

Skills2Capabilities

POLICY BRIEF 1.2

Project summary

Skills2Capabilities is conducting research to enhance skills systems for better labour market transitions, focusing on vocational education and training (VET) and adult learning (AL) programs. These programs are crucial for aligning workforce skills with economic demands and individual aspirations. The project integrates traditional human capital theory, which emphasizes meeting employers' current skill needs, with the human capabilities approach, which prioritizes learners' intrinsic interests. By combining these models, Skills2Capabilities aims to match skills supply with employer demand while offering individuals opportunities to thrive. The findings will guide improvements in aligning skills provision with both current and future labour market needs, using a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to address various skills mismatch issues. This policy brief will present preliminary findings from some work packages associated with the Skills2Capabilities project.



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Project objectives

Enhance Skills Policies

Improve the responsiveness and resilience of VET and AL systems.

Identify Skill Demand Patterns

Recognise emerging skill demands and mismatches.

Analyse Institutional Responses

Examine how institutions adapt to changing skill needs.

Policy and Practice Lessons

Recognise emerging
Develop pathways to enhance VET systems.

Research highlights

Strategic Effectiveness of Skills Policies

Led by a team at 3S (Austria), Skills2Capabilities assesses the strategic effectiveness of skills policies in six European countries: Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Austria, Norway, and England. The research highlights how job content and skill demands have evolved due to digitalization and changing market needs, prompting education and training curricula updates. Despite the importance of strategic skills policies, a systematic comparison of these policies and their implementation is lacking. Preliminary findings reveal significant variations in policy-making, design, and implementation across countries, indicating that one-size-fits-all models are inadequate. Trade-offs between economic and social goals are evident in policy documents, reflecting diverse national aims and contexts.

Responsiveness & Proactiveness of VET Systems

Led by researchers from project partner Fafo Research Foundation (Norway), S2C evaluates how vocational education and training (VET) programs adapt to changes in the work field. The project compares curricula for heating and ventilation technicians, health care workers, and industrial mechanics across six countries. Despite significant technological and task changes in these occupations, VET curricula often remain largely unchanged, suggesting a strategic choice to keep curricula general and flexible. This approach allows for adaptability over time and space, accommodating local variations and absorbing changes without frequent updates. The project will further explore the rationale, stakeholder consensus, and the pros and cons of this flexible curriculum approach.



Supply Of Social, Technical and Emotional Skills

Project partners at ROA (Netherlands), with support from UNIPD (Italy) and TLU (Estonia), are examining the supply of skills through VET systems. Using text-mining techniques, the project assesses the inclusion of 21st-century skills in vocational higher education curricula. Preliminary findings for the Dutch case show targeted enhancements in technical and social skills across sectors. An intensity index links skills taught to labour market outcomes, revealing employability and wage benefits. Another part of the study integrates the Big 5 personality traits and the BESSI questionnaire to evaluate socio-emotional skills in HBO VET curricula. These projects provide new methodologies for understanding skill supply changes and aligning educational programs with labour market needs.

Regional Change to Skill Demand

Project partner BIBB (Germany) is leading a study of the drivers of changing skill demands, focusing on regional variations. They analyse economic transitions like globalisation and technological change, presenting national and regional skill demand analyses. Using 2022 online job ads, they identify skill demands and recruitment strategies for industrial mechanics, ventilation technicians, and warehouse logistics operators. Skills are matched with the ESCO ontology and analysed using the Mistral 7b language model. Findings suggest companies in less attractive regions demand more transferable skills to adapt to changing tasks and attract a broader applicant pool. This research highlights how regional factors influence skill demands and company strategies.

Policy implications



- Innovative Methodologies: New technologies provide fresh insights but require careful validation.
- Spatial Context: Regional differences and country-specific contexts are crucial in shaping skills supply and utilization.

Conclusions

- Skills2Capabilities is pioneering research with new methodologies and deep comparative analysis.
- The project aims to provide insights for aligning educational programs with labour market needs, supporting a more adaptable and skilled workforce.





For more information and to read the full reports, visit
skills2capabilities.eu



Skills2Capabilities brings together researchers from 11 partner institutions across Europe and the Globe.

Partner institutions

