



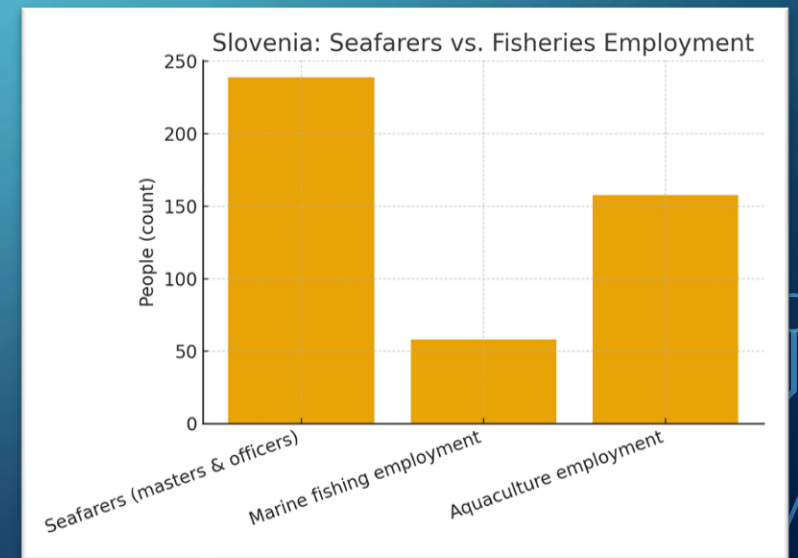
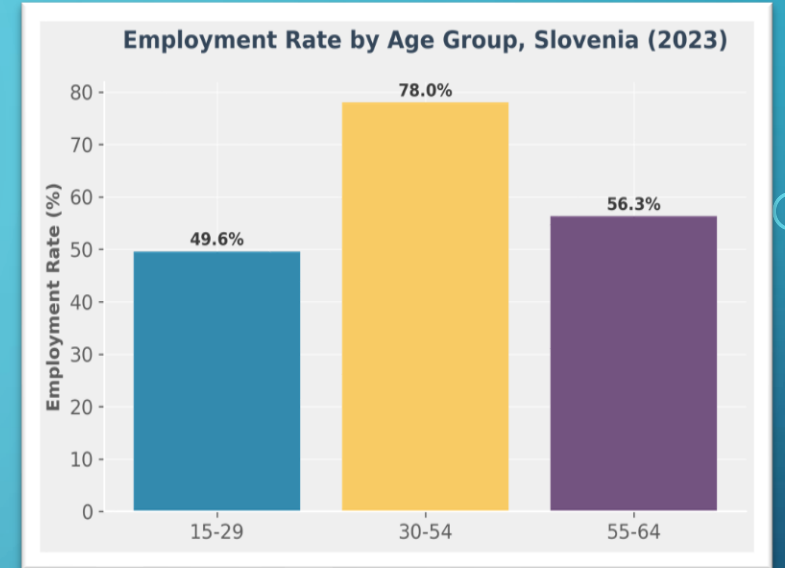
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LABOUR MARKET DEMANDS AND SKILLED PROFESSIONALS

ALIGNING SKILLS, EDUCATION, POLICIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ADRIATIC-
IONIAN / MEDITERRANEAN MACRO-REGIONS

PETER VIDMAR | 17 SEPTEMBER 2025 | IZOLA

CONTEXT

- Macro-regional strategies (EUSAIR, EU cohesion) emphasize sustainable, resilient growth.
- Labour markets are shifting due to climate, digitalisation, green transition.
- Skills gap threatens competitiveness and resilience.

