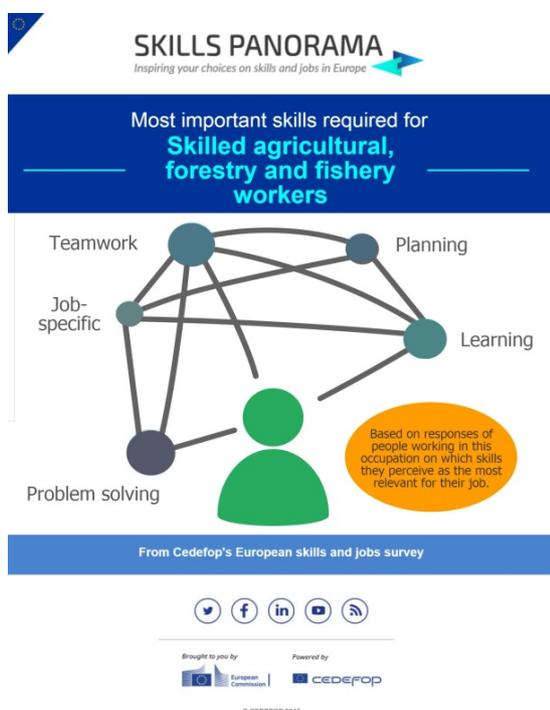


What will you be when you grow up?

09/02/2017  [Guidance](#), [European Skills Index](#), [People and Skills](#), [Matching Skills and Jobs](#), [Future Jobs](#), [Labour Market Context](#), [EU](#)

“So, what will you be when you grow up?” Ranging from fireman to ballet dancer, astronaut to truck driver, there have been numerous responses to this question, across borders and generations. “I am not sure yet” is often not well-greeted, especially as the respondent ages. However, now more than ever, information on future trends is necessary to reduce uncertainty about professional career choices.

In the future, not only new occupations will emerge, so that a great share of current pupils are foreseen to hold jobs that do not exist today^[i], but current occupations are expected to change in job content and tasks- some of them significantly. Key drivers of global magnitude such as automation/machine learning, the Internet of Things and other technological advancements, climate change and shifts in demographic composition of countries already disrupt the state of play in production lines, service delivery, consumer preferences, and regulation among others. These drivers shape employment, occupational structure and qualifications needs in all economic sectors^[ii].



Future jobs could be surprisingly different than those of today. Artificial intelligence, for instance, will call for pertinent skills not only in “white-collar”, technology-based occupations (such as [ICT professionals](#)) but as “agribots” gain ground, data management skills will become critical for occupations such as [skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers](#) that traditionally were less demanding jobs. Green skills already penetrate occupations, ranging from managerial positions (such as [production managers](#)) to [drivers and mobile plant operators](#). Technological advancements and an ageing society reformulate the delivery of health services: [health professionals](#) and [associate professionals](#) not only need to know how to reap the benefits of health technology, but also have strong communication and team work skills.

To accommodate the impact of these key drivers, new ways of working within teams and organisations are required. As organisations need to be ready to adopt and foster innovation^[iii], the importance of “soft” skills such as collaboration, teamwork, creativity and learning become at least as critical as job-specific/technical skills. “Occupational skill silos” are collapsing as these skills are needed across occupations: creativity, for example, is now important not only for artistic occupations, as it is linked to [fostering innovative thinking and the flexibility and problem-solving](#)^[iv]. A recent study indicates

fostering innovative thinking and thus flexibility and problem solving^[v]. As people have to adapt to changing jobs and career patterns, the continuous development of relevant skills will be a key to employability. The importance of lifelong training underlines the central role of [teaching professionals](#) of all education levels and types. They should be trained and supported to “teach” these “new” skills; get trained in them; and elaborate suitable teaching methods and tools to develop them in their students.

More opportunities for “welding girls”?

As “soft” skills gain momentum across occupations, and technological advances/automation take up several physical labour-demanding activities, one could argue that the boundaries of gender stereotypes in career choices also start to wither. Engaging more women in certain occupations would increase the supply of labour; and boost their relatively small share in occupations such as ICT professionals and engineers, but also [welders](#). At the same time, occupations expected to be least prone to replacement by machines (such as managers, psychologists, health professionals) rely on empathy, relationship-building and compassion: skills that women are believed to own and express more at the work place^[v].

Attract, train and retain

Although changes in skill demands are fast and will become faster, concrete steps can be taken. Attracting more young people, regardless of gender, in occupations where shortages are expected could be a significant first one. In addition, informing not only young people but also adult workers on trends in occupations and skills highlights the importance of high quality lifelong career guidance services.

Keeping curricula updated concurrently with changes in the labour market and in technology is an everlasting tough nut to crack. However, strong collaboration between the worlds of education, particularly of VET, with employers helps to tackle this challenge. The European Commission’s [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#) for example, aims at attracting young people in construction-relevant occupations^[vi] and offering them with high skills to prepare for expected developments in the sector. Staying abreast with emerging skill needs, ranging from practical to “soft” skills is fundamental for active employees, as well, so to tackle and/or prevent deskilling. Training opportunities should be offered to employees across occupational groups and hierarchical steps, whether through in-company trainings or other continuous VET options. Technological solutions, such e-training, can tackle obstacles like combining work and training commitments. Tailored training in content and way of delivery, for example in basic ICT skills, should target older workers with such needs, allowing them to retain their value in the labour market.

Most importantly, new set of skills that more or less swipe through all occupations signal a change in the way work is organised and working with others is perceived. Therefore, collaboration and team work, critical thinking to support problem solving, learning new skills and adapting to fast changing environments should be part of one’s overall approach to life rather than only of one’s skills portfolio.

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Find out more on skill developments and challenges in [30 occupational groups](#) in the new occupational Analytical Highlights in the Skills Panorama.

[i] World Economic Forum, (2016), [The Future of Jobs Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution](#), Geneva

[ii] Cedefop, (2016), [European sectoral trends: the next decade](#), Thessaloniki

[iii] Bean, R. (January 24, 2017), [Companies Brace for Decade of Disruption From AI](#), MIT Sloan Management Review, available at: (accessed 31/01/2017)

[iv] For example, see training on creativity for children in [Handicraft and printing workers: skills opportunities and challenges](#)

[v] Krawcheck, S., (2017), [Own It: The Power of Women at Work](#), Crown Business New York

[vi] Such as [Building and related trades workers](#)

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