



## Skills2Capabilities comes to a close: reflecting on IER's role and contributions

### Skills2Capabilities – Blog post

January 2026

Emily Erickson and Terence Hogarth (Warwick IER)

The [Skills2Capabilities](#) project has formally concluded, marking the end of a three-year Horizon Europe collaboration that explored how skills systems can better support labour-market transitions across Europe. The project, coordinated by 3s (Austria), brought together seven interlinked work packages to tackle some of the most pressing questions facing Europe's labour markets: how to support workers to update their skills, navigate career transitions and stay resilient throughout life – and how to give employers access to a workforce ready for the demands of green and digital transitions.

The initial idea for the entire project emerged from discussions between IER's Professor [Terence Hogarth](#) and colleagues at 3s in Vienna. Within IER, Dr. [Sally-Anne Barnes](#) (now at Leicester University) and Dr. [Emily Erickson](#) also played a major role in development of the proposal and the subsequent delivery of results. Later Dr. [Sangwoo Lee](#) joined the team. The entire research team are indebted to the administrative and technical assistance provided within IER by Ms. Stef Poole and Mr. Luke Bosworth over the course of the project.

### Leading Research on the funding of VET

IER led a work package which examined how the funding of vocational education and training shapes participation, employer behaviour and system responsiveness. Drawing on comparative analysis of Austria, Norway and England, the research examined how different funding regimes reflect wider institutional settlements within skill systems. A [comparative report](#) shows that coordinated market economies, such as Austria and Norway benefit from relatively stable long-term funding arrangements, underpinned by social partnerships. England's more liberal market economy, in contrast, exhibited more frequent reform and policy churn with repeated attempts to recalibrate incentives to make skill provision 'demand-led'.

In addition to the analytic work, the workplace produced a [Ready-Reckoner App](#) to help employers estimate the net costs of offering apprenticeships training.



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#### Comparative research on Skills Strategies

IER also made a substantial contribution to a work package examining the design and implementation of national skills strategies across Europe. IER led the England case study and supported the synthesis and cross-country comparisons with Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, and Norway. The [comparative report](#) demonstrates that skills strategies can play an important role in coordinating fragmented systems and reinforcing shared policy priorities. However, the findings also caution against over-expecting what skills strategies alone can deliver, while they can foster incremental and gradual change, their capacity to drive rapid or disruptive reform is limited.

#### Examining responses to changing worlds of work

IER researchers also contributed to a work package exploring how far skills systems are responsive or proactive in the face of occupational change and technological transformation. The resultant [comparative report](#) assesses where systems adjust primarily through reactive mechanisms or through anticipatory coordination between education providers, employers and social partners.

#### Disseminating results

In addition to these research contributions, IER led project-wide dissemination and communication activities. This included the design, development and maintenance of the project [website](#) – ensuring outputs and tools are accessible to wide audiences throughout the life of the project. Alongside this, IER managed the project's [social media presence](#), extending the reach of Skills2Capabilities beyond academic audiences. IER also crafted [policy briefs](#) which synthesised results from across work packages and translated them into clear recommendations for European and national policy makers.



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#### **Collective efforts and achievements**

These outputs reflect the combined effort of a wide group of IER research staff, professional services colleagues and administrative support. Their expertise underpinned the success of the project.

The project also benefited from successful collaboration with research partners across Europe, each bringing their unique expertise to the complex challenge of supporting workers in career transitions and employers with changing demands.

As the project concludes, Skills2Capabilities leaves behind a rich set of comparative analysis, practical tools and policy-relevant insights on how skills systems can better support labour market transitions. IER is proud to have played a central role in this work and looks forward to building on these findings in future research and collaboration.



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Read the full working paper on Skill Formation Systems: [www.Skills2Capabilities.eu](http://www.Skills2Capabilities.eu)

This Blog is part of the Skills2Capabilitiy Work Package 8 entitled 'Funding of VET and AL and the Sharing of Costs.' For more information please visit [skills2capabilities.eu](http://skills2capabilities.eu)

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