

## **GASTRONET - Partnership in vocational education and training**



### **Adapting vocational education and training to the needs of the labor market**

#### **Improving quality assurance in vocational education and training.**

#### **Contributing to innovation in VET**

### **Report - The situation on the labour market and education in the EU.**

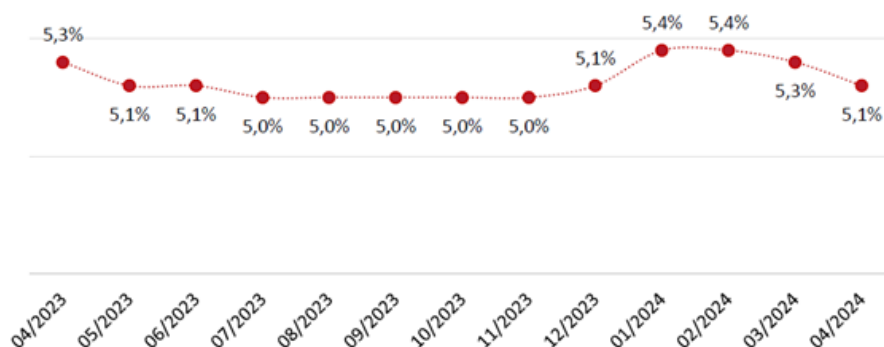
#### **Labor market in Poland**

Poland, with a result of 73.6% (2020), was among the EU-27 Member States that reached and even exceeded the employment level in the 20-64 age group set by the European Commission as a target for 2020. In general, the main indicators describing the situation on the labour market in Poland improved year by year, and our distance to the EU average systematically decreased.

In 2020, the positive growth trends were halted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on the functioning of economies introduced along with it. However, contrary to fears, the forecasted collapse on the labour market did not occur, and only the pace of improvement of the main indicators describing the labour market in Poland slowed down.

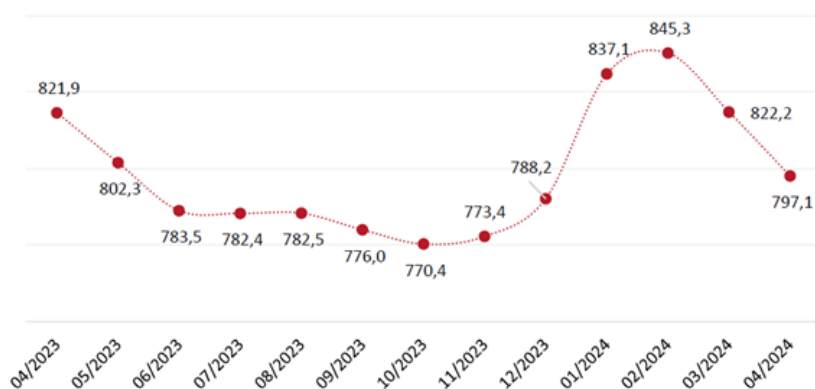
According to data from the Central Statistical Office, the unemployment rate registered in Poland in April 2024 was 5.1%. Both month-on-month and year-on-year, it was lower by 0.2 percentage points.

Registered unemployment rate in Poland in the period 04.2023 – 04.2024



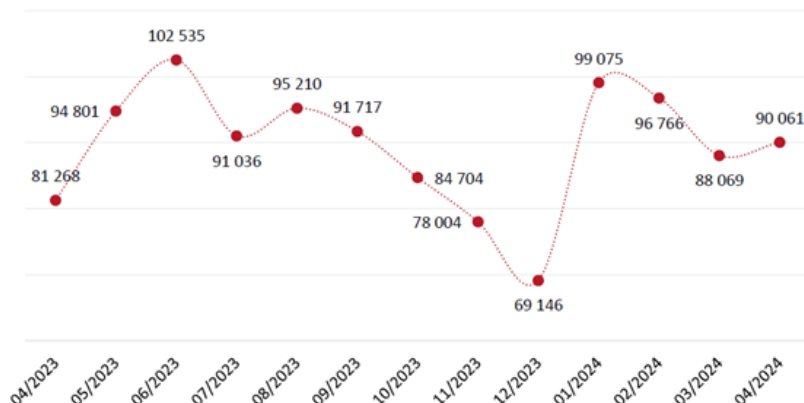
In the first half of 2024, the unemployment rate, depending on the province, ranged from 3.1% to 8.5%. Once again, the highest values of the indicator were recorded in the Podkarpackie (8.5%), Warmińsko-Mazurskie (8.1%) and Świętokrzyskie (7.5%) provinces, while the lowest – in Wielkopolskie (3.1%), Śląskie (3.7%) and Mazowieckie (4.1%) provinces. Over the year, the unemployment rate fell the most in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Lubelskie provinces (0.6 p.p. each), increased in five (from 0.1 to 0.2 p.p.), and remained unchanged in two (Łódź and Śląskie). At the end of April 2024, there were 797.1 thousand unemployed people registered in labor offices, i.e. 25.1 thousand (3.1%) fewer people than a month earlier and 24.8 thousand fewer. (3.0%) less than in March 2023 (Chart 2). The highest number of unemployed people was recorded in the Mazowieckie voivodeship (111.9 thousand), and the lowest – in the Lubuskie voivodeship (15.9 thousand).

