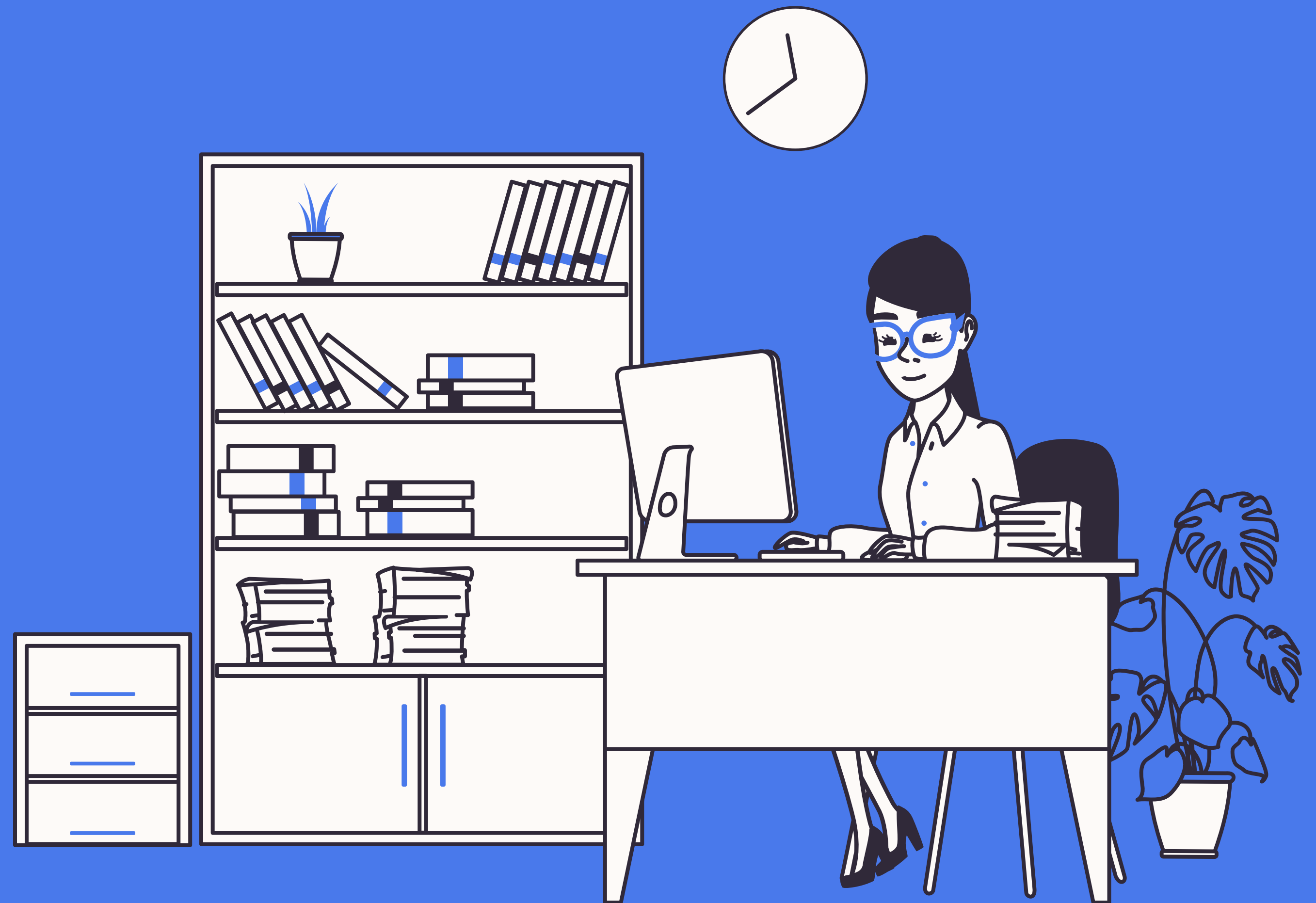


VET and Digitalisation: The Italian Overview



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Introduction

The aim of this report is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the entire Italian VET system, with particular regards to the digitalisation process.

ICT played a crucial role and proved to be indispensable for continuing to live and work during the lockdown period. For this reason, a general overview of the level of digitization of the Italian economy and society is initially provided, mainly considering the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) provided by the European Commission



The second part consists of analysing the gaps, needs and opportunities in the use of ICT within the whole VET system for the delivery of distance learning during COVID-19.

