, and institutional co-operation beyond the European Union.

Through its key actions, the programme engages higher education institutions, vocational education and training providers, youth organisations, and public authorities. It supports these actors in areas such as curriculum development, teaching and learning practices, research and knowledge exchange, and the acquisition of transversal and occupation-specific skills. By facilitating international co-operation and gradual institutional development, Erasmus+ contributes to ongoing efforts in partner countries to strengthen education and training systems and to enhance their responsiveness to changing social and economic needs.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1: Erasmus+ project grants allocation**



Source: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/factsheets-statistics-evaluations/statistics/data/overview>

Erasmus+ is structured around a set of Key Actions that support learning mobility, co-operation, and policy development in education, training, youth, and sport. While not all actions are open to participation by third countries not associated to the Programme, several provide dedicated opportunities for co-operation beyond the European Union. These include International Credit Mobility under Key Action 1, Capacity Building actions under Key Action 2 – such as Capacity Building in Higher Education and Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training – Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters, selected Youth actions, and Jean Monnet activities. Together, these actions enable institutions and organisations in partner countries to engage in mobility, curriculum development, institutional reform, and policy-oriented co-operation, within a framework that reflects both the Programme's objectives and the specific eligibility conditions set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Mobility projects for higher education students and staff, Publications Office of the European Union, Available at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu>

#### 4.1. KA 1. Learning Mobility of Individuals

Through KA 1, Erasmus+ enables undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students to join physical, virtual, or blended mobility opportunities while studying or training abroad. For learners in partner countries, these mobility periods are transformative. They refine intercultural communication, foreign-language skills, critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability. These are all essential for success in global labour markets. Staff mobility also enhances professional development. It allows faculty and administrative personnel to gain exposure to diverse pedagogy, innovative teaching, and new learning environments. Such mobility deepens institutional internationalisation, enriches curriculum design, and expands the capacity of higher education institutions in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme to deliver high-quality, globally relevant education.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.2. KA 2. Co-operation among Organisations and Institutions

KA 2 strengthens the international aspect of skills development by supporting projects that foster innovation and share best practices. These projects unite higher education institutions, training centres, NGOs, businesses, and public authorities to address shared challenges in education and employability. In third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, KA 2 initiatives modernise curricula, build research networks, support digital transformation, promote inclusion, and develop high-quality learning environments. Graduates from these strengthened institutions are more employable, globally competitive, and ready to adapt to fast-changing professional landscapes.

KA 1 and KA 2 have reshaped higher education and skills systems worldwide. Their combined impact, along with CBHE, VET, Youth, Erasmus Mundus, and Jean Monnet, advances the Erasmus+ mission of building skills worldwide.

**Figure 2: How each Erasmus+ Pillar relates to the Key Actions**

| Pillar                                       | KA 1 - Learning mobility of individuals                              | KA 2 - Cooperation among organisations and institutions            | Standalone                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Capacity building in Higher Education (CBHE) | X                                                                    | Entirely under KA 2                                                | X                                                                                      |
| Vocational Education and Training            | Mobility of learners, and staff, apprenticeships and work placements | Centers of vocational excellence, sectoral cooperation             | X                                                                                      |
| Youth                                        | Youth exchanges, mobility of youth workers                           | Cooperation projects, partnerships for youth work                  | X                                                                                      |
| Erasmus Mundus                               | X (Not formally KA 1, but shares mobility features)                  | X (Not formally KA 2, but involves cooperation among institutions) | Separate from the key action classification. A standalone action in higher education   |
| Jean Monnet                                  | X                                                                    | X (Not formally KA 2, but involves cooperation among institutions) | Separate from the key action classification. A standalone action focused on EU Studies |

Erasmus+ actions focusing on vocational education and training (VET) acknowledge the important role of VET in supporting both young people entering the labour market and experienced professionals who need to adapt to rapidly evolving economic and technological contexts. These actions emphasise the development of job-specific skills

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals, Publications Office of the European Union, retrieved 23 May 2025. Available at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/key-action-1-learning-mobility-of-individuals>

that enhance employability through programmes designed to respond to changing labour-market needs.

For third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training (CBVET) is a key instrument supporting these objectives. CBVET strengthens the relevance, quality, and responsiveness of VET systems by fostering co-operation between VET providers, labour-market actors, public authorities, and other key stakeholders. Projects support initial vocational training for young learners, as well as upskilling and reskilling opportunities for adults, with a strong emphasis on skills needed for the green and digital transitions.

Through institutional development, curriculum modernisation, staff training, and improved links with industry, CBVET contributes to sustainable capacity development within VET systems and promotes innovation at local and regional levels. Complementing mobility actions, Erasmus+ also supports the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce. International learning experiences, apprenticeships, and co-operation activities enhance participants' intercultural competences and global perspective, helping prepare learners and professionals to operate effectively in an increasingly interconnected world.

Erasmus+ actions supporting youth in third countries not associated to the Programme focus on strengthening youth work, enhancing non-formal learning, and fostering meaningful international co-operation. Through Capacity Building in the Field of Youth, Erasmus+ invests in the development of youth organisations, youth workers, and systems that support young people's personal, social, and civic development. These actions promote peer learning, youth participation, and youth-led initiatives, enabling young people to engage actively in safe, inclusive spaces that encourage initiative, responsibility, and intercultural understanding.

Complementing this, Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges provide accessible, facilitated online learning experiences that bring together young people and youth workers from different countries and backgrounds. Through moderated dialogue, collaborative projects, and intercultural exchanges, participants develop critical thinking, digital competences, and global awareness while engaging constructively with diverse perspectives beyond their immediate environments.

In addition, International Credit Mobility (ICM) supports co-operation between higher education institutions in Programme Countries and institutions in third countries not associated to the Programme. By enabling physical mobility for students and staff, ICM contributes to skills development, mutual learning, and people-to-people connections, reinforcing the international dimension of education and youth engagement.

Together, these Erasmus+ actions empower young people to become active and responsible citizens, capable of contributing positively to their local communities while engaging with broader regional and global challenges.

The prestigious Erasmus Mundus, particularly through its Joint Masters (EMJM), is distinguished by its innovative structure and approach to education, involving a consortium of at least three higher education institutions from different countries and featuring top international scholars. The consortium also has a wide range of associated partners, including research institutions, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and public sector organisations. It employs a high degree of transnational integration in its curricula,

education delivery, and degree awarding.<sup>3</sup> EMJM offers a richly diverse interdisciplinary curriculum that draws from the unique strengths and specialisations of each institution, with a compulsory requirement to physically move students to at least two countries while they study under the programme. This direct and sustained immersion in different institutions and countries alone builds strong intercultural skills in communication, understanding of diverse perspectives, and adaptability. This approach also exposes students to diverse teaching methodologies, research environments, and varied academic systems. The degrees earned under EMJM may be a joint degree of the participating higher education institutions or multiple degrees, one from each participating institution. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme equips students with advanced and specialised knowledge, enabling them to acquire job-specific skills in their chosen fields.<sup>4</sup>

Jean Monnet promotes excellence in teaching and research on EU studies worldwide. In the third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, it develops and modernises EU-related curricula. The strength of Jean Monnet lies not only in its drive for excellence in EU studies but also in its transnational networks. It significantly promotes teaching and curriculum design, policy literacy, critical thinking, analytical skills, and communication and advocacy. Jean Monnet provides individuals and organisations with professional specialisation in European affairs; it trains educators and faculties of institutions to give an optimum quality of education grounded on EU standards; and most importantly, it equips individuals with international and intercultural competencies with EU policy knowledge that may be relevant to their careers and future career prospects. In doing so, Jean Monnet makes a significant contribution to professional specialisation in European affairs and to the broader goal of equipping individuals for impactful global engagement.<sup>5</sup>

Through its key actions and flagship components, Erasmus+ functions as a comprehensive engine for skills development in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme. It combines mobility, co-operation, capacity building, and international partnership. This support helps individuals and institutions acquire the skills needed for employability, innovation, sustainable development, and active citizenship. Erasmus+ impacts education systems and empowers young people worldwide.

### 4.3. Erasmus+ and the Global Perspective on Skills

Global institutions increasingly prioritise agile, inclusive, and future-oriented skills systems designed to support decent work, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) maintains that skills development is fundamental for “productive employment, decent work and sustainable development.” The ILO highlights the importance of lifelong learning and work-based training.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calls for a skills-first approach. This approach prioritises transferable competences, flexible learning pathways, and

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Why choose Erasmus Mundus as an international student?, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024. Available at: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/why-choose-erasmus-mundus-as-an-international-student>

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Publications Office of the European Union, Available at: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, Jean Monnet Actions, Publications Office of the European Union, Available at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/jean-monnet-actions>

<sup>6</sup> International Labour Organization, Global Skills Programme – Outline, International Labour Office, 2024. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Global%20Skills%20Programme%20-%20outline.pdf>

improved recognition systems.<sup>7</sup> UNESCO positions lifelong learning as the backbone of SDG 4, “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. It emphasises equitable access, digital readiness, and system-wide capacity building.<sup>8</sup> UNICEF stresses the need to equip adolescents and youth with “foundational, transferable, and job-specific skills” for life and work.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) advocates for safe, regular, and skills-based mobility pathways, asserting that well-managed migration enhances global skills circulation and development outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

Within this global context, the Erasmus+ Programme implements many of these priorities by supporting mobility, co-operation, capacity building, and youth empowerment both within Europe and in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme.

Erasmus+ aligns with the OECD’s priorities in skills governance, recognition, and mobility, as outlined in *Empowering the Workforce in the Context of a Skills-First Approach*. This approach highlights the importance of transferable skills, flexible learning pathways, transparent skills recognition, and robust governance systems.<sup>11</sup> Through Key Action 1, Erasmus+ facilitates mobility experiences that develop transversal competencies such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving, which the OECD identifies as essential for dynamic labour markets. The programme utilises recognition and transparency tools, including the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and Europass, aligning with OECD recommendations for portable and reliable skills credentials.<sup>12</sup> Key Action 2 further supports curriculum modernisation, digital learning innovation, and structured collaboration between education providers and industry, directly contributing to the OECD’s call for innovation-driven skills governance. Collectively, these initiatives advance the OECD’s skills-first vision by fostering flexible, portable, and high-quality learning ecosystems underpinned by strong transnational governance.

Erasmus+ aligns with UNESCO’s vision of lifelong learning, inclusion, and the achievement of SDG 4. UNESCO identifies lifelong learning as the foundation of equitable, inclusive, and relevant education systems. Its *Global Inventory of National Lifelong Learning Policies* highlights the necessity of systemic, cross-sector strategies to support sustainable development.<sup>13</sup> Erasmus+ adopts this comprehensive approach by embedding lifelong learning across all educational stages and sectors, including schools, VET, higher education, adult learning, and youth work, reflecting UNESCO’s sector-wide perspective. The programme also prioritises inclusion and equity, which are central to SDG 4 and UNESCO’s educational mandate, by widening participation and reducing barriers for learners from diverse backgrounds.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Erasmus+ investments in digital transformation

7 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Empowering the workforce in the context of a skills-first approach*, OECD Publishing, 2025. Available at: [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/06/empowering-the-workforce-in-the-context-of-a-skills-first-approach\\_Oe3be363/345b6528-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/06/empowering-the-workforce-in-the-context-of-a-skills-first-approach_Oe3be363/345b6528-en.pdf)

8 UNESCO, *Why lifelong learning is essential*, UNESCO, retrieved 23 May 2025. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/lifelong-learning/need-know>

9 UNICEF, *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, UNICEF, 2018. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/global-framework-transferable-skills>

10 International Organization for Migration, *Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF)*, International Organization for Migration, 2021. Available at: [https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1686/files/documents/migof\\_brochure\\_a4\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1686/files/documents/migof_brochure_a4_en_0.pdf)

11 OECD. (2025). *Empowering the Workforce in the Context of a Skills-First Approach*. [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/06/empowering-the-workforce-in-the-context-of-a-skills-first-approach\\_Oe3be363/345b6528-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/06/empowering-the-workforce-in-the-context-of-a-skills-first-approach_Oe3be363/345b6528-en.pdf)

12 European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2024*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023. Available at: [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide_EN.pdf)

13 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, *Global Inventory of National Lifelong Learning Policies*, UNESCO, 2022. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/latest-global-inventory-national-and-regional-qualifications-frameworks-published>

14 European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2024*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023. Available at: [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide_EN.pdf)

advance UNESCO's focus on ICT competence and inclusive digital education, supporting the modernisation of teaching, learning, and institutional capacity. Through these efforts, Erasmus+ serves as a practical implementation of UNESCO's lifelong learning paradigm, promoting mobility, system reform, and equitable access across learning ecosystems.<sup>15</sup>

Erasmus+ effectively advances UNICEF's vision of holistic youth empowerment by aligning closely with its framework for youth skills and inclusion. It empowers young people – especially adolescents and vulnerable youths – by facilitating the development of foundational, transferable, digital, and job-specific skills needed for the transition to adulthood.<sup>16</sup> Through youth exchanges, volunteering initiatives, and non-formal learning, Erasmus+ fosters the socio-emotional, leadership, and civic competencies at the heart of UNICEF's agenda.<sup>17</sup> The programme's targeted inclusion measures and support for disadvantaged youth reinforce its commitment to equity and participation. Erasmus+ actions to strengthen digital and green competences also complement UNICEF's focus on preparing youth for future labour markets and societal challenges.

Erasmus+ closely aligns with the IOM priorities on safe, regular, and skills-based mobility pathways. IOM emphasises that well-managed migration systems must promote skills partnerships, transparent qualification recognition, and regulated avenues for student and labour mobility to enhance development outcomes and reduce irregular migration.<sup>18</sup> Erasmus+ directly advances these principles through its Key Action 1 learning mobility schemes, which provide structured, well-regulated, and safe opportunities for students, staff, trainees, and youth to cross borders – thereby reducing incentives for unsafe or irregular migration routes.<sup>19</sup> Its Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) partnerships with third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme further strengthen local education and training systems, supporting IOM's notion that migration should be a choice rather than an economic necessity. Erasmus+ also reinforces IOM's Mobility Governance Framework through transparent qualification frameworks and mutual recognition instruments that ensure the portability of skills across borders.<sup>20</sup> In addition, opportunities for return mobility and circular knowledge exchange support the concept of “brain circulation”, a central pillar of IOM's migration–development nexus. Taken together, Erasmus+ offers one of the most mature and well-governed models globally for safe, skills-based mobility.

Beyond its alignment with IOM, Erasmus+ reinforces the cross-cutting priorities identified by all major global organisations – including digital literacy, green and sustainability competences, socio-emotional skills, inclusion and equity, and global citizenship and intercultural understanding. By embedding these themes as horizontal priorities across all actions and sectors, Erasmus+ strongly aligns with internationally recognised 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill frameworks and contributes to the development of globally competent, inclusive, and future-ready learners and institutions.

