

April 2023

EU PACT FOR SKILLS – EFCA’S COMMITMENT

The European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations (EFCA) is the only federation to represent the engineering consultancy industry in Europe. Founded in 1992, EFCA has member associations in 28 European countries representing over 10,000 companies and more than one million staff in engineering and related services.

EFCA has identified “*Making Engineering the Career of Choice*” as one of six priority areas for the consulting engineering sector in the EU. In its manifesto¹, published in November 2022, the federation made policy recommendations on education and training, including upskilling, promoting STEM education to children at the start of their schooling and supporting female engineering students. In the same publication, EFCA also emphasised the need to respond to the climate emergency, which resonates particularly with younger people, who will be the worst affected by it. Engineering provides an opportunity for young people to make a significant impact, by designing the future climate resilient built environment.

The staff shortage was identified in EFCA’s Autumn 2022 Barometer, as the sector’s main challenge.

With skills so high on EFCA’s own agenda, the European Year of Skills comes at the perfect time and to mark the start of this year, EFCA joined the EU Pact for Skills in January 2023.

The Skills Challenge in 2023

The shortage of qualified engineers starts at the recruitment stage. Engineering graduates are highly skilled and versatile, with their qualifications being well matched to the needs of other – popular – sectors, such as IT, finance and consultancy. These sectors are good at attracting young talent and engineering firms find themselves in a competitive market. The sector also faces retention challenges. These appear to have been exacerbated over recent years, as the pandemic forced many people to reflect on their life choices and working patterns, sometimes changing career direction entirely, to give more time to personal, rather than professional goals. Work-life balance has never been more important and it is not just women that want to spend more time with young families, although their specific needs obviously include adequate maternity leave. In general, parents are increasingly asking for attractive conditions and policies for supporting their domestic responsibilities.

STEM education needs greater emphasis in schools and inspiring and effective teaching professionals. These subjects are not easy and can deter children at the beginning of their schooling, as well as older students at the point when they make choices about their future careers. Engineering is not typically promoted as an attractive and rewarding career, meaning that it is not on the radar of parents and guardians, who often have some influence over education choices.

¹ *Delivering a resilient, green and digital built environment*. November 2022.

EFCA Vision for 2030

- More young people taking up STEM education.
- More young people going into engineering.
- Dual skills as engineers/data engineers.
- The opportunity to work with AI and emerging technologies actively promoted to young people, who are excited by, rather than afraid of these technologies.
- Engineering seen by young people as an opportunity to contribute to sustainability and to help to solve the climate emergency. Young people need to understand how engineering can change the world.
- Lifelong learning continuing for mature engineers – with development offered around new technologies.
- SMEs to have equal access to young engineers, in a market where larger companies are able to offer the highest salaries.

Specific Commitment in Numbers

1. Award one young engineer for the best project submitted to the annual Future Leaders' Competition jury. Award to be announced in June 2023.
2. One workshop for all consulting engineers on a very topical theme, such as digitalisation or circular design.
3. One workshop for Ukrainian engineers on a subject, based on the list of offers received from EFCA's Member Associations.

How above will be achieved

The Future Leaders' Award is an annual competition, which is managed by the Future Leaders Committee and judged by a panel of three experts, including the winner of the previous year's competition.

The first workshop will be hosted by a Member Association online, facilitated with the support of the EFCA secretariat.

The second workshop will be facilitated by the EFCA secretariat and ICEG, the Ukrainian Member Association, with content and input from engineering firms from the Member Associations.

Specific Commitment for European Year of Skills

- Promote the inclusion of the consulting engineering sector in any relevant activities of the New European Bauhaus Academy.
- Explore a future partnership with the software companies on enhancing the digital skills of consulting engineers.
- Support Ukrainian consulting engineering sector, with offer of capacity building training, based on available knowledge in EFCA's Member Associations.
- Future Leaders' Competition in June 2023 (this is annual).