



## Skill development of workers in the platform economy

Anticipating the future of work and learning

8th Cedefop Brussels seminar  
10 December 2019, 9.30-14.00, Brussels, Belgium

### General information

<b>Organiser</b>	Cedefop
<b>In cooperation with</b>	Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU
<b>Venue</b>	Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU Avenue de Cortenbergh 80, Brussels

<b>Participant profile</b>	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
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<b>Working language</b>	English
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Cedefop, together with Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU, have the pleasure of inviting you to the 8th Cedefop Brussels seminar. These seminars, organised in cooperation with the rotating EU Presidencies, build on Cedefop research and analyses and address issues relevant to European debates on vocational education and training (VET) and employment.

### Focus of the December 2019 seminar

In the context of the ongoing global debate on the future of work and skills, this seminar will focus on the implications of rising online platform work for the skills formation and matching of workers. What are the new skill demands and learning practices in the platform economy? To what extent can changing learning practices in crowdwork provide insights into the future of work and learning? How do existing EU VET and skills policies need to adapt to meet the new lifelong learning challenges and opportunities for digital workers?

### Aim of event

Building on insights from Cedefop's innovative CrowdLearn study *Skills formation and matching in online platform work: policies and practices for promoting crowdworkers' continuing learning*, the seminar will seek to stimulate debate on important questions, including:

- ▶ What skills do crowdworkers develop through their work on online platforms?
- ▶ What are the learning processes – both individual and social – through which crowdworkers develop skills?
- ▶ What differences, if any, are there in learning practices and skill development between different types of worker and between different national contexts in which platforms operate?

- ▶ What formal and informal certification practices, types of support for learning and professional development or other initiatives are employed by platform markets to promote effective development of crowdworkers' skills and skills matching?
- ▶ What are the challenges of enabling inter-platform recognition and portability of crowdworkers' skills?
- ▶ How can skill development and matching in online platform work be improved? What design and policy recommendations can be made to improve these?

### The rise of platform work

A growing number of people are earning some – or all – of their income from work mediated through digital platforms, in what is known as platform-based work, crowdwork, or gig work, among other names. Emerging research suggests that such work is an increasingly important new non-standard form of employment around the world, including in Europe. According to EU Commission survey data, platform-mediated work is currently the main source of income for as many as 2% of adults across 14 EU Member States (Pesole et al., 2018), while surveys suggest that up to 11% of European adults are earning some part of their income through such platforms (Huws et al., 2016). According to the Online Labour Index, use of platforms has grown rapidly over the past two years, increasing by approximately 70% from mid-2016 to early 2019 (Kässi and Lehdonvirta, 2018).

### The future of work and learning

Although crowdwork represents only a small part of the overall European labour market, some anticipate that it may even surpass conventional full-time work by 2030 (Freelancer US, 2019). In many ways it is also the most visible example of transformations and technology-related shifts taking place in the wider labour market, such as growth of self-employment and contingent work, substitution of customer feedback for line management, telework and virtual teamwork solutions, and firms' use of data and algorithms in managing workers. The new policy challenges posed by crowdwork have therefore potentially broader implications for European skills policy.

### Skills formation and matching in the platform economy?

The process of skill development and matching differs radically in crowdwork compared to standard employment. While standard employees can expect their employers to provide continuing training as new technologies enter the workplace, crowdworkers are responsible for their own learning and skill development (Margaryan, 2019). In standard labour markets, publicly regulated qualification systems play an important role in skills matching, but in the online labour market skills matching appears to rely on crowdwork platforms' proprietary data and matching algorithms (Lehdonvirta et al., 2018). The standard tools of skills and education policy that European policy-makers use to address skills gaps, skills mismatch, reskilling, digital skills and other issues are therefore not directly applicable to this new context.

### The seminar

The 8th Brussels-based seminar aims to consider and discuss the insights obtained from Cedefop's recent CrowdLearn study on the patterns of learning and skill formation practices of online platform workers. To that end, Cedefop and external experts will present the main findings of interviews with key platform stakeholders and a quantitative survey of 1 000 online platform workers from three major online labour platforms carried out as part of Cedefop's CrowdLearn study. A key objective of the event is to debate promising approaches in designing education and training policies that can provide crowdworkers with equal opportunities and access to continuing training and lifelong learning, as well as cost-sharing with beneficiaries of digital labour.

