ENGINEERS 4 EUROPE

Draft Minutes of the 5th European Engineering Skills Council Meeting, Brussels 27–28 January 2026

European Economic and Social Committee, room JDE3252

Day 1 - Tuesday 27 January 2026 : Outcome of the Split-up Groups

Present:

TREIER, H. (Chairman, Switzerland, ENGINEERS EUROPE)
BARRETT, M. (TU Dublin, Ireland)
BLANCO LINO, J. (ECEC, Spain),
BOCHAR, D. (Secretary General, ENGINEERS EUROPE)
COHNEN, A. (VDI, Germany)
COSTANTINO, L. (IDP, Italy)
D'MELLO, C. (AECEF, UK)
DAJSUREN, Y. (TU/e, Netherlands)
FADEL, C. (BIAC/OECD, USA)
HENCHION, M. (ESB, Ireland)
HERMES, S. (ASIIN, Germany)
KELDSEN, T. (ANE, Danmark)
KOUNITZKY, A. (SIA, Switserland, Executive Board ENGINEERS EUROPE)
KRASATSENKA, A. (Euroheat & Power, Belgium)
LASAITE, L. (IPMA, France)
LIÇA, J. (Ordem dos Engenheiros, Portugal)
MARKUSSEN, T. (NITO, Norway, Executive Board ENGINEERS EUROPE)
MIGUÉIS, V. (University of Porto, Portugal)
MILTOVICA, B. (EESC, Latvia)
MISHELETTI, F. (IESF, France)
MORAITIS, N. (IVEPE, Greece)
NAGY, B. (SEFI, Hungary)
PÊGO, J (University of Porto, Portugal)
SEDANO, D. (CNE, Spain)
SMITS, E. (KIVI, Netherlands)
STYLIANOU, P. (President ECCE, Cyprus)
THÜRRIEDL, K. (Secretary General ECEC, Austria)
VERCAMMEN, N. (ie-NET, Belgium, Executive Board ENGINEERS EUROPE)
ZHYLA, Y. (Secretary, ENGINEERS EUROPE)

Day 2 - Wednesday 28 January 2026 : Outcome of the Split-up Groups

Present:

Identical as at Day 1 above, with the exception of :

BARRETT, M. (TU Dublin) - absent
FADEL, C. (BIAC/OECD) - absent
MILTOVICA, B. (EESC) - absent
MISHELETTI, F. (IESF) - absent
NOTERDAEME, J. (CSR, Belgium) – present
TILLEY, E. (President SEFI, UK) - present

ENGINEERS 4 EUROPE

Q1. What should the Skills Council learn from the past?

- Build on existing initiatives and structures, rather than starting from scratch.
- Acknowledge and use past data, evidence and outcomes as a solid foundation.
- Analyze, capitalize on, and scale up existing results to maximize impact.
- Ensure outcomes and good practices are widely disseminated across stakeholders.
- Promote Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a core principle.
- Embed lifelong learning to maintain skills relevance and workforce adaptability.
- Focus on long-term, cross-sector impact, rather than short-term interventions.

Q2. How should the Skills Council be organized in future?

- Maintain the existing working group structure, which has proven effective.
- Preserve a framework that supports collaboration, expertise sharing and continuity.
- Ensure stability while building established and trusted ways of working.
- Maintain the engineering survey as a core tool.
- Use the survey to provide evidence-based insights on skills needs and workforce trends.
- Leverage findings to support informed decision-making and strategic planning. If granted a decision-making role, the structure of the Skills Council should become a main council supported by sub-committee recommendations.
- Alternatively, limit core membership to around 15 members to ensure efficient and clear decision-making.
- Allow rotating membership based on themes and priorities to mobilize the right expertise, on the right subject and at the right time.
- Establish a dual function of the Council : act as an inclusive think tank to encourage broad reflection, knowledge sharing, and diverse perspectives, and create smaller, specialised groups for developing and implementing concrete proposals.
- Enable flexibility to align with other stakeholders' initiatives and governance structures.
- Facilitate effective industry engagement, recognizing the highly fragmented nature of the sector.

Q3. What are the interests of your Organisation in participating in the Skills Council ?

- Strengthening links between education, industry, policymakers and society.
- Enable and support cross-sector and cross-country dialogue and collaboration.
- Contribute to building a future-proof engineering ecosystem and collaborative platform.

- Support ways of rapid skills development aligned with evolving industrial needs.
- Promote means of workforce adaptability through lifelong learning.
- Ensure engineers are equipped to respond to emerging societal and technological challenges. Networking with relevant stakeholders, including key people and institutions across the sector.
- Promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange to align priorities and increase impact.
- Access to reliable, up-to-date data to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Use of data for strategic planning, monitoring and measuring outcomes.

