The group of personal and protective service workers covers a broad range of jobs, all of which are involved in the provision of services. The five key skills required for these workers are problem solving, teamwork, communication, customer service, and learning. They are highly needed in six EU Member States while other five EU countries report a surplus in this occupation.
During 2005-2015, employment levels of personal and protective service workers grew by about 10%, while only a marginal increase is foreseen in the coming decade.

In 2015, most employees in the personal and protective services held medium-level qualifications. This trend is projected to pertain until 2025, although the share of highly qualified workers is seen to grow.

A dramatic demographic change will affect the client group served by personal service workers. Over the next decade, Europe will face the effects of an ageing population. The 65+ age group will increase by 18.5% by 2025.

Who are they?

The group of personal and protective service workers covers a broad range of jobs, all of which are involved in the provision of services. Three out of four of these workers offer personal services covering a wide range of customers’ needs. The type of service in question determines many of the skills required in these occupations, as well as the tasks undertaken in different jobs. For example:

- Jobs in the personal services sector include: the provision of services associated with travelling (e.g. flight attendants); preparing and serving food and beverages (e.g. waiters, bartenders and cooks); supervising or maintaining people’s houses and buildings (e.g. housekeepers); providing driving lessons; caring for animals; providing hosting services for venues and events; providing hairdressing and beauty treatments; providing funeral services and so on.
- Protective service workers safeguard individuals and property against fire and other hazards, maintain law and order, and enforce laws and regulations. This subgroup includes a diverse range of occupations, such as police officers; fire fighters; prison officers; security guards; traffic wardens; and several warden-related jobs in leisure activities such as game hunting and swimming.

What skills do they need?

According to Cedefop’s European skills and jobs survey (ESJS) the key 5 skills for personal and protective service workers are problem solving, teamwork, communication, customer service and learning. These skills could support employees in this occupation to also tackle anticipated future skill challenges (see drivers of change below).

Figure 1: Most important skills required for personal and protective service workers
Where are they mostly in demand?

The labour market dynamics for this occupation differ across EU Member States:

*Figure 2: Shortages and surpluses for personal and protective service workers across the EU*
There is a concern for skills shortages of personal service workers in Belgium, Denmark and Croatia. Specific sub-occupations such as cooks are reported as shortage in Slovenia and as surplus in Latvia. Waiters and bartenders are a surplus occupation in Italy and a shortage one in Portugal and Slovenia. Building and housekeeping supervisors are surplus occupations in Romania and the United Kingdom. In Hungary beauticians and hairdressers are in surplus, while there is a lack of cooks.

What are the trends for the future? [2]

During 2005-2015, employment levels of personal and protective service workers grew by about 10%, while only a marginal increase is foreseen in the coming decade. Replacement demand [3] creates jobs for both occupations; however, new job positions are expected only for personal service workers, while employment levels of protective service workers will actually shrink; and new comers in the occupation will only replace retirees. More information can be found here.

In 2015, most employees in the personal and protective services held medium-level qualifications. This trend is projected to pertain until 2025, although the share of highly qualified workers is seen to grow. By 2025, one fifth of personal service workers and more than one third of protective services workers
will be highly qualified (about 6% and 10% increase respectively compared with 2015 shares). At the same time, people with lower qualification levels will search for job opportunities within these occupations with rising difficulty. The largest employment sector of personal service workers, accommodation and catering, offers a good example of the shift towards higher qualifications: in 2025, highly qualified employees are expected to increase by 50%.

Which drivers of change will affect their skills?

A dramatic demographic change will affect the client group served by personal service workers. Over the next decade, Europe will face the effects of an ageing population. The 65+ age group will increase by 18.5% by 2025. In comparison, the overall European population will increase by only 1.5% during the same period. New products, services and business models will emerge as a result of rising needs of an older society and this will be especially true for personal service workers. In addition, the nature of medical and psychological conditions of patients/clients will change as life expectancy increases. Relevant services will need to adjust to accommodate: the workforce must meet the demand for certain skills (e.g. caretaking and cleaning) that will become increasingly important, and businesses may be able to tailor particular services to tap into new markets (e.g. senior tourism).

Developments in tourism will affect the skills profile of respective personal services workers. Social trends and changing attitudes towards people with disabilities will boost accessible tourism, where personal service workers can be widely employed. According to the European Commission, employees should be trained to have, among others knowledge of disabilities /types of disability and access requirements, principles of effective customer service, recognising and responding appropriately to people using personal supports and service animals and assistive technology. Stronger market segmentation will continue affecting jobs and skills of relevant occupations. For example, the tourism industry includes elderly tourism, LGBT tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, culinary tourism etc. In turn, workers will need to diversify their skills accordingly.

NGO & travel agency “Premiki” has placed offering tourism products to “everyone” at the heart of its business. The concept encompasses that regardless of physical or mental limitation people shouldn’t be prevented from being able to travel to the place they desire. To accomplish its mission, Premiki offers accessible travel products, certifies touristic facilities which are “disability friendly”, and provide trainings to tourism professionals on accessible tourism. Through creating supply to meet the increasing demand, Premiki has successfully provided services in its native Slovenia and internationally.

Protective service workers’ skills are being shaped by the effects of greater tension in the political landscape. Over the past fifteen years, a number of terrorist attacks have taken place in countries across Europe. According to some estimates, counter-terrorism spending in EU has increased by more than 160% between 2006 and 2011.[11] As a consequence, improving security and intelligence systems in patrolling and protecting public areas to prevent or tackle these threats have risen in the agenda. A higher demand for skills related to surveillance (e.g. CCTV[12]), policing, and other protective services is therefore likely.

Both personal and protective service workers include occupations with relatively high level of routine tasks – therefore, they are highly prone to partial replacement by automation. Overall, technological developments will significantly shape jobs and skills in both groups. Technological developments in the security sector (e.g. more widespread use of CCTV, automated security systems in intelligent buildings and increase use of robots[13] and drones) [14] may decrease the demand for security guards and related jobs. For personal service workers, robots have been already developed with the foreseen capacity to support clients in museums, as tourist guides etc. [15]. But at the same time, as criminal actions increasingly spread into the digital world, rising demand can be expected for high-skilled professionals, who can handle security risks of physical damages, caused by remote interference (such as hijacking of driverless car or drone, hacking corporate ventilation systems or attempt to take over the control of a power plant. [16]).

- Although no major changes are foreseen in employment levels of personal and protective service workers, their job content and thus skill needs can be expected to change. Skills development and upgrade will be important to find and sustain jobs in these occupations.
- Soft skills, such as communication skills, problem solving, teamwork skills, cultural awareness, courtesy and responsibility are all pivotal in making a difference for the customer, therefore providing a competitive edge for businesses. At the same time, these skills could prove particularly important for personal and protective services workers whose jobs are more prone to including automated technological applications.
- Special consideration for ICT literacy would be important, as technological advancements are expected in both occupations.
- Especially for personal service workers, and depending on the job role, skills need to be adjusted to the needs of specific user groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities.

Reference


The need to replace workers leaving a profession for various reasons, such as retirement. For more information on replacement demand and how it drives employment across sectors, can be found on the Skills Panorama, skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/analytical_highligths/focus-replacement-demand-driving-millions-job-openings-across-eu.

EUROPOP, (2013), Projected population in the main scenario, own calculation.


European Commission, (2013), “Europe, the best destination for seniors”– “Facilitating cooperation mechanisms to increase senior tourists’ travels, within Europe and from third countries, in the low and medium seasons”, Expert draft report, Annex 1, demographic change and the rise of senior tourists.


Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.


Closed-circuit television, also referred to as video surveillance.

