



## Position Paper

# A skilled workforce for Europe's future: Six asks for the EU VET Strategy

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LIXIL/GROHE | Input to the EU VET Strategy

### Without installers, Europe's climate goals cannot cross the finish line.

Every water-efficient product LIXIL and its brands like GROHE design depend on one thing to deliver its impact: a skilled installer. Without a workforce continuously trained to fit and maintain modern water technologies, regulatory targets and Europe's capacity to deliver climate transformation objectives remain theoretical.

The scale of the challenge is documented: **delivering the EU's Renovation Wave and sustainability ambitions will require approximately 3 million additional trained professionals by 2030**, according to the European Commission Green Deal Industrial Plan, published in February 2023.

**Through GROHE, our European-born flagship brand, we train over 2,500 students per year from more than 70 vocational schools and reach tens of thousands of certified installers through product training and micro-credentials.** At LIXIL and across its portfolio of housing and water brands, the installer profession is central to our global mission. We invest in the installer profession because our own success depends on it.

Our own training programs and our partnership with WorldSkills International reflect a long-term commitment to build the profession's status and skills base. What we have learned is that private investment at scale is possible. What is missing is a policy framework that recognises it, scales it, and connects it to formal qualification systems.

**The EU VET strategy is the right moment to act.** The six asks below are specific and actionable within the Commission's mandate. They are grounded in what we have built and what we know works.

### Our six asks for the EU VET Strategy

#### 1. Formally recognize structured industry contributions to VET curricula

Europe's vocational education systems rely on industry to define what skills are needed, but the formal curriculum process gives industry limited means to contribute content that is already proven. The EU's Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) initiative funds the creation of new industry-education partnerships. It is a useful instrument for building new relationships, but was not designed to recognize content that already exists and has been validated at scale. Industry can participate in CoVE as a partner, but cannot lead, and has no route to formal recognition for programmes it has developed independently.

For more than a decade, GROHE has developed the curriculum content directly with vocational schools, and built the institutional knowledge to deliver consistently across different national systems. The result is the GIVE programme: competency-based, modular, and proven across more than 70 vocational schools in Europe. Schools integrate it because there is genuine demand: teachers recommend it, students value it. But when a student completes a GIVE module, nothing changes on their official record. No certificate issued, no competency recorded in the national VET framework. Despite the content meeting professional standards that schools themselves have validated. This is a gap in the policy framework, not in the content.

**The VET Strategy and the Pact for Skills should establish clear criteria for recognizing structured industry-education content partnerships as a formal component of curriculum development.** This would distinguish genuine co-development from one-off engagement and give industry a route to recognition for what it has already built.

#### 2. Build a European sectoral competency framework for the installation trades

A qualified installer in one EU Member State cannot easily demonstrate equivalence in another. National qualification frameworks differ in structure, terminology, and assessed competencies. This limits labour

mobility and constrains workforce growth at exactly the moment when demand for trained installers is rising across Europe.

GROHE's GIVE program operates across national boundaries with a standardized modular architecture. The experience of deploying consistent content across different national VET systems demonstrates that cross-border replicability of content is achievable. What is missing is a European framework to receive those qualifications and establish equivalence between them.

The Union of Skills sector alliances offer the right vehicle. Plumbing, sanitary installation, and water-efficiency trades should be included in the first wave of sector alliances, with a mandate to produce **a European sectoral competency framework for establishing a common baseline of skills across Member States.**

### **3. Establish an EU framework for modular, stackable micro-credentials to enable a faster and more flexible route to the installation trades, career change, and cross-border equivalence**

Measuring training in years rather than demonstrated competencies slows entry into the profession, discourages career changers, and makes it harder for workers with verified skills acquired abroad to have those skills recognized. A worker who can demonstrate a specific competency should not be required to repeat a full qualification pathway to have it count.

GROHE's training system already operates on this logic. Eight modular categories each combine a workbook, product focus, written assessment, and practical test. A practitioner can build their qualification progressively, module by module, without repeating learning already completed. The system works. The gap is that these modules carry no formal standing with national qualification frameworks.