- Strengthening sector-wide coordination and effectiveness through shared insights. Meaningful involvement of universities, recognizing that the current lack of funding is a major challenge.
- Clarification on how academic actors can be supported and resourced to participate effectively.
- Understanding how to influence decision-makers and policy processes so academic and research perspectives are reflected.
- Strengthening national cooperation among academic and professional stakeholders.
- Supporting and improving accreditation processes.
- Identifying new research areas aligned with emerging skills needs and sectoral priorities.
- Facilitating knowledge exchange between academia, industry, and other stakeholders.
- Supporting innovation, capacity building, and long-term impact across the ecosystem.

Q4. What should the Skills Council prioritize ?

- Provide strategic, forward-looking leadership for Europe's engineering skills ecosystem.
- Anticipate technological, industrial and economic change, rather than responding reactively.
- Focus on measurable impact and outcomes across education, industry and policy.
- Promote scalable solutions that can be adopted widely across Member States.
- Build and maintain trust among stakeholders (education providers, employers, policymakers).
- Support sustainable, long-term skills development aligned with Europe's competitiveness. Generate robust, comparable evidence through surveys and pan-European data collection.
- Ensure a comprehensive understanding of skills needs across countries and sectors.
- Use evidence to anticipate future skills demand and support forward-looking planning.
- Support education providers, professional associations and policymakers with insights for decision-making.
- Promote Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a central pillar of lifelong learning.

- Strengthen workforce adaptability and long-term skills relevance.
- Implement regular governance and reflection, including a yearly review of the Skills Strategy.
- Assess progress, update priorities, and ensure continued relevance over time.
- Maintain existing working groups to preserve continuity, expertise, and stakeholder engagement. Operate at a strategic level, rather than a purely operational one.
- Engage university boards and senior leadership to ensure institutional alignment.

Q5. Have the recommendations of the Skills Strategy been communicated internally within your Organisation and/or to other stakeholders over the last six months (why or why not)? What feedback did you receive?

- Yes, the recommendations of the Skills Strategy have been communicated internally and shared with relevant stakeholders.
- Member Organisations have used the Skills Strategy in different, practical ways.
- SEFI has used the report as a multi-project reference, demonstrating that concrete actions are already underway across several fields.
- KIVI uses the Skills Strategy to engage with technical universities.
- KIVI plans to further use the Strategy in upcoming discussions with universities of applied sciences.
- Feedback confirms the Strategy's relevance, credibility and practical value as a framework for dialogue with academic stakeholders.

Q6. Is your Organisation willing to engage in future research ?

- Yes, the Organisations are willing to engage in future research.
- AECEF, SEFI and KIVI have already confirmed their willingness to participate.
- This demonstrates a strong commitment to continued collaboration.
- Supports evidence-based development and future-oriented skills policy.
- Yes, engagement in future research is supported.
- All Group A members are willing to contribute to their personal capacity.
- Any organisational-level commitment would remain subject to internal alignment.
- Formal participation would require approval through respective internal processes.

Q7. Where do you see the biggest "leakage points" in the engineering talent pipeline for the under-represented groups – entry, education, transition to work, career progression, etc.

- Entry: Early leakage due to limited exposure to engineering, lack of role models and persistent stereotypes—especially affecting girls and under-represented groups.
- Education: High drop-out rates linked to heavy workloads, competitive environments, limited support and weak inclusion.
- Transition to work**:** Barriers include weak industry links, biased hiring practices and limited access to networks and internships.
- Career progression**:** Attrition driven by inflexible working conditions, limited part-time options and inadequate support after burnout or extended leave.

Q8. How can DEI contribute to the Pact for Skills objective of mobilising under-utilized talent in engineering across Europe ?

- Flexible careers and entrepreneurship to attract migrants and career changers.
- Recognition of foreign skills may unlock under-utilized talent.
- Inclusive training and workplaces can improve access and retention.

Q9. Which underrepresented groups could most realistically help close engineering skills gaps in the next 5-10 years and what currently prevents their integration?

- Overseas engineers represent the most realistic short-term solution to closing engineering skills gaps in the next 5–10 years.
- Other under-represented groups can contribute over time, but demographic change alone is too slow to meet immediate needs.
- Key barriers to integration include:
  - High costs of engineering education and requalification.
  - Limited or slow recognition of foreign qualifications.
  - Lengthy and complex pathways into the labor market.
- Women:
  - High untapped talent potential.
  - Barriers: stereotypes, bias in hiring/promotion, limited flexibility.
- Senior engineers:
  - Immediate skills and mentoring capacity.
  - Barriers: age bias, early retirement norms, lack of flexible roles.
- Migrant engineers:
  - Strong technical skills and global experience.