## Programme

Tuesday, 10 December 2019

Moderator: Jens Bjornavold (Cedefop)

**9.00-9.30**     **Arrival and registration of participants**

**9.30-9.45**     **Welcome and setting the scene**

- *Welcome* – Johanna Koponen (Counsellor and Chair of the Education Committee for Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU)
- *The future of work and learning in a digitised world: Cedefop insights* – Mara Brugia (Cedefop Deputy Director)

**9.45-10.45**     **Cedefop's CrowdLearn study**

- *Introduction to the CrowdLearn study* – Konstantinos Pouliakas (Cedefop)
- *Insights from the CrowdLearn study* – Anoush Margaryan (Copenhagen Business School) & Vili Lehdonvirta (Oxford University)
- *Q&A with audience*

**10.45-11.15**     **Tea/coffee break**

**11.15-12.30**     **The nature of platform work in the EU**

- *Lessons from the EU COLLEEM survey: tasks and working conditions of platform workers* – Annarosa Pesole (JRC, European Commission)
- *Algorithmic control in the gig economy: findings from the iLabour project* – Vili Lehdonvirta (Oxford University)
- *Workplace learning in crowdwork: comparing microworkers and online freelancers* – Anoush Margaryan (Copenhagen Business School)

**12.30-13.30**     **Policy session: What skills policies for the platform economy?**

- *Proposals for VET and skills policies targeting crowdworkers* – CrowdLearn team
- *Q&A – Debate with audience*

**13.30-14.00**     **Light lunch**

## Cedefop research relevant to the seminar

### **Digitalisation, AI and the future of work**

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/digitalisation-and-future-work>

Cedefop's 'Digitalisation and the future of work' project analyses the impact and drivers of automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and other digital technologies on employment and changing skill needs of jobs. It also examines the implications of new forms of digital labour, such as platform or crowdwork, for individual skill development and skill mismatch. The insights of the project aim to inform policy regarding the future of vocational education and training. The project is structured around five main areas:

(i) the risk of automation across EU economies, sectors and occupations to understand who is most at risk of job polarisation and substitution by machines or artificial intelligence (AI); (ii) learning practices and challenges of continuous learning, skill development and skills matching of individuals employed in new ICT-based forms of work, specifically in the platform or 'gig' economy ([CrowdLearn project](#)); (iii) new data on changing skill needs and mismatch due to technological advances and digitalisation for both enterprises and employees, collected via the [European skills and jobs survey](#) and the [4th European company survey](#); (iv) machine learning techniques to improve understanding of the [online job vacancy market](#) and the changing skill needs implied by new technologies; (v) [strengthening EU countries' capacity in skills anticipation](#) e.g. in implementing technological skill foresight methods.

### **Big data analysis from online job vacancies**

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/big-data-analysis-online-vacancies>

Information on skills demanded from jobseekers by employers is very useful in informing career and continuing VET decisions for individuals, as well as employment services and guidance counsellors. Over the past decade, the use of online platforms for posting job vacancies has significantly increased, with jobs of different type and level now widely published online. The internet has become a rich source of 'real-time' labour market information, which can be analysed thanks to advances in big data collection and analysis.

After several years of development, Cedefop presented the first results from its real-time labour market information project in March 2019. This new type of labour market intelligence is based on information collected from more than 30 million online job vacancies over the second half of 2018 in Czechia, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy and the UK. The classification of European skills, competences, qualification and occupations (ESCO) and complex big data analysis techniques were used to extract information on skills from the vacancies. The results are presented in the [Skills online vacancy analysis tool for Europe \(Skills OVATE\)](#).

The project benefited from collaboration with other EU institutions, notably DG Employment and Social Affairs, DG Connect, Eurostat's big data task force and network of European statistical systems (ESSnet). Some EC initiatives (such as ESCO, EURES) will strengthen the usability of the pan-European tool for vacancy scrapping and analysis, while others (such as the new Europass and the Blueprint for sectoral collaboration) are expected to benefit from the data collected.