



Vocational training for the long-term unemployed

Learning from inspiring practices

POLICY LEARNING FORUM

Cedefop, 15 and 16 June 2017, Thessaloniki, Greece

General information

Venue	Hotel Makedonia Palace Email: Konstantinos.Pouliakas@cedefop.europa.eu
Organiser(s)	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), Thessaloniki, Greece
No of participants	Maximum 60
Participation	By selection
Participant profile	High-level EU and national policy-makers, public and private employment agency officials, VET providers
Type of event	Policy learning forum (PLF)
Working language	English

Long-term unemployment in the EU

The economic downturn has led to a marked increase in long-term unemployment. In 2015 there were almost 4 million more European citizens out of work for over one year compared to 2007. Although recently employment growth has somewhat improved, in 2015 nearly half of the jobless in the EU were long-term unemployed (LTU), affecting almost 11 million people (4.5% of the active EU population). Close to two-thirds of them (6.8 million) have been out of work for over two years (very long-term unemployed, VLTU) ⁽¹⁾.

Cedefop's **European skills and jobs survey** ⁽²⁾ confirmed the widely reported adverse health and psychological effects, as well as the 'scarring effects' associated with long unemployment spells. It also pointed towards the vicious circle resulting from the LTU taking up jobs with poor skill development opportunities.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat database [extracted 23.2.2017].

⁽²⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-skills-and-jobs-esj-survey>

Policy challenges

Addressing long-term unemployment is one of the key challenges of the EU's jobs and growth agenda ⁽³⁾; its persistence and associated higher risk of skills deterioration are barriers to labour market integration, leading to social exclusion. The recent Council recommendation on the labour market integration of the long-term unemployed ⁽⁴⁾ and the European Commission's *New skills agenda for Europe* ⁽⁵⁾ call for a multi-faceted strategy that combines macroeconomic policy with better activation and skills policies. Such policies should include better skills profiling and validation, identification of skill needs in the local economy and targeted training combined with individualised career guidance and counselling. These policies depart from 'work-first' approaches to activation.

Cedefop's 2015 study of skills matching policies and practices in EU Member States clearly showed the potential of such innovative approaches ⁽⁶⁾. It observed that 'today's emphasis on quickly finding employment for unemployed people may backfire in the medium-term future, if they are not placed in properly matched jobs or in jobs that fail to make use of and develop their full potential'. Innovative practices showcased in the study were found to make use of European education and training tools – such as recognition of non-formal and informal learning – and take a clear upskilling perspective through competence-based matching tools, modularised training, and personalised counselling. They can benefit EU countries struggling with reintegrating the LTU due to fundamental skill deficits, insufficient links between training and labour market needs, employer disengagement and other social barriers.

Aim of the policy learning forum

Meta analyses of the effectiveness of training as part of active labour market programmes for the unemployed paint a nuanced picture (for example due to deadweight costs and lock-in effects) ⁽⁷⁾. While it has been shown that the LTU and other disadvantaged groups stand to gain the most from well-designed activation policies, much of the reported evidence is based on employment chances shortly after activation, with little focus on the quality of the job-person match. There is a lot to be learned about which activation measure elements facilitate not only fast transition to work but also durable labour market reintegration.

The aim of the policy learning forum (PLF) is to inform approaches to VET within activation measures that put skill matching centre stage. The forum will seek to 'put policy into practice' by moving beyond theory and empirical analysis and towards a deeper understanding of features, mechanisms and triggers underpinning effectiveness of innovative practices from

⁽³⁾ President Juncker's political guidelines http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/publications/president-junckers-political-guidelines_en; European Commission annual growth survey 2016 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TEXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0902&from=EN>

⁽⁴⁾ Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. SWD(2015) 176 final. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14480&langId=en>

⁽⁵⁾ European Commission (2016). *A new skills agenda for Europe: working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness*. SWD(2016) 195 final. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>

⁽⁶⁾ Cedefop (2015). *Addressing unemployment while addressing skill mismatch: lessons from policy and practice in EU countries*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5546>

⁽⁷⁾ Kluve (2010). <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S092753711000014X>; Card et al. (2015). <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21431>

across the EU. The PLF will serve as a platform for debate and mutual learning for key stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of VET and skill matching programs as part of activation policies. The following indicative questions will be guiding the working sessions and debates:

