

Press note

Re-engineering skills systems to thrive in a rapidly changing world

Skills are an essential driver of economic and social progress. Megatrends such as globalisation, digitalisation and demographic change are transforming jobs and the way societies function and people interact. Against this background, getting skills right becomes even more critical for ensuring well-being and promoting growth that is inclusive and sustainable. To thrive in the world of tomorrow, people will need higher levels and different types of skills and to respond to these challenges many countries will need to re-engineer their skills systems. Already today, skills shortages have become one of the major constraints to productivity, economic growth and inclusiveness in many countries. OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría notes that “skills are the foundation upon which countries build prosperous and inclusive societies”.

The *2019 OECD Skills Strategy: Skills for Shaping a Better World* presents evidence from across the OECD on skills policies that work. It updates the original 2012 Skills Strategy, incorporating important lessons learned from applying the OECD Skills Strategy framework in 11 countries. The updated strategy also presents new evidence about the skills implications of megatrends, such as globalisation, digitalisation, population ageing or migration. It also identifies the importance of sound governance arrangements for effective skills systems, underpinned by a whole-of-government approach, and of the need for policies in different areas – lifelong learning, labour, tax, migration, or regional development – to be fully aligned. The 2019 OECD Skills Strategy also presents a dashboard, providing countries with a high-level, comparative assessment of the performance of their skills systems.

The key policy recommendations are organised around three broad components of the updated 2019 OECD Skills Strategy:

- ***Developing relevant skills over the life course.*** To ensure that countries are able to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, all people need access to opportunities to develop and maintain strong proficiency in a broad set of skills. This process is lifelong, starting in childhood and youth and continuing throughout adulthood. It is also “life-wide”, occurring not only formally in schools and higher education, but also informally in the home, community and workplaces.
- ***Using skills effectively in work and society.*** Developing a strong and broad set of skills is just the first step. To ensure that countries and people gain the full economic and social value from investment in developing skills, people also need opportunities, encouragement and incentives to use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society.
- ***Strengthening the governance of skills systems.*** Success in developing and using relevant skills requires strong governance arrangements to promote co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration across the whole of government in order to align policies that are complementary; engage employers, social partner and other stakeholders throughout the policy cycle; build integrated information systems; and develop efficient financing arrangements to which Governments, employers but also beneficiaries themselves contribute.

Skills are vital in enabling individuals and countries to thrive in an increasingly complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world. The 2019 OECD Skills Strategy provides countries with a strong foundation for re-engineering their skills systems to meet the needs for the future. The OECD will continue to work with interested countries to implement the OECD Skills Strategy framework to foster better policies for better lives.