



Conference concept note

Dates: 13 April 2021 (main event) – 15 and 20 April 2021 (workshops)

Venue: Virtual event held on the platform Zoom.

Organiser: Cedefop

Number of participants: 300 (registration required)

Participant profile: VET and skills policy-makers, LMSI experts, VET experts, social partners

Working language: English

Looking back – Cedefop skills intelligence

For over a decade, Cedefop has been a driving force behind the development and dissemination of labour market and skills intelligence (LMSI – or in short: skills intelligence) for the European Union. Skills intelligence is the outcome of an expert-driven process of identifying, analysing, synthesising and presenting quantitative and/or qualitative skills and labour market information. Aiming to help inform VET policy and provision, and more broadly, people's education and career choices, Cedefop has developed targeted tools for understanding current and anticipating future skills demand and supply in the EU. Focus has been placed on using a range of skills anticipation methods to gain insight into labour market and skills trends and provide expert policy-relevant intelligence.

Contributing to a better understanding of the relationships between labour market trends, skills, jobs and qualifications, Cedefop's work on labour market and skills intelligence has been critical in improving VET governance and modernising VET proactively. It has provided valuable evidence for policies aimed at building and maintaining employability for learners and workers, and competitiveness for businesses. The Agency has also helped raise VET's profile beyond education and training and employment policies, not least through its work on green skills and research on digitalisation, artificial intelligence and the future of work.

The information and expert analysis Cedefop provides supports policy-makers, labour market analysts and VET experts, and constitutes an important part of the evidence base underlying current VET and skills policies. Cedefop's skills intelligence work comprises a range of complementary data collection, analysis and research activities. The Agency's core activities include the following.

- **Cedefop's skills forecast** identify broad employment trends in sectors, occupations and education levels. Combining these with information on expected developments in the future labour force (e.g. in terms of age distribution, gender and education level) can provide insights into potential macro-level skills imbalances. Launched in 2008 and endorsed by a 2010 Council mandate, the skills forecast is carried out every two years. It acts as an early warning mechanism to help mitigate potential labour market imbalances. Thanks to the use of harmonised data and methodology, the forecast results are comparable across countries (EU-27 plus several others) and can be aggregated to provide an overall picture of labour market and skill trends in the EU.
- **Skills surveys** shed light on skills development, usage and matching in a changing world of work. The 2014 European skills and jobs survey (ESJS) helped to provide insight into how adults acquire and use their skills and into the dynamics of skills mismatches in relation to changing skill needs. The second ESJS wave (in the field in 2021) focuses on new digital

technologies and technological change and their impact on the future of work and skills, including in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. By providing information on people's adaptiveness to changing tasks and skill needs, the survey will also help provide policy-relevant insights into how to shape continuing vocational education and training policies and measures. The Cedefop/Eurofound 2019 European company survey helped explore how corporate skill strategies, recruitment, HR development practices and work organisation contribute to workplace wellbeing and performance. Cedefop's CrowdLearn surveys collected unique information on skills and learning needs of platform workers.

- **Real-time labour market analysis** provides faster and more detailed information on skill needs. Cedefop uses big data and artificial intelligence (AI) methods to analyse information collected from online job advertisements in (quasi) real-time. This novel type of LMSI, which Cedefop releases through its Skills OVATE platform following pilot work, has attracted significant attention. It helps improve policy-makers' understanding of skill trends because of the level of granularity of the information provided, as well as the possibility to extract detailed skills information at specific occupational, sectoral and regional levels. Big-data-powered skills intelligence does not replace conventional skills intelligence. Using web-based data for skills analysis brings its own challenges; exploiting the complementarities of big data and other skills intelligence sources is therefore crucial in generating statistically robust, detailed, and policy-relevant evidence.
- **Analysis of national skills systems and policies** provides systemic and policy-oriented intelligence on their characteristics and performance. The European skills index (ESI) uses a composite indicator framework to measure the performance of national skills systems in terms of skills development, activation and matching. The ESI provides a framework for monitoring Member State performance over time, and identifies potential improvement areas. Cedefop also monitors and analyses skills anticipation practices Member States have in place and has acquired significant practical experience in providing support to countries strengthening their skills anticipation and matching practices governance.
- **Dissemination of skills intelligence** makes key information on labour market trends, skills and jobs available to experts and policy-makers. Cedefop's LMSI web tools (Skills Panorama, skills forecast, ESI, skills OVATE, matching skills) present skills intelligence in user-friendly formats to help policy-makers, policy experts, researchers and guidance practitioners keep up with the latest developments, make comparisons, and identify anticipated changes. The information also aims to foster the development and improvement of skill needs assessment and anticipation methods and practices. This contributes to education and training systems becoming more responsive to labour market needs and to better skills demand/supply matching in the EU. From mid-2021 onwards, Cedefop will be presenting LMSI via its corporate web portal, building on the experience gained in developing the Skills Panorama.

Looking ahead – Shaping a new generation of skills intelligence

Robust and actionable labour market and skills intelligence can act as a compass for developing VET and skills policies. Megatrends, such as the proliferation of digital technologies, new forms of work and work organisation, population ageing, the shift towards more sustainable economies and growing labour market inequalities, are reshaping labour market demand and supply and have wide-ranging economic and societal implications. The unprecedented circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic is accelerating anticipated labour market transformation. Understanding and correctly interpreting trends in today's complex and dynamic labour market is challenging. Using skills intelligence tools in isolation is no longer sufficient to capture the nature, scope and direction of changes in skill needs and their implications.

At the same time, the transformation of jobs and the enormous up-and re-skilling effort needed to address it make reliable and targeted skills intelligence imperative to support people in their career and skills development. Following the 2020 European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience – which advocates strengthening skills intelligence and making it more relevant for individuals – Cedefop has been working on developing a new generation of skills intelligence. Such work focuses increasingly on combining diverse sources and methods of labour market and skills intelligence, careful consideration of different perspectives, and integration of scenarios taking uncertainty into account.

This virtual conference brings together high-level policy-makers, LMSI experts and other stakeholders to discuss how LMSI can be further developed in the years ahead. It will contribute to better understanding the challenges labour markets will face in coming decade – digital, green, demographic and others – and set the stage for developing a skills intelligence fit to address them. It will particularly reflect on how LMSI can become more contextualised, more timely and more relevant to people so it can support their decisions on education and training, further up- and reskilling, labour market transitions and career development.

Conference aims

By taking stock of the current EU skills intelligence landscape and context, engaging in high-level discussions on skills policy priorities and via interactive discussion with stakeholders on future development opportunities, the conference aims to:

- provide insights into how LMSI can contribute to understanding current challenges (digital, green, demographic and others) and support designing better VET and skills policies at national and regional levels.
- present the results of main components of Cedefop's skills intelligence toolkit and its potential contribution to policy action in the decade ahead, in line with the ambitions set out in the 2020 Skills Agenda and other EU policy priorities.
- initiate skills intelligence 2.0 by taking stock of Cedefop's current LMSI work, identifying gaps in knowledge and understanding, and reflecting on opportunities to make LMSI smarter and more people-centred.
- shape the direction for Cedefop's skills intelligence work in the years ahead by tapping into the insights and perspectives of Cedefop's main stakeholders.