**A European framework for modular, stackable micro-credentials in the installation trades would create a faster and more direct path into the profession, provide a mechanism for recognizing competencies acquired in other EU countries or outside the EU, and support career transitions into skilled trades.** Embedding micro-credentials within national qualification frameworks is the step that converts proven training content into portable qualifications.

### **4. Strengthen modular Continuous Professional Development (CPD) systems for working professionals**

The technologies installers work with are changing faster than most VET curricula are updated. Water-efficient technologies, digital controls, and smart systems evolve on product cycles that bear no relation to the pace of curriculum revision. An installer qualified ten years ago is working with products and requirements that did not exist when they trained. There is no structured European mechanism to address this. A modular, customized, skill-based approach to CPD for installers and building technicians would allow practitioners to update discrete skill sets without repeating full qualification pathways. It would also make the profession more attractive: access to continuous learning and new technology is a factor in whether young people enter a trade and whether experienced practitioners remain engaged.

GROHE's GIVE program already applies this modular logic and offers a practical template. **The VET Strategy should strengthen CPD frameworks for the installation trades specifically, recognizing that workforce currency is not a one-time achievement but a continuous requirement.**

### **5. Direct EU funding instruments at the installer trades**

Installer training attracts limited dedicated funding relative to its importance to the Renovation Wave and the EU's water efficiency objectives. The profession sits at the intersection of climate, housing, and industrial policy, but this is not consistently reflected in where EU funding flows.



GROHE currently reaches 2,500 students per year. This represents private investment at scale. Targeted public co-financing through Erasmus+, the Skills Agenda, and the Renovation Wave measures could expand that reach substantially. Industry programme commitments formalised as pledges within the European Alliance for Apprenticeships would provide a concrete accountability mechanism and a basis for monitoring outcomes.

**Plumbing and sanitary installation should be recognized as a strategic priority within the relevant EU funding instruments.** The private investment is already there. The question is whether public instruments will meet it.

## 6. Invest in the attractiveness of the installer profession

The installer shortage is not only a training problem. It is a perception problem. The profession carries outdated associations that suppress entry, particularly among young people, women, and career changers. This is not inevitable.

The context has shifted. Automation and AI are reshaping white-collar work at speed. The trades are not automatable. The role of the installer has also changed in substance: today's installer advises customers on products, translates regulatory requirements into practical choices, and guides purchasing decisions. The gap between this reality and how the profession is publicly understood has real costs for workforce supply.

GROHE's partnership with WorldSkills International, including at WorldSkills Lyon 2024, reflects a deliberate, long-term commitment to reframe the installer profession as a high-status, future-oriented trade. **A European-level campaign on the attractiveness of the installation profession, co-designed with industry, would address the perception gap and broaden participation.** GROHE is prepared to contribute content, networks, and discuss financing of a coordinated European campaign.

### A partner, not a petitioner

LIXIL and its GROHE brand bring to this conversation a proven operational model, a network of schools across Europe, and a direct commercial stake in the outcome. We are asking the European Commission to help scale what works: recognise industry-developed content, build the qualification frameworks that connect training to mobility, and direct funding toward a profession that Europe's climate targets cannot be met without.

### About LIXIL and GROHE

**LIXIL** makes pioneering water and housing products that solve everyday, real-life challenges, making better homes a reality for everyone, everywhere. Drawing on a proud Japanese heritage, LIXIL creates world-leading technology and innovates through meaningful design, an entrepreneurial spirit, and responsible business growth. Approximately 53,000 colleagues operating in more than 150 countries are proud to make products that touch the lives of more than a billion people every day through industry-leading brands, including INAX, American Standard, TOSTEM, and GROHE.

**GROHE** is a leading global brand for complete bathroom solutions and kitchen fittings and has been a cornerstone of LIXIL's global portfolio since 2014. To deliver "Pure Freude an Wasser", every product is based on the brand pillars of quality, technology, design, and sustainability. With water at the core of everything it does, GROHE manages its value chain responsibly, contributing to LIXIL's Impact Strategy by developing technologies that optimize water- and energy-saving potential.