15 International Labour Organization, Global framework on core skills for life and work in the 21st century, International Labour Office, 2021. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed\\_emp/%40emp\\_ent/documents/publication/wcms\\_813222.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_813222.pdf)

16 UNICEF, Global Framework on Transferable Skills, UNICEF, 2018. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/64751/file/Global-framework-on-transferable-skills-2019.pdf>

17 European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2024, p.228, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023. Available at: [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide_EN.pdf)

18 International Labour Organization, Global Skills Programme – Outline, International Labour Office, 2024. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Global%20Skills%20Programme%20-%20outline.pdf>

19 European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2024, p.41, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023. Available at: [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide_EN.pdf)

20 International Labour Organization, Global Skills Programme – Outline, International Labour Office, 2024. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Global%20Skills%20Programme%20-%20outline.pdf>

Erasmus+ embodies the shared global priorities of the ILO, OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF, and IOM by integrating lifelong learning, safe mobility, skills portability, employability, and youth empowerment into a coherent programme. Its mobility schemes strengthen transversal and technical skills; its co-operation projects modernise institutions; and its policy actions support system-wide reforms.

For third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, Erasmus+ offers a robust skills development model that complements international frameworks for decent work, lifelong learning, youth empowerment, and well-governed migration.

## 5. Erasmus+ as a Platform for Building Skills

Erasmus+ sits at the centre of the EU's commitment to human capital development. The European Union recognises that national prosperity depends on citizens who are skilled, prepared, and empowered, and that sustainable economic and social growth requires both individual competence and institutional capacity.

Over €14.7 billion were invested in the programme from 2014 to 2020<sup>21</sup>, while €26.2 billion, almost double the previous programming cycle, were allocated for the 2021-2027 period. Between 2014 and 2024, the programme contracted more than 230,000 projects and involved almost 170,000 organisations.<sup>22</sup> In 2023 alone, with a total budget of more than €4.5 billion, Erasmus+ supported almost 32,000 projects involving more than 84,500 organisations.<sup>23</sup>

The EU's investment extends well beyond its member states and associated countries. The Erasmus+ Programme is explicitly designed to engage the wider world: third countries not associated to the Programme span more than 150 countries across fourteen regions worldwide, with a strong focus on the EU's Neighbourhood, but with substantial investment in regions serviced by Erasmus+ National Focal Points in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East. Third countries from these regions participate in the Programme through a dedicated set of actions, including Capacity Building in Higher Education, Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training, Erasmus Mundus, International Credit Mobility, Virtual Exchanges, Capacity Building in the field of Youth, and Jean Monnet. Not all of these actions are open to every region: eligibility varies by action and is determined by the EU's external policy priorities and the specific criteria set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for each call. What connects those actions that do apply is a distinctive logic: rather than transferring resources, they invest in the people and systems that generate and sustain skills over time. It is this quality, the capacity to build lasting human and institutional capability, that gives Erasmus+ its particular value as an instrument of international cooperation.

### 5.1. Institutional Reform and Systemic Capacity: Capacity Building in Higher Education

*Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)* develops skills at the level of systems rather than individuals. By bringing together universities from Europe and its partner countries to co-design and implement joint initiatives, CBHE creates the conditions for curriculum reform, upgraded infrastructure, enhanced teaching quality, and stronger institutional governance. The resulting skills are embedded in institutions and the wider economic spheres surrounding them: they shape the competency profiles of every cohort a reformed programme will subsequently produce, long after the project itself has closed.

*LA-CoNGA physics* is an Erasmus+ CBHE project led by Université Paris Cité that aims to contribute to the modernisation of the educational platforms of eight Latin American higher education institutions in the Andean region, through the implementation of a one-year Master-level course in advanced physics. The teaching and research network brings

<sup>21</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/news/marking-37-years-of-erasmus-key-numbers-and-achievements>

<sup>22</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/news/marking-37-years-of-erasmus-key-numbers-and-achievements>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cde.ual.es/en/erasmus-annual-report-1-3-million-beneficiaries-and-32-000-projects-supported-by-2023>

together three partner universities in Europe and eight in Latin America, and collaborates with leading scientific institutions such as the [\*Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives \(CEA\)\*](#), the [\*European Organization for Nuclear Research \(CERN\)\*](#), the [\*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique \(CNRS\)\*](#), the [\*Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron \(DESY\)\*](#), and the [\*International Centre for Theoretical Physics \(ICTP\)\*](#). The curriculum has two tracks: high energy physics and physics of complex systems, and three training areas: theory, scientific instrumentation, and data science. The skills built were those of the field itself, advanced scientific competency and research capacity, alongside the pedagogical and organisational capabilities that collaborative, cross-border academic delivery requires. The project created regional infrastructure for high-level physics education that had not previously existed at this scale, and the institutional foundations it put in place will continue to generate that expertise independently.

The [\*HARMONY\*](#) project, coordinated by the University of Zaragoza in Spain and bringing together four European and seven Asian universities, pursued a comparable logic in a different disciplinary and institutional context. Its focus was on internationalisation strategy at the institutional level, supporting senior leaders at partner universities in India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam to develop evidence-based approaches to internationalisation, modernise their framework conditions for higher education, and build the administrative capacity to sustain international cooperation over time. The project's outcomes were institutional as much as academic: strengthened international offices, reformed governance structures, and clearer strategic frameworks for engaging with the wider world. These are precisely the conditions that make high-quality, internationally relevant education self-sustaining beyond the life of any single project.

## 5.2. Tailored Skills Sets for Specific Fields: Erasmus Mundus

[\*Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters\*](#) programmes develop tailored, interdisciplinary skills sets for specific fields of professional practice. Each programme defines the competency profile its graduates are expected to hold and structures its curriculum, partnership arrangements, and mobility pathways accordingly. Graduates earn a joint degree from a consortium of European universities, signalling not only subject-matter expertise but the demonstrated capacity to work across disciplinary, institutional, and cultural boundaries. This specificity is a defining strength: a programme in humanitarian action produces graduates equipped for complex operational environments; one in aquaculture and ecosystem science produces graduates capable of addressing food systems challenges; one in international business produces graduates who can navigate multicultural commercial and regulatory contexts.

The [\*Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degree Programme in International Humanitarian Action\*](#), known as NOHA, illustrates how this model extends its reach through partnerships with institutions in third countries not associated to the Programme. NOHA's nine European consortium universities are complemented by a network of 11 global partner universities where students may undertake their third-semester Regional Training Track, spanning institutions in the United States, Colombia, Indonesia, Lebanon, Thailand, Australia, India, Jordan, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, and Qatar, alongside the option of a Work Placement Track in a humanitarian organisation. This combination of rigorous interdisciplinary academic training with direct exposure to professional and operational contexts is what gives the programme its particular graduate profile: specialists who can analyse, plan, and act in the complex environments that humanitarian work demands. In 2025, NOHA was once again selected as

an Erasmus Mundus programme, and over its history more than 3,500 graduates have gone on to work in humanitarian relief and international cooperation worldwide.

NOHA is one example of a consistently documented pattern across Erasmus Mundus programmes. Graduate surveys report strong rates of employment in roles directly related to the field of study, alongside gains in professional maturity, the capacity to work effectively in multinational environments, and the analytical competencies demanded by complex, knowledge-intensive roles. These are not incidental outcomes; they are what each programme was designed to produce, and the sustained global participation in Erasmus Mundus reflects the recognition that this investment delivers.

### 5.3. Applied and Occupational Competencies: Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training

*Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training (CBVET)* addresses the gap between what labour markets require and what existing training systems provide. CBVET supports partnerships between VET providers, higher education institutions, enterprises, and public authorities to modernise vocational systems, improve training quality, and strengthen the connection between education and employment. Projects promote work-based learning, curriculum reform, staff development, and institutional governance, with the objective of making training systems more responsive to economic, technological, and environmental change. Alongside occupation-specific competencies, CBVET develops transversal skills, including digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and analytical problem-solving, that are applicable across a range of employment contexts. CBVET is open to partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and several other regions, but is not available in Asia.

*Capac'IT 4 Africa* is a two-year international cooperation project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, coordinated by [Simplon.co](#) in France and involving eleven partners from the Simplon Africa network across ten countries. Partners include Simplon Africa in Senegal, Bencode in Belgium, Fondation Kinshasa Digital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Inclusive Help Class in Cameroon, Wenaklabs in Chad, Santech SAS in Mali, ONG Ogooué Labs in Gabon, Société Inclusive in Benin, the Agence du service civique d'action pour le développement in Guinea, and Cabinet L'Envol in Benin. The project promotes pedagogical innovation, curriculum modernisation, and the establishment of sustainable training networks aligned with the demands of digital transformation in regional labour markets. Its outcomes include updated curricula, a strengthened cohort of VET educators equipped with contemporary teaching methods, and institutional networks capable of maintaining relevance as sectoral demands continue to evolve.

The *VECRA-MOZ* project offers a further illustration of CBVET's reach. Led by [Häme University of Applied Sciences in Finland \(HAMK\)](#), in partnership with [CINOP](#) in the Netherlands and local institutions in Mozambique, the project focuses on vocational excellence in climate-resilient agriculture, equipping young people, trainers, and agricultural institutions with the skills and updated curricula needed to build sustainable rural economies in the face of climate change. Together these two projects demonstrate the breadth of what CBVET can address: from the infrastructure of digital economies to the agrarian foundations of food security, the action builds the occupational competencies that specific labour markets and communities actually need.

## 5.4. Professional Development Through Mobility: International Credit Mobility

*International Credit Mobility (ICM)* traineeships embedded within ICM programmes add a further dimension, connecting academic learning directly to workplace practice and strengthening the transition from education into employment. The combination of academic and professional experience that ICM makes possible is particularly significant for participants from contexts where domestic opportunities for internationally grounded learning remain limited. The Programme supports traineeships as a recognised component of ICM mobility, allowing receiving institutions and partner organisations to design pathways that integrate academic study with supervised professional practice. In fields such as humanitarian action, public health, environmental governance, development cooperation, and social work, the traineeship dimension carries particular weight: employers in these sectors increasingly expect graduates to arrive with demonstrable field or organisational experience, and ICM-embedded traineeships provide a structured route to acquiring it. For students from regions where access to internships in internationally operating organisations is constrained by geography, professional networks, or institutional capacity, the opportunity to undertake a supervised placement abroad within the framework of a funded mobility programme can be genuinely formative.

Yet the value of ICM extends well beyond the traineeship component. The period of study at a European higher education institution exposes participants to pedagogical cultures, assessment frameworks, and academic debates that may differ substantially from those of their home systems, broadening their intellectual formation in ways that carry long-term benefit. Language acquisition and consolidation, whether in the language of instruction or in the everyday language of the host country, adds a further layer of professional and personal capital. The relationships formed during an ICM mobility, with peers from multiple national backgrounds, with faculty, and with the wider institutional community, constitute a professional network that participants carry with them well after the mobility period ends. For staff mobilities under ICM, the benefits are similarly compound: academic and administrative staff who spend time at partner institutions return with enriched perspectives on curriculum design, quality assurance, student support, and internationalisation strategy, strengthening their home institution's capacity in ways that extend to the students they teach and advise. Taken together, these dimensions make ICM one of the more comprehensive instruments available within Erasmus+ for building lasting, substantive connections between European higher education and partner institutions worldwide.

## 5.5. Non-Formal Learning and Civic Skills: Youth Actions

Youth actions under Erasmus+ operate through a different pedagogical model than formal qualification programmes. *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges*, *Capacity Building in the field of Youth*, and *European Voluntary Service* develop skills through structured non-formal and informal learning: intercultural dialogue, collaborative projects, voluntary service, and civic participation. The competencies that emerge, communication, teamwork, self-direction, intercultural understanding, and the capacity to engage constructively in unfamiliar settings, are widely recognised by employers and community organisations as foundational to active participation in society and the workforce. For young people in third countries not associated to the programme, these actions create structured pathways into international experience and learning environments that formal higher education does not always reach.

The [LIVE-EX](#) project (2024-2027) illustrates how virtual exchange formats extend access to this kind of development. Coordinated by the International Cultural Youth Exchange and involving two European and eight Sub-Saharan African partner organisations, LIVE-EX strengthens the capacity of international voluntary service organisations to deliver high-quality virtual intercultural exchanges. Participants develop critical thinking, intercultural competencies, and digital skills while engaging with social and environmental themes of both local and global relevance. Youth workers gain professional development; young people gain access to international cooperation formats that do not depend on physical mobility, an important consideration in contexts where the demand for internationally engaged young professionals consistently outpaces the availability of formal mobility opportunities.

## 5.6. Specialised Knowledge for Policy Engagement: Jean Monnet

[Jean Monnet Actions](#) support teaching, research, and structured policy dialogue on European integration at universities worldwide. Their contribution to skills is specific and should be understood on its own terms: Jean Monnet develops deep analytical and scholarly competency in EU studies, the capacity to understand, teach, and engage critically with European institutions, law, values, and external policies. Faculty gain specialised expertise in a field of genuine professional relevance; students gain access to rigorous, research-informed instruction on one of the world's most consequential policy actors. Jean Monnet modules, chairs, and centres of excellence do not pursue broad skills formation across a curriculum; their purpose is to deepen a defined area of knowledge and to develop the academic and policy communities capable of advancing it.

At universities in third countries not associated to the Programme, Jean Monnet engagement has practical professional relevance for academics, policymakers, and practitioners whose work intersects with EU institutions, trade frameworks, development partnerships, and educational cooperation agreements. The [Asia-Europe Institute at Universiti Malaya](#), which was awarded Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence status in 2017, demonstrates how this investment can develop an institution's capacity to convene academic and policy communities around the dynamics of ASEAN-EU relations, generating scholarly expertise and structured dialogue that informs both teaching and public debate on regional integration, governance, and connectivity. This kind of contribution, building the specialist knowledge base from which informed engagement with the EU becomes possible, is what Jean Monnet is designed to produce, and it is most clearly understood on those terms.

## 5.7. The Portfolio as a Whole

What the preceding sections describe is not a single skills agenda but a portfolio of complementary investments, each addressing a different dimension of human and institutional capacity. [Capacity Building in Higher Education \(CBHE\)](#) reforms the systems that produce and sustain expertise. Erasmus Mundus forms specialists with recognised, high-level qualifications and field-specific competency sets. CBVET builds the applied, occupational skills that labour markets require. ICM deepens individual professional formation through internationally grounded study and workplace experience. Youth actions open access to non-formal learning and civic engagement for young people who may not

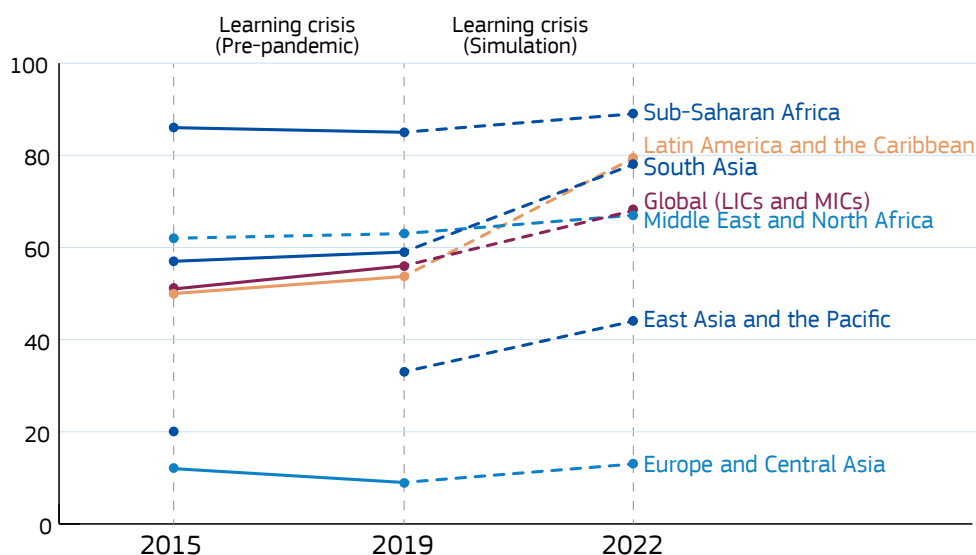
reach formal qualification pathways. Jean Monnet develops the specialist scholarly capacity needed to understand and engage with the EU as a global actor.