Digital Economy and Society Index

Focusing on the Italian landscape, the results of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) show a strong gap in terms of digital transformation in relation to other Member States with similar socio-economic characteristics.

As it can be observed from the graph, in fact, among the 27 Member States, Italy ranks 20th for the overall level of digitization, strongly penalised with respect to the “Human Capital” and “Connectivity” dimensions.

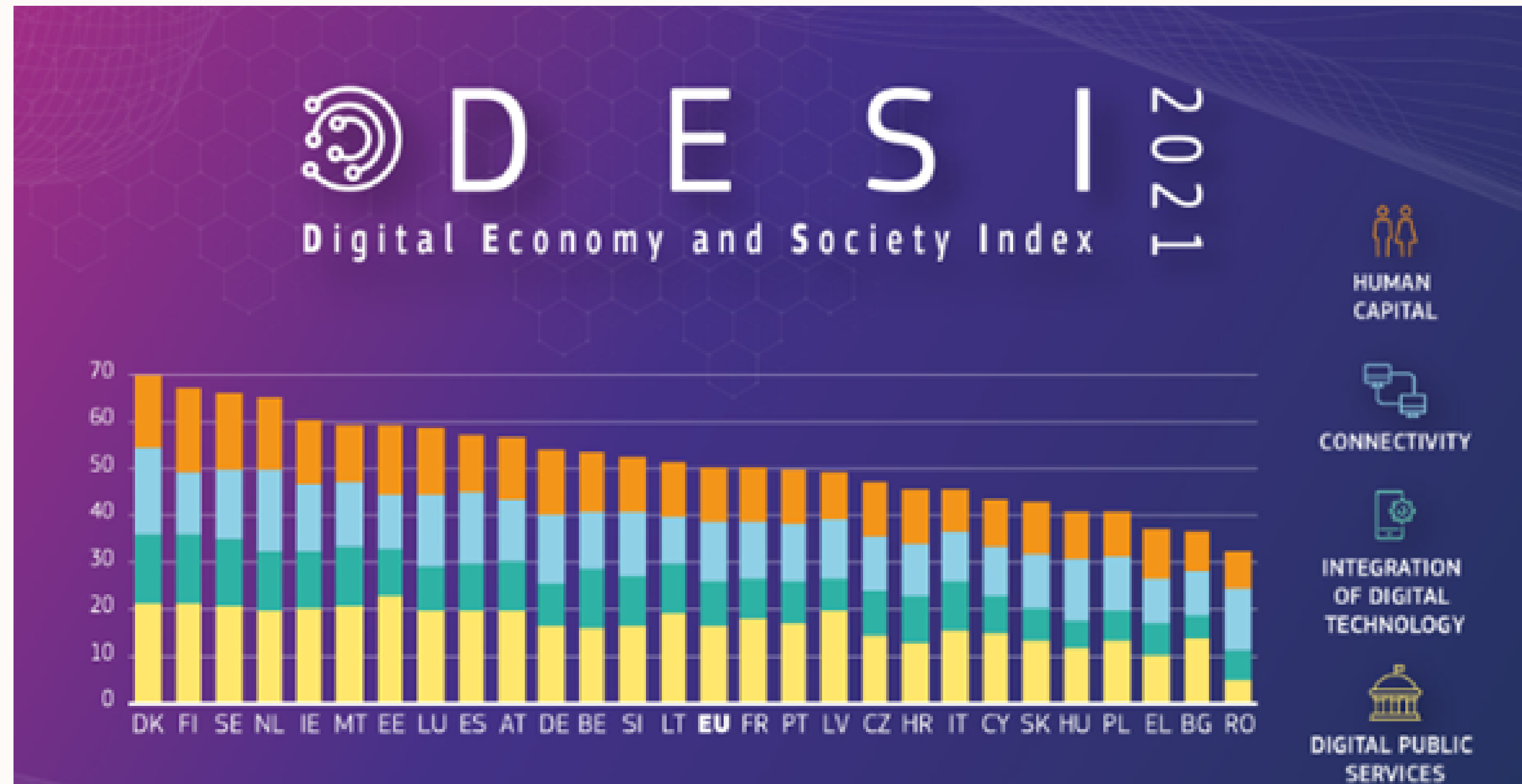


Exhibit 1 Digital Economy and Society Index for All Member States, 2021

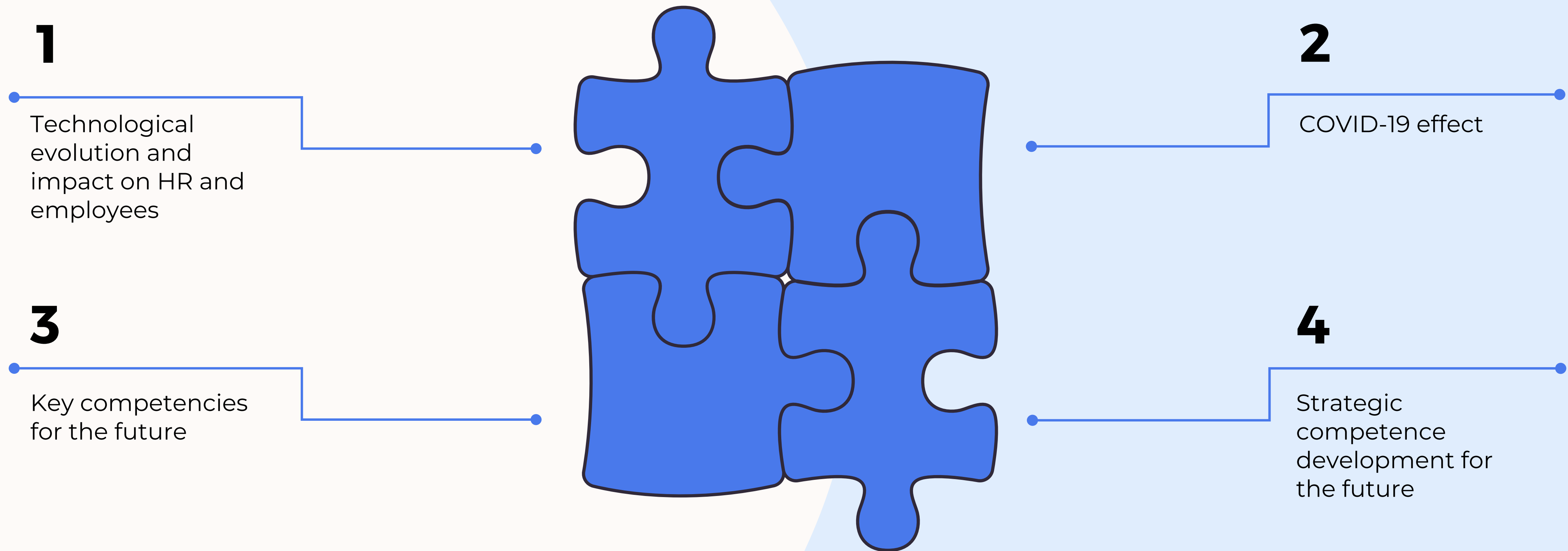
Imbalances and main challenges

In Italy, VET courses are organized at all levels of education and in formal and non-formal training, both in the public and private sector. Target groups may be different: young people who are about to enter the world of work or workers who wish to enhance their skills and knowledge.

With regard to formal and non-formal vocational training for adults, it is interesting to mention The Observatory Barometer 2020, a survey carried out by Cegos in 2020 involving 250 HR managers and 1780 employees from 4 countries (Italy, Germany, France and Spain).

VET Ecosystem

The aim of the survey was to understand what changes have been implemented by the VET ecosystem as a result of COVID-19 and whether these have been effective. Specifically, the research focused on four different thematic areas: Make sure to mention what matters to the customers.



The key findings of The Observatory Barometer 2020 reveal the impact of pandemic-related restrictive measures on corporate training:

86%

of HR specialists confirmed that they had to adapt VET service provision

46%

had a full shift towards digital and online training

29%

had to develop new content and new training materials



The most common digital training solutions used in Italy:

