

Ministers convene and discuss solutions for skills challenges in the digital world at the Skills Summit in Porto, Portugal

The Skills Summit 2018 brought together ministers and officials from more than 20 countries in Porto, Portugal, on the 28-29 June to discuss the skills needed for a digital world.

Mr. Tiago Brandão Rodrigues, Minister of Education of Portugal and Angel Gurría, the OECD's Secretary-General, opened the Summit. Minister Brandão Rodrigues noted "Being transversal and intangible, digital skills are nowadays as fundamental as reading, adding, expressing, feeling and thinking. They are essential to know-how. Knowing how to act, make and learn in digital environments is a vital instrument for the cohesion of our societies."

Ministers discussed how digitalisation is transforming the way people work, learn, connect with each other, and live their lives. Discussions focused on the impact on workplaces, as workers in digital environments move to tasks that are more complex and that involve the use of ICT skills. Discussions also focused on how technology could improve education and learning, and on the types of skills both youth and adults should obtain to succeed in the digital economy and how better lifelong learning systems could play a role to upskill their populations.

Ministers agreed that digitalisation brings great opportunities for innovation, productivity and well-being, but also carry important risks for people who lack the skills to seize these opportunities. Ministers emphasised that inclusive skills policies that offer opportunities for all to upskill and reskill through life are at the heart of their efforts to make a digital world work for all.

The Ministers at the Summit, with portfolios including education, labour and economic development, agreed that responding to digitalisation requires new and coordinated policy efforts. Angel Gurría noted, "Developing effective skills policies is a hard challenge that requires governments to think differently and better work together – within government and with stakeholders. Focusing on formal education early in life only is likely to be insufficient to respond to the changes of a digital world. Countries have to work with social partners to make lifelong learning a reality."

International co-operation in skills matters in an economy that is now global and digital. Ministers recognised that many countries face similar challenges and can learn from each other. Gurría added "This is why knowing the problem and addressing it through sound policy can be aided through fruitful international dialogue and analysis."

Those attending the summit were able to engage candidly on both the current state of skills in their countries and the plans they are developing for skills challenges in a digital future, leaving with a commitment to pursue strong skills policies. They called on the OECD to build on its work to enable a deeper understanding of the economic and social impacts of digitalisation and to provide policy advice to countries that ensures citizens have the skills they need to participate fully and effectively in a digital world.