Number of unemployed persons registered at labor offices in the period 04.2023 – 04.2024



In April 2024, 90,000 job offers were reported to labor offices, which is 8.8 thousand (10.8%) more than a year earlier.

Number of job offers submitted per month in the period 04.2023 – 04.2024



According to the Central Statistical Office, the average monthly employment in the enterprise sector in April 2024 amounted to 6,499.4 thousand people and was slightly lower than a month earlier (by 1.8 thousand). Year-on-year, it dropped by 24.9 thousand (0.4%).

According to the results of the labor demand survey, at the end of the second quarter of 2024, the number of vacancies amounted to 110.8 thousand, which means a decrease of 1.0 percent compared to the previous quarter and 2.1 percent compared to the same period of the previous year. 36.1 thousand entities of the national economy had vacancies, which constitutes 5.7 percent of all entities. In the structure of vacancies by profession, the share of vacancies intended for machine and device operators and assemblers increased (by 1.4 percentage points to 17.4 percent) and employees performing elementary work (by 0.7 percentage points to 6.2 percent). In the second quarter of 2024, 110.1 thousand new jobs were created, which means an increase of 3.6 percent compared to the same period of the previous year. The largest increase in newly created positions was recorded in entities employing 10 to 49 people (by 18.6%) and in the smallest entities, employing up to 9 people (by 4.0%). At the same time, 61.2 thousand jobs were eliminated, which is a decrease of 15.8% compared to the first quarter of 2024. Data from the Central Statistical Office indicate a stabilization of the situation on the labor market in Poland, with the unemployment rate remaining at 5.0%. Despite a slight decrease in employment in the corporate sector, an increase in the number of newly created jobs is observed, which may indicate a certain flexibility of the labor market in the face of changing economic conditions.

The Gastronomy sector, despite the difficulties observed in recent years, still remains a promising industry in which talent and skillful use of global trends on the local market translate into professional success. According to experts, the problems in the catering industry did not disappear with the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the difficult situation in the industry was deepened by inflation and galloping prices of energy and raw materials. Rising maintenance costs force restaurant and pub owners to look for savings and raise prices. The average cost of one of the most frequently purchased dishes in Poland, pizza, has increased by about 10% over the past year, according to the latest Food Trend Report of the Pyszne.pl platform. Higher prices are often met with a sharp reaction from consumers, who

