

Cedefop and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) are organising the [third Policy Learning Forum on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future](#). The event will take place in the form of a virtual event on Thursday 5 and Friday 6 November 2020, from 09:30 to 13:00 CET on both days.

Policy Learning Fora (PLF) on upskilling pathways are a series of policy learning events on the topic aimed at providing a platform for countries to come together to learn from one another and explore common challenges in upskilling adults with low level of skills.

Background

We are living in uncertain times. Rapidly changing labour markets and multiple challenges, such as digitalisation and its consequences for the future of work, technological changes, the environment, ageing societies and social inclusion, require strong skill foundations and constant updating and acquiring of new skills, knowledge and competences. The outbreak of the Covid-19 health pandemic is having unprecedented consequences on our economies and societies. Measures of social distancing implemented to curb the spread of the virus, are deeply affecting labour markets, both in terms of job losses and in terms of new organisation of work through new technologies and digital means. Ensuring 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 is more important than ever.

Uncertainty might also trigger strategic decisions and investments leading to opportunities for social development and economic prosperity. Recent policy developments at EU level, such as the [Communication a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions](#), the [New Skills Agenda](#) and the [European Pillars of Social Rights](#), go in this direction: they bring people at the centre and build on the principle that 'the best investment is in our people'. They also recognise that we do not all start from the same point and support is needed to unleash the full individual's potential. Against this background, progressing with the implementation of the [Upskilling Pathways Recommendation](#) is ever more relevant.

[Cedefop estimates that 128 million of Europeans¹ are low skilled as](#) they are either low-educated, have low digital skills, low cognitive skills or are medium-high educated at risk of skill loss and obsolescence; these estimates hint to a large pool of talent and untapped potential waiting to be unlocked. However, it is not only the magnitude of the challenge, but its complexity that European countries are facing. [Cedefop work also shows that low-skilled adults are a highly heterogeneous population](#), comprising people with very different characteristics, backgrounds and needs. Unlocking this potential requires [a renewed approach bringing tailored training offers together with supporting systems and structures that provide financing, guidance as well as opportunities for validation and recognition of prior learning in a coordinated manner and coherent strategy](#).

Upskilling pathways and Cedefop analytical framework

Upskilling pathways is about pulling together resources and creating the right synergies for supporting every (low-skilled) adult towards an individual path to empowerment. It is about creating a comprehensive approach to the upskilling and reskilling of the low-skilled adult population. This

¹ EU-27 Member States, the UK, Iceland and Norway

approach should be able to address their needs in a coordinated and coherent way and ensure that they have all the tools and support to embark on sustainable learning pathways leading to their full potential and fulfilment.

In line with the principles and frame of reference provided by the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation the [Cedefop analytical framework](#) has been developed to sustain this unique vision of upskilling pathways for low skilled adults. It is developed to support policy-makers and other stakeholders in designing and implementing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. It is not intended as an exhaustive list of necessary conditions or an assessment tool. It works as a frame of reference for stimulating discussion and reflection on design and implementation of upskilling pathways. It is intended as a source of inspiration for policy-makers and other stakeholders, to support them in identifying key areas for action. Its value-added aspects involve the development process, its core foundation and its multidisciplinary contents:

- (a) it articulates a clear grounding in a lifelong learning perspective and is focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary;
- (b) it is articulated around important systemic features needed for a coherent and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults;
- (c) it contains 10 key areas of the policy process organised according to three levels: decision-making, support, and implementation;
- (d) it unlocks synergies and fosters complementarities, and contributes to the enrichment of knowledge and evidence within each key area, promoting coordination and cooperation across the 10 key areas; and
- (e) it is a live document. It is based on an iterative process integrating both qualitative research and two rounds of stakeholder consultations aimed at gaining important stakeholder feedback and input collected at the [first](#) and [second](#) Policy Learning Forum on Upskilling Pathways.

The Third PLF on Upskilling Pathways

Four years into the adoption of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation, objectives of the third PLF on Upskilling pathways are to:

1. identify and share lessons learnt on upskilling pathways implementation;
2. translate the analytical framework into practice and;
3. discuss the future of upskilling pathways.

Participants will work towards these objectives by discussing and exchanging ideas and practices on the factors for success and challenges to upskilling pathways implementation as well as the next steps. During the first morning these issues will be explored with the support of three countries, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands, which will share both in plenary and in dedicated country workshops details of their experience with implementing Upskilling Pathways and their plans for the future.

In the final day participants will reconvene in plenary to discuss where we are with upskilling pathways and what the future holds. The open discussion will build on the key messages from the country workshops as well as an additional country example from the Portuguese approach to upskilling pathways. Recent policy developments at EU level as well as the opinions and views of EU level stakeholders will frame the discussion.