Together these instruments constitute a coherent but differentiated programme of investment in the skills that individuals, institutions, and societies need to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from a rapidly changing world. Chapter 6 examines how this portfolio has been deployed across the regions where Erasmus+ engages with third countries not associated to the programme, and what its cumulative contribution has been in each.

## 6. Erasmus+: Building Regional Skills

The following chapter presents a regionally differentiated overview of how Erasmus+ has supported skills development and institutional co-operation in third countries not associated to the Programme. Drawing on selected examples and implementation patterns, it highlights how Erasmus+ actions have been adapted to regional contexts, priorities, and constraints. The regional sections that follow illustrate how skills development, institutional capacity building, and international co-operation have been pursued across diverse socio-economic and policy environments, while operating within the common framework of the Erasmus+ Programme.

**Figure 3: Learning Poverty Globally and by Region-2015 and 2019, with 2022 Simulation Estimates**



Source: <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/34035a49acb5700ce8b118aeda81a5cb-0510022023/original/TheStateOfLearningPoverty-Feb2023Update-03-08-23.pdf>

### 6.1. Sub-Saharan Africa: Strengthening Skills Development through Erasmus+

Today, Sub-Saharan Africa has an estimated population of 1.27 billion people. Demographically, it is the youngest region in the world. Nearly 70% of its people are under the age of 30.<sup>24</sup> This youthful demographic structure represents both an unprecedented challenge and a unique opportunity. With millions entering the labour market annually, the region holds potential to harness a substantial demographic dividend, provided that its populations are equipped with the appropriate skills, education, and employment opportunities.

#### 6.1.1. The Sub-Saharan Africa skills development challenge

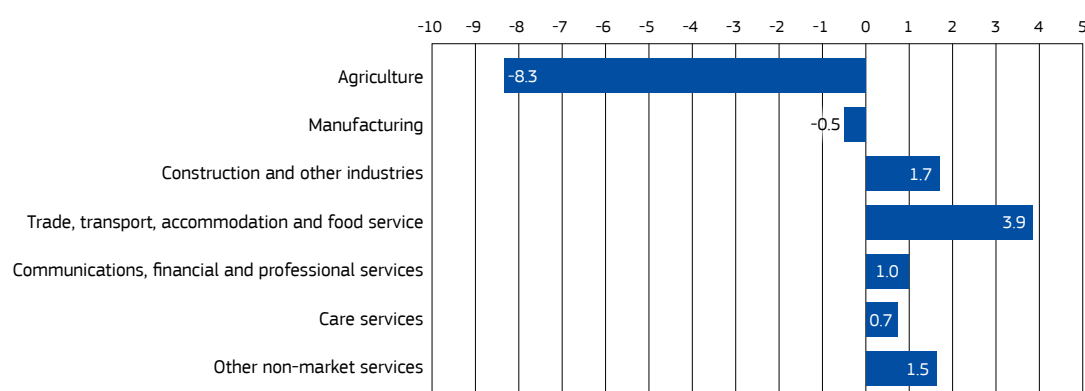
In addition to its demographic advantage, Africa has abundant natural resources that, if effectively managed, could serve as a foundation for sustained economic growth and development. Yet, despite this wealth in both human and natural capital, Africa remains the

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). (n.d.). Young people's potential key to Africa's sustainable development. United Nations. Retrieved 19 December 2025, from <https://www.un.org/ohrrls/news/young-people%E2%80%99s-potential-key-africa%E2%80%99s-sustainable-development>

poorest continent globally.<sup>25</sup>

The number one challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa is learning poverty.<sup>26</sup> Current estimates indicate that nine out of ten children in the region cannot read and comprehend a simple text by the age of ten. Additionally, the region faces a high rate of education exclusion: approximately twenty-three per cent of girls and nineteen per cent of boys are not attending primary school. Nearly sixty per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 17 are not enrolled in any formal education programme. Alarming, the percentage of out-of-school adolescents continues to rise, highlighting a deepening crisis in access to and retention in education.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 4: Change in sectoral share of youth employment between 2001 and 2021 (percentage points)**



Source: ILO modelled sectoral estimates, November 2022 (unpublished).

Source: [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Sub-Saharan Africa GET Youth 2024\\_0.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Sub-Saharan%20Africa%20GET%20Youth%202024_0.pdf)

The consequence of these educational deficits is evident in the very low levels of participation in TVET and the weak rates of transition into tertiary education. Sub-Saharan Africa records the lowest gross enrolment ratio in higher education globally, underscoring the systemic barriers to advanced skills development.<sup>28</sup> This educational shortfall has direct implications for the labour market. An inadequately educated workforce, often equipped with skills misaligned with the demands of modern industries, constrains economic transformation. The result is a severe mismatch between labour supply and labour market needs. Today, an estimated twenty-one per cent of African youth are not in employment, education, or training. Moreover, the employment landscape remains overwhelmingly informal, with ninety-seven per cent of total employment in the region classified as informal and approximately sixty per cent concentrated in agriculture.<sup>29</sup>

With digitalisation, agriculture – the largest employer in sub-Saharan Africa – has adapted to the modern age.<sup>30</sup> Internet access in Africa rose from twenty-six per cent in 2019 to

<sup>25</sup> FocusEconomics, The Poorest Countries in the World, FocusEconomics, n.d., <https://www.focus-economics.com/blog/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world/>

<sup>26</sup> World Bank, The State of Learning Poverty: 2023 Update, Washington, DC, February 2023, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/34035a49acb-5700ce8b118aeda81a5cb-0510022023/original/TheStateOfLearningPoverty-Feb2023Update-03-08-23.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> UNESCO, Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education, Paris, 2021, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382577>

<sup>28</sup> World Bank, School enrolment, tertiary, female (% gross), World Development Indicators, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR.FE>

<sup>29</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Sub-Saharan Africa, Geneva, 2024, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Sub-Saharan%20Africa%20GET%20Youth%202024\\_0.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Sub-Saharan%20Africa%20GET%20Youth%202024_0.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Status of Digital Agriculture in Africa, FAO e-Agriculture, Rome, retrieved 19 May 2025, <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1539554>

thirty-six per cent in 2022. Still, this remains low, constraining digital learning and skills.<sup>31</sup>

Challenges in digital infrastructure and skills directly constrain agriculture, exacerbating structural imbalances. As a result, persistent low productivity, income, and upward mobility hold back the region's ability to fully realise its demographic and resource potential.

#### 6.1.2. The EU, through Erasmus+, is building skills in Africa.

Since 2021, Erasmus+ has strengthened its engagement in Africa through targeted programme design and dedicated support mechanisms. The European Commission has introduced a larger ring-fenced budget for Sub-Saharan Africa, additional actions for youth, and closer alignment with the EU *Global Gateway* agenda. Together with simplified administrative procedures, robust evaluation frameworks, and active alumni engagement, these measures have enabled African institutions and learners to participate in Erasmus+ at a scale not previously observed.

In 2025, CBHE supported 48 projects across three thematic strands. Increasingly, Erasmus+ partnerships also involve employers, NGOs, and public authorities, strengthening links between education systems, labour-market needs, and policy priorities.<sup>32</sup> A further 21 CB projects benefitted the VET sector.

The EU's commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa's youth demographic goes further than programme design. Recognising the scale and urgency of skills investment needed for the continent's young population, the EU made an additional injection of €35 million in 2025, specifically to expand Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange opportunities and launch new Capacity Building in the field of Youth projects for the region. This targeted investment generated new projects across both sectors in 2025, with continued funding committed through 2026 and 2027. This mid-programme reinforcement reflects a deliberate policy choice to invest in young Africans not only through formal higher education channels but through non-formal learning, civic engagement, and digital participation at scale.

This financial support is complemented by an enabling ecosystem that includes Erasmus+ National Focal Points and regional co-operation events. Regional seminars and cluster meetings, such as the *2025 gathering in Addis Ababa* which brought together around 150 onsite and 300 online participants, provide guidance on Programme rules and facilitate partnership development. Policy coherence is further reinforced through alignment with EU-funded regional initiatives outside Erasmus+, including the Youth Mobility for Africa Flagship, which reflect AU-EU priorities and support Programme sustainability.

Quality assurance and recognition tools, such as Inter-Institutional Agreements and credit recognition mechanisms, help streamline mobility pathways and reduce risks for participants, supporting employability outcomes. At the same time, Erasmus+ promotes intra-African academic co-operation through the *Youth Mobility for Africa* initiative, which supports Master's, doctoral, and staff mobility within Africa for periods ranging from four to thirty-six months. HAQAA, a specific programme on Quality Assurance across the continent of Africa works on the framework for quality that can further enable mobility and align credit and qualification recognition.

Taken together, these measures illustrate how Erasmus+ and other programmes

<sup>31</sup> World Bank, Digital Development: Overview, World Bank Group, retrieved 19 May 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/digital/overview>

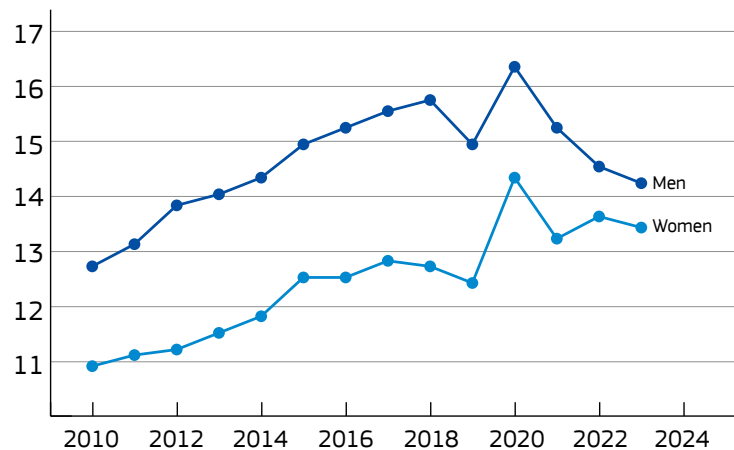
<sup>32</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021–2027: Part B – Key Action 2, Capacity Building in Higher Education, Publications Office of the European Union, n.d., <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/capacity-building-higher-education>

combine targeted funding, policy alignment, and operational support to strengthen skills development, institutional co-operation, and regional integration in Sub-Saharan Africa, while remaining responsive to diverse national and regional contexts.

## 6.2. Asia

Today, Asia comprises over 60% of the global youth population<sup>33</sup>, defined as individuals aged approximately 15 to 24 years, highlighting the region's significant demographic influence. In South Asia,<sup>34 35 36</sup> projections indicate that more than 150 million individuals will enter the labour force by 2030, which is expected to exert considerable pressure on regional labour markets. However, South Asia continues to experience high rates of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET), particularly among women. NEET rates exceed 30% overall, and in some countries, the rate among young women surpasses 40%.<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 5: Youth unemployment rate by sex, Asia and the Pacific, 2010-23 (percentage)**



Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, May 2024.

The primary challenge is twofold. First, it is necessary to enhance employability by advancing skills development, implementing education reform, and providing training that aligns with labour market requirements. Second, there is a need to establish effective pathways to decent and sustainable employment that can accommodate the large influx of youth entrants and address existing gender disparities.

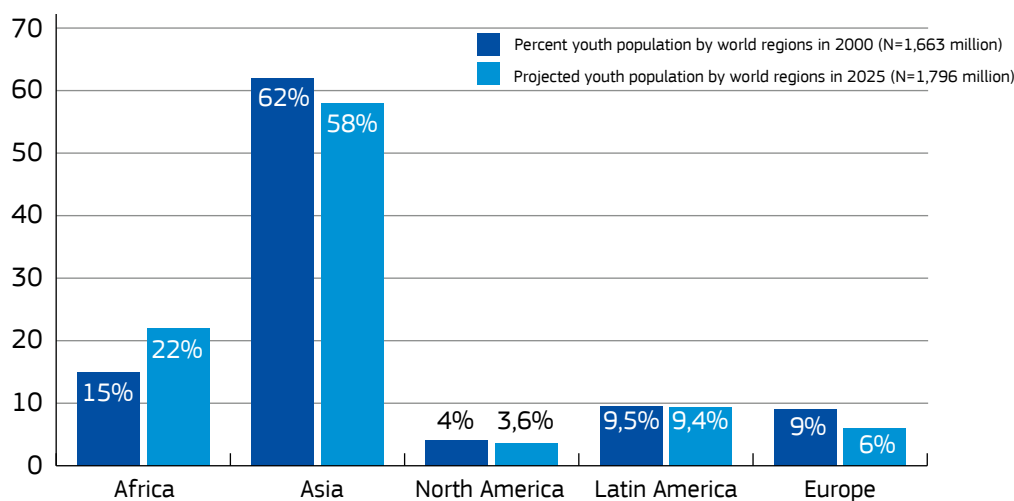
33 UMEME Project, About the Project, Erasmus+ Capacity Building initiative, retrieved 19 May 2025, <https://umemeproject.co.tz/index.php/about-us/>

34 International Monetary Fund (IMF), South Asia's Path to Resilient Growth, Washington, DC, 2022, <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9781513587219/CH003.xml>

35 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2023, Bangkok, 2023, <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2023>

36 World Bank, South Asia Economic Focus: Coping with Shocks, Washington, DC, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/publication/south-asia-economic-focus>

37 International Labour Organization (ILO), Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in Transforming Futures for Young People, Geneva, 2022, <https://www.ilo.org/media/583916/download>

**Figure 6: Youth population by region**

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patreese-Ingram/publication/267547288/figure/fig1/AS:669512953257998@1536635735744/Percent-Youth-Population-Ages-15-24-by-World-Regions.png>

### 6.2.1. The Asia skills development challenge

Economic transformation in Asia - including the rapid industrial upgrading witnessed in China and the accelerating digital growth among Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states - has outpaced developments in many education and training systems.<sup>38 39</sup>

A 2025 survey of employers in the Asia-Pacific region found that 77% report difficulty in filling job vacancies due to skills shortages, particularly in technical and digital domains.<sup>40</sup> Aligning the curricula of vocational and higher education with actual labour market demands remains a significant challenge, as existing education systems often lag behind evolving industry needs.<sup>41 42</sup>