are also looking for savings and giving up on overly expensive services. According to the Consumer Panel Services GfK study, described by "Rzeczpospolita", about 2,000 catering establishments have been closed in Poland recently. New ones appear almost immediately in place of the closed premises. Moreover, changing consumer preferences and real globalization encourage the search for new ways of implementing global trends on the Polish market. Economic courage in gastronomy is confirmed by the statistics of the Central Statistical Office. In November 2022, there were 17,620 catering establishments in Poland in the REGON register, a year later, i.e. at the end of November 2023, almost two thousand more. Establishments that are able to adapt to the preferences of the modern recipient of catering services remain on the market. And this is thrifty, a bit stressed, but also curious about the world. According to the aforementioned Food Trend Report, customers are increasingly opting for "fusion of cultures" dishes and oriental cuisine. In turn, high life pressure and stress encourage people to look for services that improve their mood. Here another promising trend appears, the so-called comfort food. In 2024, more than ever, consumers will be willing to pay for catering services that will make them feel good, forget about their troubles, be relaxed and recall pleasant moments. This is also a huge opportunity for traditional cuisine. "Home-cooked meals", nostalgic milk bars, cakes like grandma's - this is what customers will also be looking for in 2024. New opportunities for the development of the industry are also emerging with the dynamic development of "foodie culture" on the Internet. According to Pyszne.pl, as many as 56% of respondents aged 18-24 look for culinary inspiration on TikTok and YouTube. 43% of us visit culinary blogs. Running a blog and/or promoting your own catering business on the Internet is no longer optional, but is becoming a necessity for people who want to achieve market success. Not only are culinary preferences changing, but also the ways of using services. An increase in revenue is forecasted for the entire catering industry in this and subsequent years, but the most spectacular successes are celebrated by the food delivery industry. According to estimates by the Stava platform, in 2024 this market, for the first time in history, is to be worth over PLN 10 billion. Many establishments, especially in tourist towns, conduct seasonal recruitment, but catering work for people with catering education most often means stable employment conditions. High turnover is visible in fast-food establishments, but slow-food establishments, focusing on high quality service, carefully select candidates for their teams and put a lot of effort into retaining employees for years. The magnet is supposed to be the commonly used non-wage benefits, such as subsidized meals, discounts on products and services, life insurance, private medical care, integration events (according to Sedlak&Sedlak).

### **Job offers in Poland**

In April 2024, employers published 266.5 thousand new job offers on the 50 largest recruitment portals in Poland. This is a decrease of only 1% year-on-year (in April 2023, 269.4 thousand offers appeared). Similar dynamics were last recorded in July 2023, which gives hope that the trend of decreasing number of job offers in Poland is slowly breaking. It is worth recalling here that in the autumn of 2023, the decreases reached as much as 27%. The largest increase in the number of job offers year-on-year was recorded in the legal

industry (40%), with trainee legal advisers/attorneys in particular in demand (+78%). Demand for manual workers has also increased significantly (22%), especially drivers (+33%). On the other hand, declines in the dynamics of offers were recorded among job offers addressed to IT employees (-29% y/y), HR employees (-11% y/y) and finance professionals (-10% y/y), although of course each of these groups includes professions for which demand is still high, e.g. CIO/IT director (+400%) or financial director/CFO (+67%).

In general, since spring 2023, the average number of benefits in job offers, such as sports cards, private medical care or insurance, has remained high, but in April 2024, employers offered the most in the history of the survey - an average of 6.9 incentives per job offer. The most frequently offered were still training, a medical package and a sports card, as well as high remuneration or flexible working hours.

There were approximately 5.5 requirements for candidates from employers per job offer (an increase of 0.1 p.p. m/m, returning to the level from February 2024). Most often, it was relevant experience (72%, a decrease of 3 p.p. m/m), education (43%, an increase of 2 p.p. m/m) and availability (31%, a decrease of 5 p.p. m/m). Knowledge of a foreign language was required by 30% of employers (compared to 33% in the previous month).

People who link their future with the catering or hotel and catering industry can often count on an employment contract with all the benefits and protection associated with it. What's more, more and more employers care about the professional development of their employees by offering co-financing for industry courses. This is partly due to the growing requirements in the HoReCa sector and the desire of catering establishments to keep up with trends, and partly to the expectations of employees themselves, who are more willing to associate with companies that allow them to improve their qualifications. According to the Central Statistical Office, employment growth has been maintained in accommodation and catering for 2024, reaching 4.8%.

## **Education and the labor market**

According to a study conducted by pracuj.pl, young people do not feel prepared to enter the labor market. The article summarizes the results of the "Generation Z at work" study conducted in March 2024. 64% of Generation Z representatives believe that the role of formal education is decreasing on the market, while practical skills are increasing. Only 35% of respondents agree with the statement that vocational schools and technical schools in Poland effectively provide knowledge useful on the labor market. In the context of high schools, only 16% of respondents indicated that they provide any knowledge useful on the labor market. The results regarding universities also do not look good - only 23% of young respondents agree that they offer adequate preparation for entering the labor market. At the same time, 24% of respondents indicate that higher education is necessary to achieve professional success. 35% of respondents aged 18-24 declare that they feel adequately prepared to enter the labor market. Such declarations may reflect the aforementioned gaps

in education or lack of practical experience. Less than half of the respondents believe that they have extensive knowledge of job search tools.