- Barriers: qualification recognition, visa constraints, language and network gaps.

Q10. What structural barriers (beyond regulation and policy) most limit DEI in engineering today (i.e. educational, organisational, cultural, etc.) ?

- Poor communication about what engineers actually do.
- Difficulty conveying the purpose and passion of the profession.
- Overemphasis on math and physics rather than real-world impact.
- Limited visibility of the societal problems engineers help to solve.
- Socio-economic inequality remains a major structural barrier to DEI in engineering.
- Unequal access to education, networks, and career opportunities limit participation.
- These disparities reinforce under-representation across the engineering sector.

Q11. How can DEI approaches realistically contribute to alleviating skills shortages and/or widen the talent pool for the engineering profession in the short to medium-term (not just long-term)?

- Focus DEI on removing concrete barriers to entry and transition, not only long-term cultural change.
- Improve understanding of DEI target groups and develop clear, realistic narratives about engineering careers.
- Address leakage at key transition points (school → secondary education → university → industry).
- Increase the attractiveness of engineering and STEM through stronger, applied teaching of physics and mathematics.
- Support better-informed teachers and raise societal awareness of what engineering work involves.
- Based action on robust data, shared good practices, and targeted socio-economic and income support.
- Upskill and reskill current workers to widen the talent pool quickly.
- Promote a forward-looking, inclusive culture that values diverse backgrounds and experience.

Q12. Which actors need to act first to make DEI a real skills solution – industry, education providers, professional bodies or policymakers ?

- Industry plays a key role in DEI but often continues to recruit from the same traditional profiles, which limits the inclusion of other under-represented groups.
- There is a clear gap between young engineers and experienced professionals in expectations, opportunities and progression.
- Current practices do not sufficiently support non-linear or interrupted career paths.
- To address skills shortages, industry needs more circular and flexible career pathways. This is particularly important to attract, retain and reintegrate female engineers.

- Industry: act first by embedding DEI into workforce planning and committing CEOs to inclusive reskilling.

- Skills Council: train CEOs inclusive leadership and promote reskilling as a lever for workforce diversity.
- Education providers and policymakers: align programmes, funding and policies to support inclusive skills pathways.
- Parallel action is needed, but industry and education providers should lead early, supported by professional bodies and policymakers.

  Industry (first movers) :
  - Embed DEI in recruitment, performance management and leadership expectations.
  - Create inclusive workplaces (flexible work, job-sharing, accessible environments).
  - Set accountability through data, targets, and reporting.
  - Send a strong demand signal to the rest of the system.

  Education providers:
  - Modernise the framing and content of engineering programs to broaden appeal.
  - Introduce inclusive and interdisciplinary curricula.
  - Create learning environments that reduce drop-out and support diversity.

  Professional bodies:
  - Upskill professionals and certify DEI-related competences.
  - “Train the trainers” to embed inclusive practices at scale.
  - Reinforce DEI through professional standards and leadership expectations.

  Policymakers:
  - Align regulation, funding and incentives with DEI goals.
  - Support inclusive education, reskilling and return-to-work pathways.
  - Enable accountability through data and policy frameworks.

Q13. Which DEI measures have already proven effective at organizations or sectoral level and how could they be scaled or mainstreamed at European level?

- Centralised integration services, early labor market access and local cooperation have proven effective in Portugal.
- EU scaling: support integration hubs, early skills recognition and local partnerships across Member States.
- Tailored training combined with mentoring and clear career pathways delivers strong outcomes.
- Youth participation in professional events:

  - Giving young engineers visibility at conferences increases confidence and retention.
  - EU scaling: reserve speaking slots, mentoring tracks and funding at European events.

- Role-model visibility in schools:
  - Showcasing diverse engineers' challenges stereotypes and broadens aspirations.
  - EU scaling: Create a European role-model network linked to schools and industry outreach.
- Targeted skills and inclusion programs:
  - Tailored training combined with mentoring and clear career pathways delivers strong outcomes.
  - EU scaling: Integrate into EU skills and digital programs with common evaluation criteria.
- Early exposure and confidence-building programs:
  - Initiatives like girls' engineering camps have proven effective in boosting interest and self-confidence.
  - EU scaling: replicate through EU funding, shared curricula and school–industry partnerships.