



“Navigating the Shifting Landscape: Developing Skills and Education for a Sustainable European Future”

Hosted by MEPs Sirpa Pietikäinen and Paul Tang

November 15, 2023 16:00-18:00

Summary:

During the meeting, speakers discussed the importance of integrating sustainability and digital skills into the European education system to support the European Green Deal and sustainable development. The conversation highlighted the need for a transformation in education to prepare the next generation for the challenges of climate change and the digital revolution.

Sirpa emphasized the role of education as a critical component in addressing sustainability and environmental challenges. She proposed the idea of a science advisory board for the EU to assess and analyze environmental issues and commission proposals, ensuring an informed approach to nature restoration and other environmental initiatives.

Emily Sinnott from the European Investment Bank presented data indicating a significant skills shortage as an obstacle to green investment. She noted that while there is a demand for specific green jobs, the majority of the greening of jobs involves existing roles requiring new skills. The EIB's research identified key green skills and the need for advanced digital skills in green activities. Emily also discussed the challenges regions face in finding the necessary technical and environmental skills, highlighting the importance of training and lifelong learning.

Andreea Calbeaza from Microsoft discussed the company's report with BCG on sustainability skills, emphasizing the need for a workforce equipped with such skills to progress from commitment to action. She highlighted the importance of digital skills in sustainability-related tasks and shared resources Microsoft has developed to support sustainability education and training.

Gülçin Berkel Erem from Dow spoke about the challenges in attracting people with the right skills for a greener industry. She stressed the importance of incentivizing STEM education, addressing the gender gap in green skills, and making STEM fields attractive to younger generations.

Bart Vandewaetere from Nestlé shared practical experiences from the company's "Nestlé Needs YOUth" skills program, which focuses on apprenticeships and work-based learning schemes. He emphasized the need for companies to embed sustainability into their business and the importance of engaging with farmers for a sustainable food system.

Rasmus Borch from Lenovo discussed the challenges AI poses to education, particularly in K-12, where the current model of pedagogy is being challenged by AI advancements. He highlighted the need for a shift in the educational paradigm and the importance of

technological literacy. Lenovo's "From Waste to Wonder" project was presented as an example of integrating STEM skills and sustainability into education.

Katrien Maes from the League of European Research Universities (LERU) spoke about the integration of sustainability into university strategies and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, including the social sciences and humanities. She highlighted the need for staff training, curriculum development, and the importance of partnerships between universities and the business world.

Cliona Murphy from the Royal Irish Academy discussed obstacles to effective climate change education, emphasizing the need for professional learning for teachers, curricular content that addresses climate action, and research to assess the impact of educational initiatives.

Finally, *Vito Borrelli* from the European Commission discussed the Erasmus+ program's focus on supporting the European Green Deal and sustainable development. She highlighted the program's investment in green-forward domains and the importance of engaging a wide spectrum of players in the transition towards climate neutrality.

The meeting concluded with a call for continued dialogue and collaboration among educational institutions, businesses, and policymakers to address the urgent need for sustainability and digital skills in the European workforce.