

11th ADB International Education and Skills Forum



European Forum of
Technical and Vocational
Education and Training

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11th ADB International Education and Skills Forum: Applying a Fresh Lens to Unlock the Power of Human Capital

Concept note

The ADB International Education and Skills Forum is the Asian Development Bank's flagship annual gathering for policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and international organisations.

The 11th edition focused on a **3×3×3 strategic lens**, calling for fresh perspectives to unlock the potential of human capital in Asia and the Pacific.

Three Transformative Themes

- Digital transformation and EdTech at scale

- Green and climate-resilient skills aligned with priority economic sectors
- Preparing education and training systems for future jobs, especially in health, agriculture, clean energy, water, and transport

Three Core Dimensions

- Quality assurance, measurement and monitoring
- Inclusion and equity, with attention to emerging forms of disadvantage
- Building future-ready education and training ecosystems

Three System Levels

- Renewed investments in K–12
- Strengthening TVET for employability, productivity, and competitiveness
- Accelerating higher education, research, and innovation

The event positioned education as key to sustainable growth and social resilience, calling for **partnership-based approaches**, multisector collaboration, and international cooperation.



QR to the website of the summit



Pre-Conference Activities

Study Visit to TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Agency), and TESDA Women Centre (TWC)

Main data on the Philippines VET system:

- 92% private VET providers (4.600 centres), 8% public
- Sectors: energy, semiconductors, construction, tourism, informatics, health, manufacture
- Open to internationalization, via private bilateral agreements

Key issues raised by Secretary General Kiko Fernandez as relevant for Philippines:

- Skills mismatch, addressed via the implementation of microcredentials as unit of learning for both VET and HE, in cooperation with international platform including Coursera, Microsoft. Goal: by 2028 implemented in every sector
- LLL framework, addressed with Digital Skills Passport System inspired by the Singapore system. The digital system includes the creation

of a database with all certificates, platform to identify skills gap in the job market, map of training providers to learn skills missing in the market. Special customised programs have been created for “zero skilled people”

- Employability, via a strong system of enterprise-based education and training (EBET), including:
 - EBET: for National Certificates 1 & 2, less than 6 months (internships)
 - Apprenticeships: NC3, less than 3 years, maximum 20% of workforce of the company
 - Upskilling system: whatever NC, less than 3 years
- Innovation hubs development, thru the activation of the Regional Training Innovation Centres (RTIs), 17 campuses active in different fields/areas, based on applied research, strong investments in innovation, similar to our CoVEs
- Internationalization of certificates, thru mutual recognition of skills framework at Asian level

IAG-VET meeting

The Interagency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET) was convened by UNESCO in 2008 to ensure a good coordination of activities by the key international organisations involved in the delivery of policy advice, programmes and research on TVET. It enhances knowledge-sharing and a common understanding of key issues. Ultimately, the group seeks to better leverage the work of each member organisation to help countries design and implement more effective TVET policies to improve productivity, economic prosperity, sustainable development and employment opportunities.

EFVET, EVBB and EVTA took part for the first time in the open session of the **Interagency Group on TVET (IAG-TVET)**.

IAG-TVET Members

UNESCO, ILO, OECD, UNIDO, WHO, World Bank; regional banks (AfDB, ADB, IADB); European bodies (EC, ETF, Cedefop).

Non-institutional partners include the German Ministry, British Council, GIZ—and now **EFVET, EVBB and EVTA**.

Active Working Groups

- **WG1:** Skills mismatch in digitalised labour markets (ETF lead)
- **WG2:** Work-based learning (UNESCO)
- **WG3:** Future of VET (Cedefop)
- **WG4:** Career guidance (OECD)

Emerging Proposals for WG

- Green skills
- AI
- Mobility of people in displacement and refugees

For more recent updates, visit:

https://unevoc.unesco.org/pub/2025_iag_newsletter_december2.pdf

Day 1: Human Capital Development

“Live as you will die tomorrow, learn as you would never die”

Spotlight Session with Education Ministers: “Big Bold Ideas for the Future of Education: Unlocking the Power of Human Capital in Asia and the Pacific”

The Spotlight sessions will showcase bold visions for the future of education toward 2035, with ministers sharing transformative ideas to make education systems future-ready. Spotlight Session 1 will focus on the Forum theme of “Applying a Fresh Lens to Unlock the Power of Human Capital” and how education systems can undertake transformational change to meet labor market demands and adapt to rapid changes across Asia and the Pacific.