38 Asian Development Bank (ADB), Reaping the Benefits of Industry 4.0 through Skills Development in High-Growth Industries in Southeast Asia, Manila, 2024, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/671711/industry-skills-development-southeast-asia.pdf>

39 Dezan Shira & Associates, Navigating China's Evolving Labour Market in 2025, China Briefing, 18 March 2025, <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/chinas-evolving-labor-market-2025/>

40 ManpowerGroup, Talent Shortage in APAC Persists, with 77% of Employers Facing Challenges in Filling Positions, 6 May 2025, <https://www.manpower.com.sg/en/insights/blogs/2025/05/talent-shortage-in-apac-persists-with-77-percent-of-employers-facing-challenges-in-filling-positions>

41 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), OECD Skills Strategy Southeast Asia: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023, [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/03/oecd-skills-strategy-southeast-asia\\_c50c9e28/923bfd03-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/03/oecd-skills-strategy-southeast-asia_c50c9e28/923bfd03-en.pdf)

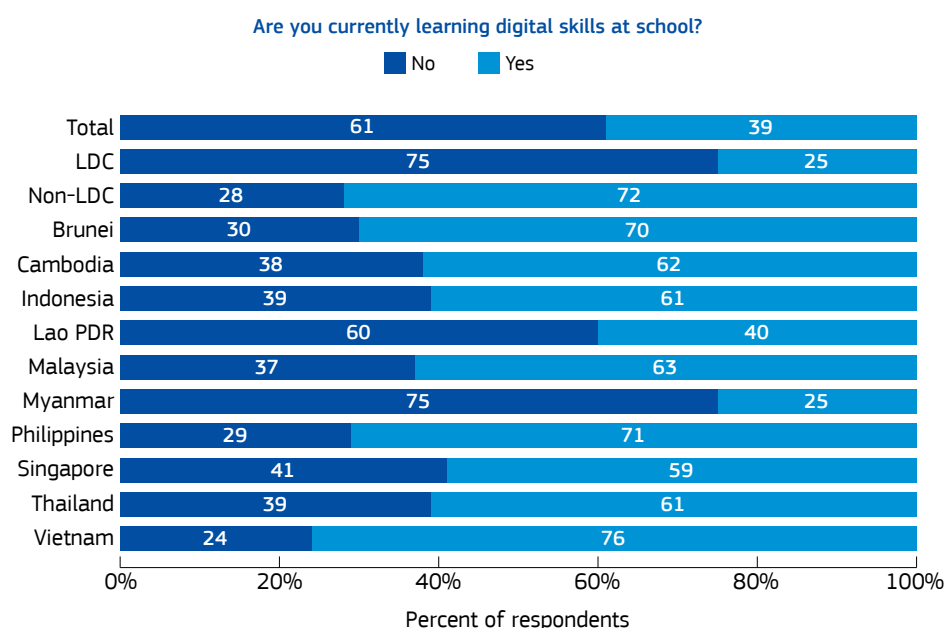
42 ASEAN Secretariat, Regional Report of ASEAN–Republic of Korea Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Co-operation, Jakarta, 2022, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/20220927-0.Regional-Report-1.pdf>

**Figure 7: Top jobs in demand by number of hires, September 2020 - February 2021**

| Australia                    | Indonesia            | India                        | Malaysia            | Philippines          | Singapore                    | USA               |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Project manager              | Graphic designer     | Software engineer            | Software engineer   | Customer service rep | Software engineer            | Software engineer |
| Software engineer            | Marketing specialist | Sales manager                | Admin assistant     | Software engineer    | Project manager              | Real estate agent |
| Business development manager | Software engineer    | System engineer              | Project engineer    | Financial advisor    | Business development manager | Project manager   |
| Business analyst             | Lecturer             | Business development manager | Project manager     | Graphic designer     | Marketing executive          | Salesperson       |
| Account manager              | Sales specialist     | HR executive                 | Marketing executive | Social media manager | Account manager              | Account manager   |

Source: <https://events.development.asia/sites/default/files/materials/2022/10/202210-digital-jobs-and-digital-skills-shifting-landscape-asia-and-pacific.pdf>

Recent forecasts indicate that Asia's digital economy will surpass USD 2 trillion by 2030, primarily due to rapid growth in ASEAN markets and the implementation of new regional frameworks for digital trade and regulation.<sup>43 44</sup> However, both foundational and advanced digital skills remain insufficient.

**Figure 8: Digital literacy education in schools by country (n=8,230)**

Source: [https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7766/file/Digital\\_Literacy\\_in\\_Education\\_Systems\\_Across\\_ASEAN\\_Cover.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7766/file/Digital_Literacy_in_Education_Systems_Across_ASEAN_Cover.pdf)

The growing digital divide risks excluding large segments of the workforce from emerging

43 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience 2024, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 2024, [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ASEAN-AR-2024\\_e-pub\\_web.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ASEAN-AR-2024_e-pub_web.pdf)

44 World Economic Forum, World Economic Forum Predicts a USD 2 Trillion Digital Economy for ASEAN by 2030, 6 August 2024, as reported by Biometric Update, <https://www.biometricupdate.com/202408/world-economic-forum-predicts-2-trillion-digital-economy-for-asean-by-2030>

sectors such as e-commerce, financial technology, and artificial intelligence. Ongoing gender, geographic, and socioeconomic disparities continue to limit access to education and training. In Nepal, barriers such as low educational attainment, household responsibilities, limited financing, and male-dominated decision-making restrict women's participation in TVET institutions.<sup>45</sup> In Pakistan, less than 6% of young people have gained technical skills through formal TVET, and only 2.5% have participated in on-the-job training.<sup>46</sup> Across South Asia, female labour force participation is about 32%, compared to 77% for men, partly due to limited access to training and formal employment.<sup>47</sup> More than 70% of Asia's workforce operates in the informal economy.<sup>48</sup> These workers typically lack access to structured upskilling, reskilling, and social protection. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and flexible skills certification mechanisms are essential for integrating informal workers into formal labour markets.

Efforts to address persistent disparities are constrained by labour market structures. In the Asia-Pacific region, approximately 68% of employed persons are engaged in informal employment, where access to upskilling, reskilling, and social protection is often minimal.<sup>49</sup> In South Asia, micro and small enterprises – many of which operate informally – constitute 80-90% of firms, further highlighting the prevalence of informality in the labour market.<sup>50</sup> Recognition of prior learning (RPL) has emerged as a promising mechanism to validate skills acquired through informal or non-formal means. For example, India's RPL programme, linked to its National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), incorporates pre-assessment, remedial training, and certification to integrate informal sector workers into the formal skills ecosystem, enabling greater economic mobility, recognition, and opportunity for millions previously excluded from formal advancement.<sup>51</sup>

45 Lamichhane, R. H., *Hindering Factors of Female Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nepal*, Centre for the Study of Disability Policy (CSDP), 2014, <https://www.cpsctech.org/2014/07/hindering-factors-of-female.html>

46 International Labour Organization (ILO), *Pakistan Country Skills Profile*, Geneva, 2021, <https://www.skillsforemployment.org/knowledge-product-detail/5424>

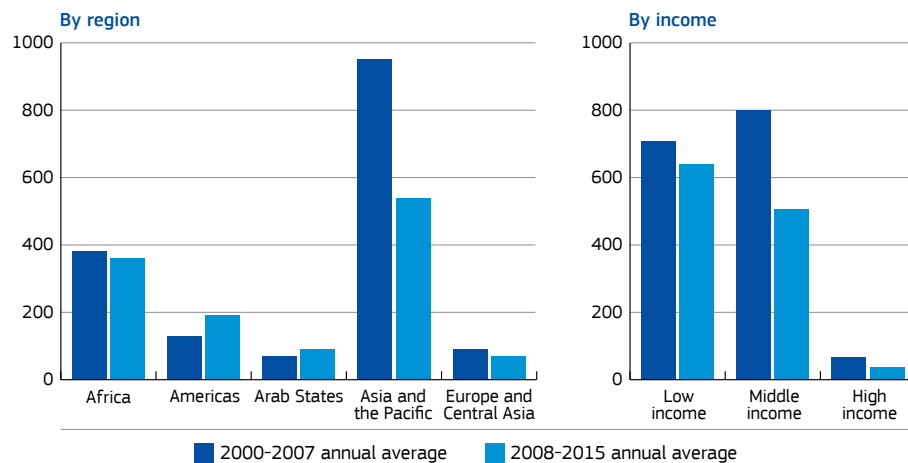
47 World Bank, *Clearing the Path for Women to Work Can Bring Prosperity to South Asia*, 16 October 2024, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_869188.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_869188.pdf)

48 International Labour Organization (ILO), *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Brief*, Geneva, 2022, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_869188.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_869188.pdf)

49 International Labour Organization (ILO), *More Than 68 per Cent of the Employed Population in Asia-Pacific Are in the Informal Economy*, press release, Geneva, 2018, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/more-68-cent-employed-population-asia-pacific-are-informal-economy>

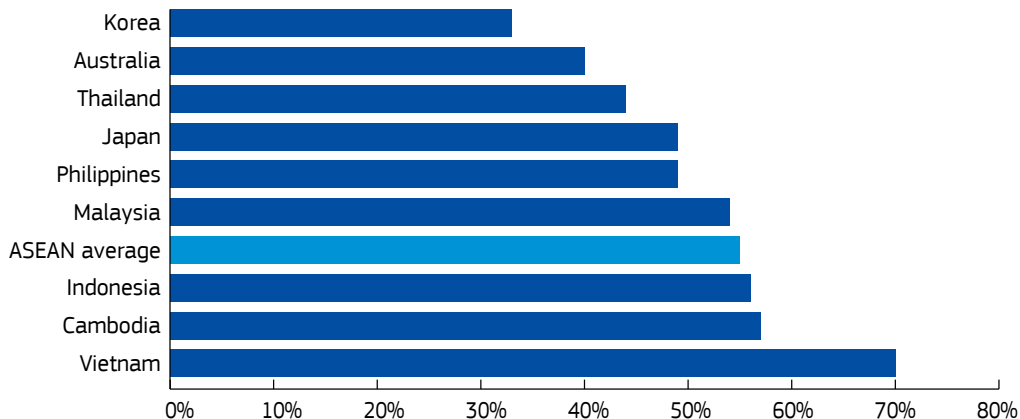
50 Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) / AsiaPathways, *Social Protection for the Informal Economy in South Asia*, Tokyo, August 2024, <https://www.asiopathways-adbi.org/2024/08/social-protection-for-the-informal-economy-in-south-asia/>

51 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), *Case Study: Recognition of Prior Learning for the Informal Sector in India*, Hamburg, 7 December 2023, <https://www UIL.unesco.org/en/articles/case-study-rpl-informal-sector-india>

**Figure 9: Working-life years lost due to disasters 2000-2015 (per 100,000 workers)**

Source: [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_628654.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_628654.pdf)

Asia is widely recognised as the most disaster-prone region globally and remains the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>52</sup> A just green transition could generate approximately 14 million net jobs by 2030, particularly in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and waste management, provided that workers acquire relevant skills. However, the integration of green competencies into TVET and higher education systems remains an urgent policy priority, as readiness across the region is uneven.<sup>53</sup>

**Figure 10: Share of jobs at risk of automation or a probability of significant change (%)**

Source: [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/03/towards-a-skills-strategy-for-southeast-asia\\_f100fd8e/6db0907f-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/03/towards-a-skills-strategy-for-southeast-asia_f100fd8e/6db0907f-en.pdf)

Automation and digitalisation are projected to significantly impact the labour market. Evidence indicates that a large proportion of jobs in Southeast Asia, particularly low-skilled positions, are susceptible to technological substitution.<sup>54</sup> Most education systems in Asia continue to prioritise initial schooling over lifelong learning. Supporting mid-career workforce adaptation requires the implementation of adult reskilling programmes, modular training opportunities, and competency-based learning systems.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Greening with Jobs: World Employment and Social Outlook 2018, Geneva, 2018, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@40dgreports/@40dcomm/@40publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_628654.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@40dgreports/@40dcomm/@40publ/documents/publication/wcms_628654.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Regional Green Jobs Policy Readiness Report, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 2021, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ASEAN-Regional-Green-Jobs-policy-readiness-Report-web.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Towards a Skills Strategy for Southeast Asia, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2021, [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/03/towards-a-skills-strategy-for-southeast-asia\\_f100fd8e/6db0907f-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/03/towards-a-skills-strategy-for-southeast-asia_f100fd8e/6db0907f-en.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> The Asia Foundation, The Future of Work across ASEAN: Insights for Policy-Makers and Business Leaders, San Francisco, 2020, [https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Future-of-Work-Across-ASEAN\\_full.pdf](https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Future-of-Work-Across-ASEAN_full.pdf)

Asia serves as both the largest source and destination for migrant workers. The region accounts for over forty per cent of the world's international migrants, including approximately 19 million Asians employed abroad, many in low-skilled occupations.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, cross-border skills recognition, qualification portability, and enhanced protections for migrant workers are critical challenges for regional labour mobility.

Key priorities for skills development in Asia include expanding access to job-relevant training, strengthening digital and green skills, and improving lifelong learning opportunities. Skills mismatches are prevalent because many graduates do not possess the technical, transversal, and digital competencies required by employers.<sup>57</sup> Persistent inequalities related to gender, geography, and socio-economic status further limit access to quality education and training. High levels of informality in labour markets restrict opportunities for structured upskilling and formal certification. Weak connections between industry and education, particularly in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), intensify these challenges. Common issues include misaligned curricula, limited work-based learning, and insufficient employer involvement. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated reforms in TVET and higher education, stronger public-private partnerships, and enhanced regional co-operation on skills recognition and mobility to ensure that qualifications are recognised across borders.<sup>58</sup>

### 6.2.2. EU, through Erasmus+, Building Skills in Asia

Asia engages with Erasmus+ primarily through Capacity Building in Higher Education, Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters, International Credit Mobility, and Jean Monnet actions. It is important to note at the outset that Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training is not available in Asia.

Within the current 2021–2027 Programme cycle, CBHE engagement in Asia has grown substantially. Between 2021 and 2024, 1,253 International Credit Mobility projects were active in Asia, enabling the organised mobility of approximately 13,500 students, researchers, and staff. Nearly two-thirds of these participants were Asian individuals studying at European universities, reflecting sustained demand for European academic opportunities and the strength of Erasmus+ in facilitating interregional exchange. CBHE projects in the region have addressed curriculum reform, institutional governance, quality assurance, digital transformation, and research capacity across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, supporting universities to engage with international academic standards and build the administrative infrastructure that sustains quality beyond the project period.

Two notable projects, *ASEAN Network for Green Entrepreneurship and Leadership (ANGEL)* and *Smart Textile and Clothing Production (SMARTEX)*, demonstrate how Erasmus+ aligns EU priorities with local development needs in Southeast and South Asia. Collectively, these initiatives underscore the diverse contributions of Erasmus+ to digital transformation, green innovation, entrepreneurship education, applied technical training, and academic internationalisation.