73%

virtual classroom and webinar

46%

e-learning modules

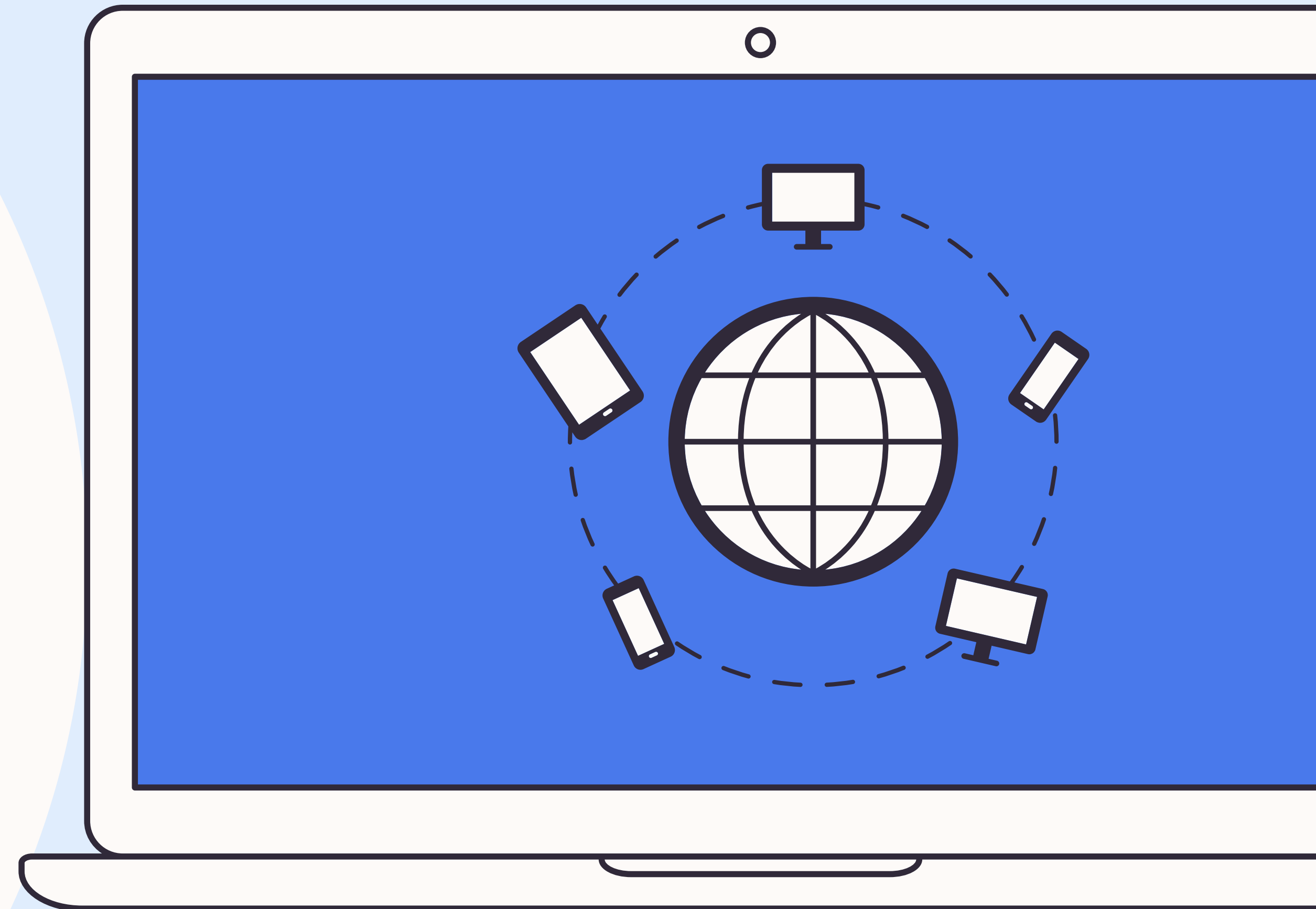
29%

e-coaching



77% of employees attended at least one online training session

- The barometer also confirms how the shift towards digital and online training provision triggered by the pandemic is not a temporary solution, rather the onset of a long-term trend..
- However, Vocational Education and Training is not only provided at corporate level but it can take various forms.
- COVID-19 had different impacts on iVET and cVET. Much more information and data on the impact of COVID-19 on iVET than on cVET can be found in the literature; evidence that can be explained by the fact that iVET is mainly managed at ministerial level



In secondary schools, the most widely used teaching method was distance learning (90.8%).



One of the main critical points of the distance learning mode turned out to be the use of the camera, which is essential for ensuring eye contact and stimulating attention.

The results showed that the percentage of switched-on cameras decreased dramatically between primary school (87.9%) and secondary school (66.2%).



For VET institutions, in which the practical application of acquired knowledge is fundamental, another important issue has been the limited chance to implement stages and other kind of Work Based Learning experiences. In many cases, current digital technologies could not answer to this kind of limitations.

Conclusions

It is important to adequately train teaching staff and trainers in order to ensure a higher quality of lessons and to stimulate the active participation of learners. However, it must be admitted that this process of VET digitalization is slowed down by a general low performance at national level in terms of human capital, connectivity, integration of digital technology and digital public services (see DESI).



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