Moderator: Christine Engstrom, Director General, Sectors Department 3, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Ministers and Senior Officials:

- Naranbayar Purevsuren, Minister of Education, Mongolia
- Shirley Agrupis, Chair, Commission on Higher Education, Philippines
- Simil Johnson Youse, Minister of Education and Training, Vanuatu
- Khushboo G. Chowdhary, Indian Administrative Service, Secretary to Government,
- Nasimjon Karimzoda, First Deputy Minister of Labor and Migration and Employment, Tajikistan
- Fauzan Adziman, Director General of Research and Development, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Indonesia

Ministers highlighted approaches to make education systems future-ready, including:

- Stronger science and innovation pipelines (Philippines)
- Green, blue and digital technologies for climate resilience (Vanuatu)
- Digital and data capabilities, engineering, transversal skills, entrepreneurship (India)
- Strengthening TVET with modern equipment, inclusive education, digital transformation (Tajikistan)
- Linking technology, innovation, and labour market transformation (Indonesia)

Common themes included:

- Foundational skills remain essential
- Alignment of education with economic sectors
- Teacher competence, CPD, and industry involvement
- Broader innovation ecosystems



Spotlight Session with Education Ministers: “Big Bold Ideas for the Future of Education: Scaling-up Quality, Inclusion, and Equity”

Spotlight Session 2 will emphasize quality, inclusion, and equity, with special attention to fragile contexts, learners with special needs, and youth at risk of exclusion.

This session will also highlight the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, inviting ministers to share their vision for supporting learners with disabilities.

Moderator: Ayako Inagaki, Senior Director, Human and Social Development Sector Office, ADB.

Ministers and Senior Officials:

- Gardenia Aisek, Secretary, Department of Education, Federated State of Micronesia
- Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Minister of School Education and Literacy Department, Sindh, Pakistan

- Gerald Zackios, Minister of Education, Sport and Training, Republic of the Marshall Islands
- Zviad Gabisonia, Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Youth, Georgia
- Albert Makhmetkulov, Deputy Minister of Education, Kyrgyz Republic
- Oung Borat, Secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cambodia
- Shiba Sapkota, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Nepa

Key insights included:

- Digital networks improving access in geographically remote regions
- Acute need for CPD in inclusive pedagogy

- Mobility and exchange of teachers for capacity building
- Challenges of fragility, remoteness, and limited resources across island states

President’s Speech

In 2026, ADB will convene a Global Education Advisory Panel to shape future human capital investments.

1. Digital transformation with attention to ethics and privacy
2. Critical importance of education financing aligned with new tech sectors (AI, semiconductors, hydrogen)
3. Public–private partnerships as drivers of innovation

Parallel Session 1.3: “Smarter, Faster, Adaptable: How AI and Humans Can Transform the Future of Learning”

The session will explore how humans and AI can co-create in education for better teaching and learning outcomes. As the discourse has moved beyond whether AI is necessary, we have accepted that AI is here to stay. How we work with AI—and the ways we need to build safeguards and parameters around it—is what is important to explore. Experts will discuss what the future of humans and AI co-existing for education could look like.

Moderator: Rose Sagun, Education Specialist, Human and Social Development, ADB

Speakers:

- Rose Luckin, Emeritus Professor of Learner-Centered Design, University College London, and CEO of Educate Ventures
- Hervé Huot-Marchand, Chief of Section, Education Sector, UNESCO
- Baiq Hana Susanti, Director, AI Center Indonesia
- Edward Yee, Head of Growth and Strategy, FAR.AI

Key messages:

- Frame AI in education through three lenses: tools, systemic adaptation, and AI literacy
- Emerging 4D strategic framework: governance & ethics, technology & data, staff capability, iterative applications
- Human-centred skills revolution remains necessary
- Massive teacher training initiatives underway in Indonesia
- AI disruptions: shorter knowledge half-life, labour market shocks, risks for graduates in ICT sectors

Parallel Session 1.6: “Innovative Financing for Education and Role of Philanthropies”

Asia is home to six of the world’s top ten education systems and demonstrates a deep, long-term commitment to learning and human capital development. Yet significant challenges remain, from inequities in access and quality to preparing learners for the digital age, climate resilience, and future jobs.

