

BIO CATALOUGE

Forum on Vocational Excellence 2025



Our moderator

Rogier Elshout is professional moderator. He designs and moderates events that are sharp on content, high in energy, and always interactive. He is founder of Moderating.eu, a collective of European moderators that wants to make conferences in “the EU bubble” more exiting, effective and inclusive. He will be moderating the Forum on Vocational Excellence for the 4th time in 2025.



Unofficial opening chat

Boudewijn Grievink is the program manager internationalisation at Katapult, a network of 550 public-private partnerships in VET in the Netherlands. Since 2019, Boudewijn has been coordinating the Community of Practice of Erasmus Centers of Vocational Excellence, CoP CoVEs, together with Tknika. In this open-source learning community, the project leads of all 69 Centres of Vocational Excellence funded by the Erasmus+ programme work to ensure no one has to reinvent the wheel and that Europe's talent has the right skills to build a great tomorrow.



Ragnhild Skaalid works as a Seconded National Expert in the Unit responsible for Vocational Education and Training in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in the European Commission. She works on the Erasmus+ programme, with a special focus on the Centres of Vocational Excellence initiative. She holds a cand.philol. degree (higher degree) from the University of Bergen, Norway, and has had a long career in the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research from 2001. She was Counsellor for Education at the Mission of Norway to the EU in the period 2016-2020 and has also worked shorter periods at the Norwegian embassies in Ottawa and Berlin.



Henriette Hansen is the coordinator of Forum on Vocational Excellence version 2025. She has worked in the South Denmark European Office as an EU-Project manager for more than 26 years, with a special interest in lifelong learning. She has developed and managed projects ranging from early childhood education to training of senior citizens together with a large range of public and private stakeholders from the Region of Southern Denmark. She holds a Msc in Business Administration and a MA in European Studies and has through her work obtained substantial knowledge and experience with specific areas such as health and social care innovation, creativity and design, regional development as well as innovation in education and training.

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Official Opening

Iben Lehmann Rasmussen is a city council member for the Socialist People's Party (SF) in Kolding, Denmark since 2019, where she, among other areas, has the responsibility for Social Affairs and Employment and Education.

She holds a master's degree in Language and Business Communication with a specialisation in interpretation and translation and works as a senior lecturer at Hansenberg Technical High School, where she also serves as a joint academic staff union representative and an employee representative on the school's board. Additionally, she is a board member of the Association of Danish Business Schools and High Schools. Iben has thus both a political and a professional interest and insight in Vocational Education and Training.



Mikael Sorknæs is Chief of Staff for Business, Education and Settlement in the Urban and Shared Services Administration in Kolding Municipality – a position he has held since 2019. He also has an international title as Chief Design Officer, as he is responsible for Kolding's designation as a UNESCO City of Design. He holds a master's degree in History and Media Science and an MBA in Strategic Management. His professional background is in higher education and public administration as well as European and international project work from a range of EU-projects across different programs and themes – primarily with an innovation angle.



Manuela Geleng works for the European Commission where she is currently the Director for Jobs and Skills in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. She is responsible for the Future of Work file, focusing on the new challenges in the world of work such as those related to platform work or remote work and The Right to Disconnect as well as youth employment, the implementation of the Union of Skills and vocational education and training policies. Prior to joining the European Commission, she worked in the private sector and for the United Nations Development Programme. She holds an MSc in Financial Economics from the University of London and a master's in Public Administration and Management from the Solvay Business School (Brussels). She completed her postgraduate studies at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna.

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1st panel session



Anna Banczyk works for the European Commission in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. She is Head of Unit for “Vocational education and training, Skills portability, CEDEFOP” since January 2025. Previously, Anna was Head of Unit for “Learning and Development” in Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security. Prior to that she held several other positions in the Commission, including as a Deputy Head of Unit for “Future of Work, Youth Employment”. Her professional experience includes also labour law, occupational safety and health, human resource management and organisational development. Anna holds master’s degrees in both sociology and psychology.



Mads Haugbølle Behrendsen is chairman of the Vocational School Students’ Organisation. He trained as a carpenter at Roskilde Technical College and won the Danish carpentry championship in 2023. On behalf of Denmark’s technical vocational education students, Mads represents their interests and views in the public debate.



Theodor Grassos is Secretary-General of the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB), with over 20 years of professional experience at both EU and national levels. In Greece, he has led public sector reforms and evaluated Human Resources Development Programmes. At the EU level, he has worked for 18 years across various DGs and programmes, including DG Reform. Fluent in four languages, he has managed over 100 projects in employment, education, and social inclusion. He is currently a member of two European Commission Working Groups on VET and Adult Learning.



Dr. Pilvi Torsti, is the Director of the European Training Foundation. She served as a State Secretary in three ministries in Finland: The Ministry of Education and Culture 2013-2015 and Ministry of Employment and Economic Affairs & Ministry of Transport and Communications 2019-2023. From 2017 to 2019, Pilvi Torsti was an MP and a member of the education and future committees of the Finnish parliament. She holds a PhD in social sciences from the University of Helsinki and is also the co-founder of United World College in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, she founded HEI Schools, an education company co-owned by the University of Helsinki where she has been an adjunct professor since 2012 and was nominated as the adjunct professor of the year in 2020. Pilvi is UWC graduate (1995) and Eisenhower Fellow (2013).

