Portugal: Mismatch priority occupations

10/2016 | European Skills Index, People and Skills, Matching Skills and Jobs, Future Jobs, Labour Market Context, Portugal, Mismatch priority occupations in countries

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Summary

Health professionals belong to high shortage occupations for Portugal.

Looking at past, current and future trends (3-4 years), a number of occupations have been identified as mismatch priority occupations for Portugal, i.e. they are either in shortage of surplus. Shortage occupation: an occupation that is in short supply of workers, and for which the employers typically face difficulties finding a suitable candidate. Surplus occupation: an occupation for which there are plenty of suitable workers available but low demand. The employers have no problems filling such posts.

The list below is based on an assessment of the labour market of Portugal. The occupations presented are not given any rank. All of them present high mismatch.
Health professionals

The growing demand for health professionals is driven by the aging of the Portuguese population, which implies a greater need for healthcare services. This has led to the opening of new private clinics and increasing numbers of health professionals working in the private sector (although the majority of the professionals are employed in the public healthcare system). For example, between 2012 and 2014 the total number of the professionals working in the public sector decreased by 2% while in the private sector it rose by around 10%. Demand for health professionals is such that some hold two jobs – one in the public healthcare sector and another in the private sector. This trend can also be explained by the low wages received by these professionals; having two jobs relates also to extra working hours and the generation of stress. These unfavourable working conditions lead many Portuguese medical and nursing graduates to migrate to other countries in search of better work and life opportunities. During 2014 and 2015, around 6.5 thousand professionals emigrated, mainly to the United Kingdom. Almost 90
% of them were nurses.

Although there are several schools offering health-related courses with high numbers of candidates and graduates per year (e.g. in 2013/14 there were around 251 thousand students registered in health-related higher education courses[^3]), still supply is lower than demand.

In Portugal, there are none measures specifically directed to tackle shortages of healthcare professionals. In order to reduce the migration of healthcare professionals, improvement to working conditions (related to working hours, wages, career progression, etc.) could be considered.

**ICT professionals[^4]**

The demand for professionals with ICT skills has been growing increasingly in Portugal. According to the Portuguese National Statistics Institute, in 2012 the ICT sector represented 5.5% of the Business Volume, 8% of the Gross Value Added, 3% of the total companies and approximately 4% of the total workforce. In addition, around 13% of the companies created in Portugal in 2012 were related to the ICT sector. While demand is increasing, the pace of expansion of supply is not fast enough to meet demand. For example, the number of higher education ICT-related courses and the number of students enrolled in them is growing (e.g. in 2012, approx. 13% of the total number of higher education graduates finished their studies with a degree in ICT), however, it takes between three to five years at least to complete these courses, which is not a solution for current demand.

The lack of ICT professionals can hinder growth of the Portuguese ICT sector. The implementation of additional vocational or practice-oriented courses could significantly help to reduce the current gap between demand and the offer of ICT professionals in the labour market. Through the strategy program “Programa Operacional Capital Humano”[^5] for 2014 - 2020, the Portuguese Government recognises the importance of the digital economy sector for economic growth of the country and emphasises that investment in training and education on digital skills should be strengthened. Additionally, an official Directive from 2015[^6] stated that higher education institutions should open more enrolment places for ICT courses. Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia coordinates the initiative Portuguese Coalition for Digital Jobs (launched in April 2015), which brings together 18 different organisations with the aim to create the mechanisms that may ensure:

a. training of young people in the ICT sector;
b. retraining and requalification of unemployed in ICT;
c. greater awareness of the unique opportunities for jobs in this area; and
d. internationalisation of the ICT sector.

**Technicians[^7]**

High demand (ranked as the highest priority occupation group) for technicians has been identified[^8] in several regions: North (physical and engineering science technicians); Center (physical and engineering science technicians and process control technicians); and Alentejo (physical and engineering science technicians and process control technicians). The need for technicians is mainly related to replacement demand and the expansion of companies and their services (and therefore the need for more human
resources). Furthermore, a factor that curbs supply is that these occupations were seen as less important/prestigious and therefore people tended to avoid them.

In order to meet the demand for technicians in the job market, the responsible government entities should allocate substantial investments to organise and implement necessary educational and training programs. This will substantially prepare students (especially at NQF levels 4 and 5) for future jobs and improve their chances in the labour market. The government published a list of national and regional priority VET programmes for 2014 [9], in which technicians are considered. It is necessity to invest in these professionals in order to reduce the employment gap, which will consequently support the development of the North, Center and Alentejo regions. Company projects can be put on hold as a consequence of skilled workforce shortage. For example, this has been the case for several projects of the DGE (Direcção-Geral de Energia e Geologia) public sector company.[10]

**Engineering professionals (excluding electrotechnology) [11]**

A sectorial study [12] identified the lack of engineers working in the public sector. This is mostly caused by the adverse financial conditions (low wages and lack of public and private investment) and low prestige of the profession in the public sector.