This panel, prepared in cooperation with the International Education Funders Groups, will explore how philanthropy can work in a mutually reinforcing way with governments and multilateral actors to strengthen education outcomes across the region.

Moderator: Safdar Parvez, Deputy Director General, Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships Department, ADB

Speakers:

- Karthik Krishnan, CEO, International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)
- Laura Savage, Executive Director, International Education Funders Group
- Tiong Hui Yeo, Associate Director, Temasek Foundation
- Gayatri Nair Lobo, CEO, Educate Girls
- Raman Sidhu, CEO, Octava Foundation

Challenges identified:

- Governments often undervalue human capital investments
- Private tutoring compensates for systemic failures
- Long-term investment horizons clash with short political cycles
- Philanthropy is rising, but cannot replace public responsibility
- Need to prioritise funding based on learning outcomes and societal impact



Day 2: Priorities for ADB Strategy 2030 mid-term review

Fatima Yasmin (ADB Vice-President)

- Finance and Deployment
- Empowering people
- Stronger systems and processes

Education must embrace change through multisector collaboration, climate resilience, and digital access.

Plenary Session 2: “Shaping Investment Priorities in Education and Skills Toward a Sustainable Future”

As the world faces rapid technological, climate, and labor market shifts, how can education systems stay ahead? Education leaders from different regions of the world will discuss emerging priorities, investments, and policies that foster innovation, equity, and resilience across the globe.

Moderator: Manuela Prina, ADB

Keynote Speaker: Mamta Murthi, Vice President, People Vice Presidency, World Bank

Panel Members:

- Yuko Mitsui, Senior Vice President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (video message)
- Outi Hakanen, Ambassador of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland
- Shanti Jagannathan, Director, Education Sector Group, Human and Social Development, ADB
- Haftom Gebregziabher Hagos, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, Federal Technical and Vocational Institute, Ethiopia
- Mamta Murthi, Vice President, People Vice Presidency, World Bank

Four traps to escape:

1. Inputs-only trap

2. Training for disappearing jobs
3. Scale trap (pilot dependence)
4. Supply-push training misaligned with vacancies

Three strategic shifts:

- Sector-based skill investments
- Using targeted sector investment to drive economic transformation
- Engaging employers meaningfully in defining skills

World bank forthcoming actions:

- Extending the Human Capital Index
- Strengthening diagnostics integrating skills into economic policies
- Launching new skills academies and peer-learning platforms
- Establishing a global expert advisory panel

Regional interventions from Japan, Finland, ADB and Ethiopia underscored:

- Centrality of foundational skills
- Labour market data for policymaking
- VET ecosystem development
- Demographic opportunities and risks



Parallel Session 2.1: “Powering data use for faster response and higher impact through education and skills development”

Existing data evidence to make smart decisions. Timeliness of the response.

Moderator: Albert Park, Chief Economist, ADB

Speakers:

- Elisabetta Gentile, Principal Economist (Development Impact), ADB
- Lars Sondergaard, Lead Economist, World Bank
- Assess earlier and identify the

gaps at preliminary stage to intervene quicker

- Davor Miskulin, Head of International Business Development,
- Ronald Mendoza

Data for Faster and Higher-Impact Decisions

- Need for timely data to support rapid action
- AI-driven labour market analytics (Lightcast/Burning Glass)

- Digital tools supporting teachers and learners

Parallel Session 2.2: “Shaping Multisector Investments for Quality Jobs of the Future”

Explore how linking industrial investment, infrastructure, and skills development can drive innovation, ensure smooth technology adoption, and create jobs. Drawing on examples from manufacturing, utilities, and public sector transformation, panelists will discuss strategies for embedding skills development into sector-focused investments, highlighting successful partnership models, cofinancing approaches, and practical solutions to accelerate technology adoption and job creation. Participants will examine the key actions needed to make multisector collaboration the standard for sustainable economic and employment outcomes.