As many as 66% of respondents from the youngest age group surveyed (18-24 years old) declare that their professional aspirations are strongly connected to personal passions and hobbies. This trend indicates the growing importance of pursuing personal interests in a professional context and means that for people entering the job market, not only financial stability will be crucial, but also the opportunity to find fulfillment in what they do.

The generations that are currently entering their professional lives show a significantly different attitude towards employment than their predecessors. Instead of long-term loyalty to one employer, Generation Z is increasingly looking for diversity and flexibility, which encourages them to change jobs more often; A study of the first career choices of different generations indicates that the oldest respondents began their careers in more formal work environments. The largest percentage of this group of respondents (26% vs. 8% in Generation Z) indicated an occupation related to office administration as their first job. The most frequently chosen answer among Generation Z people (21%) is work in the catering sector.

46% of the oldest age group spent more than 5 years in their first job. Among the youngest respondents, 32% claim that they spent 1-3 months in their first job. When asked how many places they have worked so far, respondents most often indicate 3 to 5 places, although among the youngest group, i.e. people aged 18-24, such an answer is given by 41% of respondents. Among representatives of the silver generation, who have currently been on the market the longest, the most common answer (for 47% of respondents) is also 3-5 places. Younger generations are entering the job market earlier than their older colleagues. This change may result from the greater availability of occasional and seasonal work for young people, but also from a certain cultural shift, in which the pressure to choose a specific career path at the beginning is much less today than it was in the future.

Catering and hotel and catering services, despite certain challenges, are among the most promising, and the demand for people with a degree in cook, confectioner, food technician and catering services and related fields is already huge. What's more, the HoReCa sector is currently undergoing many fascinating changes, and the creation of new trends is influenced not only by consumers and market conditions, but also by inventive chefs, restaurateurs and catering service employees. A good catering school will help develop talent and skills related to the chosen field of gastronomy and will provide tools for independent development in the industry. A cook is one of the so-called deficit professions in Poland, and the demand for people who graduated from catering schools will also be high on the labor market in 2024. According to the annual study conducted on the initiative of the Ministry of Labor - Occupational Barometer, the deficit of people willing to work as chefs this year will be visible in as many as 195 cities and counties in Poland. Cooks will be most in demand in Warsaw, Wrocław, the Wrocław, Krapkowie, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Kołobrzeg and Puck counties.

The following will also have a good chance of finding a job:

- chefs (wanted in 83 cities and counties, especially in the capital of Lower Silesia and the surrounding area),
- kitchen assistants (shortage in 104 cities and counties),
- confectioners (too few candidates for work in 91 cities and counties),
- food processing workers (wanted in 40 cities and counties),
- waiters and bartenders (shortage in 71 cities and counties).

Qualified graduates of catering schools can often find work right away. The range of opportunities that people with a diploma in a cook, confectioner or even a food and catering service technician can choose from is also growing. The possibility of completing internships abroad, developing parallel online activities, using modern technologies or fresh ideas for your own business within a trendy niche - now more than ever, the industry needs creative people who will be able to see the market opportunities of the rapidly changing world of culinary services.