Implemented across Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand, the ANGEL project enhances

<sup>56</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Migration Report 2024, Geneva, 2024, <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-2/international-migrants-numbers-and-trends>

<sup>57</sup> Wickramasinghe, G. L. D.; Wickramasinghe, V., Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Asia: Preparedness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, *Journal of Economic Analysis*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 170–191, 2025, <https://www.anserpress.org/journal/jea/4/1/95/pdf>

<sup>58</sup> TVET-Online, A Thematic Literature Review on Industry–Practice Gaps in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), issue 19, 2022, <https://tvvet-online.asia/19/a-thematic-literature-review-on-industry-practice-gaps-in-tvet/>

institutional capacities in green entrepreneurship and sustainability leadership through collaborative curriculum development, digital learning tools, and regional training programmes. A key milestone was the Training-of-Trainers workshops in Malaysia, which aimed to upskill academic and administrative staff in green-entrepreneurship education. Over 80% of participants expressed overall satisfaction, demonstrating ANGEL's effectiveness in delivering relevant and high-quality capacity-building interventions. This outcome highlights the project's pedagogical impact and its role in strengthening sustainability-oriented teaching and leadership competencies within ASEAN institutions.

The SMARTEX project, implemented in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan, demonstrates how Erasmus+ supports innovation and institutional modernisation in applied sciences and technical education. Focusing on the textile sector, the project updated textile engineering and textile technology curricula to reflect Industry 4.0 developments, including automation, digital textile design, advanced manufacturing, and smart materials. At Politeknik STTT Bandung, three undergraduate courses were substantially revised, supported by the development of 11 English-language modules and the translation of 29 additional modules related to smart textiles and digital manufacturing. The project also strengthened research and training infrastructure through the acquisition of specialised laboratory equipment and supported student internships with industry and European partner institutions.

[\*Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters \(EMJM\)\*](#) programmes have provided students across Asia with access to advanced, interdisciplinary training aligned to specific professional fields and the competency profiles that employers in those fields require. The 2025 Erasmus+ Asia factsheet reports that over 7,500 Asian students have participated in Erasmus Mundus since its inception, making this one of the largest regional cohorts globally. Graduates returning to their home countries bring with them field-specific expertise, the analytical capacity to work across disciplinary and institutional boundaries, and professional networks spanning multiple countries and sectors. These are not simply academic credentials; they reflect the kind of tailored professional formation that Erasmus Mundus is specifically designed to deliver.

In addition, the [\*OPEN-ASIA\*](#) project, launched in 2024, aims to promote the adoption of open science principles within higher education institutions in South and Southeast Asia, working with partners including Universiti Malaya, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, NMIMS, and Thapar Institute to advance digital research infrastructure and support policy reforms in open research. Through these coordinated interventions, OPEN-ASIA is expected to increase research transparency, accessibility, and cross-border collaboration.

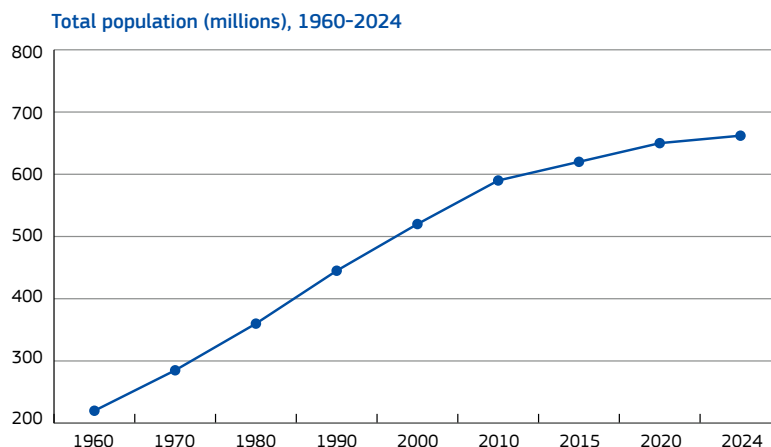
Since 2021, Jean Monnet actions in Asia have expanded considerably, demonstrating a growing institutional commitment to EU-focused teaching, interdisciplinary research, and public engagement across the region. Jawaharlal Nehru University in India established the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for European Union Studies, which organises conferences, policy dialogues, and research initiatives on EU-India relations and comparative regionalism. The Manipal Academy of Higher Education sustained its Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence after 2021, providing one of Asia's few structured pathways for postgraduate training in European Studies. In the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University received the country's first Jean Monnet Chair in 2024, formalising EU-focused teaching and supporting the publication of EU and ASEAN [\*"Regionalism: An Interdisciplinary Approach"\*](#). In East Asia, the 2022 relaunch of the Jean Monnet EU Centre of Excellence at Korea University renewed its focus on the EU-Korea sustainable development partnership.

Together, these activities develop the specialist analytical and policy knowledge that academics, policymakers, and practitioners need to engage substantively with the EU as a political, economic, and regulatory actor in the Asia-Pacific region.

### 6.3. Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has a population of nearly 650 million, positioning it as a demographically significant region within the Global South. The region experiences a demographic paradox: a substantial youth population entering the labour force coincides with rapid fertility decline and population ageing in certain countries.<sup>59</sup> The population of the region remains relatively young, with approximately twenty per cent aged 15 to 24 years. This youth cohort offers the potential for a demographic dividend if integrated into productive, high-quality employment.<sup>60</sup> However, declining fertility rates are slowing labour force growth, and countries such as Chile and Uruguay are already experiencing accelerated population ageing.<sup>61</sup> Although employment creation has remained steady, persistent informality, low productivity, and structural reliance on commodity exports limit long-term economic growth. Concurrently, technological change, climate change, and migration are transforming labour markets. Examining the interaction between demographic trends and employment patterns is essential for developing policies that promote sustainable, high-quality employment.

**Figure 11: Latin America and the Caribbean Population**



Source: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>

#### 6.3.1. The Latin America and Caribbean skills development challenge

Skills development in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) remains a persistent challenge and a strategic opportunity for sustainable growth and social inclusion. Although access to education has expanded, significant barriers hinder the development of a productive and resilient workforce prepared for digital and green transitions. An immediate challenge is recovering foundational learning. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing

<sup>59</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Latin American Economic Outlook 2024, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2024, [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2024/12/latin-american-economic-outlook-2024\\_60523697/full-report/overview\\_b80bea0f.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2024/12/latin-american-economic-outlook-2024_60523697/full-report/overview_b80bea0f.html)

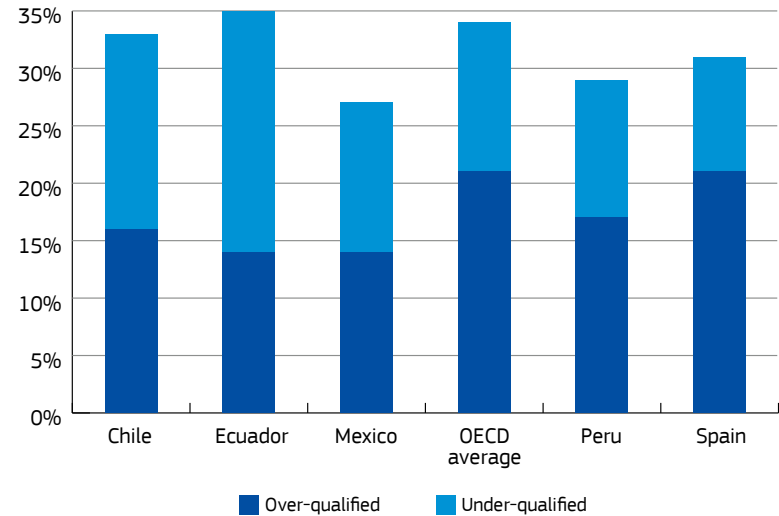
<sup>60</sup> World Bank, Regional Overview: Latin America and the Caribbean, World Bank Group, 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/lac/overview>

<sup>61</sup> Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 2025 Latin American and Caribbean Macroeconomic Report: Regional Opportunities amid Global Shifts, Washington, DC, 2025, <https://publications.idb.org/publications/english/document/2025-Latin-American-and-Caribbean-Macroeconomic-Report-Regional-Opportunities-Amid-Global-Shifts.pdf>

deficits in literacy and numeracy, resulting in four out of five children being unable to read and comprehend a simple text by age ten.<sup>62 63</sup> Failure to address this crisis jeopardises the development of advanced skills, employability, and overall productivity.

Reducing informality and improving job quality is vital. In mid-2024, the region's informal employment rate stood at 47.6%, nearly half of the region's workers. This marks a modest but noteworthy improvement from 48.0% in 2023 and 48.8% in 2019. Informality discourages investment in skills, weakening LAC's human capital. The gradual decline suggests incremental progress reflecting both policy efforts and evolving labour-market dynamics across the region.<sup>64</sup>

**Figure 12: Qualifications mismatches between 16 to 34 year old workers**



Source: [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america\\_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf)

The persistence of skills mismatches constitutes another major challenge. Employers throughout LAC consistently report difficulties in recruiting workers with appropriate competencies. Insufficient alignment between education systems and labour markets results in graduates whose qualifications often fail to meet labour market demands, particularly in technical and vocational sectors.<sup>65 66</sup> Strengthening skills anticipation, work-based learning, and qualification frameworks is essential.

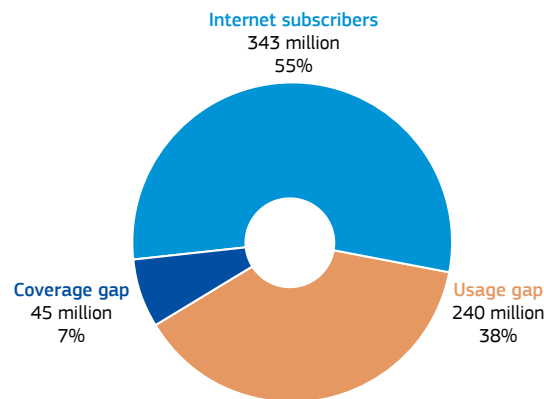
62 World Bank, Four in Five Children in Latin America and the Caribbean Will Not Be Able to Understand a Simple Written Text, press release, 23 June 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/23/education-latin-america>

63 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Accelerate Foundational Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Panama City, 2023, [https://www.unicef.org/lac/sites/unicef.org/lac/files/2023-08/28\\_08\\_23\\_Accelerate%20Foundational%20Learning%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/lac/sites/unicef.org/lac/files/2023-08/28_08_23_Accelerate%20Foundational%20Learning%20FINAL.pdf)

64 International Labour Organization (ILO), Labour Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean 2024: Executive Summary, Geneva, 12 February 2025, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/PL%202024\\_english\\_ExecutiveSummary\\_Embargoed\\_.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/PL%202024_english_ExecutiveSummary_Embargoed_.pdf)

65 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Skills in Latin America, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023, [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america\\_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf)

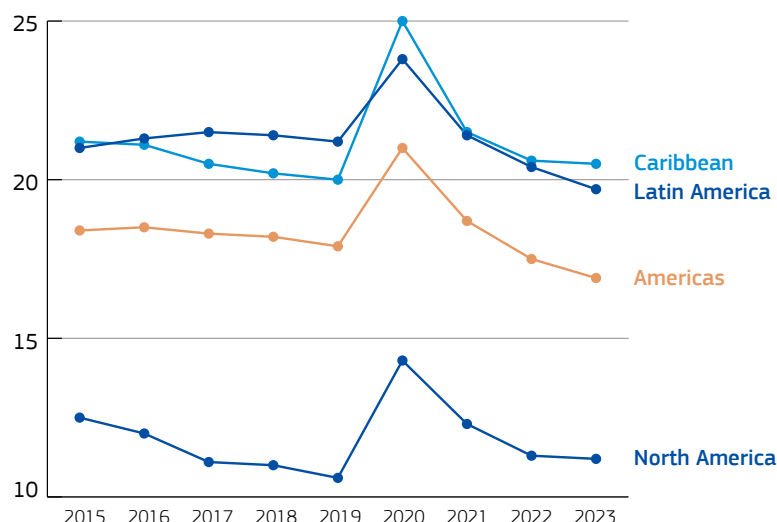
66 Prada, M. F.; Ripani, L.; Robalino, D.; et al., Skills for Work in Latin America and the Caribbean: Unlocking Talent for a Sustainable and Equitable Future, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, 2023, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Skills-for-Work-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Unlocking-Talent-for-a-Sustainable-and-Equitable-Future.pdf>

**Figure 13: Gaps in Internet coverage and use persist in LAC**

Source: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0f4d6df3-bfa2-48fd-b12f-80581ca89f4b/content>

Digital transformation introduces additional complexity. Despite widespread mobile access, LAC experiences significant deficits in basic and intermediate digital skills as well as ongoing connectivity gaps.<sup>67 68</sup> Improved infrastructure and expanded lifelong learning opportunities are necessary for workers and learners to succeed in digital economies.<sup>69</sup>

Low and volatile economic growth further exacerbates these challenges by limiting fiscal capacity for public investment in training and diminishing firms' incentives to upskill their workforce. Regional growth is projected to remain at approximately 2.2% in 2024 and 2.4% in 2025, which is insufficient to achieve broad-based prosperity.<sup>70</sup> Addressing productivity constraints is therefore integral to advancing effective skills policies.

**Figure 14: Youth NEET (Neither in employment, education or training) rates by Americas region and subregions, 2025-2023 (percentage)**

Source: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/TheAmericasGETYouthBrief2024.pdf>

67 Enciso, S. S., Digital Skills (Skills for Life Series), Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, 2024, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Skills-for-Life-Series-Digital-Skills.pdf>

68 World Bank, Digital Solutions Can Fuel Growth, Inclusion and Better Public Services in Latin America and the Caribbean, press release, 4 October 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/10/04/conectividad-digital-impulsa-crecimiento-inclusion-perspectivas-america-latino-caribe>

69 Phillips, P. A.; Bianchi, C.; Brenes, E. R.; Moutinho, L.; Salhi, S., Latin America and the Caribbean Economy: A Growth Agenda, Journal of Business Research, 2024, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0f4d6df3-bfa2-48fd-b12f-80581ca89f4b/content>

70 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2024 (LC/PUB.2024/27-P/Rev.1), United Nations, Santiago, 2025.

Youth transitions into the labour market present an additional structural challenge. Approximately one in five young people in LAC is classified as not in employment, education, or training (NEET), with young women nearly twice as likely as young men to be.<sup>71</sup> Targeted measures, including career guidance, second-chance education, and childcare services, are necessary to address these gender-specific barriers.

The region also lacks comprehensive lifelong learning systems. Modular, competency-based training, particularly for workers in small and medium-sized enterprises or those in informal employment, remains limited in both scale and effectiveness.<sup>72 73</sup> This deficiency restricts adults' ability to adapt to labour markets influenced by automation, globalisation, and the green transition.

The transition to a low-carbon economy presents both risks and opportunities. Decarbonisation has the potential to generate millions of jobs, contingent on workers acquiring relevant green skills in sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and energy efficiency.<sup>74 75</sup> Achieving a just transition in LAC will require coordinated investments in education, training, and reskilling.