Moderator: Manuela Prina, Principal Education Specialist, Human and Social Development, ADB

Speakers:

- Pilvi Torsti, Director, European Training Foundation
- Neo Poh Ling, Executive Director, Singapore Cooperation Enterprise
- Ashutosh Agarwal, Director, Tesca Technologies
- Giovanni Crisona, President, SkillMan
- Allison Woodruff, Principal Water Security Specialist, Water and Urban Development, ADB

Key points:

- TVET must operate at the intersection of industry, infrastructure, and innovation
- CoVEs recognised as models for systemic collaboration
- Private sector demand for increasingly specialised training
- Examples from Fiji: sector-led training responding to brain drain and new tech complexity

Panel Session: “Vocational Excellence: The Model of Centers of Vocational Excellence (COVEs)”

This panel unites EU policymakers, VET associations, and a Center for Vocational Excellence (COVE) to explore how COVEs drive innovation, strengthen skills ecosystems, and enhance vocational education quality. The session also highlights the EU’s strategic framework and practical tools for fostering international collaboration and sustainable VET development. Curated by Georgios Zisimos and Doriana Monteleone, European Training Foundation (ETF) in partnership with European Commission (DG-INTPA), the German Federal Ministry of Education (BMBFSFJ), three European Vocational Education and Training Providers Associations (EFVET, EVTA, and EVBB), and a COVE (Cometa).

Advancing Skills for Competitiveness and Growth – the case of CoVEs

The European Training Foundation (ETF) is a European agency mandated in supporting human capital

development and vocational education and training (VET) reforms outside the EU, fostering partnerships and promoting excellence in skills development. At the upcoming ADB Skills Forum in Manila, scheduled for the first week of December 2025, the ETF is requested to play a role in advancing the discourse on provision of skills for competitiveness benefitting from the capacities of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).

The ETF’s participation is designed to showcase its expertise and leadership in developing skills for competitive economies, leveraging international partnerships, and introducing innovative tools for vocational excellence. Thus, ETF will include key partners of the initiative “Towards a Global TVET-Agenda” in the Forum.

- Promoting the role of CoVEs in enhancing vocational excellence and demonstrating EU/ETF tools and partners.
- Strengthening the bilateral and multilateral cooperation with ADB and other international partnerships and networks for skills development.
- Facilitating policy dialogue between key stakeholders to align strategies and investments.

Through its contributions to the ADB Skills Forum, the ETF aims to reinforce its commitment to skills development and TVET-platforms as a cornerstone for growth and prosperity. Furthermore, this event will set the stage for transformative partnerships and initiatives in vocational education and training.

Objectives

The ETF’s involvement is framed by its commitment to advancing skills for competitiveness. The objectives include:





CONTRIBUTIONS

The ETF proposed a dedicated session on vocational excellence that will consist of a panel discussion and a presentation. The session will provide a platform to examine effective strategies for investing in vocational excellence.

The panel discussion put together representatives from the European Commission (DG-INTPA), the German Federal Ministry of Education (BMBFSFJ), three European VET Providers Associations (EfVET, EVTA and EVBB), and a CoVE (Cometa) to explore practical approaches to fostering CoVEs as models for (T)VET development and projects like the Global TVET Agenda.

Panellists shared insights on how CoVEs and policies can drive innovation, nurture skills ecosystems, and enhance the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training

(VET). The discussion focussed on policy perspectives, partnerships, practical implementation, and the role of stakeholders in ensuring the sustainability of CoVEs.

EfVET played an active role in this high-level session curated by ETF, DG-INTPA, German Ministry for Education, three European VET associations (EfVET, EVBB, EVTA), and Cometa CoVE.

