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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Cedefop-EESC forum points to need for urgent and coordinated response to low skill levels in Europe**

Cedefop and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held the [Third Policy Learning Forum \(PLF\) on upskilling pathways](#), a platform bringing together countries to exchange practice and explore common challenges in upskilling adults with low level of skills, on 5 and 6 November.

The aim of the virtual event was to discuss a vision for the future and explore lessons learnt about the implementation of upskilling pathways in the four years following the adoption of the 2016 [Council Recommendation on Upskilling pathways: New opportunities for adults](#).

## **THIRD POLICY LEARNING FORUM on upskilling pathways**

**5 and 6  
November 2020  
Virtual event**

EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL  
SKILLS WEEK 2020



**A VISION  
FOR THE FUTURE**

#UpskillingPathways  
#EU Vocational Skills #DiscoverYourTalent

The upskilling pathways is a legislative proposal which forms the building block of the EU skills agenda, aiming to equip all Europeans with adequate skills required for the participation in the labour market and for unlocking their full potential to thrive both as individuals and members of society.

According to Cedefop research, 128 million adults in Europe will have to update their skills or gain new ones to be able to keep or get a job that corresponds to their competences and

skills level. The figure is a total for the EU-27, Iceland, Norway and the UK, corresponding to a staggering 46.1% of the population.

Participants in the forum, who included social partners, government and civil society representatives, stressed the urgency of implementing the upskilling pathways, especially against the backdrop of the current pandemic that is already having a disruptive impact on Europe's labour markets. It threatens to further accelerate the changes in the world of work already brought by digital revolution, making upskilling and reskilling ever more relevant.

'We need to emphasise that what we are offering is a part of the survival kit, both for workers and for employers because the business will not be back as usual. Strong skills are a driver for competitiveness at EU level but also for personal and professional fulfilment of the individual, said the EESC member Laurentiu Plosceanu.

Such disruptive events on labour markets, which will be further aggravated by negative demographic changes in Europe, will require a profound transformation of an economy able to reconcile sustained productivity and adequate distribution of the benefits of growth across social groups and European societies.

'This will be a tremendous challenge, which translates into the need to support all people in preparing for and keeping up the pace with change,' said Cedefop Executive Director Jürgen Siebel. He reminded that many of the EU's recent legislative proposals in this area, such as the skills agenda or the European pillar of social rights, already build on the principle that 'the best investment is in our people'.

'We have to ensure that every adult has lifelong opportunities to update existing skills and acquire new ones to help them navigate uncertain times and thrive in their life and career. No doubt, this translates into a stronger policy focus on upskilling and reskilling of adults and especially people with low level of education and skills,' Mr Siebel maintained.

In his view, upskilling and reskilling systems should be carefully designed to target different groups of the population but also be able to consider the needs of enterprises, which are an important part of the equation for reaching the ambitious goal.

The PLF had a successful debut in 2018 and a second edition in 2019. The third PLF took a closer look at the experience with designing and implementing upskilling pathways in Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands, which highlighted the crucial importance of coordinated involvement and efforts by all stakeholders and the need for a comprehensive response to low skills levels in Europe across different policy areas.

The pivotal role of social partners in reaching the most vulnerable parts of population in need of upskilling was singled out, as was the continuous commitment of governments to ensuring the accessibility of adult learning, especially for the low skilled.

The ambitious agendas for upskilling in different countries already show there is an awareness of urgency at the highest political level, participants said. Apart from Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands, where the governments set ambitious targets with comprehensive strategies and reforms of lifelong and adult learning underway and already bearing fruit, the Portuguese government's programme, Qualifica was also able to boost the

offer for adult training in the country in which over half of the population had not completed secondary education in 2016.

Effective communication on the upskilling strategy and on the benefits such learning and training can bring to individuals is equally crucial, as the successful outcome can much depend on the motivation of individuals. It seems that the efforts by some countries to create an environment in which upskilling is quite normal during worklife is starting to bring results.

Several surveys, such as [one carried out by Cedefop](#) and one by the Finnish Innovation fund Sitra 2019 already show that citizens are aware of the pressing need to invest in their training and education in order not to fall behind in the new world of work. The Finnish survey has shown that almost 80% believe that within five years there will be changes in their own work requiring upskilling.

### Notes to editors

Cedefop publications related to the theme:

- [Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways \(Volume 1\)](#)
- [Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways \(Volume 2\)](#)
- [Perceptions on adult learning and continuing vocational education and training in Europe \(Volume 1\)](#)

Relevant EESC opinions [here](#)

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### Contact

Press Officer: Rosy Voudouri

Tel: +30 2310 490012, email: [rosy.voudouri@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:rosy.voudouri@cedefop.europa.eu)

Head of Department for Communication: Gerd Oskar Bausewein

Tel: +30 2310 490288, email: [gerd-oskar.bausewein@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:gerd-oskar.bausewein@cedefop.europa.eu)

### About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications.

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