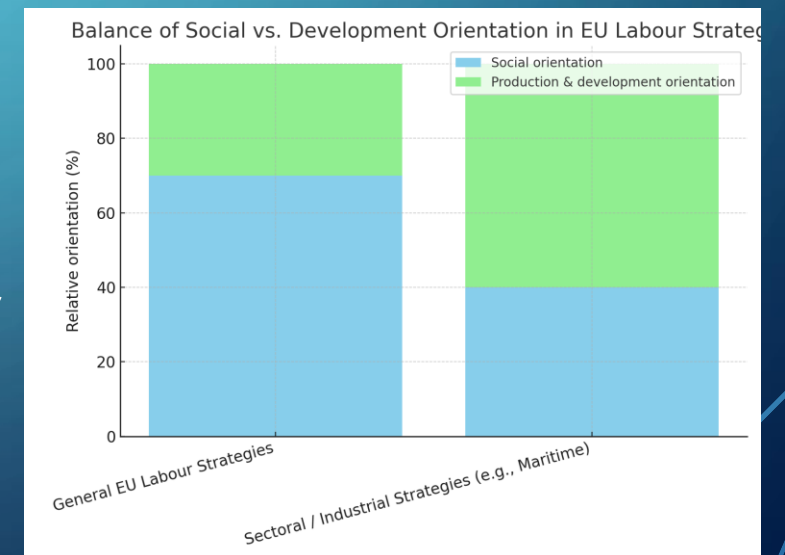
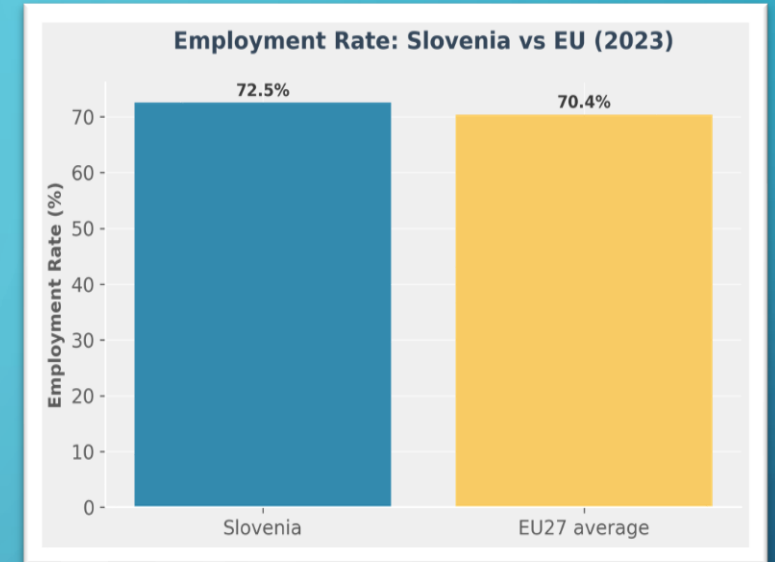


KEY TRENDS

- Demographic shifts: ageing, youth migration.
- New growth areas: blue/green economy, digital sectors.
- High demand: digital, green, soft skills.
- Persistent mismatches between education output and demand.

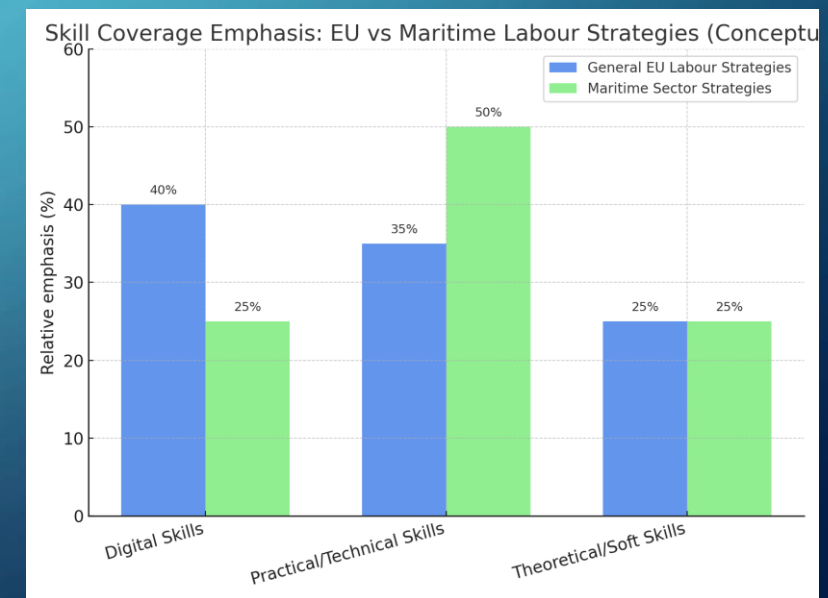
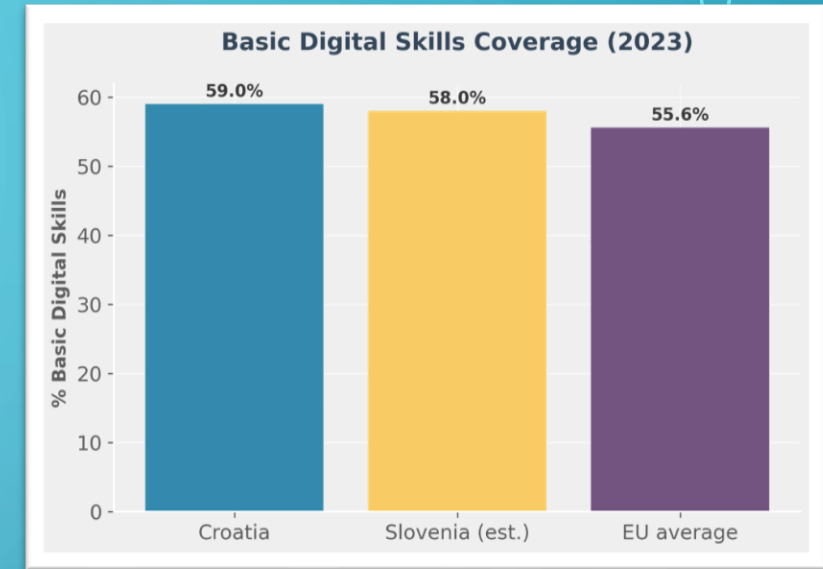
BARRIERS / GAPS