Objectives

- Promote CoVEs as engines of innovation and competitiveness
- Strengthen global partnerships
- Share EU tools and frameworks supporting high-performing VET ecosystems

EfVET Contribution (Paolo Nardi)

Paolo highlighted:

- The role of VET provider associations as **bridge builders** between institutions and grassroots VET centres
- The importance of connecting European and Asian providers for:
 - exchange of practices
 - bilateral cooperation
 - study visits
 - joint projects

The session reinforced the potential for a **Global TVET Agenda** and the relevance of European experience in ecosystem building.

Special Exhibition Booth

Within the forum networking space, the ETF and the Team Europe curated an exhibition designed to foster the exchange of European perspectives.

The stand served as a Hub, offering attendees the opportunity to explore

some of the ETF's tools and services, showcasing initiatives like the Global TVET Agenda, several Global Gateway flagships in the region, and supporting the dissemination of best practices from Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).

Paralell Session 2.8: “Technical and Vocational Education and Training: What Skills for the Future and How to Steer Ecosystems for Innovation”

As the world of work rapidly evolves due to digital transformation, AI, and shifting demographic trends, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems face increasing pressure to adapt. This panel discussion will explore the skills and strategies needed to make TVET systems future-ready. Experts from Asia and the Pacific will examine emerging challenges— from AI and Industry 4.0 to demographic shifts—and share approaches to strengthen skills ecosystems, enhance industry engagement, and accelerate green and digital transitions. The session will highlight critical reforms and practical solutions to prepare TVET for the evolving world of work.

Moderator: Georgios Zisimos, Head of Policy Advice Unit, European Training Foundation (ETF)

Summary:

1. To be pragmatic, to be clear about the reality on the ground, starting from your reality first
2. To be sustainable: many solutions, but not all of them work and are politically or economically sustainable
3. To be Future-oriented: new technology is crucial, not the only one
4. To be brave but humble: humble in understanding how own challenges and brave to address them, even going against the public opinion

Speakers:

- Siripan Choomnoom, President, Thailand Office of Vocational Commission
- Oliver Diehl, Deputy Head, Division in Vocational Education and Training

at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research

- Tamar, Georgia
- Dong-Yeol Park, Director, Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training

Key insights:

- Need for pragmatic, realistic, future-oriented TVET strategies
- Importance of focusing on sustainability (technical, political, financial)
- Germany’s dual system remains strong but faces demographic decline and HE over-expansion
- Georgia seeks to embed TVET at secondary level
- Korea emphasises research-driven innovation



Closing Ceremony

A final session for inspiration and thinking about the future of education through the lens of inclusion and new forms of learning. Through the voice of young entrepreneurs, we will explore the future of learning and the future of employment in a world with no barriers, and where no one is left behind. Can we dream about it? Then we can surely make it happen! A concluding celebration through music and culture will close the 11th International Education and Skills Forum.

Message: Ayako Inagaki, Senior Director, Human and Social Development, ADB Keynote

Speakers: The Future of Education: Inclusive by Design

- Ryan Gersava, Social Innovator and Educator, Founder of Virtualahan The Future of Education: Learning beyond the Classroom
- Lyqa Maravilla, Education Influencer

Inspirational messages highlighted:

- Inclusion as a **design principle**, not a side effect

- SEL competencies as enablers for navigating rapid change
- Equity through skills development
- The cost of exclusion is far higher than the cost of inclusion

ADB committed to integrating insights from the Forum into its upcoming Education Strategy.

EfVET's participation in the 11th ADB Forum marked a significant step in strengthening collaborations across Europe and Asia. The event demonstrated:

- the growing relevance of **VET and skills ecosystems** in global development agendas;
- the strategic importance of **CoVEs**, international cooperation, and shared learning;
- the alignment of European expertise with Asian priorities in digitalisation, green transition, and inclusive development.

This forum further positions EfVET as a key actor in shaping the emerging **“Towards a Global TVET Agenda”** initiative and in connecting VET centres, practitioners, and policy makers across regions.





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EfVET is an EU nonprofit umbrella organisation, established in 1991, with the purpose of building a network of TVET stakeholders, to secure a voice across Europe in European policymaking and practice arenas. EfVET represents 400+ members from 60+ countries (including America, Africa and Asia), reaching 2K+ TVET providers, 200K+ TVET practitioners, and 2M+ learners.

More information:



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