A cross-cutting challenge is the weakness of skills governance and data systems. Many countries lack integrated frameworks for anticipating skills, ensuring credential transparency, and recognising prior learning.<sup>76 77</sup> These deficiencies undermine the targeting and accountability of skills investments, thereby limiting their effectiveness and reach.

### 6.3.2. EU, through Erasmus+, building skills in Latin America and the Caribbean

Erasmus+ has served as a catalyst for capacity building, innovation, and employability throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 2021, a total of 936 Erasmus+ bilateral partnership projects with Latin America and the Caribbean have facilitated academic mobility for approximately 7,214 students and staff, reflecting the Programme's sustained commitment to interregional exchange and capacity building.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters programme has served as one of the primary instruments through which Erasmus+ develops the field-specific, professionally relevant competency sets that graduates in the region need. According to the European Commission's *20 Years of Erasmus Mundus report*, nearly 50,000 students have participated in Erasmus Mundus programmes globally, with 18 per cent originating from Latin America, the largest proportion from any non-European region. Brazil accounted for approximately 1,544 students and Mexico for 1,357, ranking among the top sending countries worldwide.

71 International Labour Organization (ILO), Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 – The Americas, brief, Geneva, August 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/The%20Americas%20GET%20Youth%20Brief%202024.pdf>

72 Development (OECD), Skills in Latin America, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023, [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america\\_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf)

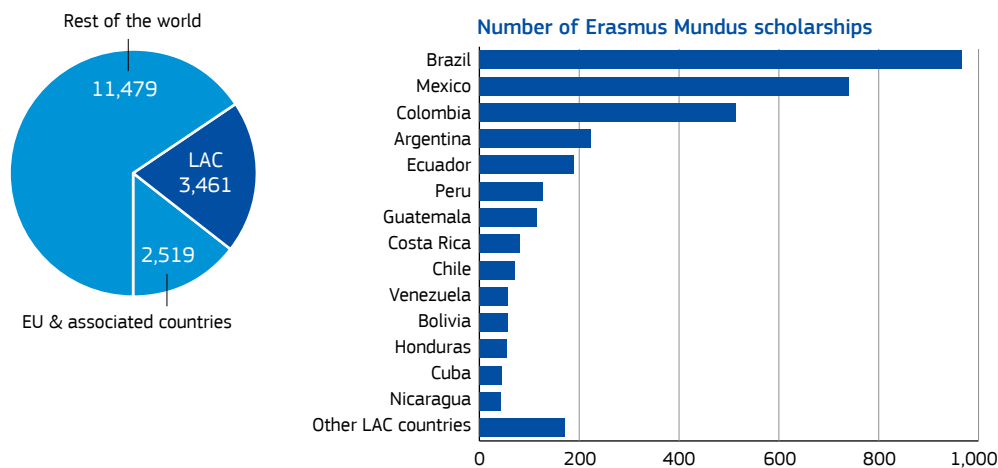
73 Prada, M. F.; Ripani, L.; Robalino, D.; et al., Skills for Work in Latin America and the Caribbean: Unlocking Talent for a Sustainable and Equitable Future, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, 2023, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Skills-for-Work-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Unlocking-Talent-for-a-Sustainable-and-Equitable-Future.pdf>

74 H Hasanbeigi, A., A Roadmap Framework for Industrial Decarbonization in Latin America and the Caribbean, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, 2024, <https://publications.iadb.org/en/roadmap-framework-industrial-decarbonization-latin-america-and-caribbean>

75 International Labour Organization (ILO), Green Jobs: An Opportunity for Women in Latin America, executive summary, Geneva, 25 July 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/green-jobs-opportunity-women-latin-america-executive-summary>

76 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Skills in Latin America, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023, [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america\\_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/05/skills-in-latin-america_b493e1f5/5ab893f0-en.pdf)

77 Prada, M. F.; Ripani, L.; Robalino, D.; et al., Skills for Work in Latin America and the Caribbean: Unlocking Talent for a Sustainable and Equitable Future, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, 2023, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Skills-for-Work-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Unlocking-Talent-for-a-Sustainable-and-Equitable-Future.pdf>

**Figure 15: Erasmus Mundus scholarships awarded to Master students in LAC, 2014-2022**

Source: [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-07/factsheet-erasmusplus-celac-2023\\_en.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-07/factsheet-erasmusplus-celac-2023_en.pdf)

The skills outcomes of this participation are well documented. Graduate surveys consistently report strong rates of employment in roles directly related to the field of study, typically within three to six months of completing the programme. Graduates report gains in the analytical, technical, and interpersonal competencies demanded by complex, knowledge-intensive professional environments, alongside the capacity to work across multicultural and multinational teams. The institutional dimension is equally significant: between 2014 and 2022, universities from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico participated as full or associated partners in numerous joint masters' consortia, with LAC higher-education and research organisations appearing as associated partners 331 times across 21 countries. This sustained institutional engagement reflects a recognised return on investment: Erasmus Mundus produces graduates whose field-specific profiles and professional networks are valued by employers and institutions in the region and internationally.

CBHE plays a pivotal role in addressing the pressing skills development challenges faced by Latin America and the Caribbean. By fostering multi-country partnerships among higher education institutions, the programme advances the modernisation of curricula and promotes quality assurance mechanisms that align with both regional and global labour market demands. CBHE initiatives facilitate the creation of practice-oriented learning environments that bridge academic, industrial, and community sectors, enhancing institutional governance, teaching innovation, and the employability and entrepreneurial capacities of graduates.

One example of regional Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and digital capacity building is the [Latin American Alliance for Capacity Building in Advanced Physics \(LA-CoNGA Physics\)](#), an Erasmus+ initiative that connects universities in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela with European partners including Université Paris Cité, supported by organisations such as CERN, CNRS, DESY, and ICTP. The project advances open science, digital literacy, and collaborative learning. Since 2020, it has delivered over 100 lectures to 67 students from four countries, with participation rising to around 90 in 2022. The Co-Afina Open Data Hackathons have grown steadily, with 80 participants from over 40 universities in 2024, and CAEN-based electronic laboratories have been established in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

The [CODICIS](#) project addressed specialised skills in cultural heritage preservation.

Conducted from 2021 to 2024 with a European Union grant of €868,383, and uniting institutions from Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru, it established six specialised laboratories for conservation and digitisation at partner universities. The principal training programme provided 145 hours of technical and theoretical instruction to 65 professionals, 49 of whom met all requirements for graduation. Through a cascade training model, participants delivered five regional pilot courses, establishing lasting institutional capacity in a field where professional training infrastructure had previously been absent, including the first documentary conservation laboratory in southern Peru.

**Figure 16:** Number of students who have completed the training course (per participating higher education institution).

|                                        | UCSP | UDEP | UP | BUAP | UCB | UMSA | Total |
|----------------------------------------|------|------|----|------|-----|------|-------|
| Students who attended the programme    | 14   | 10   | 10 | 10   | 11  | 10   | 65    |
| Graduates (met all three requirements) | 9    | 8    | 10 | 10   | 6   | 6    | 49    |

Source: <https://www.codicis.org/wp-content/uploads/libro-codicis-formacion-patrimonio-bibliografico-documental-version-digital.pdf>

The [SUS-TER](#) project fostered inclusive territorial development by creating the new professional profile of the “Territorial Enhancer”, linking academic curricula with rural development, biodiversity, and heritage valorisation. From 2020 to 2023, it established a transatlantic network connecting European and Latin American universities and developed an interdisciplinary course on territorial revitalisation that was subsequently institutionalised within partner institutions. Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training has also been extended to Latin America and the Caribbean in the current programme cycle. The [METAVET](#) project modernised curricula in the metal and energy sectors in Paraguay and Argentina, mapping labour-market needs, updating courses, and enhancing VET provider-industry partnerships. The [STOREM](#) project introduced new master’s programmes in sustainable tourism and environmental management in Barbados, Colombia, and Costa Rica, with the Universidad del Magdalena in Colombia receiving Ministry approval for a new master’s programme directly based on STOREM outputs.

Jean Monnet actions in Latin America and the Caribbean develop analytical and policy competency in EU studies, with practical professional relevance for academics, diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners whose work involves EU institutions, trade agreements, development frameworks, and international co-operation. Between 2014 and 2022, higher education institutions in the region implemented 50 Jean Monnet projects across eight countries. The Jean Monnet Chair at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador, focused on democratic governance and EU election observation, illustrates the kind of professional impact these actions can generate: since December 2022 it has trained over 500 national election observers, strengthening employability in governance-related professions and contributing to democratic practice in the country. These are field-specific, professionally applicable outcomes, and they are what Jean Monnet is designed to produce when it is implemented at institutions with a clear mandate and engaged academic leadership.

## 6.4. Pacific

The Pacific region encompasses a diverse group of countries and territories, including small island developing states (SIDS) across Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, as well as Australia and New Zealand, which differ significantly in terms of economic structure, institutional capacity, and labour-market maturity. While Australia and New Zealand are high-income economies with well-developed education and training systems, strong research ecosystems, and diversified labour markets, Pacific Island countries face more acute demographic, geographic, and economic constraints. These differences shape distinct patterns of engagement with skills development and international co-operation across the region.

In the Pacific Island countries, geographic isolation, small and dispersed populations, limited economic diversification, and high exposure to climate-related risks significantly influence job creation and workforce development. Many of these states have youthful and fast-growing populations, creating both opportunities and sustained pressure for strategic investment in skills, economic diversification, and governance. Population sizes vary considerably, ranging from fewer than 20,000 people in Tuvalu to more than nine million in Papua New Guinea. In several countries, urbanisation levels remain low; in Papua New Guinea, for example, only around 14% of the population lives in urban areas, with a large share of livelihoods dependent on subsistence agriculture.<sup>78</sup>

Within this heterogeneous regional context, Erasmus+ engagement reflects differentiated needs and capacities. Co-operation with Pacific Island countries primarily focuses on capacity building, digital co-operation, and institutional resilience, while engagement with Australia and New Zealand often takes the form of academic co-operation, mobility, and participation in Erasmus Mundus and research-linked education initiatives. Together, these forms of engagement support regional connectivity, skills development, and knowledge exchange across a Pacific region characterised by both structural diversity and shared transnational challenges.

The Pacific region includes many small island developing states (SIDS) across Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. These areas face unique demographic and economic challenges. Geographic isolation, small and dispersed populations, limited economic diversification, and climate vulnerability shape the region's capacity to create sustainable jobs. The region has a youthful population. This brings both opportunities and pressure for strategic investment in skills, economic diversification, and governance.

Pacific Island countries (PICs) vary widely in population size, from fewer than 20,000 people in Tuvalu to over nine million in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Most states experience relatively high population growth and youth bulges, which create significant demand for employment opportunities.<sup>79</sup> Urbanisation remains low in several countries; in PNG, for instance, only about 14% of the population resides in urban areas, with the majority engaged in subsistence agriculture.

<sup>78</sup> Dahal, S.; Gaspar, R.; Schellekens, P., Update of the 2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 13 March 2024, [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/2024\\_rhdr\\_update\\_-\\_march\\_1368.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/2024_rhdr_update_-_march_1368.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Population Division; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Population and Development Report No. 17, United Nations, 2024, [https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org/development/desa/pd/files/undesa\\_pd\\_2024\\_escap-report-population-development-17.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org/development/desa/pd/files/undesa_pd_2024_escap-report-population-development-17.pdf)

Figure 17: Unemployment rate, total and youth, latest available year, percentage

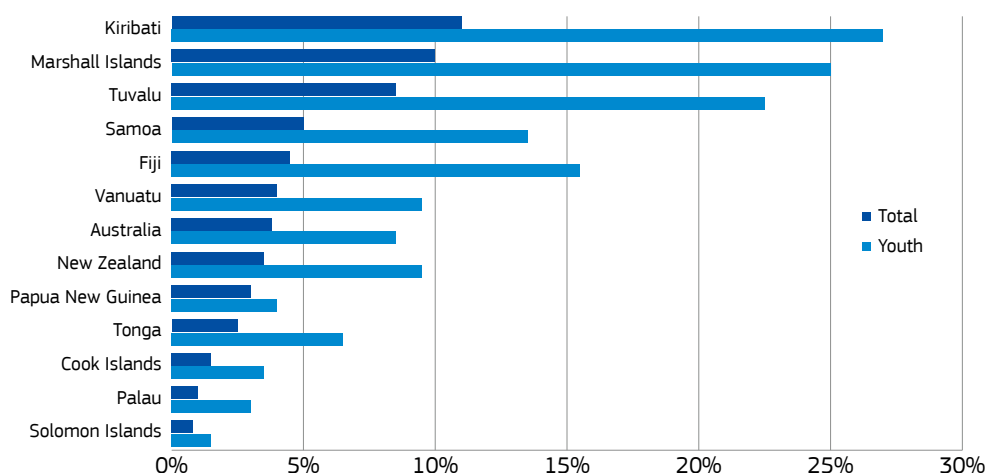
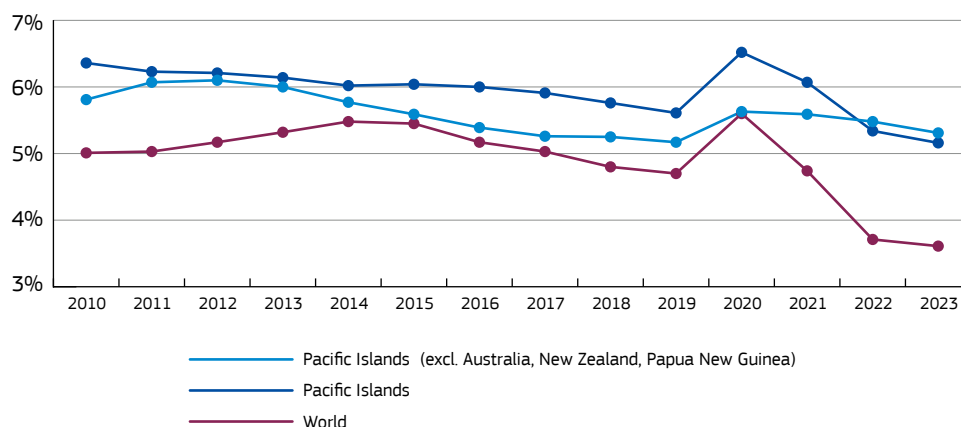


Figure 18: Unemployment rate, percentage



Source: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/pacific-employment-social-monitor-brief-2024-april-en.pdf>

Employment in the Pacific is characterised by high informality, youth underemployment, and dependence on labour mobility schemes. Many citizens engage in subsistence activities or informal trade, with limited access to social protection or stable wages.<sup>80</sup> Young people, in particular, face restricted opportunities in formal labour markets, resulting in the underutilisation of skills and, in many cases, outward migration.