- Weak labour market intelligence & forecasting.
- Poor collaboration: business – academia – public sector.
- Regional disparities (coastal/rural vs. urban centres).
- Maritime education is not a deficit occupation
- Slow adaptation of curricula.
- **EU labour strategy: employment policies = more social, while sectoral/industrial strategies = more production/development-driven, with social safeguards added.**



OPPORTUNITIES & GOOD PRACTICES

- Dual education, apprenticeships, industry-education partnerships.
- Lifelong learning, micro-credentials, reskilling.
- Interdisciplinarity
- Digital training platforms.
- Community and cross-border mobility programmes.



POLICY & STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS

- EUSAIR and EU macro-regional cooperation potential.
- Cohesion funds & Green Deal alignment.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol examples as models of integrated planning.
- Recognition of qualifications & quality assurance.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Strengthen labour market intelligence.
- Scale up apprenticeships and dual systems (study/training programs).
- Prioritize lifelong learning in policies.
- Embed green & digital skills in all curricula.
- National and Regional platforms for cooperation and pilots.



BENEFITS

- Reduced mismatch & youth unemployment.
- Enhanced competitiveness in key sectors.
- Retain skilled professionals locally.
- Inclusive access to opportunities (gender, rural-urban).
- More resilient, future-proof economies.

CHALLENGES / RISKS

- Underfunding and project-based approaches.
- Slow recognition of skills.
- Broad and/vs specialized knowledge.
- Uneven access to training.
- Balancing diverse stakeholders' incentives.

CALL TO ACTION

- Commit to bridging vision and practice.
- Each sector must take steps: curricula reform, private sector investment, government incentives.
- Propose creation of a cross-regional skills alliance.

 Create a Cross-National/Regional (interdisciplinary) Skills Alliance

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Which sectors face most urgent shortages?
 - Construction & Skilled Trades
 - Digital & High-Tech
 - Blue Economy / Maritime Services
- Successful models and barriers?
 - Good practices usually involve co-creation / partnerships among government, education providers, and businesses
 - Local / regional specificity matters: what is a shortage in one area may be oversupply elsewhere.
 - Continuous monitoring & diagnostics (labour market data, feedback loops) are essential to adapt.
- How to scale cooperation across regions
 - Shared Strategic Frameworks
 - Regional Platforms & Networks; EUSAIR TSGs, ICPDR, Black Sea Commission, UNEP/MAP) as “hubs” for alignment.
 - Cross-border Flagship Projects
 - Financing Synergies (combine EU cohesion, Interreg, EIB/JASPERS, and national funds)
 - Science–Policy–Practice Interface
 - Skills & Capacity-Building (regional Centres of Vocational Excellence, macro-regional skills alliance)
 - Communication & Trust-Building
- What indicators should we track?
 - Climate & Environmental Resilience
 - Labour Market & Skills
 - Cooperation & Governance
 - Impact on Society & Economy