

Call for Evidence - European strategy for vocational education and training

Reuse, repair, and recycling social enterprises of the RREUSE wider network are unique training providers that leverage their circular operations as vehicles for training and job opportunities, especially for labour market underrepresented groups. They promote circular skills consisting of the manual abilities needed to extend product lifespans through repair, reuse, and preparation for reuse – skills that are increasingly scarce due to decades of decline in hands-on work.

Social enterprises offer flexible, work-based, learner-centred training, which is better suited to people with no previous experience in formal education or coming from complex personal circumstances. They combine technical learning with confidence-building, guidance, and tailored support, helping individuals gain social mobility and transition into the labour market while fostering an inclusive circular economy.

However, existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems often fail to adequately account for the specific needs of labour-intensive circular activities like reuse and repair. Furthermore, the lack of official recognition for social economy enterprises as legitimate skills providers limits their growth potential and reduces the motivation and mobility of workers to engage in necessary up- or re-skilling programs.

Main Challenges:

- **Lack of funding** for green training in work integration programmes of social enterprises.
- **Difficulty finding qualified instructors**, especially for specialised circular skills like repair.
- **Limited recognition** of social enterprises as legitimate training providers within VET systems.
- **Overly complex certification and verification procedures**, hindering the delivery of accredited training.
- **Rigid VET structures** that do not adapt to learner needs or circular economy skill requirements.
- **Mismatch between skills supply and demand**, due to insufficient skills intelligence.
- **Limits on the subsidy duration for work integration programmes**, restricting long-term skill development.
- **Insufficient focus on learner-centred and work-based training** in mainstream VET.

Opportunities:

- **Strengthen integration between VET systems and social enterprises.**
 - Formally recognise social enterprises as training partners within VET systems.
 - Recognise social enterprises' work-based, learner-centred, inclusive training as uniquely suited to developing circular skills and reaching underrepresented groups.
 - Promote structured cooperation frameworks so VET providers understand the specific skills needed in reuse, repair, and preparation for reuse.
- **Make VET programmes more flexible and accessible.**
 - Adapt training formats to the needs of low-skilled and underrepresented groups (shorter modules, practical learning, flexible schedules).
 - Reduce the rigidity of VET systems so they can respond quickly to circular economy skill needs.
- **Recognise and certify the skills acquired in social enterprises.**
 - Allow social enterprises to play a bigger role in certifying skills, especially for labour market underrepresented groups.
 - Simplify or streamline verification processes for issuing qualifications, which are currently overly complex.
 - Promote partial qualifications, skills passports, and low-level qualifications as tools to validate skills gained on the job.
- **Strengthen skills intelligence for the circular economy.**
 - Invest in better mapping of circular economy skill needs, especially manual skills that have declined over decades, which also helps in understanding current EU labour shortages.
- **Promote policies linking training provision with demand for circular skills.**
 - Align VET reforms with measures that increase demand for reuse, repair, and preparation for reuse services.
 - However, training alone is insufficient unless accompanied by complementary job-creating circular policies (e.g. mandatory [separate reuse targets](#) and consumer repair incentives).

Please find [attached the RREUSE case study report on circular skill programmes](#) to accompany the call for evidence.

Author:

Simone Schirru, Social and Economic Policy Lead
simone.schirru@rreuse.org



Co-funded by
the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.