To ensure sustainable employment in the coming decades, Pacific countries must invest in three key areas: human capital, economic diversification, and effective governance. Education and training systems should match emerging labour market demands. Emphasise technical and vocational education (TVET), digital skills, and lifelong learning. These reforms address skills gaps and prepare workers for green and digital transitions.<sup>81</sup>

Second, economic diversification is critical. Pacific countries can capitalise on opportunities in renewable energy, sustainable aquaculture, marine biotechnology, and digital services, while also enhancing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through improved financing and business development services. Investments in infrastructure – particularly

80 UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Asia-Pacific Region: TVET Country Profiles, UNESCO, 2025, <https://atlas.unevoc.unesco.org/asia-pacific>

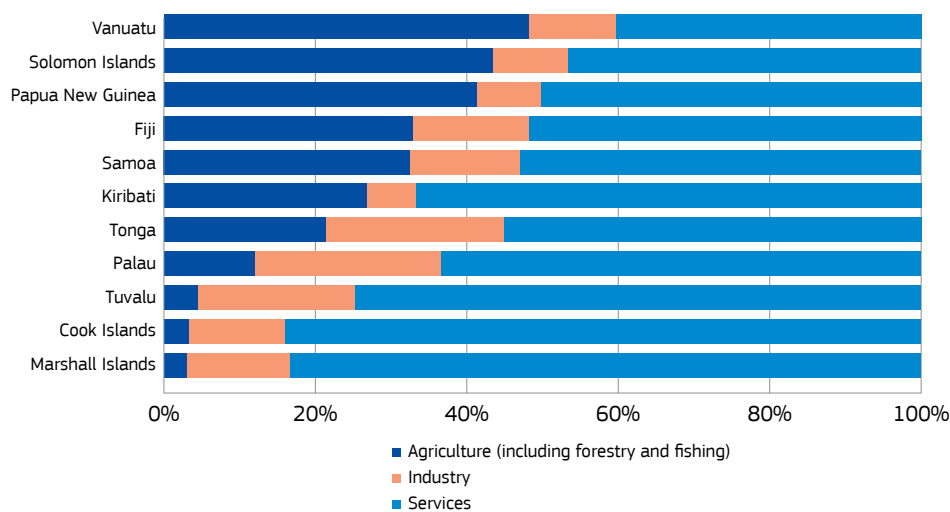
81 International Labour Organization (ILO), Pacific Employment and Social Monitor: Brief 2024, Geneva, April 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/pacific-employment-social-monitor-brief-2024-april-en.pdf>

digital connectivity and renewable energy – would further reduce the costs of doing business and unlock new industries.<sup>82</sup>

#### 6.4.1. The Pacific Region Skills Development Challenge

Skills development is a critical factor for sustainable growth, social inclusion, and resilience in the Pacific region. The unique geographic, demographic, and economic features of Pacific Island countries (PICs) shape their main needs. These characteristics also underlie the challenges faced in building effective skills ecosystems.

**Figure 19: Composition of total employment by broad sector, latest available year, percentage**



Source: <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/pacific-employment-social-monitor-brief-2024-april-en.pdf>

Aligning training programmes with labour market demand is a primary need. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems often produce graduates whose qualifications do not match employer requirements. This is especially true in key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and fisheries.<sup>83</sup> Employers need both technical skills and general workplace abilities. These include communication, critical thinking, punctuality, and professionalism. To address this skills mismatch, industry and training providers must collaborate in a structured manner.

Expanding equitable access to training remains a significant need, particularly for individuals residing in remote and rural areas. Geographic dispersion, high connectivity costs, and poor infrastructure create uneven access to quality education and training.<sup>84</sup> Marginalised groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and those in informal jobs need targeted support. These efforts can help skills initiatives promote inclusive growth.<sup>85</sup>

Strengthening the capacity of institutions and trainers is also essential. Numerous Pacific training centres lack qualified instructors, current curricula, and modern equipment, which

<sup>82</sup> World Bank, Pacific Islands: Regional Overview, World Bank Group, 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pacificislands/overview>

<sup>83</sup> Asian Development Bank. (2008). Skilling the Pacific: Technical and vocational education and training in the Pacific. ADB. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29484/skilling-pacific.pdf>

<sup>84</sup> UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report 2024 – Pacific: Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?, UNESCO Publishing, Paris, 2024, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391211>

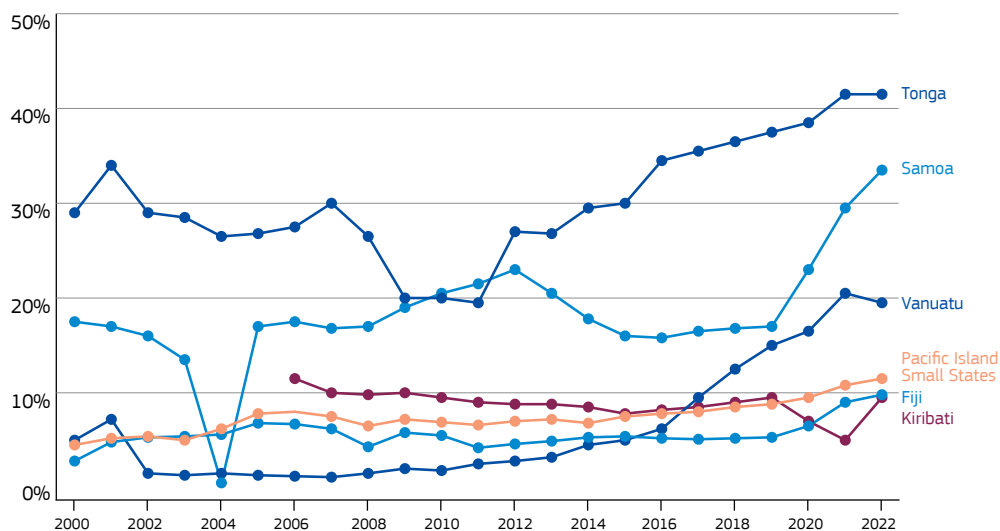
<sup>85</sup> UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Skills Development in Asia and the Pacific, UNESCO, n.d., <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Skills%2BDevelopment%2Bin%2BAsia%2BAnd%2Bthe%2BPacific>

diminishes the quality and relevance of training. Upgrading laboratories, workshops, and digital infrastructure is required to deliver contemporary training programmes. Fiscal constraints faced by governments highlight the importance of sustainable financing mechanisms, including public–private partnerships and diversified funding sources.<sup>86</sup>

Equally important is the recognition and mobility of skills. With limited domestic labour markets, many PICs rely on overseas employment opportunities for economic sustainability. This requires qualifications that are portable and recognised across borders, supported by robust national qualifications frameworks and systems for validating non-formal and informal learning.<sup>87</sup> In addition, as climate change and digitalisation reshape economies, there is an urgent need to integrate green skills and digital competencies into education and training systems to prepare workers for new forms of employment.<sup>88</sup>

Persistent challenges persist in blocking progress in Pacific skills development. Structural constraints, such as small populations and remote locations, create low economies of scale. They also make specialised training more expensive.<sup>89</sup> Weak labour market information makes it hard for policymakers to match training with job demand.<sup>90</sup>

**Figure 20: Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)**



Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?end=2022&locations=S2-FJ-TO-WS-VU-KI&start=2000>

Retention of skilled workers presents an additional challenge. Many Pacific Island countries experience substantial brain drain as trained professionals migrate in search of better wages and career opportunities abroad.<sup>91</sup> This migration diminishes the local return on investments in education and training. At the institutional level, fragmentation

<sup>86</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Future of Work for the Pacific Islands, ILO, Geneva, 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms\\_553880.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_553880.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Future of Work for the Pacific Islands, p.9, 33, ILO, Geneva, 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms\\_553880.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_553880.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Future of Work for the Pacific Islands, p.18, ILO, Geneva, 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms\\_553880.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_553880.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> World Bank, Well-Being from Work in the Pacific Island Countries, World Bank Group, Washington, DC, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/EAP/Pacific%20Islands/Well-being-Work-Pacific-Island.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Future of Work for the Pacific Islands, p.6-8, ILO, Geneva, 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms\\_553880.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_553880.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Future of Work for the Pacific Islands, ILO, Geneva, 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms\\_553880.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40Asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_553880.pdf)

and insufficient coordination among ministries, training providers, and industries reduce system effectiveness.<sup>92</sup> Persistent equity concerns persist, as women often have limited opportunities to participate in technical training, and cultural norms may restrict their access to specific occupations.<sup>93</sup>

Skills development in the Pacific is driven by the need to equip citizens for domestic labour markets and enable regional and international mobility. Key recommendations include reforming systems to improve access, quality, financing, and industry linkages; addressing challenges such as remoteness, brain drain, and institutional weaknesses; and targeting interventions to close skills gaps. These actions are crucial for preventing rising inequality and unlocking the region's potential for inclusive and sustainable growth.

#### 6.4.2. EU, through Erasmus+, Building Skills in the Pacific

The Pacific region represents one of the more modest areas of Erasmus+ engagement in terms of project volume and budget. This is a reflection of the region's geography, population size, and the limited number of eligible actions rather than any absence of intent. CBVET is not available in the Pacific, and the Programme's footprint is primarily shaped by International Credit Mobility (ICM), Jean Monnet, and a small number of Capacity Building in Higher Education projects. Within those constraints, Erasmus+ has made targeted contributions to skills development and institutional capacity that are worth documenting clearly and without overstatement.

In the Pacific Island countries, ICM has supported direct Europe-Pacific links in higher education. The University of the South Pacific (USP) undertook Erasmus+ mobility to the University of Tartu in Estonia to strengthen co-operation in tourism and hospitality education, with a focus on improving internship management and enhancing students' employability in an area central to Pacific economies. A further ICM partnership between USP and AGH University of Science and Technology in Poland advanced staff skills in engineering and technology, contributing to the institution's internationalisation agenda and building STEM teaching capacity.

Within Capacity Building in Higher Education, a small number of projects have engaged Pacific institutions directly. These projects have focused on institutional governance, curriculum development, and academic co-operation, supporting universities to engage with international standards and expand their international networks, both of which are significant given the geographic constraints Pacific institutions face.

Jean Monnet actions have made a proportionally significant contribution to skills development in the region, particularly in the areas of policy analysis, governance literacy, and research capacity. The EU-Indo-Pacific Jean Monnet Network at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, involves 28 universities across 19 countries and develops structured foresight tools and research training for early-career scholars in policy analysis. The Jean Monnet Sustainable Development Goals Network, led by RMIT University in Australia, supports SDG-aligned planning through a seminar series, briefing papers, and research workshops for graduate and early-career scholars. The Jean Monnet Chair in Trade and Environment at the University of Adelaide introduces specialised teaching on EU

<sup>92</sup> Asian Development Bank. (2008). *Skilling the Pacific: Technical and vocational education and training in the Pacific*. ADB. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29484/skilling-pacific.pdf>

<sup>93</sup> The Asia Foundation. (2021). *The future of work for women in the Pacific Islands*. The Asia Foundation. <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Future-of-Work-for-Women-in-the-Pacific-Islands.pdf>

trade and environmental policy, with professional development workshops that strengthen regulatory literacy in areas directly relevant to Pacific export economies, including carbon border adjustment mechanisms and sustainable supply chains.

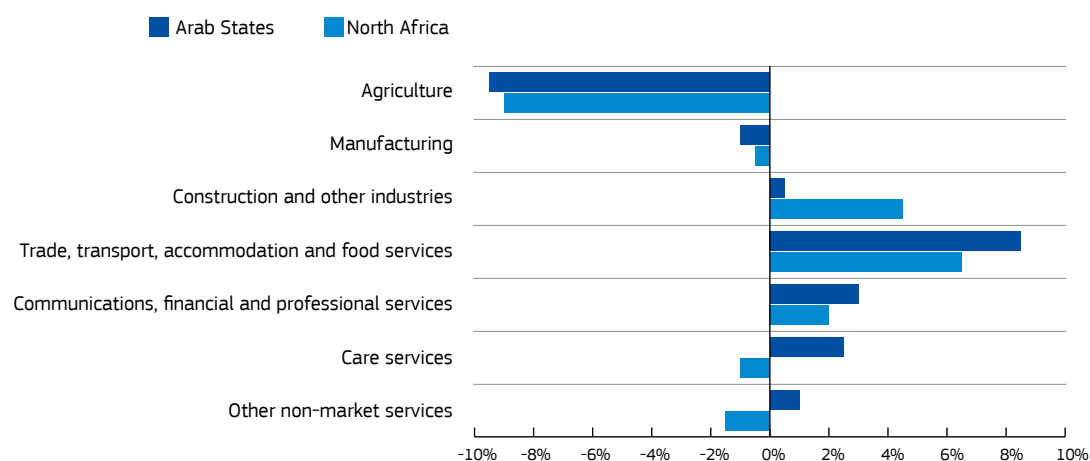
These initiatives demonstrate that even within a modest budget envelope, Erasmus+ can contribute meaningfully to the development of analytical and professional capacities that are genuinely scarce and genuinely needed in the Pacific region.

## 6.5. Middle East

The Middle East confronts significant difficulties in converting demographic trends into sustainable employment opportunities. The region possesses one of the youngest populations globally, with individuals under 25 years old constituting nearly half of the population in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq.<sup>94</sup> While this demographic structure offers the potential for economic growth, inadequate job creation may result in increased social and economic exclusion.

Youth unemployment in the Middle East remains severe. In 2023, the region reported a youth unemployment rate of 24.4%, which is substantially higher than the global average of 13.6%. The youth employment-to-population ratio was only 18.5%, representing the lowest figure worldwide.<sup>95</sup> Female youth are particularly disadvantaged, with labour market participation rates trailing those of male youth by over 30 percentage points in countries including Saudi Arabia and Jordan (World Bank, 2024).<sup>96</sup>

**Figure 21: Change in sectoral share of youth employment between 2001 and 2021 (percentage)**



Source: ILO modelled sectoral estimates, November 2022 (unpublished).

Mismatches between education and required skills intensify youth unemployment. According to a UNICEF (2023) report, education and training systems in the Middle East

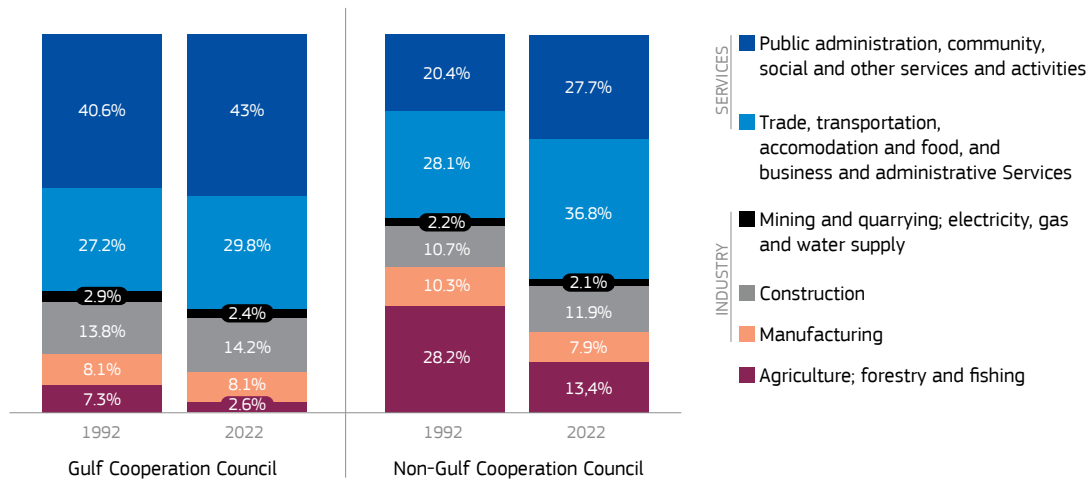
<sup>94</sup> World Bank, Middle East and North Africa: Regional Overview, World Bank Group, 7 January 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/overview>

<sup>95</sup> International Labour Organization. (2024). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Middle East. ILO. <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/MENA%20GET%20Youth%20Brief%202024.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> World Bank, Middle East and North Africa: Regional Overview, World Bank Group, 7 January 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/overview>

have not adapted to evolving labour market requirements.<sup>97</sup> As a result, graduates often lack the technical and digital competencies sought by employers, hindering their transition from education to employment.