The activities undertaken by engineering professionals in industry, construction and R&D fields have significant financial and social impact on the country’s economic development. Therefore, a lack of these experts may have a negative influence on the country’s economy as a whole. Due to the lack of highly skilled engineers (in the area of Physics), in the region of Aveiro, six companies, which operate in different sectors, have made a protocol with Aveiro University [13] and are paying the student fees for the five-year course in that area. The Portuguese Government reported in Diário da República (State Official Gazette) that higher education institutions should open more vacancies on Engineering courses [14]. Furthermore, training entities that provide courses for these qualifications should invest more in courses related to engineering. In addition, it is necessary to develop closer relations with companies, for example, by offering practical learning experience through internships, in order to increase students’ chances of getting a job at these companies.

**Legal, social and religious associate professionals [15]**

The majority of legal and social professionals work in the public sector, where benefits and wages have recently been reduced and the number of working hours increased. Such working conditions have reduced the attractiveness of working in these professions. In addition, the opening of vacancies is limited for some of these professionals (with the exception of religious associate professionals) because post-crisis the government is controlling/reducing its costs. For example, at the Food Safety and Economic Authority (ASAE), which towards the end of 2015 had only 230 inspectors working in the entire country, the process of contracting 22 additional inspectors faced some barriers including lack of equipment for the employees (e.g. computers and vehicles).[16].

At the moment, there are no specific measures which can tackle the shortage of these professionals. Although from time to time the State opens new job opportunities, the vacancies are few and not attractive. One measure which could potentially help to solve this problem is the provision of education
attractive. One measure which could potentially help to solve this problem is the provision of education and training courses directed to these professionals.

**Other shortages**

According to national stakeholders, other shortages are found for tourism related professionals (e.g. “waiters and bartenders”\(^{17}\) and “chefs”\(^{18}\)) as well as personal care workers in health services (“healthcare assistants”\(^{19}\), “home-based personal care workers” and “health services not elsewhere classified”\(^{20}\)). Shortages regarding tourism professionals can be explained by the significant **growth of the tourism business** in Portugal in the last year. In relation to personal care workers, the main reason behind the shortage is the **aging** of the Portuguese population, what leads to a growing need for professionals taking care of elderly people. According to the system for the anticipation of qualification needs (SANQ – Sistema de Antecipação de Necessidades de Qualificações) carried out by the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training, qualifications related to tourism professionals and personal care workers are among the 20 most demanded in Portugal.

In order to meet the demand for these professionals in the labour market, the responsible government entities should allocate substantial investments to organise and implement necessary training and educational programmes.

**Surplus Occupations**

Surplus occupations include the following skilled professionals: mining professionals\(^{21}\); workers in textile, clothing and leather industries\(^{22}\); construction workers and similar\(^{23}\); blacksmiths, toolmakers and related trades workers; and keyboard operators\(^{24}\). The reasons for surplus can be associated with the significant **decline in the demand** for labour in these sectors, due to outdating of the professions (e.g. they are no longer needed as a result of technological innovations), **re-location of production** to countries with cheaper workers, as well as **falling demand for these services** or **closure of companies** in these sectors (as a consequence of the economic crisis in Europe).

Traditionally, workers belonging to these occupations are people who performed the same job for the majority of their working life. Therefore, it is hard for them to get a job with a similar function (due to changes brought by new technologies) and even harder to get a different job (due to lack of qualifications/skills). In order to tackle unemployment and create ways to integrate these people back into the labour market or provide them with additional training/education, the Portuguese Government has adopted some general measures. For example, through the National Agency for Qualifications and VET (ANQEP)\(^{25}\):

a. **National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences** – refers to recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning;

b. **Provision of Adult Education and Training Courses** as an alternative for adults who wish to improve their qualifications;

c. **Provision of Technological Specialisation Courses**, which prepare candidates for a scientific or technologic specialisation in a specific training area; and

d. creation of the **Higher Professional Technical Programmes**.
In addition to these programs, the Portuguese Government, through the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), also developed programs that provide funds/benefits for companies to hire long-term unemployed. These measures are also mentioned in the strategy programme “Programa Operacional Capital Humano” for 2014 – 2020.[26]

**Note on the methodology**

The list has been compiled by Cedefop in the first half of 2016 combining quantitative and qualitative methods. In particular, a list of mismatch occupations was formulated following quantitative analysis of labour market indicators. Country experts were then asked to build on and scrutinise this list. Their expert assessment and knowledge of the country’s labour market has provided rich insights about the reasons behind the skills shortages or surpluses at occupational level. These are also accompanied by measures and policies that aim to tackle such mismatches. Country’s stakeholders have also been included in validating the final list of occupations.

Find here more data and information about Portugal.

**References**

[1] ISCO 221 Medical doctors; ISCO 226 Other health professionals; ISCO 325 Other health associate professionals;


[3]

[4] ISCO 133 Information and communications technology service managers; ISCO 351 Information and communications technology operations and user support technicians


[7] ISCO 311 Physical and engineering science technicians, ISCO 313 Process control technicians


[15] ISCO 341 Legal, social and religious associate professionals


[17] ISCO 5131

[18] ISCO 5120

[19] ISCO 5321

[20] ISCO 5329

[21] ISCO 312 Mining, manufacturing and construction supervisors; ISCO 811 Mining and mineral processing plant operators

[22] ISCO 753 Garment and related trades workers; ISCO 815 Textile, fur and leather products machine operators

[23] ISCO 711 Building frame and related trades workers; ISCO 712 Building finishers and related trades workers; ISCO 713 Painters, building structure cleaners and related trades workers