### **European labour market**

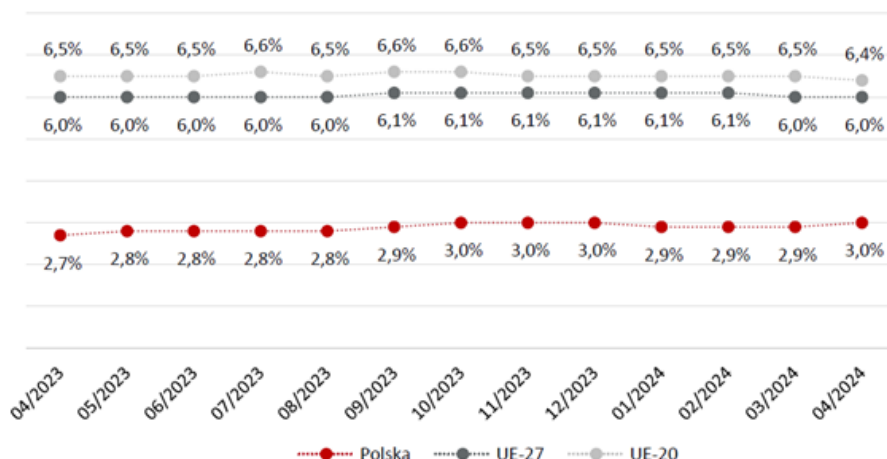
Despite the economic uncertainty, the European labour market has shown remarkable resilience, with a significant increase in job vacancies. Data from JobsPikr reveals that job vacancies increased from 12.6 million in Q4 2023 (January to March 2024) to 18.8 million in Q1 2024 (April to June 2024). This 49% increase suggests strong demand for workers, driven by several factors. First, many industries that have been heavily impacted by the pandemic, such as tourism, hospitality and retail, have seen a strong rebound as restrictions ease and consumer confidence returns. This has led to an increase in employment, particularly in countries where these sectors play a significant role in the economy. Second, digital transformation across industries continues to accelerate, creating demand for tech-savvy professionals in IT, digital marketing, cybersecurity and data analytics. The shift to remote work and digital services, which began as a necessity during the pandemic, has now become a permanent feature of the job market, creating new opportunities for workers with the right skills. Finally, there has been a surge in interest in sustainability and green technologies, driven by both government initiatives and consumer demand. This has led to an increase in job opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, electric vehicles and environmental consulting.

According to data from the EU's statistical office Eurostat, the unemployment rate in the Member States (EU-27) in April 2024 was 6.0%, which means no change both compared to the previous month and year-on-year.



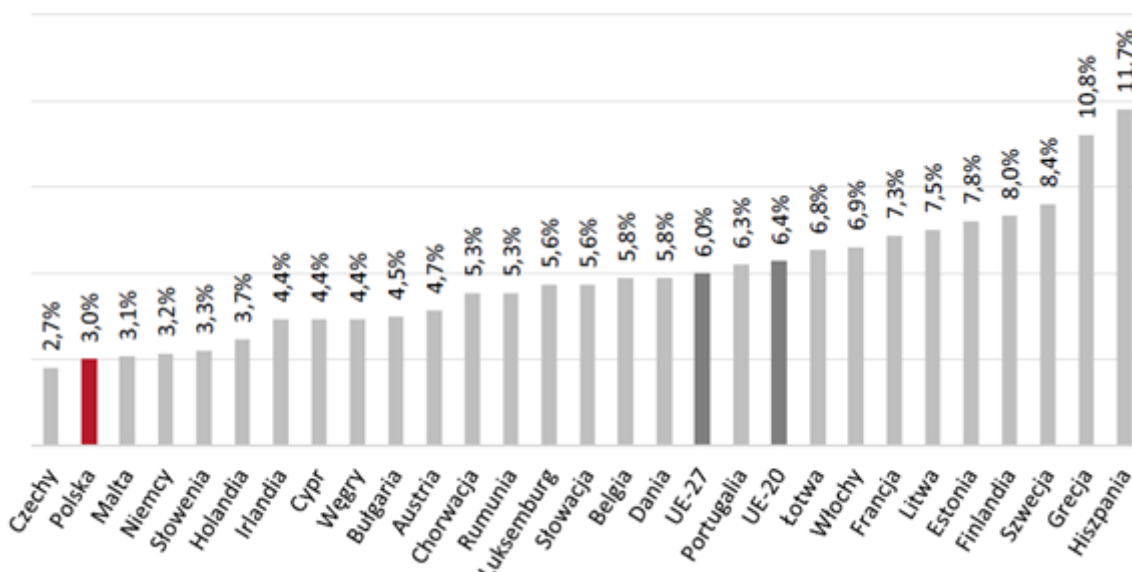
On the other hand, the unemployment rate for the eurozone countries (EU-20) in April 2024 was 6.4%. Both compared to the result recorded a month earlier and year-on-year, it was lower by 0.1 percentage points.

