

Matching skills and jobs in Europe Insights from Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey

25/11/2015  [People and Skills](#), [Matching Skills and Jobs](#), [Labour Market Context](#), [EU](#)

The common impression of skill mismatch in the European Union (EU) is one of employers unable to fill vacancies despite high unemployment. But Cedefop's European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey reveals a more complex problem. Skill mismatch, a term not always clearly understood (see Box), affects most of the workforce, not only those looking for a job.

Skill mismatch and finding a job

The economic crisis has made skill mismatch worse. Due to weak employment demand, more people are taking jobs below their qualification or skill level. The survey shows that, in the EU, around 25% of highly qualified young adult employees are overqualified for their job. Those graduating after 2008 are almost twice as likely to be overqualified for their first job as those who graduated between 1991 and 2000.

The worry is that the economic downturn will undermine the long-term potential of the EU's skilled workforce. Unemployed people returning to work are also more likely to enter less skill-intensive jobs that may not develop their skills; 42% of adult workers looking for a job in the years following the crisis had few opportunities to find jobs suitable for their skills and qualifications.

The ESJ survey gives new insights into work-based learning in Europe. People whose studies involved work-based learning are more likely to go directly from education to their first job and into more skill-intensive jobs. Around 40% of adult employees have completed education or training involving some work-based learning, but this varies considerably across countries and fields of study. Only about 25% of younger (aged 24 to 34) graduates in humanities, languages and arts, economics, business and law have participated in work-based learning.

Sectors also vary: some 62% of adult employees in professional, scientific or technical services completed studies only in an educational institution. Employees in services relating to education or health are more likely to have completed study that involved some workplace learning (48%).

Skill mismatch at work

The ESJ survey shows that, to avoid skill mismatch, 53% of adult employees in the EU need to learn new things continuously, as the variety of their tasks has significantly increased since they started their job. Overall, around 26% of EU adult employees have significant skill deficits (their skills are much lower compared to those an average worker needs to be fully proficient in their job) leaving much scope to improve skills and productivity. More than one in five adult employees in the EU have not developed their skills since starting their job. Countries with the highest shares of adult employees suffering from skill deficits have lower levels of labour productivity.

Good jobs for good skills

Even though workers with lower skills could 'bloom' and develop, not everyone has the chance, as 27% are in 'dead-end jobs', with higher skills than they need to do their job and only limited potential to develop.

This leads to another important survey finding: that good jobs develop good skills. Skill-intensive jobs with complex tasks that provide opportunities to acquire skills continuously are a sign of a healthy labour market. Europe needs more jobs that fully use and develop the skills of its workforce.

Cedefop's survey found that 40% of adult employees only need basic literacy skills to do their job and 33% need only basic or no ICT skills at all. In some sectors, job complexity is stable or decelerating. Over a third of jobs in sectors such as hotels and restaurants, transport, and wholesale and retail trades have stagnant skill needs, where the variety of tasks has not changed significantly over time.

The ESJ survey also confirmed the importance of job stability, which enables workers to cope with complex workplace changes that place higher demands on their skills and promote investment in skill development.

Results and key indicators are available from Cedefop's website (<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>) and the European skills panorama web portal (<http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/>).

For more information about the survey, please contact: [Konstantinos Pouliakas](#)

Enter your email address

POWERED BY:

