

BeChangeMaker Youth Festival 2026

Wednesday, 29 April, 11:00-13:35 CEST

Audience: 300+ BCM youth participants (18–30), student leaders, youth social entrepreneurs, TVET students, mentors, partner representatives.

Organizers: UNESCO-UNEVOC, BeChangeMaker (BCM), WorldSkills International, HP LIFE, YMCA Europe

The Change Maker's Toolkit: Skills for Life in the Future Economy

The future of work is defined by uncertainty - automation, AI, platform work, climate transition, demographic shifts and rising inequality. In this context, narrow technical know-how becomes obsolete quickly unless it is anchored in deeper, transferable skills for life. These include critical thinking, emotional resilience, collaboration, digital literacy, ethical reasoning and self-directed learning. Together, they function as a young person's adaptive toolkit to navigate multiple careers, entrepreneurship, disrupted industries and constant reskilling. Skills for life are therefore the real “employability guarantee”: not a guarantee of one specific job, but of the capacity to remain relevant, resilient and proactive in a rapidly changing world of work.

Skills for life are the backbone of youth preparedness because they are simultaneously: (1) build adaptability in uncertain labour markets, (2) enable meaningful participation in shaping norms and policies around work, and (3) unlock the capacity to innovate solutions to global challenges through social enterprise. For the BeChangeMaker movement, this means designing programmes where youth practice agency rather than only hearing about it; use entrepreneurship as a vehicle for social and environmental impact, not only income; and experience education and TVET as shared, co-created projects in which their ideas redefine what “skills for life” should mean in different contexts.

Social enterprise is the natural laboratory for this approach. It demands classic entrepreneurial skills - opportunity recognition, business modelling, financial literacy and marketing - while being driven by a social or environmental mission. At the same time, it requires systems thinking to understand interdependencies, intercultural competence to work across borders and identities, ethical judgement to navigate tradeoffs, and collaborative leadership to mobilise others around shared goals. Youth-led ventures make global challenges concrete, force integration of technical, business and socio-emotional competencies, and teach risk, failure and resilience in a purposeful context. Positioned as “learning engines”, social enterprises help youth prototype inclusive services, sustainable production and community support models, shifting entrepreneurship from individual success to collective problem-solving.

The annual BeChangeMaker Youth Festival, organised by UNESCO-UNEVOC with the support of WorldSkills International and HP LIFE, is the flagship space where this vision comes to life. Bringing together over 300 TVET youth and BeChangeMaker alumni worldwide, the 2026 edition under the theme “The Change Maker's Toolkit: Skills for Life in the Future Economy” is conceived as a high-energy forum for youth and experts to jointly respond to the skills challenge. Grounded in the UNESCO TVET Strategy 2022–2029 framing of skills to learn, work and live, the festival will showcase how skills for life can be cultivated and applied through social enterprises, TVET programmes and community projects.

Youth social innovators from the BCM network will present concrete initiatives addressing climate vulnerability, digital exclusion, mental health and youth unemployment, while experts, TVET practitioners reflect on pathways to embed such experiences into mainstream systems. The festival thus serves both as a compelling case for investing in skills for life and youth-led social innovation, and as a launchpad for new commitments and partnerships to ensure young people are recognised and supported as equal partners in shaping the future of work.

Agenda

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11:00-11:30 Introduction

Welcome from programme partners

- Mr Friedrich Huebler, Head of UNESCO-UNEVOC
- Mr Markus Schwertel, Director Government Affairs & Public Policy, HP
- Mr Alexander Amiri, Director of Sponsorship and Partnership, WorldSkills International
- Ms Diana Didi Belc, Lead BCM | Communications & Partnerships, YMCA Europe

11:30-12:10 Skills for life as the new success currency

Panel conversation with leading social entrepreneurs

How critical thinking, resilience, digital literacy and self-directed learning bridge volatile with labour markets and enabling lifelong employability

- Ms Jacqueline Kisato, Senior Lecturer, Mentor in Business Innovation, Incubation Kenyatta University, Kenya
- Mr Steven Harris Ramdev, Worldskills Champion, Graphic Design Technology Chief Expert, ACTVET, United Arab Emirates
- Mr Claudio Cocorocchia, Global Sales & Solutions Expansion Lead at HP

12:10-12:40 Learning through practice

Bridging employability and citizenship through skills for life

Applying skills for life to concrete issues like digital exclusion, climate vulnerability, inequality via social ventures and TVET-community hybrids

- Glovatrix - BeChangeMaker Winner 2025 (assistive technology)
- Paperpods - BeChangeMaker Winner 2025 - 3rd place (agricultural)

12:40-12:50 Life skills mapping exercise

Mentimeter

12:50-13:30 Scaling skills for life

Policy, partnerships and pathways

Opportunities and projects aimed at empowering youth-led social enterprises

- Mr Markus Schwertel, Director Government Affairs & Public Policy, HP
 - Ms Jessica Woitalla, Manager, Public and Private Funding, YMCA Europe
 - Ms Claudia Pompa, Programme Specialist, Section of Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO
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13:30-13:35 Closing and call to action

- Ms Priscilla Gatonye, Programme Officer, Inclusion and Youth Employability, UNESCO-UNEVOC