Unemployment rate for the European Union (EU-27), the eurozone (EU-20) and Poland in the period 04.2023 - 04.2024



In April 2024, the highest unemployment rates were again recorded in Spain (11.7%), Greece (10.8%) and Sweden (8.4%). The lowest unemployment rates were recorded in the Czech Republic (2.7%), Poland (3.0%) and Malta (3.1%). At that time, according to Eurostat, 528,000 people were unemployed in Poland - 5,000 more than in March 2024. A year earlier, in April 2023, there were 42,000 fewer such people (486,000). The data concerns people aged 15-74, actively seeking employment and ready to start work in the next two weeks.

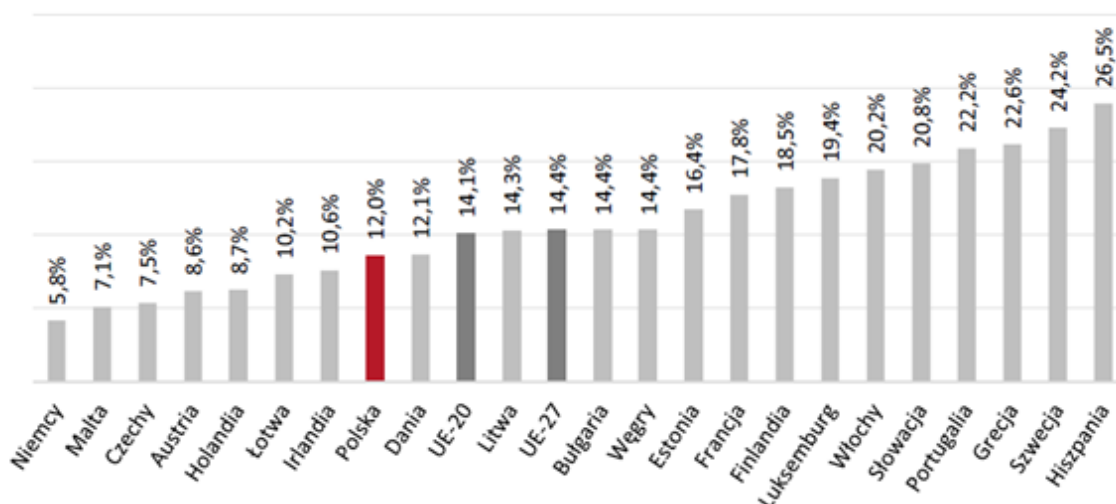
Unemployment rate in the EU (EU-27), the eurozone (EU-20) and individual EU countries in 04.2024





In April 2024, the unemployment rate among young people (up to 25 years of age) was 14.4% in the EU (a decrease of 0.3 pp m/m and an increase of 0.4 pp y/y) and 14.1% in the eurozone (a decrease of 0.2 pp m/m and an increase of 0.1 pp y/y). In the period under review, the lowest values of the indicator were again recorded in Germany (5.8%), Malta (7.1%) and the Czech Republic (7.5%), and the highest – in Spain (26.5%), Sweden (24.2%) and Greece (22.6%). Poland, with a result of 12.0% (an increase of 0.1 pp m/m and an increase of 0.6 pp y/y), was again in 8th place among the EU countries.

Youth unemployment rate (under 25 years of age) in the EU (EU-27), the eurozone (EU-20) and individual EU countries in 04.2024



In April 2024, the unemployment rate among women in the EU-27 was 6.3% (down 0.1 p.p. m/m; no. y/y), and among men – 5.7% (no. m/m; no. y/y).

In the eurozone, the unemployment rate among women reached 6.7% (down 0.2 p.p. both m/m and y/y). Unemployment among men was 6.1% (no. m/m; down 0.1 p.p. y/y).

Poland, with an unemployment rate of 3.2% for women and 2.8% for men, ranks third and second, respectively, in the ranking of EU countries.

### Job offers in the EU

According to the Talent Trends 2024 report, the most important factor in attracting and retaining employees in an organization is compensation. Other important factors in determining job satisfaction include work-life balance and flexibility, which employees see as a right rather than a privilege. Candidates are increasingly looking for autonomy and flexibility in their workplaces, which poses a huge challenge for employers, many of whom would like to return employees to the office. Nearly half (49%) of respondents who are currently in the office more than a year ago are there because of changes in company policy. 53% of them are actively looking for a new job, suggesting that employees will consider other options if their expectations for flexibility are not met.