- which elements and features of activation measures or policies make identification of skill gaps among the long-term unemployed more feasible, effective and/or relevant? How can tools such as skills assessment frameworks, skills audits and qualification/training frameworks feed into the design of customised training for the long-term unemployed?
- which features of activation measures help ensure the labour market relevance of training programs? Specifically, how can public or private employment services and VET providers customise training to (local/regional/national) skill needs and how can these be best identified?
- which types of incentives and institutional arrangements can help VET providers, employment services and social partners work together more effectively (e.g. data sharing, cross-referrals, management coordination, performance monitoring and follow up) to ensure continuity and coordination of training and skills matching service delivery?
- what steps can employment services take to increase VET programme attractiveness and quality for individual job seekers and to engage (local) employers?
- how can we make job integration agreements (JIAs) – social integration contracts proposed by the European Council for the LTU ⁽⁸⁾ – work in EU Member States?

Format

Following a similar format to other successful PLFs organised by Cedefop ⁽⁹⁾, the PLF on ‘Vocational training for the long-term unemployed’ will require active participation from all participants, both before and during the forum:

- all participants will need to submit a short written input summarising features of vocational training measures for the long-term unemployed in their organisation or country and lessons learned from practice;
- case-study presenters will be asked to deliver more in-depth information to Cedefop to be used for short (one page) schematic summaries of the initiatives they will present at the forum;
- during the forum, participants are expected to contribute to the debate and exchange experiences.

⁽⁸⁾ Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. SWD(2015) 176 final. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14480&langId=en>

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/2nd-policy-learning-forum-defining-and-writing-learning-outcomes-vet>

Setup

The forum will adopt a four-stage approach:

Market place: presenters showcase some 15 case studies from EU Member States – focusing on unique features and practice experience (dos and don'ts, success factors and challenges). Basic information is available in infographics.

World café: participants discuss case studies in small groups at theme tables – deep learning, looking for inspiration, assessing the potential of transferring principles and features to different settings.

Assembly line: participants draft plans to take ideas forward based on what they learned and on feedback from colleagues.

Selling ideas: participants present their plans to a panel of policy-makers. Debates discuss feasibility but the focus is on making things happen – gathering political support, making plans, continued learning through cross-country cooperation to support implementation, etc.



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Draft agenda (15.3.2017)

Thursday 15 June 2017

9.00 – 9.30	<i>Arrival and registration</i>
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Europa</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Chair: Konstantinos Pouliakas (Cedefop)</i></p>	
9.30 – 10.00	Welcome and introduction to Cedefop's policy learning forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Cedefop welcome (James Calleja, Cedefop Director) ❖ Introduction (Konstantinos Pouliakas, Cedefop)
10.00 – 10.20	Warm-up exercise Introduction – expectations – learning goals
10.20 – 11.15	Setting the stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Preventing and addressing long-term unemployment tbc (European Commission) ❖ Activation policies: reflections for the future John P. Martin (UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy)
11.15 – 11.45	<i>Tea/Coffee break</i>
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Chair: Stelina Chatzichristou (Cedefop)</i></p>	
11.45 – 13.00	Market place – Inspiring case studies from across Europe Flash presentations (supported by infographics)
13.00 – 14.30	<i>Lunch</i>
14.30 – 16.45	World café (participants work at five to six theme tables) Which elements and features of training and matching programmes for the long-term unemployed increase their effectiveness?
16.45 – 17.15	Wrap-up
17.45 – 20.00	<i>Cultural event and dinner</i>

8.30 – 9.00	Arrival
9.00 – 10.00	Keynotes – Insights from Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The challenge of skills matching in activation John McGrath (SOLAS) ❖ Profiling exit from unemployment Seamus McGuinness (ESRI)
10.00 – 11.15	Assembly line (five to six theme tables – participants rotate) What does it take to go from policy priorities to implementation? Participants select and combine promising features and ideas, collect feedback from colleagues at other tables and draft plans to move forward.
11.15 – 11.45	Selling ideas – Presentation of plans
11.45 – 12.45	Policy-makers panel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Susanne Kraatz (European Parliament) ❖ Pascaline Descy (Cedefop) ❖ Tbc
12.45 – 13.00	Closing (Mara Brugia, Cedefop Deputy Director)