

FORUM E-Bulletin 01/08

Partnerships for skills: new results from OECD

This issue of the Forum E-Bulletin brings to you the first results of the OECD study on Designing Local Skills Strategies and invites you to join the debate on the role of partnerships in skills and economic development. To do that you can join the next Forum Annual meeting to be held in Vienna, Austria on 18-19 February as well as the high-level OECD conference on labour policy decentralisation to be held on 17-19 April in Venice, Italy. Don't have time to travel? Share with us the results of your work by responding to our questionnaire.

Why skills?

The promotional slogan of the state of Maryland's Workforce Investment Board (GWIB) is '**Workforce Development is Economic Development**'. The sentiment behind this, that economic development should increasingly **focus as much on human resources and skills as on infrastructure and inward investment** - is increasingly apparent across all OECD countries. On the other side of the world in Australia, the primary goal of the regional development agency in Griffiths, New South Wales is now 'building workforce skills and education', followed by 'taking a proactive regional approach to meeting infrastructure needs' and 'implementing regional sustainability/growth management'.

In 2007-2008 the **OECD LEED Programme** is looking on **one particular aspect of the skills issue**: the preparation of **local skills strategies**. Our study reviews cases of localities in the Americas, Asia, Australasia and Europe that have developed area-based skill strategies (the High Talent Initiative in Shanghai China for example, and the Regional Skills Alliances in Michigan) while also looking at innovative responses to particular issues (such as attracting new talent and upgrading the skills of local workers). The resulting report will provide direction for national policy makers seeking to support local actors, while at the same time providing advice to local policy makers seeking the best means to design a local skills strategy appropriate to their own local situation and taking a broad breadth of issues into account.

Read more about:

[1. Designing local skills strategies: first results from the OECD study](#)

[2. Want to contribute to the study and feature your experience?](#)

[3. Coming next:](#)

- ✓ *4th Annual Forum Meeting (18-19 February, Vienna), register by 18 January.*
- ✓ *Decentralisation and Co-ordination: The Twin Challenges of Labour Market Policy, a high-level conference to be held in Venice on 17-19 April.*

1. Designing local skills strategies: first results from the OECD study

Skills are increasingly at the core of strategic objectives for increasing competitiveness, enterprise and inclusion. However preparing a skills strategy can be difficult, and requires achieving consensus between a number of different policy areas: education, vocational training, employment, entrepreneurship, regional development, and community development. Harnessing the buy-in of policy makers from these different areas can be a significant challenge, and one of the main tasks of partnerships interested in the skills issue. As skills become a principal determinant for the grouping of companies in certain regions, partnerships can also use their skills focus as a basis for building the strength, viability and thus attractiveness of local growth areas and clusters.

To plan ahead, policy makers need to make an informed guess as to potential local growth areas which will provide employment opportunities for tomorrow's generation of school and college leavers. However, trusted information on even current skills demand can be difficult to come by and even more difficult to maintain up-to-date. Interpreting such data is also by no means straight forward. Many localities in OECD countries are not experiencing skills shortages, but rather a '**low skilled equilibrium**' which undermines productivity, quality employment and incomes. In this case investment in the training of the unemployed is not enough: employers also need to be engaged as active players in transforming local skills demand.

Strategies also have to plan for the fact that **skills may be both gained and lost through migration**. Resources cannot be placed everywhere, and so policy makers need to assess the costs and benefits of taking forward different local priorities: attracting and retaining talent, upgrading the skills of the current labour force and the next generation of youth, and integrating hard to reach groups into the skills development system. The most successful and most cohesive localities in the future will be those that get this crucial balance right.

In sum **OECD studies** show that:

- 1) **Actions to support the attraction and integration of immigrants need to be balanced with investment in the training of existing residents;**
- 2) **OECD countries need to do more to support the up-skilling of those on low incomes already in the workplace;**
- 3) **The education and training system needs to be equipped with enough flexibility in the management of programmes** so that it can react to the double-sided phenomena of local change - a rapidly changing economy and a rapidly changing local labour force;
- 4) **Educational officials need to think strategically,** and plan for, rather than react to such change.

Designing a strategy requires a **three stage process**: identifying the local context, deciding what weight to give the different elements of the strategy and deciding which instruments to use. After setting out the initial findings, the remainder of the report looks at each of these issues in turn. [Read the preliminary finding.](#)

Please let us have your comments on the [OECD project](#) and findings.

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2. Want to contribute to the study and feature your experience?

Share with us your experience by **answering to the questions below**. Your answers will feed the ongoing analysis as part of this project. Your experience will also contribute to shape the 4th Annual Forum Meeting and a capacity building session to be held at the OECD LEED Trento Centre for Local Development, Italy, in June, on "Partnerships for Skills Development". We will also feed back to you on the results of this survey in future communications of the Forum. Information on your current priorities and challenges will help the Forum to better respond to members' needs. Please keep your contributions to 2-4 pages, maximum.

1. Before answering to the following questions, please tell us more about you	
For partnership practitioners	Please describe your partnership's: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geographic scale (regional, local, neighbourhood)• Partners• Partnership objectives and activities• Contact details
Other [public servant; researcher; NGO; other]	How do you relate to local partnerships? Contact details
2. Partnerships and skills: if you want to describe a partnership experience in designing or implementing a skills strategy for a place, please fill in this template	
The context	Please provide brief information on the local context. How do you measure and forecast skills needs within the local economy? (we would be interested in innovative techniques developed and/or problems with data availability faced).
Your skills strategy	What is your strategy focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Attracting and retaining talent○ Upgrading the skills of the current labour force○ Integrating hard to reach groups into the skills development system○ Other (please describe)
	How? Please describe the mechanisms (programmes) used to achieve the strategy objectives and your partnership role in designing and/or implementing a skills strategy. Have you evaluated the results already? Tell us more about the lessons you have learnt.

Please send your form to Elisa.Campestrin@oecd.org by 11 February 2008.

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3. Coming next

18 – 19 FEBRUARY 2008, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

4th Annual Meeting of the OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance

'Partnerships for Skills and Competitiveness'

The 4th Annual Meeting will seek to identify the best ways for partnerships to contribute to the design and implementation of skills development strategies which can boost competitiveness and make the economy more inclusive. 150 partnership practitioners, managers, national co-ordinators of partnership networks, and policy makers from OECD member and non-member countries will join the debate.

To register, please fill in the [registration form](#) and send it to [Eva Rubik](#) by **18 January 2008** at latest.

17-19 APRIL 2008, VENICE, ITALY

'Decentralisation and Co-ordination: The Twin Challenges of Labour Market Policy'

High-level conference jointly organised by the Senate and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Italy and the OECD LEED Programme, in collaboration with Italia Lavoro and Isfol.

This conference will take stock of 10 years of decentralisation since the initial Venice conference which the LEED Programme organised in 1998 at the request of the Italian government. The main themes of the conference will be: i) reducing the trade-off between flexibility and accountability; ii) co-ordinating labour market policy with economic development and innovation; and iii) tackling skills and employability challenges.

Policy makers will bring lessons from their experience of decentralisation over the past 10 years and debate ways to make policies more effective in a globalised, knowledge-based economy, when localities are faced with complex issues and business needs change constantly.

[Download here a draft agenda](#)

To register, please contact Debra.Binks@oecd.org

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Contact the [Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance](#)