**Figure 22: Employment share (%) by subregion and sector, 1992 vs 2022**



Source: [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_912980.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_912980.pdf)

Structural factors further sustain high unemployment rates. Public sector employment continues to be favoured by nationals, especially in Gulf states. However, fiscal limitations have diminished the capacity of governments to employ new graduates.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, private sector industries are frequently dominated by migrant labour and lack effective mechanisms or incentives to incorporate national youth into the workforce.

The employment challenge in the Middle East is creating enough jobs to absorb rapidly growing youth cohorts and ensuring that those jobs align with the skills of the emerging workforce. Addressing this requires reforms in education, stronger support for private-sector growth, and labour-market policies that balance the presence of expatriate workers with opportunities for nationals. Without these measures, the demographic advantage of a young population may turn into a long-term social and economic burden.

### 6.5.1. The Middle East skills development challenge

Aligning education and training systems in the Middle East with the urgent needs of a rapidly changing economy is now critical. Accelerating skills development is imperative to fully realise demographic potential, drive economic diversification, and reduce unemployment. Yet, persistent institutional rigidity, limited resources, and entrenched social inequalities are stalling progress and demand immediate attention.

First, urgently bridging the digital skills gap is crucial, as many labour forces remain

<sup>97</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The Middle East Urgently Needs Relevant Education, Training and Lifelong Learning Systems to Tackle Youth Unemployment and Skills Gaps, press release, 3 May 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/middle-east-and-north-africa-urgently-needs-relevant-education-training>

<sup>98</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Arab States Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2024: Promoting Social Justice through a Just Transition, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2024, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_912980.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_912980.pdf)

unprepared for emerging technologies such as AI and data analytics.<sup>99</sup> In the Gulf, over half of employers report dire skill shortages, highlighting an acute demand for technical and transversal skills.<sup>100</sup>

**Figure 23: Skills availability by market**

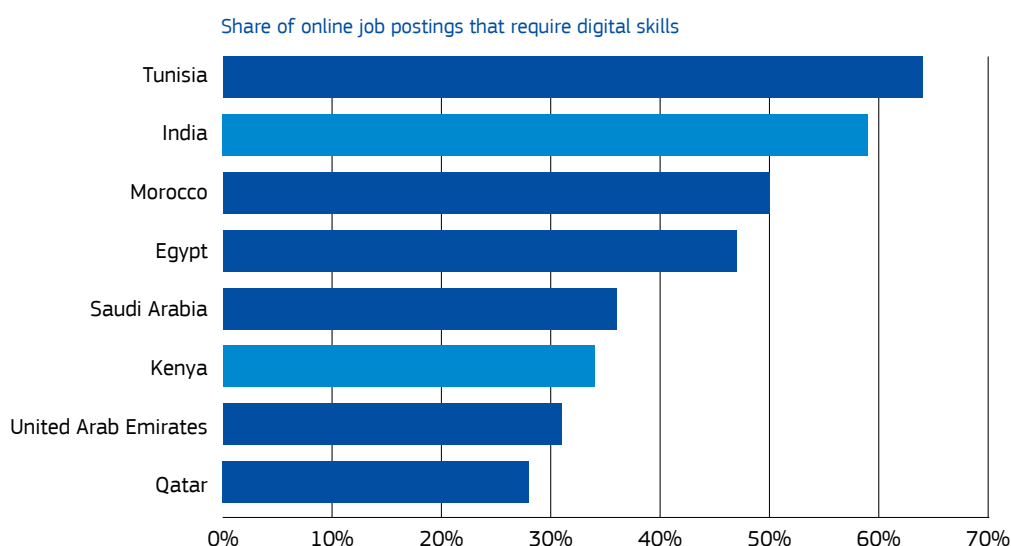
|              | Hardware and IT | Development / Coding | Product design | Data and analytics |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Saudi Arabia | 20%             | 11%                  | 7%             | 2%                 |
| Kuwait       | 26%             | 15%                  | 17%            | 4%                 |
| Lebanon      | 32%             | 39%                  | 3%             | 4%                 |

|                | Entrepreneurship as a good career choice<br>(% of adult population) | High status to successful entrepreneurs<br>(% of adult population) | Media attention for entrepreneurship<br>(% of adult population) |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Egypt          | 83.4%                                                               | 87.1%                                                              | 62.1%                                                           |
| Iran           | 52.4%                                                               | 80.5%                                                              | 57.9%                                                           |
| Jordan         | 73.5%                                                               | 82.3%                                                              | 74.7%                                                           |
| Morocco        | 79.3%                                                               | 58.7%                                                              | 60.7%                                                           |
| Qatar          | 71.2%                                                               | 80.4%                                                              | 66.7%                                                           |
| Saudi Arabia   | 81.3%                                                               | 78.7%                                                              | 75.9%                                                           |
| Tunisia        | 71.1%                                                               | 72.1%                                                              | 48.3%                                                           |
| UAE            | 75.1%                                                               | 82.3%                                                              | 83.8%                                                           |
| Average (MENA) | 73.4%                                                               | 77.8%                                                              | 66.3%                                                           |

Source: [https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/9\\_Technology\\_and\\_Youth\\_Drive\\_the\\_Future\\_of\\_Work\\_in\\_MENA.pdf](https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/9_Technology_and_Youth_Drive_the_Future_of_Work_in_MENA.pdf)

**Figure 24: Digital skills are being demanded in MENA countries**



Source: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5214c8a2-1e1e-4761-a570-3d306dcf6375/content>

Second, education systems must align more closely with labour market needs. Nearly 60% of regional CEOs believe that schools and universities fail to prepare students for

<sup>99</sup> Aly, H., Technology and Youth Drive the Future of Work in MENA, Middle East Institute, Washington, DC, 2021, [https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/9\\_Technology\\_and\\_Youth\\_Drive\\_the\\_Future\\_of\\_Work\\_in\\_MENA.pdf](https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/9_Technology_and_Youth_Drive_the_Future_of_Work_in_MENA.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> World Bank, Digital Development Overview: Middle East and North Africa, World Bank Group, Washington, DC, 2024, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5214c8a2-1e1e-4761-a570-3d306dcf6375/content>

employment.<sup>101</sup> Third, lifelong learning frameworks are necessary to facilitate reskilling in response to technological disruptions.<sup>102 103</sup>

Vocational education urgently requires expansion, as university graduates often far outnumber available job openings while technical skills remain critically scarce.<sup>104</sup> Finally, immediate strategies to retain talent and combat brain drain are absolutely crucial, as skilled young people are increasingly driven to seek better opportunities abroad.

Cultural barriers also devalue vocational paths, while gender inequalities prevent women and marginalised groups from accessing opportunities. Rapid technological change may render training obsolete before it reaches scale, especially in fragile or rural contexts.

The Middle East must urgently turn demographic pressures into sustained economic growth by building inclusive, demand-driven skills ecosystems. Policymakers, education leaders, and employers must act now by reforming governance, enhancing employer engagement, investing in vocational and digital training, and making lifelong learning fully inclusive. Delays threaten prosperity – immediate, tangible steps are essential.

### 6.5.2. EU, through Erasmus+, building skills in the Middle East

Erasmus+ engagement in the Middle East operates within the Programme's defined regional boundaries. For the purposes of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the Middle East region covers Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and the Gulf states. Countries such as Jordan and Lebanon fall within the South-Mediterranean region and are addressed in that context, as part of the EU's Neighbourhood South region.

Erasmus+ achievements in the Middle East reflect the particular challenges of the region: fragile or post-conflict institutional environments, significant skills mismatches, high youth unemployment, and a growing need for digital and vocational competencies that existing education systems have been slow to develop. In Iran, Iraq, and Yemen, CBHE projects have strengthened institutional capacity by overhauling curricula and enhancing project management capabilities. International mobility has fostered cross-cultural learning and collaboration. Freie Universität Berlin secured over €1.6 million in Erasmus+ KA171 International Credit Mobility funding in 2024, the highest allocation awarded to any German university under that call, to fund student and staff exchanges with partner universities worldwide. Of this, approximately €800,000 is designated for the 2024-2027 period specifically for the southern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting the strategic priority these regions hold for the institution.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters programmes have enabled students from the region to enrol in European degree programmes, with nearly 220 students from the region participating between 2021 and 2027 alone.

Under the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 Programme, the EU has intensified its engagement with fragile and post-conflict higher education systems through CBHE actions that explicitly link skills development, employability, and institutional resilience. The *RISE project*, Reinforcing

101 Atlantic Council, Modernising MENA Education: How to Close the Career Success Gap, Atlantic Council, Washington, DC, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/modernizing-mena-education-how-to-close-the-career-success-gap/>

102 Sakamoto, A., Credentialism and Skills Development in the Middle East, Asia Pacific Journal of Education, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 548–562, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14480220.2019.1632566>

103 World Economic Forum, Three Lessons from the Middle East's Reskilling Revolution, World Economic Forum, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/11/3-lessons-from-the-middle-east-s-reskilling-revolution/>

104 World Bank, The Road Not Travelled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa, World Bank Group, Washington, DC, 2020, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/1f1fe72d-bf6d-50b8-81e5-7f280bf8b72d>

Integration of Skills for Employability and Internationalisation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, represents a targeted intervention that addresses long-standing fragmentation between university internationalisation agendas and graduate employability services. Rather than treating these as separate policy areas, RISE implements an integrated institutional reform strategy that positions universities as contributors to workforce ecosystem development, entrepreneurship, and regional socio-economic recovery.

A central early activity was the definition of institutional and system-level roadmaps, developed through a consultative workshop in Sulaymaniyah in September 2025, which brought together representatives from partner universities, employers, civil society, students, and alumni. In October–November 2025, RISE delivered a six-module online MasterClass for staff from the seven Kurdish partner universities, covering internationalisation strategy, soft skills, entrepreneurship, career service management, and university-business collaboration. A four-day Training Week in Murcia in November 2025 involved 36 participants, concentrating on strengthening Career Development Centres and aligning them with internationalisation functions. Overall, the project foresees 35 trainees participating in Europe-based activities and 150 in local training across partner universities, alongside the development of internationalisation and employability roadmaps for each institution and one overarching Synergy Roadmap for the Kurdistan Region as a whole.

Erasmus+ projects across the Middle East have advanced refugee inclusion, expanded digital and pedagogical innovation, reformed governance and quality assurance, and strengthened university-industry collaboration. These initiatives demonstrate the capacity of Erasmus+ to meet urgent skills development needs and contribute to more resilient, future-oriented education systems in contexts where institutional fragility makes the work both more difficult and more consequential.

## 7. Conclusion

In a context of ongoing technological change, climate-related uncertainty, and growing global interdependence, skills development has become an increasingly important component of economic participation, institutional resilience, and social cohesion. This publication has examined how Erasmus+ addresses these dynamics through structured international co-operation with third countries not associated to the Programme across Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Middle East.

The evidence presented across the regional chapters points to a consistent finding: Erasmus+ contributes most effectively when its actions are understood as distinct instruments rather than interchangeable tools. Capacity Building in Higher Education reforms the institutional systems that produce and sustain expertise. Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters develop tailored, field-specific competency sets for defined professional practice. Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training builds the applied, occupational skills that specific labour markets require. International Credit Mobility deepens individual professional formation through sustained exposure to different academic environments and, where traineeships are embedded, direct workplace experience. Capacity Building in the field of Youth and Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges open access to non-formal learning, civic engagement, and intercultural development for young people who may not reach formal qualification pathways. Jean Monnet Actions develop the specialist analytical and policy knowledge needed to engage with the EU as a global actor, with direct professional relevance for academics, policymakers, and practitioners whose work intersects with European institutions, trade frameworks, and international co-operation agreements.

Digital literacy and green skills feature consistently across all actions and regions as transversal competencies that no single action owns but all are expected to address. Their integration into curricula, work-based learning, and institutional practices reflects a programme-wide recognition that these are not specialist add-ons but foundational requirements for participation in contemporary labour markets and civic life. This is particularly relevant in contexts affected by geographic isolation, infrastructure constraints, or crisis situations, where digital approaches have helped sustain learning and widen access where physical mobility is not possible.

The regional chapters also reveal differentiation that matters. Sub-Saharan Africa benefits from the full range of actions open to third countries, including a targeted mid-programme injection of €35 million in 2025 to expand Virtual Exchanges and Capacity Building in the field of Youth, reflecting a deliberate policy choice to invest in the continent's young population through both formal and non-formal pathways. In Asia, CBHE and mobility under ICM and Erasmus Mundus carry the weight of the programme's opportunities, with CBVET not available in the region; the skills story there is one of institutional reform, advanced professional formation, and the gradual alignment of higher education with the demands of rapidly transforming economies. In Latin America and the Caribbean, CBHE, Erasmus Mundus, and more recently CBVET have together addressed skills challenges ranging from advanced physics and cultural heritage preservation to sustainable tourism and digital entrepreneurship. In the Pacific, a modest but targeted portfolio of CBHE, ICM, and Jean Monnet projects has contributed to institutional capacity and policy literacy in a region where geographic isolation makes international co-operation both more difficult

and more valuable. In the Middle East, Erasmus+ has engaged with fragile and post-conflict environments through CBHE projects that explicitly integrate skills development, employability, and institutional resilience, recognising that in these contexts the conditions for learning are themselves part of what needs to be built.

Several factors emerge across all regions as supporting the effectiveness of Erasmus+ co-operation. These include genuine co-ownership between European and partner institutions, alignment with national and regional policy priorities, attention to the institutionalisation of outcomes beyond the life of individual projects, and the role of alumni networks in sustaining knowledge circulation and local leadership. Erasmus+ National Focal Points in third countries not associated to the Programme play a quiet but essential enabling role, providing contextualised guidance, outreach, and policy intermediation that helps ensure access is not confined to institutions that already have the networks to find their way in.

The Programme's record demonstrates that international co-operation in education and training can generate skills outcomes that extend well beyond immediate economic returns. By investing in people, institutions, and networks across diverse regional contexts, Erasmus+ contributes to incremental but durable improvements in human and institutional capacity. As global challenges continue to evolve, the case for learning-based co-operation grounded in partnership, shared ownership, and long-term engagement remains as strong as the evidence presented in this publication suggests it to be.

