

## Addressing and preventing low skills

3<sup>rd</sup> Cedefop Brussels Seminar  
26 June 2017, 9.30-13.00, Brussels, Belgium

### General information

**Organiser** Cedefop  
**In cooperation with** The Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU

**Venue** Permanent Representation of Malta to the EU  
Rue Archimède 25, 1000 Brussels

**Participants' profile** Brussels-based stakeholders from the Permanent Representations of Member States to the EU, European Commission, the European Parliament, European business and sector associations, trade union and employee organisations.

**Working language** English

### Event rationale

The third in a series of Cedefop Brussels-based seminars, the discussion will focus on addressing and preventing low skills, a driving force of the core skills strategies in the EU.

In 2015 one in four European adults aged 25-64 years (about 64 million adults) still held only low qualifications, despite a long term descending trend. On average, 33% of individuals<sup>1</sup> without upper secondary education are low skilled in literacy and 38% in numeracy. Low skills come at the cost of economic competitiveness and social welfare. Cedefop's recent research on low skilled estimates that the aggregated economic net benefit for the society of reducing the size of the low skilled adult population to half its current projection for 2025 (14.7%) would account for a total value of some 2.000 billion EUR. A highly skilled population has recognised advantages also for individuals. Skilled workers enjoy higher earnings, better health, higher satisfaction levels and have a higher contribution to economic growth and technological innovation.

Low skills have complex social causes and must be addressed with targeted policies adapted to the needs and characteristics of its diversified target groups. Long term

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<sup>1</sup> People aged 16-64 years old

unemployment, ageing, skills mismatch, socioeconomic background, migrant status and gender are all factors which impact on the average skills level of workers. A disadvantaged background tends to be strongly related to low educational attainment and/or skills obsolescence. Migrant status also tends to have a negative impact normally due to language and cultural barriers.

Low skilled also tend to have more precarious work, worse working conditions and lower access to training, being more at risk of remaining trapped in a low skilled occupation. Adequate career guidance, outreach initiatives, assessment and validation of skills and flexible training can be developed to reach and support those who are low skilled and at risk of becoming so.

Current European policy initiatives, and particularly the new Recommendation “Upskilling Pathways – New opportunities for adults”, encourage the development of comprehensive and integrated systems that contain these services, to address the issue of low skills. The Youth Guarantee and the Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market provide a complementary scope on both preventative and remedial actions for young and adults.

### Event objectives

The aim of this workshop is to share evidence about the origins, costs and impacts of low skills for societies and individuals, as well as to stimulate the debate about policy strategies to prevent and address them. The discussion will take into account the economic and demographic diversity as well as the distinct administrative structures and cultures of the Member States. Drawing on evidence gathered in Cedefop’s recent study “Investing in skills pays off: the economic and social cost of low skilled adults in the EU” and its ongoing research on guidance validation and training the workshop will discuss the possibility of designing integrated and comprehensive policy responses.

Participants will:

- Better understand the costs of low skills to individuals, the economy and society;
- Have new insights on the origins and causes of low skills as well as the specific issues affecting subgroups of low skilled individuals;
- Analyse and debate policy strategies and good practices in preventing and addressing low skills;
- Have new insights on new European policy initiatives in addressing the issue of low skills.

Please find below the agenda of the event with details in that regard.

**09:30-10:00 Arrival and registration of participants**

**10:00-10:15 Welcome and setting the scene**

- Jean Micallef Grimaud, Chair of the Education Committee, Malta Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- James Calleja, Director, Cedefop
- **Low skilled: Cedefop's research and support to Member States**  
Antonio Ranieri, Head of Department for Learning and Employability, Cedefop

**10:15-10:45 The costs of low skilling: an individual, social and economic issue**

- **Presentation of study "Investing in skills pays off: the economic and social cost of low skilled adults in the EU"**  
Lidia Salvatore, Expert, Cedefop
- **EU's initiatives to address low skills**  
Dana Bachmann, Head of Unit E3 - VET, Apprenticeships & adult learning, DG EMPL

**10:45-12:15 Policy action to address and prevent low skills**

- **Reaching low-skilled: how to use guidance effectively**  
Pedro Moreno da Fonseca, Expert, Cedefop

**11:15-11:45 Tea/coffee break**

- **Up-skilling pathways: the role of validation**  
Ernesto Villalba, Expert, Cedefop
- Q & A session

**12:15-13:00 Open discussion: EU policies to address low skilled: Youth Guarantee, Upskilling Pathways and Long Term Unemployed**

- **Panel discussion** followed by Q&A and discussion involving the whole audience
  - Detlef Eckert, Director, DG EMPL, European Commission
  - James Calleja, Director, Cedefop
  - Antonio Ranieri, Head of Department for Learning and Employability, Cedefop
  - Thiébaud Weber, ETUC Confederal Secretary

**13:00-13:30 Light lunch**