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Adelaide Almeida works as Educational Projects Division Manager & Project Manager at European Welding Federation (EWF) since 2016, being responsible for international projects focused on the development of educational programmes and new occupations for the manufacturing industry. Her expertise includes the development of Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks and their alignment with European Frameworks and standards for VET and HE as well as the development of skills forecast approach for the advanced manufacturing sector. Adelaide holds a master's degree (MSC) in Educational Sciences.



Jürgen Siebel joined Cedefop from the private sector in September 2019. As Executive Director, he is responsible for managing the Agency's operations in accordance with the strategic direction of its tripartite Management Board. With his management team and all staff, Jürgen has led Cedefop to strengthen its position as a go-to ally for the EU institutions, social partners, researchers and practitioners when it comes to analysing the impacts of megatrends on the labour market, on skills, and on training ecosystems – and on how vocational education and training enables a fair digital and green transition. Jürgen has a background in human-resources management with particular emphasis on learning and education, earned his MSc in Economics at the University of Hamburg, and his PhD in Business Administration from the University of Vienna.

2nd panel session



Signe Tychsen Philip is the Deputy Director at The Confederation of Danish Industries (DI), one of Denmark's most influential employer organizations, representing approximately 18,000 companies. In her role, she oversees areas such as occupational health and safety, vocational and adult education, and upper secondary education. Signe has extensive experience in strategic political work, having contributed to policy development that supports growth and innovation of VET in Denmark on behalf of employers in Denmark.



Troels Lund Jensen is chief analyst in the Economic Council of the Labor Movement where he primarily focuses on analyses of the education sector. He has extensive experience working with detailed register-based data, exploring issues such as barriers to education, social mobility, and investments in education. He has also carried out in-depth studies of specific areas of education, including primary and lower secondary school, vocational education and training, and adult and continuing education. Troels is also responsible for detailed forecasts of the educational level of the Danish population and the workforce. Troels holds a master's degree in Mathematics-Economics from the University of Copenhagen from 2018.

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Daire Horgan is Senior Research & Development Specialist at Wind Energy Ireland. He leads communication, dissemination, and stakeholder engagement for national and EU-funded projects, including the Erasmus+ T-Shore CoVE. His work connects industry, vocational education providers, and policymakers, and he has coordinated major industry events, including sessions in the European Parliament.



Elise Andsager works as a special educational advisor in the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F), which is Denmark's largest trade union and unemployment insurance fund for skilled and unskilled employees in sectors such as transport, construction, industry, service, catering and the green sector. Elise participates in numerous technical trade committees in different VET and Continuing VET in the Danish industry.



Mette Schack is a Danish bricklayer - one of few female bricklayers in Denmark. She has worked in the construction industry for 15 years and thus has a long term inside experience with the industry. While building houses, Mette is also an active "gamechanger". Through her advocacy, she works passionately to dismantle stereotypical gender roles in the construction industry by creating public debate, changing rules and laws on the ground, and standing up against sexism at the workplace. Mette is also active in the Danish "Boss Ladies" network that works to challenge stereotypes and bring about cultural change in vocational education and training, as well as in industries such as construction, civil engineering, installation and maritime.

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Closing Session



Julie Elm Vig Albertsen has been Director General of the National Agency for Education and Quality since 2020. She holds a master's in Political Science from the University of Copenhagen and has held senior roles in the Ministry of Finance and the Agency for Public Finance and Management, including deputy permanent secretary and head of department. Her responsibilities have covered municipal and regional finances, healthcare, social affairs, the labour market, and education (from 0 to 18). Julie has also been deputy director of Danish Broadcasting Corp. and has experience as a board member of VIVE (The Danish Center for Social Science Research). Julie is currently a board member of Krogerup Folk Highschool.



Mario Nava is the Director-General of DG EMPL of the EU Commission. Previously, he was the Director-General of DG REFORM and has held Director and Head of Unit posts in the DG for Financial Services. He was also President of Italian Financial Market Authority. He teaches at Bocconi University and at Solvay Business School. In 2023, he was awarded the title of Bocconi Alumnus of the year.



Mark Søgaaard serves as a member of the Regional Council in the Region of Southern Denmark, where he is – among other areas – responsible for healthcare. As a regional politician he has been involved in committee work looking into how to create a smooth transition between study and working life. Mark is the political member of the regional CoVE of the EUVECA project, based on the fact that the region is the largest regional employer (and vocational educator) in the healthcare sector. Alongside this political life, he works as an ambulance instructor at Prehospital South, driven by a strong passion for teaching and creating excellent learning conditions. Mark is currently running for Mayor of Assens Municipality and is also the co-author of the debate book “Den røde ambulance”, (The red ambulance in English) which explores the future of integrated healthcare.