- The European labour market has been performing as follows in recent years:
- 2008-2013: The Beveridge curve suggests that the global financial and sovereign debt crises led to more job creation in areas where unemployment was previously relatively low.
- 2014-2019: Labour markets improved as job vacancies rose and unemployment fell.
- 2020-2021: The COVID-19 crisis led to fewer job vacancies and lower unemployment, as sectors such as hospitality experienced both reduced demand and recruitment challenges. By mid-2021, both had returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- 2021-2022: Despite the increased number of vacancies, they became harder to match with job seekers. The situation reversed in 2023, with unemployment rates falling slightly and the number of vacancies falling.
- In 2023, countries such as the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands showed high job vacancies and low unemployment, indicating high matching efficiency.

Higher levels of education are associated with higher employment rates, lower unemployment and inactivity rates in the labour market. This relationship holds true in almost all OECD, partner and/or accession countries for which data are available, regardless of gender, age group, immigration background or subnational region. On average across OECD countries, 60% of adults (aged 25–64) with less than secondary education are employed, compared to 77% of those with secondary or post-secondary education and 87% of adults with tertiary education (Table A3.1). At the same time, 9.0% of adults with less than secondary education are unemployed and 34% are inactive; 5.1% of those with secondary or post-secondary education are unemployed and 19% are inactive; and 3.4% of those with tertiary education are unemployed and 10% are inactive (OECD, 2024[3]).

### **Education levels and employment rates**

Higher levels of education in a country tend to provide younger people with better employment opportunities. On average across OECD countries, 61% of 25-34-year-olds with less than a secondary education are employed, compared with 79% of those with secondary or post-secondary education or less. The employment rate for younger adults with a tertiary education is even higher, at 87%.

Employment rates improved slightly between 2016 and 2023 for younger adults at all levels of education in most countries with comparable trend data. The increases tend to be highest for those with a higher education. Greece, Hungary, and Italy saw the highest percentage point increases in employment rates for 25-34-year-olds with a tertiary education, with increases of at least 10 percentage points over the period.

Rapidly developing artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities have recently raised concerns about job losses or fewer job offers for some of the more non-traditional, cognitive tasks performed by adults with a higher education. However, early evidence suggests that AI-related job vacancies still constitute only a small fraction of overall job vacancies, as AI technology adoption is highly concentrated in those workplaces that have job structures

suitable for implementing AI-based algorithms (Acemoglu et al., 2022[5]; Borgonovi et al., 2023[6]). While the impact of AI on the labor market is currently very small, as AI adoption is not widespread, progress is so rapid that the effects in 2024 will need to be measured precisely. Although artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies are likely to transform the skill structure of employment, creating demand for skills that are complemented by technology rather than replaced by it, adults with low educational attainment are less likely to adapt to the shift in needed skills (Lassébie and Quintini, 2022[7]; Autor, 2024[8]). Between 2016 and 2023, the gap in employment rates between those aged 25–34 with less than secondary education and those with tertiary education widened in more than half of the OECD, partner and/or accession countries with comparable trend data.

Labour market policy actions aimed at EU labour market institutions and employers should include:

- modernising employment services to better match job offers,
  - anticipating skills shortages and labour market needs,
  - encouraging labour mobility across Europe,
  - supporting economic migration and the ability to adapt to market changes.
- Statistics on job vacancies and unemployment, provided by national statistical agencies, provide the basis for the analysis. However, data discrepancies between EU Member States limit comprehensive economic divisions. This analysis, designed primarily for policy makers, aims to show the course of business cycles, help identify labour market bottlenecks and track structural changes in the economy.

### **Changes in the labor market - Key conclusions**

- In 2024, 10% of employees worked in positions that did not exist before.
- In 2018, the most important competencies were: knowledge of Microsoft Office, customer service, knowledge of Microsoft Excel, management and leadership. The TOP 5 in 2023 are: communication, analytical skills, teamwork, problem-solving and customer service.
- Over the next 5 years, 50% of the competencies that are currently essential in our work will change. AI innovations will contribute to accelerating 70% of these changes.
- Today's college graduates have the opportunity to take on almost twice as many different professional roles during their careers as graduates from 15 years ago.
- The three most important changes observed by specialists are: the use of artificial intelligence to carry out everyday tasks, increased efficiency of work from home and remotely, and management of multi-generational teams.